

January 24, 2021

“Our Great Need”
Psalm 132

FCF: The question of our response

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Our greatest need in challenging times
(magnet) is to know the Lord.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

Presidential inaugurations often draw our minds back to our nation’s roots. And that can stir up thoughts of our Founding Fathers. Case in point, Benjamin Franklin. He wrote (**READ**):

“Our new Constitution is now established, and has an appearance that promises permanency; but in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.” (Letter, 1789)

Perhaps we should add something else to Franklin’s list - hardship, difficulty, and stressful times. Such things are certain. It is never a matter of “if” such things will come but simply “when”.

From where do we take our cues in such times? Do we merely look to those around us? Do we simply fall back into old patterns from our past? For the follower of Jesus, those cues are never wise nor safe. When the hardship comes, we are to look to a wiser safer place - to Jesus.

SCRIPTURE READING: **Psalm 132****PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

With so much happening domestically, you likely missed this news from China (**READ**):

Chinese rescue teams say it might be more than two weeks until they can save a group of miners trapped hundreds of metres underground. They have been trapped since an explosion closed the entrance tunnel to the Hushan gold mine in Shandong province on 10 January. Authorities made contact with 11 surviving miners a week after the blast, but one has since died. Rescuers have drilled small holes to supply food and medicine to the men. The cause of the explosion that sealed the mine entrance is still not known. The fate of another 11 miners trapped by the blast is unclear - authorities have been unable to communicate with them despite lowering food and messages into other areas of the mine. The group discovered alive told rescuers they had established communication with a lone miner about 100m below them, but had since lost touch with him.

How will the rescue work? Currently, rescue operations are trying to widen a narrow shaft to make it big enough to lift the miners out. However, drilling is proving difficult as it needs to get through particularly hard granite and the miners are trapped far from the surface. Rescuers face an added problem in that the mine is waterlogged and there's the risk the chamber where the miners are stuck could flood. "The obstacles are just too huge, which means we need a least another 15 days or even more to reach the miners," Gong Haitao, deputy head of the local publicity department, said. The debris standing in the way weighs about 70 tons, he added.

It’s worth noting that, while they’ve received porridge and nutritional liquids, the miners have asked for a traditional meal of sausages. That is heartening. But what they most need is rescue.

Challenging times make clear essential needs. No few of us face crises of our own - perhaps not life threatening but still serious. We are uncertain of the outcome, powerless to solve it. And it’s so difficult to see the way out that we’re tempted to despair. Such are challenging times. Our text speaks to this. Our greatest need in challenging times is to know the Lord.

Now what would “knowing the Lord” mean here? Three things. First, it would mean being seen. Second, it would mean drawing close. And then, finally, it would mean being saved.

I. TO BE SEEN

First, to know the Lord in such times means being seen. The first words in the psalm are so striking (**READ Psalm 132:1a**). Note this is not our remembering but God’s remembering.

A) Meaning

1. Not passive

What would this mean? It's certainly not a sad plaintive passive, "God, please try not to forget."

2. But active

No, this is active. "Hear our cry! Look upon us!" We see this elsewhere ([READ Psalm 25:6-7](#)). And then in other places as well, but translated in different ways ([READ Psalm 8:4; 9:11-12](#)).

B) Occasion

([READ Psalm 132:1a](#)) When do we hear this? What is the occasion for such words?

1. From the community of believers

First, it comes from the community of believers, disciples who have heard the Lord's call and then repented, believed, and now follow Him. It comes from the child looking to the Father.

2. In the midst of trouble

And it comes in the midst of trouble. Things are pressing in, the waters rising - a time of need.

([READ Psalm 132:1a](#)) This is how we are told to pray. The Lord hears and sees us.

Illustration:

In a recent Fireside Chat, I alluded to Genesis 16 and the plight of Hagar. Here's a recap. Abraham was unsure as to how God was going to fulfill the promise to give him an heir. So Abraham took matters into his own hands and took his servant, Hagar, into his arms. She then conceived. Tension arose between Hagar and Abraham's wife, Sarah. Sarah dealt harshly with Hagar and so Hagar fled into the wilderness. Let's pick it up ([READ Genesis 16:7-13](#)).

Application:

Hard times do come. And the LORD is a God of seeing. He sees us and hears us. And He gives us the very words to pray ([READ Psalm 132:1a](#)). "Hear our cry! Look upon us!" He loves us so that He gives us the very words to pray, these words. I wonder. Do you hear them?

Our greatest need in challenging times is to know the Lord. Part of that is to be seen.

II. TO BE CLOSE

Another part of that is drawing close. We see this in vv.1-10. There are two parts to this.

A) David's Purpose

The first is David's purpose. This is reflected in what we read earlier from 2 Samuel 7.

