

Praise To The God Of Life

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[0:00] Psalm 30, a Psalm of David, a song at the dedication of the temple. I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me.

O Lord, my God, I cried to you for help and you have healed me. O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol. You restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.

Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints. Give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment and his favor is for a lifetime.

Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved.

By your favor, O Lord, you had made my mountain stand strong, but then you hid your face and I was dismayed. To you, O Lord, I cry.

[1:09] To the Lord, I plead for mercy. What profit is there in my death if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?

Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me. O Lord, be my helper. You have turned for me my mourning into dancing.

You have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness. That my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. Amen. O Lord, my God.

I will give thanks to you forever. Amen. Well, how fitting is it for us to hear God's word from Psalm 30 on a special day like this one?

It was King David who authored it, which is always of special interest to us. But he had a specific purpose for this song. As you'll see in the superscription, he assigned it for worship at the dedication of the temple, which was a service we read about a moment ago.

[2:13] It actually took place quite a bit after his death. The question is, why this song? It says absolutely nothing about the temple.

Why would David write this one and put it to music and decide, even before his death, that whenever the dedication of the house of God comes, that this is what Israel should sing as part of their worship on that day?

What did David want to be foremost in Israel's worship on such a momentous day? Well, it isn't a song of praise to the God who gives his people wonderful places in which they can worship.

That's not what the song is. Certainly, we want to do that. We want to praise God for his provision and for his faithfulness and the kindness and goodness of his hand that would do such things, but that's not what the song praises the Lord for.

It's a song of praise to the God who rescues his people from death in order that he might give them life.

[3:25] That's what the song is about. That's what David wanted to be foremost in Israel's mind.

Now, the setting of the psalm, it reminds us that David is reflecting on a time when he was as good as dead.

And as we read through it, we find that he felt he was as good as dead, not because of some enemy in his life, but because he was actually facing the judgment and the wrath of God for his sin. Eventually, he repents. And when he repented, God's anger was assuaged, and God mercifully delivered David from this death. And so, in response to this great salvation that God has given him, he says in the end he will praise God forever.

His thanksgiving to God will always be on his lips for the rest of eternity for this great gift of life and salvation. So then, in the dedication of the temple, the king then is leading his people in joyful worship for a life that will never come to an end.

That's the theme of the psalm. That's the summary of it. The exact moment that David is recalling in his life isn't specified here, but it's hard to ignore how closely this psalm tracks with a specific moment in David's life.

[4 : 52] You can read about it in 1 Chronicles 21. It was a specific sin of David's life recorded for us when he numbered the people. It was a census that he engaged in in order that he might determine how many mighty warriors are actually at his disposal, thinking that his victory and his triumph would come at the hands of men, which you would understand to be a great problem for the Lord.

It was a grievous act of pride. It came in a season of prosperity, and that comes through in the song as well. And what we find when we read 1 Chronicles 21 is that God's judgment was severe. In the end of it, 70,000 of those men that David numbered were killed by a pestilence at the hand of the judgment of God.

The account ends with God mercifully staying his hand. The angel of the Lord, we're told in that chapter, is prepared to bring destruction to the city of Jerusalem.

The angel has situated himself on a place, a threshing floor that belonged to a man named Ornan. David and his company, they go to where this angel is, and it's at that place that David cries out to God and begs for him to stay his anger and to show mercy and to kill no one else, not to destroy the city of Jerusalem.

[6 : 28] And God hears his cry, and he stops his judgment. And then he gives David a command that he said, build an altar on that place where the angel of the Lord was sending forth this destruction.

And that's exactly what David does. He builds an altar, and then he purchases Ornan's threshing floor, and he designates the site of Ornan's threshing floor to be the place where the future house of God, the temple of Israel, would be built.

It's fitting then that when we come to Psalm 30, that we would think of David's connection between this psalm and the dedication of that very temple.

David wanted the people to remember on that day not that God can prosper them to build magnificent structures. He wanted them to remember on that day that God is a God of mercy and that salvation from his own wrath is what he offers his people.

At the heart of the psalm is an invitation to join in the king's praise. It's a call for us to give praise to the God of life for salvation from death is given to all who will belong to him by faith.

[7 : 53] And we know that this life is provided through not David, but the greater David, Jesus, who ultimately fulfills the meaning of the psalm.

