

Psalm 130-131: A Pilgrimage of the Soul

Transition to the experience faced by the pilgrims as they embarked one of three annual festivals in Jerusalem: Passover, Pentecost, and Booths – the Psalms of Ascent (120-134).

A pattern discovered (Psalms of Ascent: 120-134)¹

- Difficulty – a situation of difficulty
- Deliverance – focuses on God's power to keep
- Delight – the security in Zion and its God

Psalm 120-122 –

- 120 – Difficulty: the unkind words of ungodly people
- 121 – Deliverance from the Lord (I looked to the hills...)
- 122 – Security in Zion (Let us go to the house of the Lord...)

Psalm 123-125 –

- 123 – Difficulty: the ill and unjust treatment of people (contempt through scorn and pride) (3-4)
- 124 – Deliverance from the Lord
- 125 – Security in Zion (1)

Psalm 126-128 –

- 126 – Difficulty: I AM EXPERIENCING SPIRITUAL APATHY! (4)
- 127 – Deliverance from the Lord (He builds the house.)
- 128 – Security in Zion (5)

Psalm 129-131

- 129 – Difficulty: Expect affliction to come.
- 130 – Deliverance: Cry out to God for mercy.
- 131 – Delight: Quiet your heart in God alone.

Four Pictures: (1) Anxious man (2) Watchman (3) Toddler with Mom (4) Squeezing a lemon

Opening illustration¹:

It's been said that "when life hands you lemons, make lemonade." That's thinking too small.

A better approach is to turn the lemons into a business plan.

Here are three examples of people who, when hit by personal tragedy, turned it into an opportunity for growth.

Josh Opperman: Broken Promise, Better Price

Opperman came home one day to an empty Manhattan apartment to find his girlfriend gone, with only an engagement ring left behind. Ouch.

¹ <https://www.inc.com/geoffrey-james/3-who-turned-tragedy-into-success.html>

As Josh, heartbroken, sat in his home, staring at the ring, he consoled himself with the fact that at least he could return the ring and get his money back. And since the ring cost around \$10,000, he anticipated a fair chunk of consolation.

Unfortunately, when he went to the jeweler, he discovered that--despite the fact they could obviously resell the ring for another \$10,000--they'd give him only 35% of the purchase price!

Talk about life handing you a lemon.

Opperman realized, however, that his personal disaster was actually an opportunity in disguise.

He founded the website [I Do ... Now I Don't](#), which buys engagement rings from broken relationships and resells them to suitors looking for a good deal. Opperman says he's now making around 1,200 sales a year.

Brokenness is God's requirement for maximum usefulness.

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BY [CHARLES E. STANLEY](#)

So often, Christians struggle to get to what they perceive as the top. They forge their long list of accomplishments, perhaps with the hope that they will one day be able to hand it to God and say, "See what I've done for You?"

However, God never accepts us on the basis of what we've done; rather, He receives us because of what Christ has done on the cross ([Eph 2:8, 9](#)). This is why He instructs us to stop depending on what we can accomplish and instead rely upon Him ([Prov. 3:5, 6](#)). However, that's not just for salvation but for *every* aspect of life. He calls us to repent of our sinful habits, self-reliance, and prideful desires until we can truly say, "All that I am and all that I have is God's. He is in me and I am in Him, and that's all that matters."

What is God stripping away from your life? What do you trust in more than the Lord? God will break your dependence upon anything other than Himself no matter how long it takes or how difficult the process may be. He is committed to bringing you to a place of wholeness and spiritual maturity—conforming you to the likeness of His Son ([Rom. 8:29](#))—so that He can work through you and bring others to wholeness and spiritual maturity through your testimony ([2 Cor. 1:3–7](#)).

Maybe you are facing a time of brokenness and it feels as though the emotional pain is more than you can bear. Or perhaps you are dealing with a series of disappointments that have completely undermined your sense of security. Instead of becoming fearful, ask the Lord to reveal what He is teaching you.

The apostle Paul faced such a time of suffering, and he wrote, “I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me” ([2 Cor. 12:8](#)). Although God did not remove the “thorn” from him, He did help Paul to understand that it was given to keep him from exalting himself and from relying on anything other than Christ ([2 Cor. 12:7–11](#)). The Lord also taught the apostle that His grace would always be sufficient for all of Paul’s weaknesses.

The same is true for you. Whenever you experience brokenness, God’s grace can sustain and mature you. He will show you how to relinquish your reliance on earthly forms of security and teach you how to rest in His wonderful provision and love. In that way, you grow in the likeness of Christ and are prepared for future service.

Peter wrote: “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation” ([1 Pet. 4:12, 13](#)).

Keep in mind that God uses brokenness to deepen your understanding in at least three ways:

- You gain a new perspective of His mercy and provision and learn to depend on Him more.
- You develop a more complete comprehension of yourself.
- Your compassion and understanding for others’ suffering grows.

Are you facing a season of trials and brokenness? Then embrace the promise of [Jeremiah 15:19](#): “If you extract the precious from the worthless, you will become My spokesman.” That is, if you trust in God and learn from Him through your trial, He will reveal Himself to you and work through you in wonderful ways.

The Lord has one goal in mind for your brokenness: spiritual victory. Therefore, be confident that Jesus Christ can take your weakness and turn it into strength, hope, and honor.

Adapted from [*The Charles F. Stanley Life Principles Bible*](#), © 2009.

Psalm 130 — Cry out to God for mercy!

