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August 15, 2002

Climbing out of the Hole Psalm 130

Last months Guidepost magazine described the story of _____ a professor at the university in _____ Australia. She lived by herself on 10 acres about an hour out of town enjoying her seclusion and her small herd of Ixtapa's. One Saturday afternoon as she was feeding her animals she noticed a small hole about the size of a silver dollar in the corner of the fenced animal pen. As she bent down to investigate, the entire earth gave way beneath her. She began falling, falling, hitting wooden beams as she fell 10 stories below hitting the water below with great force. Upon kicking back up to the surface of the water she found herself at the bottom of an abandoned mine shaft, her ribs broken, and the sides of the hole too steep and smooth to climb up, but could only cling to a tiny outcropping of rock and a ledge. She screamed and cried for help but there was no one within miles of her, no hope of rescue. She knew the milkman would drive by and deliver her neighbors milk early Sunday morning. She waited, heard his truck pull up and stop, she heard the clink of the milk jugs...screamed at the top of her lungs, the dogs barked...but the truck pulled away. Would she be missed on Monday when she didn't show up to teach her classes? Totally alone, not a person for miles around, wet and cold and losing strength, she cried out to God from the dark depths of the mineshaft.

Have you ever been in the depths, felt totally alone...maybe you have screamed out for help until your heart bled raw and nothing, no one has come to help. Maybe you are in the depths right now. Nobody sitting near you even knows how far down you are. You look perfectly normal and secure....but you know the turmoil, the fear, the aching loneliness, the hurt, the discouragement and despair the rages

underneath your skin. Maybe you are in the depths of despair because of things that someone else has done to you, how someone else has hurt you badly. Maybe you are in the depths because of what you have done to yourself. Maybe it's a hole that you have spent years digging yourself and now you have finally fallen into it yourself. Maybe it's a relational hole. You have ignored the problem, hope it goes away. Maybe your sinful anger contributed to it. Maybe it was your demand to always be in control, or jealousy or manipulation. You thought you could work it all for your own advantage but now its all unraveling before your eyes. Maybe it's a hole of pride that has at times served you well but now that pride has so gotten in the way that you can't get along with people and enjoy life. Maybe it's an addiction hole that you thought you could control the substance, but now its obviously way out of control. Maybe your lust has tripped you into the depths of an affair or internet porn addiction whose talons you cannot get free from. Maybe it's a financial hole that you have dug yourself into where greed is become your god and a nasty task-master. You may find yourself in a parenting hole. Maybe it's a hole filled with crushed expectations. Maybe it's a medical difficulty hole. Maybe you are in an occupational hole of some kind. Maybe your hole is an overwhelming depression that strips you of any motivation to do right. You've yelled for help until the lungs of your soul are raw with pain and you feel like giving up. Has any body here ever been in the depths? Are you in personal pain from crushing loss? Maybe it's even a mess that has been caused by your own doing? We all spend some time in the depth...some more than others but we have all spent some time in the depths. Where do you turn to? To Whom do you yell to for help?

Turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Psalms. One of the larger books should be right in the middle if you open it up. This is one of the Psalms of assent. A song sang as people traveled to Jerusalem to worship at the temple of God. This is a song about a worshipper who

knows what its like to be at the bottom of the pit. He knows what its like to be in the depths of despair...and he shares with us the process of climbing out of the hole. READ with me Psalm 130. (READ)

Out of the depths I have cried to Thee. He is in it bad. It's dark and lonely and cold in the hole. There is very little perspective in the bottom of the hole. Notice the author doesn't say that he's in the depth because his enemies are all around him and pushed him into the depths. This guy is in the depths because his own sin is eating him at the depth of his soul. He dug his own hole and knows it. This guy has a few things going for him even in the depths. 1. He's down and he knows it. He is not deluded. He doesn't try to put on any mask before God. He's honest and is vulnerable enough to talk about it and admit it. I'm in the depths.

Farmer Joe decided his injuries from the accident were serious enough to take the trucking company responsible for the accident to court. In the court, the trucking companies fancy lawyer was questioning farmer Joe. "Didn't you say at the scene of the accident "I'm fine?" Farmer Joe responded, "Well I'll tell you what happened. I had just loaded my favorite mule Bessie into the.." I didn't ask you for the details, the lawyer interrupted, "just answer the question. Did you not say at the scene of the accident, "I'm fine" Farmer Joe said "Well I got Bessie into the trailer and I was driving down the road..." Again the lawyer interrupted and said "Judge I am trying to establish the fact that at the scene of the accident this man told the Highway patrolman on the scene that he was just fine. Now several weeks later after the accident he is trying to sue my client. I believe he is a fraud. Please tell him to simply answer the question. The judge however was fairly interested in farmer Joe's answer and asked Joe to continue. Joe thanked the Judge and continued, " I had loaded my mule into the trailer and was driving her down the highway, this huge semi-truck ran a stop sign and plowed right into my truck. I was thrown into one ditch and Bessie into the other. I

was hurting real bad and didn't want to move. I could hear ole Bessie moaning and groaning on the other side when the patrolman came on the scene. He took one look at Bessie writhing there in pain and took out his gun and shot her between the eyes. Then the patrolman with gun in hand came across the road, looked at me all beat up and said, "Your mule was in such bad shape I had to shoot her. How are you feeling?" It was then that I said, "I'm fine"

Folks there is no need for you to say "I'm fine" this morning when you really aren't. I realize that is the socially polite thing to do when people ask. Most don't even want a real answer and we don't really want to tell people the whole story about our being in the depths. We tend to just smile and say "I'm fine". You may lie to other people...but it makes no sense to lie to God. We are not oK. We are not just fine. We have all been touched by the pain and ugly mess of sin and we need to admit it. Romans 3:23 says "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" The wages of that sin is death... and fortunately the verse ends with some good news.

