

The Lord Preserves His People

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- [0 : 00] We shall resume our public worship of God by singing to his praise from Psalm 130.
We're going to sing the whole psalm. Amen.
The whole psalm 130 to God's praise. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried.
Lord, from the depths to thee I cried.
My voice, Lord, you can hear. Until I saw me years and twice.
- [2 : 13] If thou not said to me. Lord, who shall stand in the Lord?
Should the Father give me with me. But the heaven with me.
For the heaven has been. That fear thou mayest be.
I wish for my joy. Lord, I'll be with my hope.
This is worth. Lord, I'll be with my hope.
- [3 : 24] Lord, I'll be with my hope. My soul is for the Lord.
I said, Lord, I'll be with my hope. Lord, I'll be with my hope. Lord, I'll be with my hope.
Lord, I'll be with my hope. The Lord will be with my hope. Let Israel, O bless the Lord, For
with mercy, King.
And planet Jesus, we get us come, and set the fire with heaven.
And from all this, in every peace, and the child of the King.
- [4 : 52] Let's join together in prayer. Lord God in heaven, help us to recognize that you are a God
who is able to work in us and through us.
In a whole host of different ways, as you have been at work in this world from time
immemorial, we acknowledge that there are occasions when you do the ordinary as well
as the extraordinary.
You speak truth, and you speak truth in surprising ways. Speaking into the context of our
human existence.
Speaking the language of our heart, what we understand, what we have been taught from
our mother's knee. But also speaking vividly through the agencies that are at your beck
and call.
As you speak to us through temporal agents, as you do spiritual agents. We remember
how you spoke to Elijah of old when he was in the grip of despondency.
- [6 : 31] And you passed him by through the elements that would ordinarily have been expressions
of divinity and the mighty power that we associate with it.
And yet you spoke to him through a still small voice and reminded him of the fact that you
were in control of all our providences.
The voice that spoke to him as he took flight in a cave. What doest thou here, Elijah?

Challenged his thinking and called into question the way in which he was sheltering from agents that were under the superintendents of the mighty God.

And so it is in our experiences. We take flight so easily from things that are weak and that are without the capacity to do us harm.

[7 : 59] If we have found our strength and our strength and our shelter in the most high God. As your people, all of them without exception have done.

As we come to worship you this evening, we pray that our worship would be spiritual worship. That you would guide us in the truth and that the truth would set us free.

That liberty would be afforded us to hear and to utter the wise words of the most high God.

That we would not shun the truth. That we would not bypass it. That we would not be guilty of in any way taking flight from what it has to say to us, whoever we may be.

Oftentimes, in all your people's experiences, they are times turned a blind eye to what was staring them in the face.

[9 : 14] That their own lives needed to be radically transformed. And that they themselves needed to be translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

And until such time as they yielded to the truth as it spoke to them. They were contained and continued within the power of darkness.

Lord, help us to appreciate your long-suffering towards your people. Even when they persistently turned away from your entry treaties in the gospel.

Until such time as you brought them to yourself. We marvel at your mercy and your grace. And your kindness towards such as we are.

We pray that you would continue to show mercy to us. Because without it we are lost. And we pray for those who are still on mercy's ground.

[10 : 25] But are strangers to grace and to God. We pray for them from our own families. Our loved ones. Our neighbours. Our friends.

Many that we know who are still in the grip of the enemy of our soul. And who would hold them secure in his grip.

Were it possible for him so to do? Break that grip we pray. Wrench them out of that grip. Pour out your spirit upon us as a generation.

That we might yet know that you are God indeed. That your power has not in any way abated or diminished. That you are still mighty to save to the uttermost.

And that through Christ you can bring young and old. Male or female. Those who are despot. Those who are guilty of many sinful acts.

[11 : 31] For which men might find it difficult to excuse them. But that God is able to cover such sin. With the blood of Jesus Christ.

Through whom salvation is not only possible. But there is something that must ultimately be the end.