I. Cry out to God for mercy. (Psalm 130)

A. To forgive you. (1-6)

- The personal testimony of a pilgrim.

- I need you desperately. (1-4)

- Please hear me when I cry out to you. (1-2)

- Maybe initially the depths of misery to which enmity and hurt (Psalm 129) have driven him, but with a sudden realization of the more serious pit of sin. Coming to God with one problem may easily (and blessedly) expose the 'real' problem that needs to be solved. Compare Mark 2:3-5.²

³And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."³And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

- The act of crying (and waiting in verse 5) are both in the perfect tense signifying a past situation continuing into the present. Or a perfect of fixed intention: 'I have set myself to...'³

- Please forgive me when you count up what I have done. (3-4)

- "Mark": to keep watch over, guard, to preserve or keep
- "iniquities"(plural): perversity, depravity; activities that are crooked and wrong
- "who could stand": stand firm before God without shame
- "Forgiveness": pardon

Neh. 9:17 - ¹⁷They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt.^[a] **But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them.**

- "That you may be feared": Not to be afraid (*Qal... as demonstrated by Abraham in Gen 3:10 when Adam responded to God's question about his location after*

² Ibid

³ Alec Motyer, Psalms by the Day: A New Devotional Translation. (page 381)

Adam ate the fruit) in this context but more of REVERENCED, HELD IN HONOR (*nifil*)

Similar to Exodus 14:13-14

¹³And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

Not fear in the servile sense, but (compare I Peter 1:17) fear of offending one so loving and caring; the reverence with which his fellowship is enjoyed on the basis of forgiveness – and in which his word is obeyed by forgiven sinners. Nowhere is the full, awesome reality of the divine nature more present than in the bestowal of forgiveness.⁴

- I will wait for you patiently. (5-6)
 - "wait" (*qawah*): to look eagerly for and "hope" (*yachal*) long for are synonyms. Both combine the thoughts of patience, hope, and confidence. They also signify that there is nothing we can do about our sinful state and its consequences.
 - Please comfort me through your Word. (5)
 - Please sustain me through the night. (6)

The PUBLIC declaration of a pilgrim. (7-8)

B. To love you. (7a)

- He is worthy. (7) – For with the LORD is steadfast love: *hesed* (covenant-keeping love)

C. To redeem you. (7b-8)

- He is able. (8) – and with him is plentiful redemption: *pedut* (ransom from exile [Is 50:2], from iniquities (Psalm 111:9))
- And he will redeem Israel... *yipdeh* (to loose, to let go, to set free, to ransom, to deliver)

Yahweh has three companions. They never leave his side; he never comes without them. First mentioned is 'forgiveness' (Ps. 130:4), a word always used of sin and divine forgiveness – a word, therefore, of relationship. Yahweh has been offended by our actions, but has pardoned the offence and restored the broken relationship. Then there is the personal word, 'committed love' (130:7). Unlike its companion word, *rachamiym*, 'compassion,' which refers to 'being in love', *chesedh*, committed and unchanging love, is the love which makes a promise for life, the love which stays the same 'for better, for worse, for richer for poorer'. Yahweh's third companion is 'ransom' (130:7), the sufficient price which covers the need, buys back the

⁴ Ibid, 382

kidnapped one, satisfies any lawful claim. We can call it, for convenience, the legal word. Of course, when we call these Yahweh's companions, we really mean that they are part and parcel of Yahweh himself; they declare what he is. When we come to him in all our sin and unworthiness, we enter a rich company. When he comes to us in our sin, he comes not to condemn but to love, ransom and forgive – and that is the proper 'order' of these words: the personal (love), the legal (ransom) and the relational (forgiveness). Everything else flows from the inexplicable basis: he loves us (Deut. 7:7-8); and because he love us he himself provides and pays the ransom price, so that forgiveness full and free floods over our guilty souls. If it occurred to you to wonder how we could ever rest, unworried, calm, content, in his presence, as in Psalm 131, ask his three companions.⁵

Application:

Find hope in the character of God.

- He is willing to forgive, eager to demonstrate loving-kindness, and ready to redeem.
- No person is beyond God's ability to forgive, love and redeem. (Seek forgiveness. Offer forgiveness.)

Find comfort in the promises of Scripture.

- No struggle transcends the hope offered in His Word. (Sin)
- No situation transcends advice offered in His Word. (Uncertainty)

Questions:

- What keeps you from a regular pattern of personal prayer and Bible reading?
- Why do you struggle to "feel" forgiven?
- Why are you unwilling to offer someone else the forgiveness, kindness, and fresh start that God has offered you?

⁵ Alec Motyer, Psalms by the Day: A New Devotional Translation. (page 384)

I. Cry out to God for mercy. (Psalm 130)

II. Quiet your heart in God alone. (Psalm 131)

Could it be that you struggle with the above three issues because you lack the characteristics that come from a pilgrim who DELIGHTS in God as seen in Psalm 131 (humility [1], maturity [2], and security [3])?

Humility (1)

- My heart is not lifted up
- My eyes are not raised too high
- I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me

Maturity (2)

- But I have calmed and quieted my soul
- Like a weaned child with its mother
- Like a weaned child with its mother is my soul within me

Security (3)

- O Israel, hope in the Lord
- From this time forth and forever more

- **Quiet your heart with the discipline of delight!**

Through humility

With security

In light of eternity

Question to ponder:

- What situation is keeping you from trusting God today?
- Take time right now to humble yourself before a holy God who forgives, loves, and ransoms you.