1. A house

Having settled into his own house, his palace, David wanted to build a house, a temple, for the Lord. Since the time of Moses, the Lord had been amidst His people within the tabernacle.

2. The ark

The time had come for something permanent. It was time for a dwelling place, a resting place, for the ark of the covenant - the footstool of God's throne, the place of His presence on the earth.

B) David's Longing

That was David's purpose. Which was simply an overflow of the longing of his heart.

1. Not merely political

This was not merely a political tactic, a consolidation of power. Yes, it was customary for kings to build temples to their god. And, yes, doing such a thing would have certain pragmatic effects.

2. But clearly relational

But David's chief motivation here was not political but relational. He knew the Mighty One of Jacob, the God of saving power and amazing grace. And David longed for Him to be near.

David is not criticized for wanting to do this. He is clearly commended for it. And he was willing to bear any suffering, pay any price, endure any hardship. Which raises a point.

Illustration:

2020 was tough. But it could have been worse. At least there wasn't any news of a remake of *The Princess Bride*. After all, one ought not to tamper with perfection. There are so many moments, so many great lines. There is such zeal and devotion expressed here ([READ](#)):

Westley: I told you I would always come for you. Why didn't you wait for me?

Buttercup: Well...you were dead.

Westley: Death cannot stop true love. All it can do is delay it for a while.

Buttercup: I will never doubt again.

Westley: There will never be a need.

Westley could not be kept away from this woman. Nor could David be kept from the Lord.

Application:

David was willing to bear any suffering, pay any price, endure any hardship - anything to be near the One who would bear any suffering, pay any price, endure any hardship to be near us. As we look back over history on this side of the cross, we need to ask, "If this was true of David, how much more should it be true for us?" Given what we see, how much more? Which means we need to really grapple with how much less we often settle for, how tepid is our pursuit.

Our greatest need in challenging times is to know the Lord. Part of that is drawing close.

III. TO BE SAVED

But that brings us to our greatest need - not just to be seen and to draw near but to be saved. We see this in vv.11-18, the Lord's great promise to David and, ultimately, to us today.

A) God's Promise

As with David's purpose, we read of this in 2 Samuel 7 as well. This is God's promise.

1. An enduring dynasty

A promise of an enduring dynasty ([READ Psalm 132:11-12](#)). What is the promise? Not that his descendants would always be faithful or that the line would never sink into obscurity but that the Lord would forever preserve this line. It would endure, even if it would appear to be hidden.

2. Eventual descendant

And from that line would come a descendent, Jesus, great David's greater son. All these hopes would finally be realized in these words given to a poor girl in Nazareth ([READ Luke 1:30-33](#)).

B) God's Purpose

And what were God's purposes in all this? What would He have us to learn and know?

1. Lessons of history

The lessons of history. All that those kings were meant to be and weren't would point to the need for the one true King. All the times when they proved themselves faithful would build anticipation all the more for His coming, the great King that all those lesser kings were to serve.

2. Jesus the King

For Jesus arrived as this King, a son of David's body set upon the throne ([READ WSC:26](#)):

How doth Christ executeth the office of a king? Christ executes the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

What a picture of the kingly role of Jesus in coming to save us, His people, and our need of that!

This is our greatest need of all - a King to save us.

Illustration:

We don't do kings very well. We'll inaugurate presidents but shy away from coronating kings. But the truth is that no one does kings very well. Not this kind of king, one who comes with absolute sovereignty and to whom we usually give a personalized and selective submission.

Application:

What would move our hearts from such a stance? What vision do we need to transform us? Think of the implications of the flow of events with 2 Samuel 7, Psalm 132, and Luke 1. Think of what we see - His faithfulness to His promises, an absolute commitment to His word and to His people. Can we not say, "Given His commitment there, surely I can trust Him here"?

Our greatest need in challenging times is to know the Lord and His saving rule.

CONCLUSION:

There are various levels at which we can and should read the Psalms. Certainly, we need to start with the original author and the context. Who is this and what's going on with them? Then there is the original audience, not just those at the time of the author but those who would then follow in their steps over the years, singing those same words. What would it mean for them? That said, there is a third lens through which the Psalms should be read. We need to consider Jesus Himself, singing this in the synagogue. And as the original Singer of the Psalms.

Let's drill down on that third level for a moment. That can really have an effect on how we read this. Consider what it must have been like for the Son of David to breathe out vv.1-5. Hear it coming from His lips ([READ Psalm 132:1-5](#)). Let that settle in. Jesus is the fulfillment of this desire. He is the fulfillment of the promise the Lord made to David. Yes, David wanted to draw near to God. But think of how much more we see the Son of David vowing to draw near to us, enduring the worst sort of hardship to do so. Hardship beyond our fathoming, all for us.

May we know and hold to that. When we're tempted to discouragement and perhaps even despair, may we hold to that. Our greatest need in challenging times is to know the Lord.

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