For all who have sought the covering of that blood. We pray for the preaching of the gospel to prosper. For those that you have sent out with it.

With the message of salvation to sinners. That their endeavours might yield fruit. Within our congregations. Within our island.

Within our nation. Throughout all the earth. Those that you have sent out with the great evangel. Where you have challenged men. To go out with the gospel.

[12 : 29] To preach the good news. To whomsoever would hear it. Give thanks for those that you have challenged. To go out with.

With the good works. That flow from the love of Christ. We give thanks for missionary works. Of all descriptions throughout the world.

Thinking especially of the parts of the world. That are riddled with all kinds of dark arts. And wickedness. Where the Christ of God is despised.

Where the gospel is forbidden to be spoken of. Where the Bible is a book that is fuel for fire.

And those who would claim to adhere to its teachings. Are soon even added to the flames.

[13 : 34] That is not something that is a strange act. Even as far as this nation is concerned.

The history books speak of the persecution of the saints. Where many were burnt at the stake. Where many had despicable acts carried out.

Because of their faith in Christ. And we are no different. As a generation to. The kind of. Heart that is.

In the breast of many. With regard to the. Things of God. We pray for mercy. For grace to help in time of need. That we might turn.

As a nation. To yourself. Remember all that we commit to your care. This evening. Of our number who cannot be healed. Because of illness. Because of various providences.

[14 : 31] That keep them. Within their homes. We pray for those who are in the path of duty. And we pray that all who. Would have a desire to be amongst us.

Would be. Visited by your own spirit. And that the word of truth. Would reach them. Even where they are. You are able to do that. You are the God of the miracle.

And you are able to feed. The hungry. Even when they do not sit. At the table with us. But we know that.

It is our. Our duty to be. Gathered with the saints. And we give thanks for those. Who continue to. Faithfully adhere to. To such a calling.

And we pray for those. Who are. Who are in some ways. Negligent. Over. The. The. The ability that they have.

[15 : 27] And yet. Abuse. We pray for those. Who are unwell. Remembering those. Who are confined. To their homes. Those who are. Succumbing to the frailties.

Of old age. Who think of those. In hospital. In care homes. Even within the hospice. We remember them to you. And pray that you would bless them. And encourage those.

Who care for them. To do their utmost. To alleviate suffering. Of whatever. Health could may be. Remember Lord. Those who are grieving. And sorrowful.

As we. Have already prayed. For this day. We know that such. Times as these. Are times. Where families gather together.

And inevitably. Recent breaches. Brings. Or memories. And we. Bring them to you. And ask for your. Grace. To encourage.

[16 : 22] Each and every one. To look upon the Lord. Who is the God. Of. All grace. And. Who is able to show. Even through Christ.

The. The kind of heart. That is. Needed. To those. Help us then. To bear one another's burdens. To remember the needs.

That are before us. Each one. Whatever they may be. Guide us in the truth. And may your spirit. Open the eyes of our understanding. May you pour out upon us.

That which would enliven our souls. God. Keep and protect us. Cleanse from sin. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. I'm going to. Read from the book of Psalms.

Psalms 132. Psalm 132. Read the whole psalm. Lord.

[17 : 22] Remember David. And all his afflictions. How he swore unto the Lord. And vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob. Surely I will not come.

Into the tabernacle of my house. Nor go up. Into my bed. I will not give sleep to my eyes. Or slumber to my eyelids. Until I find out a place for the Lord.

And habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. Lo. We heard of it at Ephrata. We found it in the fields of the wood. We will go into his tabernacles.

We will worship at his fieldstone. Arise O Lord. Into thy rest. And thou on the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness.

And let thy saints shout for joy. For thy servant David's sake. Turn not away the face of thine anointed. The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David.

[18 : 24] He will not turn from it. Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony.

That I shall teach them. Their children shall also sit upon thy throne forevermore. For the Lord hath chosen Zion. He hath desired it for his habitation.

