

The Psalms of Ascents

Subject: Experiencing God's dealing in the church life until we arrive at a mature testimony

The Third Stage: Completely one with God, reaching the maturity of life (Psalms 130 to 134)

Let us pray: "O Lord Jesus. Lord we thank You for gathering us together this weekend. We gather in Your presence. We look to Your presence; we look to Your speaking. Lord, we want to know You more, to know Your ways, to know Your heart's desire so that we can be with all the brothers and sisters in the church life today. We want to experience all that You are dealing with us today so that we can continue to go forward, so that we can reach the truth to know You more, to reach the oneness, to reach a mature man, to reach the riches of the stature of Your fulness so that the church today on earth can reach a mature testimony. Lord, we thank You and look for Your blessing. May Your word be open to us. We give You the Psalms of Ascents. Bring us onward step by step according to the revelations in these psalms so that our life can grow, so that our experience of life can go upward until we reach oneness with You with maturity of life, so that we can be ones awaiting Your return. Lord Jesus, hear our prayer. Thank You Lord."

A Brief Review of Psalms 120 to 129

It is a joyful time for us to be here again with all the brothers and sisters. Last year at this time we fellowshiped concerning the first and second stages of the Psalms of Ascents in Psalms 120 to 129. The 15 Psalms of Ascents can be divided into 3 stages of 5 psalms each. This is a marvellous arrangement in the Bible. I believe that this is according to the arrangement of the Holy Spirit. The entire 150 psalms are in 5 sections. These 5 sections describe the 5 stages of our growth in life in our Christian life. One of the sections is the Psalms of Ascents. You can say that this is the cream of the Psalms. Last year

we covered 2 stages. The first stage is Psalms 120 to 124. Psalms 125 to 129 is the second stage. This time we come to the third stage, Psalms 130 to 134. The more we enter into the word of God, we find that His word is wonderful.

Before we go on to the third stage, let us briefly review the first and second stages starting from Psalm 120. Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the Book of Psalms. There are 8 verses that begin with each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, making 176 verses in total. After this Psalm, we come to the Psalms of Ascents. The topic of these psalms is experiencing God's dealing in the church life until we arrive at a mature testimony. The whole Psalms of Ascents is to bring us into the church life. Only in the church life can we experience God's dealing to the extent that we arrive at the maturity of life. It is impossible for us to a Christian alone. If we want to be a Christian, we must be together with all the other brothers and sisters. We must live a church life with all the other brothers and sisters. All God's work today is in the church life.

The Psalms of Ascents give us a picture of how someone began to love the Lord and enter into the church life. The first point is that we must leave the world to enter into the church life. Psalm 120:1 says, "In my distress I cried to the LORD, And He heard me." Previously he was in the world; he lived in Meshech and among the tents of Kedar. That environment was filled with tongues of deceit and lying lips. He desired to escape from this world to come to God's presence. Then he was rescued by God and started to go forward.

Psalm 121 shows how he was helped by God. Then in Psalm 122 he enters into the church life: "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the LORD.' Our feet have been standing Within your gates, O Jerusalem! Jerusalem is built As a city that is compact together" (vv. 1-3). This is to enter into the church life. Here there is the throne of David. To pray for the peace of Jerusalem is to enter into the church life.

After entering into the church life the psalmist became a servant serving God: "Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes look to the LORD our God" (123:2). After entering into the

church life we need to consecrate ourselves to the Lord so that we can become His servants to serve God.

In Psalm 124 the psalmist experienced the Lord's help. When we grow in life, we will eventually find out that it was because God helped us. This is like Romans chapters 1 to 8 where Paul described the entire journey of a Christian from being condemned in sin, being justified, growing in life, being sanctified, being transformed, and being glorified. After all these things, Paul concludes with Romans 8:31: "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" Who can accuse those whom God has chosen? "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies" (v. 33). "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (v. 35). There are many environments and sufferings in this world. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. This is the testimony that Paul gave us in the New Testament.