So then all of King Jesus' people may then join him in his song of praise to the God of life. There's five stanzas in the psalm.

I'm gonna group them together into three sections. In the first section, we see that we are to praise the God who raises the dead. We praise the God who raises the dead.

Look at the first three verses. I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me. O Lord, my God, I cried to you for help and you have healed me.

O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol. That's the realm of the dead. You restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.

[8 : 58] The word pit there is gonna be used later in the psalm, but it's a different Hebrew word. It means something different later in the psalm. Here, it just means a pit, a hole in the ground where you put the dead body and you commit it back to the earth.

David says, you have restored me to life from that place and from among those who are placed in the ground in order that they may decay and be corrupted.

That this is a song of praise is clear from the opening determination that he will extol the Lord. You'll notice the king's praise here, David's praise, it is not at all perfunctory.

He doesn't merely go through the motions of worship seen in dull and routine acts of ritual. So often we fall into Sunday by Sunday.

That is not what's happening in the psalm. No, this praise is passionate. It's sincere. It's sincere. It's enthusiastic. Three times in the first three verses, nine times overall for the whole song, but three times in the first three verses, he uses the covenant name of God.

[10 : 06] One time adding in the intimately personal, my God, oh Lord, oh Yahweh, my God, you have healed me.

You have brought me up. You have restored me to life. Why is that significant? What God has done for David is the outworking of his covenant faithfulness.

He's fulfilling a promise to David in this. David recognizes that and he employs this covenant name that represents the faithfulness of God and the covenant of God to his king and to his people.

He's fulfilled that promise and enthralled by the goodness of God, David responds with this opening shout of praise for what God has done for him.

But what exactly is it that God has done for him? How has he so fulfilled his covenant? How has he so thrilled his king? He's restored him to life from certain death.

[11 : 09] David here was not merely on the brink of death, but it was such a death that comes from God's own wrath against him.

It wasn't ordinary danger in which we ask God to simply rescue us from worldly enemies. God himself was the danger.

God himself was the one against David in this moment. And knowing the severity of God, David writes as if he were truly dead.

And yet God raised him from that death, delivering him from his own judgment. He, quote, drew him up from death as one would draw water out of a well.

Why? So that David's enemies and the enemies of God would have no reason to rejoice in his death. That's not just death. That's a specific kind of death that would bring shame to David and to the people of Israel that would be able to rejoice and say, see, this God you've trusted in is worthless.

[12 : 25] That's what he's been drawn up from. It's not just about dying. It's about death by judgment. Strikingly, David speaks of it in terms of resurrection.

In verse 3, God has rescued not merely his body from danger, he has rescued his soul from the realm of the dead, from the nether regions. He has restored him to life from the grave itself.

And for David, this resurrection is metaphorical, but it's not at all difficult for us then to see how Jesus fulfills the psalm in its truest sense.

See, anytime, this is why I say, anytime we read the psalms of David in particular, they're of special interest to us because as we look back historically to the person of David, it's as if we're seeing King David there waving at us with one hand, welcoming us in to his intimacy, to his real experience.

But then with the other hand, he's pointing us to someone else. He's saying, you can see what's happening here, but it's fulfilled there. And he's pointing toward the Lord Jesus, the true and better David.

[13 : 38] And that's what's happening here in the psalm. David's life is foreshadowing the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. So then as we praise the God who raises the dead, we must first look with praise to the resurrection of Jesus Christ for that is how we know for sure that God really is the one who raises the dead.

But we can't miss where he moves in this part of the song. Verses four and five. Notice, David turns his attention to the people.

Sing praises to the Lord. Lord, all you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name for his anger is but for a moment.

His favor though, when you get his favor, it's not temporary like the judgment that David experienced. No, it is life. It's a lifetime.

It's never ending is the implication here. And he takes it further. Weeping may last for a night, but the implication being that night will eventually come to an end and it will break forth into the joy of mourning that has no end.

[14 : 57] He invites us then to join him in this praise. A praise set on the king's experience of resurrection before it is our own experience of resurrection and life.

It's amazing. It shows us that this resurrection power is extended to the king's people. We may give thanks to God ourselves because his saving benefits of mercy and favor are applied to all his saints, all those who will love and serve him and obey him.