This is my rest forever. Here will I dwell. For I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision. I will satisfy her poor with bread.

I will also clothe her priests with salvation. And her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I make the horn of David to bud.

I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame. But upon himself shall his crown flourish.

[19 : 26] Amen. And may the Lord add his blessing. To this reading of his word and to his name be the praise. I am going to sing now verses from Psalm 73 at verse 23.

Singing to the end of the psalm. Psalm 73 at verse 23. Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee. Thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me.

Thou with thy counsel while I live wilt me conduct and guide. And to thy glory afterward receive me to abide. Whom have I in the heavens high but thee, O Lord, alone?

And in the earth whom I desire besides thee there is none. My flesh and heart doth faint and fail. But God doth fail me never. For of my heart God is the strength and portion forever.

For lo, they that are far from thee, forever perish shall. Then that are hearing from thee go thou hast destroyed all. But surely it is good for me that I draw near to God.

[20 : 39] In God I trust that all thy works I may. Declare abroad. These verses, Psalm 23 from verse 23. Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee.

Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee.

Thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me.

Though with thy counsel while I am, when peace of God come night, and should avoid a glorious JEAM to mind.

Whom I lie in the heavens high, but be, O Lord, alone.

[22 : 17] And in the air, the night desired beside the vision.

My flesh and heart just changed on hills, but God has killed me in heaven.

For of my heart, God gives the strength that motioneth water.

For of my heart, God gives the strength that motioneth water.

I try it on. But surely it is good for me that I draw near to God.

[23 : 53] In all thy eyes, at all thy words, I will be clear and all.

Amen. We can turn to the book of Psalms. And we're going to read and look at Psalm 125. The book of Psalms and Psalm 125. Psalm 125. They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever.

As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth, even forever. For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the Lord shall not rest upon the loft of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands into iniquity.

Do good, O Lord, and to those that are upright in their hearts. As for such as turn aside into their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.

[25 : 18] But peace shall be upon Israel. They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion.

As you can see, I'm sure, from your own Bible, this group of Psalms has a subtitle, either a song of degrees, or in some versions a song of ascents.

There are 15 of these Psalms, beginning with Psalm 120 and continuing to Psalm 134.

Now, some of these Psalms we are fairly confident because the title bears the name of the author.

Psalm 124, a song of degrees of David. A psalm that we read, a song of degrees there.

[26 : 33] Lord remembered David and all his afflictions, whether he was the author or not. On either side of it, authorship is attributed to David.

Psalm 131, Psalm 133. So it's possible that David is also the author of that psalm. But the authorship is not really important.

It's just helpful for us to appreciate where the psalmist is coming from when he composed the psalm. Many of the commentators associate some of the psalm to situations that we might find in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Some of the psalm, some of the psalm, some of the psalm, some of the attitudes that are pointed out in the psalm, you would find fully expressed in these days.

But that doesn't mean that the psalm was composed at this time. There is, of course, no clarity as to time or place or author unless it is contained within the scriptures itself.

[27 : 51] Whatever man supposes, another may suppose something along the same lines. So one supposition is equal to the other in that respect.

But if you find the scripture telling you clearly and plainly, this is a psalm of David, this is a psalm composed by, this arises out of a situation that is attributed to that author, then we can confidently assert that that is the way it is.

And something else, because this is a group of psalms that suggested by some that they were formally meant to be sung on a specific occasion or occasions.

But again, supposition is very much to the fore there. Because of the name of the psalm of ascents, it is suggested, although not necessarily the case, that these psalms were to be sung by pilgrims making their way to Jerusalem, as they ascended up to worship.

And they were called to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices on three specific occasions annually. And it may have been that these psalms would have been on their lips.

[29 : 23] But there's no certainty that that was indeed the case. I think I remember reading somewhere that the Jews, their theologians, attributed the singing of the psalms, or these particular psalms, to these occasions.