This is also the testimony of the psalmist in Psalm 124. This is the conclusion of the first stage of the Psalms of Ascents. "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, When men rose up against us, Then they would have swallowed us alive... Then the waters would have overwhelmed us, The stream would have gone over our soul" (vv. 2-5). All this persecution cannot harm us because God has helped us. In following the Lord, we need to experience that it is God who helps us.

Psalm 125 tells us that we need to trust in the Lord. Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion. This means that when we trust in the Lord we can be strengthened and overcome. We not only face the outward environment, we also experience the old man within us. Within us is both the scepter of wickedness and the allotment of the righteous. In the process of our growth in life, we discover that the real difficulties are not outward things, they are within our person. Within us is something called the scepter of wickedness. This is the life of Adam, the life of our flesh. After we are saved, a new life enters us, the Holy Spirit enters into us; but our original natural man, our natural life, the life of our flesh, is still within. These two lives are always at war so we cannot do what we desire to do. As Paul said, to

will is up to me, but it is not up to me when I want to do it. If we Christians do not recognize what is within us, it is difficult for us to grow in life. We desire to pursue the Lord and server the Lord, but when we try to, we find a difficulty. The difficulty is our flesh, our natural life, becomes our most difficult limitation. So Galatians says that the Spirit wars against out flesh and our flesh wars against the Spirit. The two war against each other. In Romans chapter 7, Paul said that when I desire to do good, evil is within me and even captures me so that I follow the law of sin. Where is salvation? Paul asked, “Who can save me from this sinful flesh?” Praise the Lord, Romans chapter 8 is the answer. The answer is the law of the Spirit of life within us can overcome the law of sin and of death. This is what Psalm 125 is referring to when it says that the scepter of wickedness will not rest on the allotment of the righteous. Even though the life of the flesh is within us, the life of Christ is also within us. The life in our flesh cannot overcome the life in our spirit. Therefore, God wants us to experience the life within us that can overcome the law of sin and of death, that can release us from the bondage of our flesh.

Psalm 126 says that those who sow in tears will reap with a ringing shout. This means that we can enjoy a life of harvesting and reaping. This psalm again brings us higher. It begins with returning from captivity and ends with reaping with a ringing shout. These 2 verses are speaking of the same thing. Returning from captivity and sowing in tears are put together in the Bible. On one hand, those who were in captivity now return. On the other hand, those who sowed are now reaping. It is a suffering to be in captivity, but to return from captivity is a joy. Their mouths were filled with laughter and their tongues with a ringing shout. Those who sow in tears reap with a ringing shout. We need to sow ourselves. When we sow ourselves by dying the result is resurrection. We need to die with the Lord and rise with the Lord. Then we will reap the riches of life. How many grains can one seed produce? In the past, sowing was done manually but now with machines. When you sow rice, you must put the seed in ground to grow into a small shoot, then transplant it into a field. The Lord said that the good earth produced 30 fold, sixty fold or a

hundred fold. This is very conservative. The sowing in tears is a matter of death but the reaping in life is in resurrection. The more we experience death with Christ, the more we can experience the riches of life.

Psalm 127 and Psalm 128 provide a contrast. Psalm 127 says that we cannot do anything for the Lord in our natural strength. Our soul life and our natural life are worthless in God's building work. What can we do? The psalm mentions four things that are in vain, but the Lord gives His beloved sleep. Everything that we do is worthless, but verse 3 says, "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward." The word *heritage* refers to something given by God. There is nothing that you need to do; God is the one who gives the heritage. Children are the result of growth in life. They are the heritage completely from God. That is why Paul said that the One who gives the growth. Paul planted and Apollos watered but only God can give the increase. Growth is up to God. However, Psalm 127:3 also says that the fruit of the womb is a reward. A reward comes from something that you do; you will gain a reward only if your work is good. On one hand, the increase is given by God. On the other hand, we must cooperate. We must have a heart to love the Lord; we must pursue the Lord; we must desire to grow in life. This psalm shows us that everything that man does by himself is worthless. However, God is going to give us children, to increase the number in our family, to fill our house. The house that you build is also your family. God's house is God's family. The members of the family are the children. That is why this psalm puts the building of the house and bearing children together. The Bible is very meaningful. The house equals the family. When we talk about the family, we also talk about the children. To build the house is to increase the members in the house; it is the increase of life. Therefore, building is a matter of growth in life. This is the concept in the Bible. When Paul mentioned building in Ephesians chapter 2, he says that the building needs to be joined together in Christ until it grows into the dwelling place of God. He says that we must build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets and that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. The whole building is being joined together in Christ and then gradually grows until it