And of course this blessing, this blessed state, it doesn't preclude God's discipline. Surely we do at times face his anger and the consequences of our sin.

Neither does it deny the real experience of grief. Weeping does come even for the saints. But we may rest in the fact that our trials are but momentary.

the favor of the Lord, the joy of the Lord, it has no end. Even when it comes to death itself, we understand as saints of God that that death is but momentary.

[16 : 20] It is a weeping that lasts only for a night but breaks forth into life. And the life that he gives, it's true, it's unending.

And those of us who have received it by faith must join the king's song of praise to God who raises the dead. This is not the only reason that we are praising God here.

We praise the God who raises the dead but then we praise God who responds to our cries for mercy. Look at verses six and seven. As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved. By your favor, O Lord, you made my mountain stand strong but then you hid your face and I was troubled.

I was dismayed. In these two stanzas, David is rewinding the tape, so to speak. Now, half the room doesn't know what that means but those of you who grew up with blockbuster and cassette tapes know exactly what that means.

[17 : 29] He's rewinding the tape, so to speak, so that he might explain the circumstances that led to the praise that he gives in the first five verses. Okay, so we already know from the beginning of the song, God has given him life and it's been magnificent.

Now, after he's established that, now he's rewinding and he's saying, now let me explain just a little bit more about how this all came about. Let me explain a little bit more about what actually was happening.

In a time of blessing, David grew presumptuous and he acted in pride. I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved.

The implication is that he began to think of himself as self-sufficient rather than dependent on grace. God had given him tremendous security, but then suddenly he hides his face from David. He removes his blessing so that David feels as he stands against the wrath of God and the judgment of God that he is as good as dead as he stands before the Lord.

[18 : 37] Why? Because of his own sin. He found himself to be the object of God's wrath. It greatly troubled him. It should trouble you.

He wasn't at the brink of death because of unfortunate circumstances. He wasn't at the brink of death because of the threat of some human enemy.

He was facing the direct judgment of the holy God. And so it was with Jesus. His crucifixion, despite what some may say, it wasn't the result of misfortune.

Neither was he hopelessly caught up in the machinations of Jewish leaders or the tyranny of Roman oppression and the way that they dealt with who they thought were criminals and insurrectionists of the day.

That's not what's happening there. On the cross, Jesus was the direct object of God's just wrath.

[19 : 42] He didn't face the wrath of Caiaphas. He didn't face the wrath of the Pharisees. He didn't face the wrath of Pilate or of Caesar. He faced the wrath of his own father.

Only he did not face that judgment as a sinner himself. He faced that judgment from God as a sin bearer. And in bearing the just wrath of God, Jesus stood in the place of sinners, in the place of sinners like David.

The place of sinners like me and the place of sinners like you. How did David go from the object of God's judgment to extolling God for restoring him to life?

The answer is in his prayer. Look at verses 8 to 10. To you, O Lord, I cried, and to the Lord, I pled for mercy. And he gives us what he prayed. What profit is there in my death if I go down to the pit? Now, I told you earlier in the psalm, it uses the English word pit. It's a different Hebrew word. There it actually means a hole in the ground. Here it actually means corruption. So maybe you reflect on a psalm like Psalm 16, where David says you will not let your holy ones see corruption or decay.

[21 : 06] That's quoted by Peter in Acts chapter 2, that great sermon at the day of Pentecost. He uses that to preach the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Same word David's now using here.

For some reason, it's recorded for us here as pit, but it means corruption. David says, what profit is there if I go to the grave and I stay there? Will the dust praise you?

Will what becomes of my body be any good to you or to anyone else, Lord? Will it tell of your faithfulness? Hear, O Lord, be merciful to me.

O Lord, be my helper. David cries. You've heard that dead men tell no tales. They give no praise either.

Don't be mistaken. David isn't bribing God here as if God has this desperate need to be recognized by us. He doesn't need us. That's not what David's doing.

[22 : 12] David knows that God will be glorified most in showing mercy, fulfilling his covenant, fulfilling his promise to David, and preventing him from seeing this corruption, death maybe, but not eternal death, not corruption, not decay.

praying. We can hear Jesus pray this prayer, knowing that there would indeed be no profit for anyone if he were left in the grave.