But again, there's no specific biblical warrant for that. But I want us to think of the whole psalm and confine our thoughts to three parts of the psalm.

There are just five verses to the psalm. But we can break it up into three thoughts, three main thoughts.

The ways of the righteous are secure. The ways of the wicked are futile.

And the ways of the Lord are finer. I think we can safely argue, and I'm sure you believe this too, that those who belong to the Lord can be assured of their eternal security.

[31 : 20] We have a picture given to us here, or maybe two pictures.

One picture with two perspectives, or two pictures. You have a picture of those who trust in the Lord being compared to Mount Zion.

And the explanation for that comparison is that because they trust in the Lord, they are like the Lord, they are like the Lord, in that they cannot be moved.

And they will remain secure. Not because of anything that is true of them, but what is true of the Lord.

Mount Zion can be understood to be the physical, geographical mountain that is identified by the people of that region as a mountain that is real, that is physical, that they associate with the area.

[32 : 42] It is a mountain upon which Jerusalem is based and upon which it is built. But the point that is made is that the foundation upon which Jerusalem is built, the foundation of the spiritual Jerusalem, is such that it will not be shaken.

And those who trust in the Lord can be assured of that. That is the essence of what the psalmist is maintaining here.

Those who trust in God cannot be moved because he cannot be moved. And the reminder that we are given if we are God's people is that we must trust in such a God.

Trust in him so that regardless of circumstance, regardless of experience, regardless of how we may feel or what we are going through, this does not change.

God does not change. Joseph Alexander in his commentary writes, Trusting in Jehovah is a characteristic of the true church, the spiritual Israel, the chosen people collectively as a body.

[34 : 20] They build upon it. Now, without such a relationship of trust, through Jesus Christ, you cannot consider yourself safe.

That's the bottom line. Your safety is as secure as the reality or the validity of your relationship with Christ is.

The second part of the illustration that we have here is also just a reminder to the believer of their security, again, through trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ or trusting in God.

God's people are secure. We are told that not only do they build upon it, they are surrounded by this mountain.

It gave this city security because as it surrounded them, their enemies were kept at bay. And that is an image that we have within the scripture repeatedly.

[35 : 41] God's people are secure because he encircles them, he surrounds them, he undergirds them physically and spiritually with the arm that is all-powerful.

This is a precious image that the Lord's people refer to again and again. In Deuteronomy chapter 33, I think it is, we find that the word of God there reminds God's people, The eternal God is thy refuge underneath, we are told, are the everlasting Adams.

The eternal God, something that is not going to change with the passage of time. God is eternal, and as he is eternal, his protection of his own people is constant.

God cares for his people, and God preserves his people. He preserves them when they are in danger, and he reminds them of his presence when they are not, so that they will not stagger into or stray into situations where danger will overtake them.

John Calvin, in his comments, writes, The fact that the believer is secure does not mean that the believer will live placid, undisturbed lives, rather that God will preserve them.

- [37 : 35] The verb trust implies steadfast faith, and that is the inclination of many, to interpret their security as meaning that because we are secure, we are free from challenge, we are free from disturbance, we are free from anything intruding into the peaceableness of our experience, and that is not the case.

As Calvin says, it doesn't mean that our lives are undisturbed, but that God will preserve us when there are storms.

God will remain with us a constant when things are not the way we would want them to be. So in the first two verses of the psalm, that is what the psalmist wants the believer to understand.

The word is to those who trust in the Lord. It's a word to inspire confidence in the Lord. It's a word to encourage the believer to remember this at all times, because it is something that we can forget.

Do you remind yourself of that? If the word of God sees fit to remind you of something, to bring it to your remembrance, to set it in big, broad headlines before your mind's eye, there is more than a hint or a suggestion there that you will forget, that there will come a time when you will not be as comfortable as you are at present.

