

# Nomads and Pilgrims

## The Songs of Ascent

### Introduction

In life, every person faces times of difficulty. In Psalm 130 the Psalmist calls these difficulties “the depths” or an in the New Living Translation “the depths of despair.” In my own life, I have experienced the “depths” in the emotional pain I feel as I live with a chemical imbalance that causes depression, anger, and anxiety, which are very acute at times. This chemical problem causes painful headaches and neck aches as well. God has blessed me with good doctors and the right medications to bring these symptoms under control.

Maybe you live with physical or emotional pain, or maybe your “depths” have been financial or relational problems. Maybe you are in the depths due to bad choices that have led to even worse consequences. Maybe you face difficulties for what seems like no reason at all, which can compound your suffering.

You may never know this side of heaven why God has allowed some of the difficulties and sufferings you experience in your journey. Thoughts of heaven bring hope to the Christian who is suffering. But God offers hope now as well. Let us study Psalm 130 to learn more about what a Christian pilgrim can do while in “the depths.”

~ C.W.

### Study Notes

#### Question 3

• According to Webster’s Dictionary, mercy is defined as compassion or forbearance shown to an offender—compassionate treatment of those in distress.

## Hope

### Psalm 130

### Observe & Interpret

1. Have you ever been in an accident while you were traveling (either on foot, driving, biking...)? Briefly describe what happened and how you felt.
2. *Read Psalm 130.* In verse 1, we find our pilgrim-psalmist in a low place, yet what action does he take?
3. In verses 2-4 how is God referred to and what attributes or character traits does the psalmist record about God? What does he imply about a pilgrim’s position or place before God?



## Study Notes

### Question 7

• Eugene Peterson writes: "The Psalmist's and Christian's waiting and hoping is based on the conviction that God is actively involved in his creation vigorously at work in redemption. Waiting does not mean doing nothing. It is not fatalistic resignation. It means going about our assigned tasks, confident that God will provide the meaning and the conclusions...It means a confident alert expectation that God will do what he said he will do...our place in the depths is not out of bounds from God. We see that whatever or whoever got us in trouble cannot separate us from God for there is 'forgiveness for thee.' We are persuaded that God's way with us is redemption and that the redemption, not the suffering, is ultimate. The depths have a bottom; the heights are boundless. Knowing that, we are helped to go ahead and learn the skills of waiting and hoping by which God is given room to work out our salvation and develop our faith while we fix our attention on his ways of grace and resurrection."

## Apply

7. What does it mean to wait for God? How have you experienced this? What part does God's word play as we wait and hope? Looking back at the definitions for wait and hope, how are they alike?
8. What circumstances are teaching you about waiting on God at this time in your life? In what ways are you learning to hope in his word? What steps can you take to grow in these spiritual disciplines?