Point one this morning, #1 Admit your in a hole and you can't get up on your own. You've fallen and you can't get up without help. This guy is crying out to God, an emotional verbal expression of the pain deep inside of him. He can no longer hide it with the mask of "I'm fine". He can't control it or contain it...the pain bursts out as he cries out to God. Hear me. Listen to me God. Are you up there? Have you ever cried out to God only to think that your prayers were going no further then the ceiling? I sure have felt that way. But my feelings and your feelings do not negate the fact that our prayers are heard by a God who loves us more than we can know. We have believed a myth about God that God refuses to listen to our cries for help because we are too messed up....we got to figure out some way to clean ourselves up before we dare to get God to listen to us. Often when we get our lives all out of control, we

come to God and try to in some way bribe Him, manipulate him to get Him to do what we want. We're tempted to make a bargain with Him when we're in trouble at the bottom of the hole, "Lord if you will just get me through this tax audit, I will never cheat again." Or "Lord If I can sober up enough to not get stopped by the police I will never get drunk again." Or maybe we try to impress him with our past record, " Lord, this just doesn't normally happen to me, I've never been unfaithful to my spouse; this is the first time I've done it. Please get me out of this mess"

The guy who wrote this Psalm doesn't do any of that blame shifting and escape moves. He says "Lord, I'm in the depths. Hear me because my life depends on you" He knows that if God doesn't choose to listen to him he hasn't got a prayer. Look at verse 3. God if you are keeping track, then I haven't got a chance...in fact no one does. Who could stand up to that? V.3 tell us that we don't have to worry at all that we might come under the scrutiny of some God that wants to remind us of our past history and rub our noses in it when we attempt to approach our Lord. Sometimes I feel reluctant to cry out to God because we're afraid that He'll just laugh at us because we failed him so many, many times in the past and repeatedly disappointed him. It seems like we've prayed that prayer a 1000 times then the rooster crows and the tears roll down again. We feel like hypocrites coming one more time to say "lord please save me" We have a fear that we are walking haltingly into the presence of this record-keeping God and with Him arms crossed and toe tapping he'll say, "So, it's you again! Well let me get out my ledger sheet...My that is a disturbingly creative list of sin that you have been piling up and you want me to do what??? Verse 3 admits that no one could stand up before that kind of a God.

Verse 4 has one of the great "buts" in the Bible. If God choose to continually keep track no one could stand up. BUT there is forgiveness with Thee. There is pardon, simple and complete based on no merit of my

own, the forgiveness is with THEE. For centuries believers have taken great comfort and rejoice in the forgiveness of God. It is not to be taken lightly, for it is that forgiveness that begins to transform sinners into righteous loving, God-obedient people. Look at this now. But, there is forgiveness with God that He might be feared. It is the gift of forgiveness that produces a condition of reverence and holy awe of God...that's the fear part. Fear here does not mean terror and dread. That's what those who do not adore God do. Those who do not receive God's forgiveness will live in terror and dread. Satan and his minions do not receive forgiveness of God and they do not adore or revere God. Never has the devil gotten down on his knees in despair and cried out to God for help. His fear of God is trembling, terror and dread at God's justice. Those opposed to God do not have the right fear of God that includes adoration, and they have no hope for them.

Here comes point number two this morning. #2 Receiving forgiveness will nurture a holy awe of God. V.4 tells us that it is forgiveness asked for and received that fosters a reverent and holy awe of God, a "right" fear of God. Forgiveness is gifted us not just to bring relief to our guilt, its there to change our lives, transform our thinking and give us a right perspective about God and who He is. JI Packer writes that the most important thing about a person is what he thinks about God. How you and I view God is the most important thing because how we view God will drive what we value, how we think, what we do...everything. Right thinking about God will make everything else fall into place.

Here's how the Psalm is teaching us. First, We admit it. "I'm a sinner...I'm in the depth's and I'm in a hole I can't get out of on my own." Until you see that you have absolutely no need or desire to ask or seek forgiveness. Forgiveness is available but it must be asked for and received. That forgiveness received will nurture in us a right perspective about God for we will have a holy awe of Him, we will be filled with

thanksgiving and humility for all He has done for us. That right thinking about God will then lead us to a holy life and a God-obedience.