becomes the temple of God. What is growth? How do you build? We need to grow in life. Initially, growth is up to God; God is the One who causes us to grow. This is one aspect, but the other aspect is the reward. This means that there is also the aspect of man's responsibility. We need to love the Lord with a pure heart and pursue the Lord. This is our responsibility.

In Psalm 128 the thought changes again; the main point is that we must labour. Psalm 127 says that everything that we do is in vain, but Psalm 128 says that we are blessed when we eat the labour of our hands. What is the criteria for this blessing? Verse 1 says, "Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways." What does it mean to fear the Lord? To fear here is in love; it is to be fearful that God will not be pleased with us, that we cannot please Him, that we will disobey Him. It is to be fearful that God cannot gain what He wants in us. The apostle Paul was a person who feared God. He said that he buffeted his body so that it would submit to him. He was afraid that he could not attain that which he preached to others. Hebrews 12:28-29 says, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire." We must fear God to walk in His ways, that is, walk on the path God has for us, no matter how crooked it is or how much suffering and tribulation is on it. Still we must be faithful to go on this path. The labour of this kind of person will be valuable and will have a result. Then he can be glad and be nourished by those he laboured for. His will be like a fruitful vine and his children like olive plants around his table. A vine does not bear fruit one at a time; its fruit is in clusters filled with the riches of life. There are also many shoots that come out from an olive tree. All of this is a description of the riches of life. The ones who fear the Lord walk in His ways and are filled with the freshness of the fruit of life.

Psalm 129 can be considered the conclusion of this stage. Verse 2 says, "Many a time they have afflicted me from my youth; Yet they have not prevailed against me." This Psalm is a praise in the environment of affliction, yet the affliction did not prevail against the psalmist. Just like Israel, he experienced many situations with many

sufferings in the environment from God. No matter how difficult was the situation he faced, in the end he became mature just like Israel. Although his person was broken, at the end his life was mature.

In the first psalm of the Psalms of Ascent we see a man who dwells in Meshech and in the tents of Kedar. Yet at the end of the Psalms, this man is in the temple of God. These fifteen psalms begin with a man of God who desires to leave the world and enter into the church life. But at the end we see that this man has passed through a deeper dealing from God until he is one with God, mature in life and dwelling in the temple of God. These fifteen psalms begin with prayers. The psalmist has a desire before God and he has a prayer. At the end, he is filled with praises.

Therefore these fifteen psalms have a special place in the book of Psalms. They represent a man who receives grace and is saved. Yet because of his desire for the Lord, he progresses step by step until he becomes one with God and reaches maturity. These are the spiritual significances found in these fifteen psalms.

Calling unto God out of the Depths and Realizing That We are Just Sinners

The five psalms beginning with Psalm 130 belong to the third group. The central thought is to be one with God. These are psalms of ascents; we are not going downhill; we are ascending upward. The life of a Christian must be a life of ascending until we reach the pinnacle which is the maturity of life. Psalms 120 to 134 cover our experience from the time we are regenerated. Step by step we are growing, we enter into the church life and experience God's work in us so that we can grow in life until we are those who are watchful and waiting for the Lord's return.