- [39 : 36] And you need such a truth to go to and to depend on, because these times will come and it's not when you're at ease, it's not when you're in a state of repose that you depend on such truth, but when the truth comes into its own and you know that no matter what, God will not deliver you into these circumstances and leave you by yourself.

The second thing that we want to look at is the futility of the ways of the wicked. Maybe it doesn't immediately come across like that.

But the Sama says, For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands into iniquity.

The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous. Now that's a very interesting statement. I think it tells us that the wicked have a rod in their hands.

And the wicked are constantly seeking to lay that rod across the back of the believer.

- [41 : 09] But God is saying that is not going to be the way it is always. It shall not rest upon the back of the righteous.

It shall not be their portion at all times and it shall not be what secures a victory for the wicked.

it doesn't dismiss a possible attack upon the believer by their spiritual enemies. I was looking at various passages which tell us about the peace that is the rightful possession of the child of God.

And there are many of them in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. We are told for example that when you read the Hebrew in the Old Testament you find that the word that is translated peace is shalom.

And the meaning of the word shalom is peace in all its fullness. there is an intensity to the word in Hebrew that you may not fully grasp in the translation.

- [42 : 49] All thy children shall be taught of the Lord and great shall be the peace of thy children. One example of the use of that word.

when we read the New Testament and we read the words of the Apostle Paul we are told that we have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again although it's a different language the word peace there cannot be in any way made to mean anything less than it does mean.

if it's through the Lord Jesus Christ and if it is with God then you can't have a greater peace than that.

You can't have a more certain peace than that. But then we come across a passage such as this when we are told by the Lord Jesus Christ himself something that seems to contradict this.

[43 : 53] He says think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I come not to send peace but as all he says. Now that seems to suggest that these passages of the Old Testament and these passages of the New Testament and even the passages that you come across on your Christmas cards this year that speak of the coming of the babe and that when he is born he will bring peace peace on earth goodwill to all men.

And yet Jesus says think not that I am come to bring peace to send peace on earth. What can he mean?

Well if you read the context of that passage you are told quite plainly that what Jesus means by that is in terms of discipleship that that always comes with a cost.

Any person who comes to know the Lord Jesus Christ and who is persuaded to follow the Lord Jesus Christ they can be assured of this they can be convinced of this that that discipleship will come with a cost.

To follow him brings conflict. To follow him will introduce you to enmity not only from those who are on the outer perimeter of your life but those who are at the heart of your family situation if you are to follow the Lord Jesus Christ as closely as he would have you follow him.

[45 : 46] But God says notwithstanding the reality of that conflict it will not be allowed to destroy you.

The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous lest the righteous put forth their hands into iniquity the psalmist says. It may appear to us that the wicked will secure a victory over the righteous and they will best the righteous that they will have their wicked way with the righteous but God will ensure that that is not the case.

John Calvin explains it in this way God he says moderates our adversities that he may ensure that we will not forsake his service though at times we may be broken by our afflictions at times we may be broken by our afflictions in other words Calvin is arguing God's way is not to ensure that no affliction comes your way God's way is not to preserve you from the attacks of the enemy of your soul if he is your enemy but to ensure that the adversary will not have the last word with regard to you our enemy may believe that he has succeeded but only to do what

God permits even though that may cause us great pain and you can see that in the life of those who were closely associated with the Lord Jesus Christ and the Lord Jesus Christ himself the enemy of our soul and his soul was probably rubbing his hands in glee thinking that he had bested his enemy but the truth was God was sovereign in all the affairs of the children and men even in bringing to fullness the fruition of his purposes in the death of Christ the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous lest the righteous put forth their hands into iniquity in other words there is the potential for any one of us if we are overly vexed or taxed in ways that would affect our faith that we may surrender our faith and go away from

God and God is not to allow that the third and final thing we have in this psalm again is the last two verses the ways of the Lord are final do good O Lord unto those that be good unto them that are upright in their hearts as for such as turn aside into their crooked ways the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity but peace shall be upon Israel these words appear to us to be a prayer a petition offered to God on behalf of the righteous the psalmist knows that the Lord has the last word with regard to his own as he has with regard to those who are his enemies some believe that here we have a petition offered in terms that are covenantal