It might be easier to see it in the reverse cycle. Say there is an area of our life that is sin pocked. It's not honoring God. All sin in its essence is an irrational energy of rebellion against God. It's a habit of self arrogance raised up against God. We can only see sin correctly if we see it as against God. David in another Psalm wrote, "Against thee and thee only have I sinned" He didn't imply that he didn't cause great pain to the man he murdered and family he destroyed by his adultery. David was stating the truth that he sinned because of his messed up view of God. His sin was done in rebellion against God. For example; Take envy; I want what another person has that I don't have. What is my messed up view of God? When I envy I am challenging God's wisdom and ability to provide. I think I deserve better than what He has given me. I am not satisfied with what He's provided. I don't have the right view of God. What about worry? I want to control what I cannot and I doubt God's sovereignty. I doubt His ability, so we play God and manipulate and control. What's the answer? It's not telling people stop worrying, stop being envious, stop lusting, stop the greed, stop the pride. That's like telling a fat person to be skinny. How? We need to change our view of who God is. All of us will sit here and say "well I believe that God is in control. I believe that He loves me and knows what's best for me. I believe He provides..." But we don't act on what we believe. So in Philippians 4 it gives the antidote for worry, contentment, which is the opposite of envy. Be anxious for nothing but In everything...give thanks. We admit our sin, our problem before God. We receive God's forgiveness and are incredibly thankful for all that He has given for us that the freedom that forgiveness brings and that leads to a right and holy awe of God. That then inspires to live rightly. God is God and I am not. He knows what is best for me. He has provided everything I need to live well and serve Him.

I know what I really deserve and yet am so thankful for all he has forgiven and blessed me. If we truly lived out just those four truths we would not struggle with sin as we do. Receiving forgiveness will nurture a holy and righteous adoration of God.

Look with me at verse 5. Notice any repeated words in v.5 and 6. WAIT. That's a really strange word to us. Wait. It sounds so passive. We want to know what it is we are supposed to be doing. What does a night watchman do? Waits, watches. He looks forward to "the morning" He's still in the dark but is looking forward to the morning. This word wait in the Bible is not passive, it really carries the idea of craving for the presence of God. And that is the third point this morning, Crave for the presence of God. This kind of waiting is anticipating God to bring clarity to your chaos. Some here this morning who are still in the depths of their hole, like a watchman still in the dark...need to be encouraged with words of hope. The morning is coming. Look for it. Crave for the presence of God. His timing will be impeccable. In His presence is fullness of joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasure forevermore. In His presence I can be refreshed, instead of drained. In His presence I can be directed instead of confused. In His presence I can experience joy instead of defeat. In His presence I have strength and not fear. When we wait, when we crave for the presence of God we are convinced that God is still actively involved in the process. He is listening and working behind the scenes in our behalf and knows what we need. And it's all based on the truth of His word v.5

When that happens we can even encourage others. V. 7 the song writer is now encouraging others to hope in the hope. "O Israel, hope in the Lord." There is good reason to do it. He is filled with lovingkindness, the hesed loyal love. He abundantly pardons and forgives ALL of our sin. There is a new freedom when we discover the forgiveness that God offers.

We can't help but tell others about it. We have to tell others about what we have experienced.

Maybe you are still not convinced that God wants to pull you out of your depths. Maybe you are thinking to yourself. I can't become a Christian because I'm not very good at keeping my commitments. I will probably blow it and disappoint God. God is the one who initiates. He is the Sovereign one. He will not break His promise and whatever He starts He will work to bring it to completion.

Are you in the depths? Like that Australian lady in the opening story who was stuck down 10 stories at the bottom of the abandoned mine shaft no one around and screaming out for help to absent ears. Monday morning when she didn't show up to teach her class they sent police out to her farm to investigate. They found her and rescued her up from the depths of her hole. If you are in the depths right now you don't have to wait until Monday. And calling the police won't do you any good. You must cry out to God for help. It's not too late. In fact, its never too late to cry out to God.

A grandmaster chess champion examined a painting in an art gallery. The artist had painted a match between the devil and an outwitted young man. The painting showed the two engaged in a chess game playing for the man's soul. The man is in a panic as the devil appears ready to make his final move. The painting is title "Checkmate". The chess champion stood observing the painting for several minutes then smiled slightly. He turned to the curator and said, "I have good news for the man in the picture- he still has a move" The father of lies has convinced too many people that he has placed them in checkmate, but the grace of God has provided a way out, provided hope and forgiveness that we still have a move. We can cry out to God; He will hear our cry for help and raise you out of the depths.

Perhaps you are in the depths this morning. Perhaps your sinful life has finally caught up with you. Can you admit that you are enslaved to jealousy? Lust? Self-pity? Critical spirit? Arrogance? Dishonesty? Maybe it's a chemical dependency? Maybe you are addicted to material possessions? Maybe you are lazy and irresponsible? Maybe you are driven by ambition. Start where the Psalm writer did. Admit you need before God. Then ask God for total forgiveness of your sins, knowing that he's not going to keep score when you blow it but is a forgiving Father. Ask God to give you the patient craving to seek His presence and let Him begin the work to transform your mind and how you view Him. Thank God for the sacrifice of his son Jesus who died on the cross for you sin. Tell Jesus that you want him to live in you and fill you with His life and presence. Tell him you want to live for Him.