Psalm 130:1-2 says, "Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD; Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive To the voice of my supplications." The word *depths* here refers to someone falling into deep affliction. The one writing this psalm was in the depths of difficulties, hardships and troubles. The depths here are plural, not singular. Because he loves and desires God, God allows him to be in the depths. If a man loves God or says he is loved by God, he must

often enter into the depths. According to the paths led by the Lord, the depths are a necessity.

Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:11-12; "...persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me... what persecutions I endured.... Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." This is the last stage. When we grow in life to such an extent, we will be put into many difficulties, hardships and troubles so that God can break us. This is so that we fully realize that we are nothing in ourselves. We cannot rely on ourselves any more. This person was put into the depths and cried to the Lord. Jeremiah said, "I called on Your name, O LORD, From the lowest pit. You have heard my voice: 'Do not hide Your ear From my sighing, from my cry for help'" (Lam. 3:55-56). Jeremiah was a person who loved the Lord. He prayed according to God's desire. God allowed him to be placed in a pit in the prison. There he prayed to the Lord. All those who desire to follow the Lord, those who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. This what God has measured to us. This is different than our concept; our natural concept is that if we believe in and follow the Lord then He will give us many good things. Some Christians preach a prosperity gospel, that if you believe in the Lord, you will be wealthy; the Lord will direct all the wealth in the world to you. One time a friend invited me to come to where he met. The preacher there said that if you are a Christian who loves the Lord, you will be wealthy. The entire message was about God directing all the wealth to you. At the end, he called all those who want to be wealthy to come to the front so he could pray for them. Then he stretched out his hands to pray for all the ones who flooded to the front. I couldn't believe that there would be a preacher like this. If being faithful to God means that you will become wealthy, then the Lord Jesus must have been wrong. He was living in poverty His whole life, He was persecuted, He was rejected and despised, and in the end died on the cross.

If the prosperity gospel is true, then Paul also must have been wrong. What was his experience as shown in the New Testament? Without a doubt, in the New Testament, Paul's influence is the greatest and his suffering is also by far the most severe. 2 Corinthians 1:8-9: "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our

trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.” Paul’s testimony is that he was burdened beyond measure, above his strength, so that he despaired even of life.

When Paul testified that he was a minister of Christ, he did not say how many people he brought to the Lord or how many churches he established. He testified of his suffering for the gospel. During the time of his ministry, he was frequently persecuted from Damascus to Jerusalem, Syria and Cilicia. He suffered much during the time he laboured among the Gentiles and the four journeys he took. He said in 2 Corinthians 11:23-33, “Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.” Many of these sufferings are not mentioned in the book of Acts. The time that he was stoned the persecutors thought that he was dead. It only records once when Paul was shipwrecked but that time happened after Paul wrote this. He had been shipwrecked three times before then. At the end he said that if he needed to boast, he would boast in his weakness.

The New Testament presents such a picture of the one whose ministry was the most effective of all the apostles. What kind of life did Paul live as he was ministering to God? He truly experienced a life in the depths. While we are ministering to the Lord, God allows us to fall into the depths. Why? So that we will experience Him even more, so that we will grow in life. This is the third stage of the Christian life to experience the deeper work of God. We are put into the depths so that we can know our weakness. This is why Paul could not boast in himself. He said that those who boast must boast in the Lord. He boasted in his infirmities so that the strength of Christ could cover him. After he had received the visions and revelations, he said, "...yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:5-10). This is the experience of such a great apostle. This is also the experience that God will give to every Christian who desires to grow in life.

If our Christian life is smooth sailing, with nothing big happening day by day, month by month, and year by year, when we look back at the end of life there will be nothing worth remembering. This means that you did not have much growth in life or experience of life. When Paul talked about his life, it was colourful, full of tears. What has happened to you in the years that you have been a Christian? What has left a deep impression? When I think of my Christian life, I think of my experience in the church life. When I started to love the Lord, an elder brother began to deal with me. After he would deal with me he would come to shed tears and pray together with me. Afterward,