[50 : 13] God and God often inspires his people to ask for these things which he himself has promised and although the promise is there and the promise will not fail he still encourages his people to seek the fulfilment of the promise as the covenant God that he is he inspires his people to continue in prayer even though we know that he has made this promise he encourages his people to persevere in prayer until they see the prayer answered until they see its fulfilment Professor Alan Harmon writes he pleads for covenanted measures to God's people the upright in heart and only they will be blessed only they will be blessed and the fact is that the evil doers will experience banishment they will not enjoy the security of the believer as for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways the

Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity the Lord has their destiny their destination before him they will not enjoy the security of the believer and they will finally be cut off from it it will be not just the prospect of banishment but the certainty of banishment it will not be reversed there will be an unretrievable position because God has decreed finally shut off from it I think Calvin believes that when the psalm unfolds that he is describing as a psalmist the potential that there is for a person to come from a point of faith to a position of hypocrisy and then eventually to a position of out and out agnostics or more atheism even but the truth of the matter is that

God God will deal with the righteous in a just way and he will deal with the wicked in a just way and whatever they think whatever they are of the opinion with regard to God's ability nothing will frustrate what he intends for them God will reward each according to their faith or lack of but peace he says shall be upon Israel that word shalom again peace peace perfect peace if you read through these psalms of degrees you'll find that peace features in the thinking of the psalmist very much so the peace that belongs to the people of

God because it is secured by God for them and he is the one that disperses it he is the one who bestows it he is the one he secures it he is the one who ensures that every aspect of it becomes their their realised position I suppose the question that should be on the lips of every one of us is the psalmist speaking to me and if he is speaking to me who is he addressing am I of those am I of that number who trust in the Lord or am I of those who have yet to display any of these characteristics that mark out the child of God someone who knows the security that God has provided who is assured by it in all the circumstances of life who knows what it is to endure the trials of the wicked but to believe that you know that as the psalmist says occasionally though I fall yet will

I rise that there is there is an assurance that no matter what there is the potential to triumph over evil because God is my God now can you say that can you reason like that can you put your amen to what God is promising to do with regard to the wicked with whom he will have the final word as such as turn aside into their crooked ways the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity I think that's the most puzzling part for myself why there is this division there are those who have turned aside and followed wicked ways I think what Calvin believes is that these people are people who have forsaken the faith and having forsaken the faith they will be with those who have never been of the faith but the

[57 : 09] Lord will have the last word to all because he knows all he knows our hearts and he knows our minds he knows the way we are on well may God speak to us through his word let us pray Lord our God we pray that there would be of that number who put their trust in you our God we pray your blessing upon the church that bears your name here in this world we pray that you would preserve your people in the world through the world and that they may look always to the God who is their God and their portion to be their help and stay at all times continue to watch over us each one cleansed from sin in Jesus name Amen we're going to sing this psalm in conclusion psalm 125 we'll sing the whole psalm they in the Lord that fully trust shall be like sion who which at no time can be removed but stand ever still down to verse 5 but as for such as turn aside after their crooked way

God shall lead forth with wicked men on his peace shall stay need singing because
without In the Lord, judge, every trust shall be like Zion, where these one injection, the
river of something ever, I friend our dead in sadece but my dead tongue away

The Lord is close But in bread's rug upon the Lord, Alleous nation o'er Procult our life.

Let Christ as blessed Lord let us all do iniquity.

Good and good, O Son, be good, Thy goodness Lord in heart And when I could do such a
unwind with him in heart But God's forces just turned aside After they drifted away God's
glory born with his big men

[61 : 32] On his little eternity And may great mercy and peace be God the Father, the Son, and the
Holy Spirit rest and abide with you all, never and always. Amen.