There would be neither glory for God, neither would there be hope for any of the rest of us. You say, when did Jesus ever pray a prayer like this? listen to the writer of Hebrews, Hebrews 5, verse 7, in the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence, and he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, who obey the God who raises the dead.

who will come to the God who responds to our cries for mercy. Isn't that what we're praising for in the psalm? These are the prayers that we repeatedly find God responding to throughout the Bible. Over and over, the people that we feel God see God drawing to are those who are humble and contrite and broken and poor in spirit. Remember, in Jesus' own life, he shows this, he shows the glory of God in this way as he sits with sinners and prostitutes and publicans, the people who the Jews hated.

[24 : 10] He sat with them at dinner, not to condone their life or to condone their behavior, but to call them away from it. The Pharisees, those who were high-minded about themselves, who thought much of themselves and their religion would come by and said, why on earth would you sit with them?

To which he responds, a healthy man needs no physician, only a sick man. I didn't come to call those who think they're righteous.

I came for those who know they're not. That's who God responds to, not to the arrogant and the prideful, those who think they have their life together, those who think they're going to be good, those who assume arrogantly that God will reward those who do their best and try their hardest. That is not the God of the Bible. He does not reward you. He gifts you with grace and that grace is received through this kind of penitence.

They are the humble, penitent prayers of those who set their hope on the mercy of God, not setting their hope on what they think may be good in themselves. The Bible echoes again and again that our righteousness is like a filthy rag to God.

[25 : 31] It means nothing to Him. Our righteousness is not our own. If you have any hope, it won't be because you stand before Him and say, well, look at how I live my life, God, and He rewards you.

It won't happen. We just sang about it. When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within, my real guilt, my own sin, upward I look and see Him there who made an end to all my sin. Because the sinless Savior died, my sinful soul is counted free. For God, the just one, is satisfied to look on Him and pardon me.

Not to look on me, to look on Him. Who is it that God responds to? Whose prayers does God actually hear? Not the prayers of the spiritually arrogant, but the prayers of the humble, those who cry out for mercy.

Don't you realize that God invites you to do this? Isaiah 1, 18, come now, let us reason together, says the Lord.

[26 : 44] Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them white as snow. He invites you, come to Him to receive this mercy.

Micah 7, who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity, passing over transgression for the remnant of your people. He does not retain His anger forever, but He delights in steadfast love.

Psalms 130, 3 and 4, if you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, if you should count sins, O Lord, who could stand?

Answer, no one. But the psalmist continues, but with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared, that you may be loved and obeyed and revered, not merely because of your greatness, but because of your mercy.

Lamentations 3, 21 and 23, but this I call to mind and therefore I have hope, that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end, they're new every morning, great is

your faithfulness, O God.

[28:06] Or if you need a New Testament passage, how about Jesus' own words in Matthew 11, come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, who's he talking to? He's talking to all of those people who are working so hard to earn something from God that they'll never be able to earn.

He says, you, come to me, I'll give you rest from those laborers. Come to me and you will find rest for your soul.

Perhaps you would prefer Paul. Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord, will be saved.

Perhaps you like Andy's passage better from earlier in the service.

If you say you have no sin, you're a liar. But if you confess your sin, he is faithful and just and will forgive your sin and will cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Our righteousness is not our own. It's an alien righteousness. It's imputed onto us. It's the righteousness of Christ. As he stands condemned in our place, he then puts his righteousness on his people.

[29:21] David can extol God who raises the dead because he had personally experienced God who responds to our cries for mercy. And it's because of this experience that he could affirm that God's anger is indeed only for a moment, but his favor is life.

God saves from himself, mind you. He saves from himself all who will acknowledge their sin, turn to him in faith, and seek his mercy.

And those who have received it can thus join in this song of praise. But you can't join this song of praise until you've gotten there. Notice again, verse 4, who is it that's called to join the king in this praise?

Not everyone. Not everyone. His saints, those who have done as David has done, those who will look to Christ by faith and will love the Lord and trust him and cry out for his mercy.

That's who can sing the song. So we praise God who raises the dead. We praise God who responds to our cries for mercy. Finally, we praise God who rejoices our hearts.

[30:35] Rejoices our hearts. Verses 11 and 12. It's wonderful here. David moves on from this experience and he returns to praise. You have turned for me my mourning into dancing.