he would deal with me again. This is something that I cannot forget. One time I got into trouble because of a brother. I was late for a young people's serving meeting. I was responsible for the meeting, yet I was late. While they were waiting, a full time worker said that when brother Frank comes, he needs to kneel down. One of the other young serving ones went and found a cushion so that I could kneel on it when I came. When I arrived, I was put in the middle to kneel down in front of everyone. This experience is hard for me to forget. There are many, many other things that happened to me in the church life. When I went out to hand out tracts and preach the gospel, I cannot forget how I was rejected by people. When I knocked on doors, people would rebuke me. I remember these things, but all the other little things I forget. When affliction and hardship comes, it helps us to experience the Lord more, to experience the Lord's grace, to experience the Lord's blessing. We must realize that the day when we stand before the Lord in His presence, we will remember all the times we suffered for the Lord or were persecuted for the Lord. All these experiences are the real blessings.

There is a hymn (1137) that says that the chances to suffer for the Lord are so few. Many of those opportunities will soon pass away. That hymn is really good. It mentions that if we suffer for Him today, that suffering is worth remembering until eternity. Sometimes I ask myself, "Why did the Lord leave the mark of the wounds of the nails and spear when He had resurrected." The resurrected Christ who is in glory still had these wounds when He appeared to people. He told Thomas to stretch out his hand to touch the marks on His hands and put his hand in His side. It seems that the Lord purposely left the marks of His suffering there. In phase 3 of the Psalms of Ascents, it says, "Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD." Our normal Christian experience must be in the depths. It is not normal to not have the experience of being in the depths. The Lord will measure many afflictions to those who really want to follow the Lord.

Consider the experience of David; he had many experiences of the depths. He was chosen by God. God told Samuel that He had found a person, David the son of Jesse, who is a man after My heart. At that time David was young; Samuel still had not anointed him. David was the youngest in his family. His job was to shepherd the sheep in the

wilderness. The older brothers did not go to shepherd the sheep; they sent the youngest one. When God told Samuel to anoint someone in that household, there were eight brothers. Jesse brought seven of them to Samuel for one of them to be anointed. Where was the youngest one? Out in the wilderness taking care of the sheep. Samuel specifically called Jesse to bring his sons to the sacrifice that he prepared when he came to anoint one of his sons (1 Sam. 16:5), but David was not there. Why? Because his family did not think that he was ready. They thought that it couldn't be David, so they left him still taking care of the sheep. The story in the Bible is very clear. When Samuel saw the oldest one, he said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him!" But God said, "No it is not him." God said, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (v. 6). Then Jesse had his sons pass before Samuel one by one. God said that none of them were the chosen one. "And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all the young men here?'" Then he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here'" (v. 11). When David came, God said that he was the one and Samuel anointed David. He was someone whom man despised but the one God had chosen. The whole family did not pay attention to the youngest son. He was sent out to the wilderness to take care of the sheep.

After David was anointed, it seems like nothing changed; they still did not take him seriously. Then one day there was a war between the armies of Saul and the Philistines. A few of David's brothers were in the army among the soldiers. Then David's father told him to bring some things to his brothers. When he went there to meet them, they immediately rebuked him saying, "Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle" (17:28). It seems that David was never taken seriously by anyone; even David's brothers were still despising him. If any family treats the youngest one like this, it will likely produce a child that is not quite balanced, but David did not grow into an unbalanced person. While he was in the wilderness, he learned to trust in God. He was faithful to keep the sheep that God

had given to him. When the lion came to devour one of the sheep, David caught it by its beard and struck it and killed it. Thus he took the sheep back from the mouth of the lion. He was not an insignificant person. He told Saul, “The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine” (v. 37). All the soldiers in the army were afraid of Goliath but David was able to kill him because from his youth he had been experiencing God’s keeping power. He was not stumbled by the fact that his family did not take him seriously; they just sent him out to take care of the sheep. He experienced God and trusted in God, taking care of the responsibility that God had given to him for the care of the sheep. He trusted in God to overcome the lion and the bear. Through God's strength, he was also able to overcome the Philistine.

