

## Sermon Notes: Ralph Bowles

### THERE IS FORGIVENESS WITH GOD

Psalm 130

Sunday 1 May 2011

1. "Forgiveness is central in Christianity; it is a truth, an ingredient, without which the faith created by Jesus Christ would lose its identity. . . When God forgives a man He does not merely cancel exterior penalty or surrender the right to reprisals; much less does he simply agree to overlook faults. . . To forgive, on God's part, is in pure love to draw the sinner, despite his sin, into communion with Himself and to take the first step in doing this amazing thing. . . Plainly the grace that rises to meet sin must be wonderful." (H.R. Macintosh)

2. The gospel of Christ is the message of the forgiveness of sins, offered in his Name: Lk 1:77; Lk 24:47; Acts 10:43; Mk.2:10; 9:2; 1 Jn 2:12; Col. 2:13. Eph. 1:7ff.

3. So we find that asking for God's forgiveness and being forgiving towards others is at the centre of the Christian life: Mt. 6:12-15.

4. Psalm 130 is an Old Covenant pilgrim song. We can read it in the light of Jesus Christ to see how its truths about God and ourselves are fulfilled in richer, grander ways.

Consider how the psalmist discovers the meaning of forgiveness through God:

#### **I. IN THE DEPTHS WE DISCOVER OUR NEED FOR FORGIVENESS. 130:1-3**

1. It is a terrible experience to be drowning, to go down into the depths – of failure, affliction, defeat.
  - "The inward spiritual troubles are the great depths". Prov. 18:14 (R. Sibbes).
  - It is in our suffering through sin that we discover what a bitter, terrible thing sin really is. Lk. 22:32,44.
  - "The deeps of affliction awaken the conscience to a deep sense of sin." (J. Owen)
2. This is the person who is poor in spirit, who is broken and mourning over his sense of need and sin.
  - Mt.5:3.
  - Only the believer with the root of grace and new life in his/her heart, will be burdened by the depths of sin.
3. The psalmist turns to God for mercy, for help in the need: this is the decisive turn.
  - "There may be a turning from sin which is in no sense a turning to God." (Macintosh)
  - To turn to God is to realise the sin and the problem and the need to come back to God: Ps. 38:2-6,8.
4. There is conviction of sin, an awareness of the holiness of God and our own frailty and fallibility: 130:3.
  - To truly feel one's sin is to be unable to stand up under this burden: Ps. 143:2

#### **II. IN GOD WE DISCOVER THAT THERE IS FORGIVENESS. 130:4**

1. The offer of God in the gospel is to forgive our sins – not just our sins but our Sin – our rebellion against God himself.
  - Jn. 3:16.
  - We know that there is a forgiving God because of the lengths he has gone to win our salvation- Incarnation and Atonement.

- “Atonement is the cost of forgiveness to God.” (Macintosh).
  - “In Jesus the self-giving of God to man and the self-giving of man to God meet and absorb one another.” (HR. Macintosh)
2. The forgiveness of God is full and complete. 1 Jn. 1:9
  3. The forgiveness of God is costly – it cost the burden of judgement bearing by God himself in the person of his Son: 2 Cor. 5:21.
  4. With our God, forgiveness is not a capricious decision, an optional whim; to be merciful and forgiving is essential to God’s nature: “All the acts of God’s will are the effects of his nature.” (John Owen).
    - We see this in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Divine-Human Son; his life and work shows the nature of God as the merciful One by nature.
    - Jn. 1:12-13.

### **III. IN BEING FORGIVEN WE DISCOVER REVERENCE AND LOVE FOR GOD. 130:4**

1. “The sense of forgiveness works more love in us. Think of David’s murder, Paul’s persecution; Peter’s denial.
2. When we discover that God is merciful and forgiving, we love him, we reverence him.
  - “Where love (for God) is absent, there has been no reception of forgiveness.” (HR Macintosh). Luke 7:36-50.
3. Think of Zacchaeus of Jericho (Lk 19); think of the woman caught in adultery (Jn. 8:1-11) – grace and mercy to the undeserving evokes love and repentance.
  - Luke 15: the waiting Father.

### **IV. IN KNOWING GOD’S MERCY WE DISCOVER HOPE FOR THE FUTURE. 130:5-6,7-8.**

1. The forgiven person now waits in hope and expectation for the merciful God: 130:5-6.
  - The promise or word of God is the basis of our hope.
2. He is looking and hoping for God to manifest and bless; it is God himself, not his pardon, that the believer is looking for.
  - This is for a return of God’s presence in manifest blessing and closeness. The night is dark, but the night-watchman on duty is waiting and looking for the dawn of a new day of God’s blessing.
  - Some times in our lives are so dark we look for the dawn of God’s mercy and blessing that is coming and expected.
3. The psalmist is confident in hoping for God, since he already knows that God is merciful and gracious.
4. This final promise of the psalm is addressed to Israel, the people of God. One day God will finally release them, redeem them from the consequences of their sins and failures: 130:8.
  - This is what Jesus came to bring Israel and then the world: redemption: Lk 1:68 (Mk. 1:4,14-15).
  - This is forgiveness as *redemption*, a final release from Sin – Rom. 8:22-25.

(Concl) Have you discovered that there is forgiveness with God? Have you discovered God’s mercy in the depths, have you seen how forgiveness is the heart and being of our God? Has it made – is it making – you love God more and more? Are you looking forward to the full redemption, the removal of sin and failure that will come when the Lamb that was slain receives the full reward for his sufferings?

