

Psalm 130:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.

Analysis

This penitential psalm opens with a cry from desperate depths: 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.' The phrase 'out of the depths' (Hebrew 'ma'amaqqim') describes profound distress - not surface difficulty but overwhelming trouble. Depths suggest drowning, being in over one's head, engulfed by circumstances. The word can refer to deep waters (Psalm 69:2, 14), pit/grave (Psalm 88:6), or metaphorical extremity. The perfect tense 'have I cried' indicates completed action with ongoing effect - the cry has been made and continues. The address 'unto thee, O LORD' shows that extremity drives the psalmist Godward, not away from God. The divine name 'LORD' (YHWH) invokes covenant relationship - appealing to God's character and promises. This opening models appropriate response to depths: honest acknowledgment of distress combined with faith-filled appeal to covenant God.

Historical Context

This psalm is one of seven penitential psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143) used liturgically to express repentance. The 'depths' likely refer primarily to spiritual/moral distress (guilt, sin, separation from God) rather than merely circumstantial difficulty. The psalm's use in liturgy provided vocabulary for confession across generations.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What 'depths' drive people to cry out to God, and why is extremity sometimes necessary for genuine prayer?
2. How does crying 'unto thee, O LORD' differ from general religious sentiment or despair?
3. What does it mean that the psalmist cries 'out of' the depths rather than 'in' them - does this suggest hope of deliverance?
4. How do modern believers experience 'depths' that require desperate prayer?
5. Why is honest acknowledgment of being in depths important rather than pretending all is well?

Interlinear Text

מֵמָקוֹן יְמִינָה: יָבֹאָת יְבָאָת מֵמָקוֹן

Out of the depths **have I cried** **unto thee O LORD**

H4615 H7121 H3068

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 42:7 (Parallel theme): Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

Hebrews 5:7 (Parallel theme): Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

Psalms 71:20 (Parallel theme): Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

Psalms 40:2 (Parallel theme): He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

Psalms 18:16 (Parallel theme): He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.

Psalms 129:1 (Parallel theme): Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say:

Psalms 122:1 (References Lord): I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.

Psalms 126:1 (References Lord): When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

Psalms 127:1 (References Lord): Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

Psalms 123:1 (Parallel theme): Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

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