After he defeated Goliath, David had a little glory only for a little time. The women in Israel were singing that Saul had killed thousands and David killed ten thousands. Before that song, everything was OK, but after that the trouble came to David because Saul became jealous and began to seek his life. From that time, David had many more experiences of the depths. That was the start of years of running away from Saul to save his own life. Many times he found himself in the depths of his troubles and could not save himself. In the end he had to escape to the land of the Philistines because there was nowhere he could hide in the land of Israel. In 1 Samuel 21, David escaped to Achish, the king of the Philistines when Saul sought to kill him because of jealousy . The princes of the Philistines said to Achish, “Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of him to one another in dances, saying: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands?’” When David heard this, he immediately knew that he was in danger because these two nations were against one another. David faced such a desperate situation that all he could do was to pretend to be a madman. He acted like a madman, scratching on the doors and drooling into his beard. What a suffering this was! Then the king of Gath said, “Look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? Have I need of madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence?” (vv. 14-15). At those times, David felt he was in the

depths and he did not know how to get out from it. Think about this: a man of God needed to pretend to be insane to escape the danger he was in. What kind of suffering was that!

When David left the king of Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam, he wrote Psalm 34. Samuel did not record how David trusted in God; he only recorded the outward events. But David himself wrote, “I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the LORD... I sought the LORD, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears” (vv. 1-4). This beautiful psalm reveals something completely different from the outward appearance when he was pretending to be insane. Outwardly, he pretended to be insane yet within he completely trusted in God. Even in the environments of great danger, he did not forget the Lord. In verses 8 to 10 he said, “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.” This is a very good psalm about overcoming. It was written by David after he had been going through tribulation. His experience is an example of how God allows us to go through some tribulation and suffering.

When David was suffering in front of king Achish, he did not blame anyone. He only prostrated himself before God. His attitude was, “O God, you are near to those who are broken in heart. Lord, I am a broken person, I dare not speak, I dare not resist and I dare not blame others. I only feel I am not worthy. You put me here in order for me to be a broken person. I bitterly repent; who am I? I hate myself.” This is brokenness. In verse 18 he said, “The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.” His heart was broken before God. His spirit before God was contrite. The outward situation pressed him to the point that his inward parts were also broken. This caused him not to be whole anymore, no longer self-justified and without self-pride.

Besides these psalms, David wrote Psalm 51 after he had committed a great sin and God had rebuked him. He descended into the depths because of his sin. He said, “Against You, You only, have I sinned.” He continued, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And

in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts.” He realized, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.” Again he declared, “A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise.” He surrendered both outwardly and inwardly. His spirit was a broken spirit. This kind of person will no longer stand up for himself. He has lost himself entirely in God.

We need to clearly see that God gives us many difficulties and allows many blows to come to us to cause us to descend into the depths. The purpose of all these is to bring us to our end so we can clearly see ourselves and repent in the presence of God.

Knowing Our Own Sins

These kinds of experiences are what Psalm 130 is speaking about when it mentions the depths. Verse 3 says, “If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?” When David went through the experience of the depths, then he started to know himself. After he went through the experience of the depths, then he realized that he was a sinner, even to the point that he was sin. Nothing that came out from him was good; nothing was acceptable to God. The experience of the psalmist here denotes that though we feel we are perfect and stronger and better than others, God is bringing us into the depths of despair for us to learn a new lesson. God wants us to see that our very self-righteousness is our sin and that our very person is sin. Everything that comes out from us is despicable. Everything belonging to us is disgusting.

We may be able to boast in our past spiritual experiences, spiritual knowledge, spiritual revelations, and spiritual achievements until the day when God brings us into the depths. At that moment we say to God, “O God! None of these can stand in your presence and none of these can be counted.” If God appeared to us, we could only bow our head and say, “O God, I hate myself and I will shut my mouth.”

The true oneness with God is the result of a person knowing the self through sufferings. He dares not boast and he sees there is nothing in him of which to boast. Paul said, “...that no flesh should glory in His presence... that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the Lord’” (1 Cor. 1:29; 2 Cor. 10:17). He also testified,

“...sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life” (1 Timothy 1:15-16). He said again, “I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:12-13). This is the response of a person who has gone through an experience of the depths and knows himself.

Experiencing the Forgiveness and Fear of God

Psalm 130:4 says, “But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.” After we have gone through experiences of the depths, we will know ourselves to a deeper extent. Then we see that God has the authority and grace to forgive sins. The forgiveness of sins here in nature is the same as when we first believed, but it is different in degree. At this stage, the psalmist is completely devoid of hope in himself. He sees himself degraded to the uttermost. He sees himself as sin. That is the reason that he says, “If You, O Jehovah, marked iniquities, Who, O Lord, would stand?”

At this time, he experiences forgiveness from God. God forgave us in order for us to fear Him. Many do not understand God’s forgiveness. They say that it does not matter if they sin a little because God will forgive them. Those who utter these words do not know God. A man who truly has been enlightened by God will see his sinful condition. When he receives the forgiveness of sins from God, the result is that he will fear God for the rest of his life. He will not dare to offend God and cause God to be sorrowful in heart. He will learn to love God and desire to please God in all things. Fearing God comes out of our love for Him. Those who know God also know that God’s forgiveness is to lead us to fear Him. When we see our real condition and repent of our sins before God, the result is that we will fear God for our whole life.

Waiting for God and Hoping in His Word

Verses 5 and 6 say, “I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the LORD More than those who

watch for the morning—Yes, more than those who watch for the morning.” These verses begin the second section of this psalm. This section shows us that a person who knows God will cease his struggling when he has been brought into the depths; he will commit himself to God entirely. The only attitude he has is to wait for God. When a person receives mercy from God and sees and learns from his condition, his first spiritual reaction is to wait.

A fleshly person is always in a hurry. A broken person is a person who waits. He says, “I wait for the Lord, my soul waits.” He does not have any demand. He does not ask for his troubles to be reduced. He does not hope for the time to be shortened. He only hands himself over to God entirely. He trusts that all things are in the Lord’s hands and that whatever the Lord does is righteous. He only waits and hopes.

A person who waits is one who knows himself and sees God. He knows that when God is ready to reveal Himself, everything will be resolved. His waiting is not without basis. He waits on God on the one hand and hopes in His word on the other hand.

When he waits and hopes like this, God will give him His words. When he has God’s words, he can rest. Isaiah 30:15 says: “In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.” When we return and rest, when we remain in quietness and in trust, and when we give up our struggling and rest in God’s words, we will be saved and our strength shall return. This response is the result of going through the depths and experiencing God’s forgiveness.

Waiting for the Lord More than Watchmen for the Morning

Psalm 130, verses 7-8 say, “O Israel, hope in the LORD; For with the LORD there is mercy, And with Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel From all his iniquities.” When we know ourselves, we will cease our struggling and give ourselves to the Lord; we will wait for Him. This kind of person really waits for the Lord; he is a watchman. Someone who waits for the Lord will bring others of God’s people to also wait for the Lord like he does. Seemingly our spiritual experiences are personal, but ultimately their purpose is invariably for the building up of the corporate body of

Christ. There is not one spiritual experience that is only for oneself. Even when we are plunged into the depths, and it seems that we are being broken, we realize that the result of our brokenness is to bring God's people to desire God, to see His redemption, to experience His lovingkindness and His abundant love and mercy.

This is what the church needs today. Those who can help the brothers and sisters the most, who can build the church, who can bring in the most blessing, and who can bring others to God's love and mercy and his abundant redemption, are those who experience being broken and know they have nothing. They humble themselves and hope in the Lord. This kind of person will bring the people of God to experience God's great blessings.

This psalm is in the Psalms of Ascents. The Psalms of Ascents are not easy to grasp but they are very rich. This is our experience of our Christian life. It is presented in very concisely in all these 15 Psalms. May the Lord give us wisdom and revelation to receive and understand God's Word like this.