That's why we know David wasn't a Baptist. You have loosed my sackcloth. You've clothed me with gladness. Why?

So that my glory may sing your praise and never be silent. And then there's this promise he gives.

Oh Lord, my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

God's judgment, it clothes us in grief. You consider your sin when you really confront the glory of God and God confronts you with that glory.

glory, you should be dismayed. It should bring you grief. That's why our service is structured the way that it is. We begin by looking to the greatness of God and then immediate from there we go to humility and a confession of sin.

[31:45] Because to really see God for who he is means you're really going to see yourself for who you are and that will produce grief. His judgment, it closes with grief.

But when we turn to him in repentance and faith he removes the sackcloth of our guilt. But he doesn't just remove the sackcloth of our guilt he puts in its place the joy of our salvation.

He clothes us then with gladness and the fruit of this gladness is endless praise. Those whom God has made glad cannot help but sing his praise not merely with their lips but with their whole being. This praise, this promise of worship here moves beyond merely singing a set of songs on a Sunday morning. If that's all this was this would not be as exciting as it actually is.

It's not just about that. It's a life that is wholly dedicated to God's glory. It is the genuine fruit of real salvation.

[32:59] Not only the song that you sing but the life that you live and the way that you obey him and the way that you love him and the way that you love his people and his church and the way that you commit yourself to worship and the way that you commit yourself and all that you do not for your own pleasure but for the pleasure of the God who has given you life.

That's what this is. Consider your own life for a moment. Is your life truly dedicated to God's glory? Not because you think in some kind of commitment you will earn something from him but because you cannot help but recognize what he has done for you and you will give your life to his glory and to his gospel.

Is that your life? That's the Christian life. That's what it means to be a Christian. It means to recognize the goodness of Christ and live the rest of your days in light of that. Has he turned your mourning into dancing? has he turned your weeping into joy and your sorrow into gladness?

[34 : 31] And if you believe he has the question is is that actually evidenced in the fruit of the life that you live and in the way that you worship or in whether or not you worship at all?

Perhaps you've come here this morning thinking that everything is good but the reality is your life proves that everything is not good.

You may feel good about it but it's not very good. David ends the song with a promise. He will give thanks to God forever.

How can he do that? Is that not its own kind of presumption and pride that he would expect to live forever? Well that promise is rooted in a promise from God that for David there will be a forever in which he may give thanks and he is committed to doing just that.

He anticipates here a more profound salvation that goes beyond whatever earthly experience provides the background of this song. It's moving past that.

[35 : 42] That's not what he has in mind at the end. Because God has delivered him from death he believes truly that God will also deliver him through death.

This is what Paul is on about. In 1 Corinthians 15 he says the last enemy to be destroyed is death. That means you will die. Victory is not in avoiding that.

Victory is coming through that to receive a life that moves beyond this one. That's what David's on about at the end. How could we be hopeful for such a thing?

The hope of this eternal life is assured to us in the resurrection of Christ who ultimately fulfills David's words here. Christopher Ash writes so helpfully, David's rescue from death was somehow necessary for the glory of God and yet David died.

Do you see what David is promising here is not that if you just do everything that he's telling you to do you will never actually die. That God will never allow you to actually face death itself.

[36 : 54] That's not what the psalm promises. David died. So the fulfillment of the psalm has to await something else.

It awaits actually the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The hope of this psalm it doesn't ultimately rest in David's deliverance from the danger of death.

It rests in Jesus' resurrection from death itself. That's where the hope is here. Concealed in mystery with David he's but a shadow but the substance of that shadow in psalm 30 is the Lord Jesus.

Our hope in singing this song of praise to God is not finally to live a longer life to extend our days on earth. That's not why we would sing this song in praise.

It's not what we're looking to do. It's not what you should be looking to do. That's not the heart of it. It is to receive eternal life that comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[38 : 05] Who bore our sins in his body on the tree and was raised from the dead so that your faith and hope are in God writes Peter. Jesus himself says if you remember the story with Martha and Mary and Lazarus and Lazarus' death and Jesus raising him.

What is it that he says to Lazarus' sister? I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me though he die will live.

That's the fulfillment of what David writes here. We don't look to David with joy. We look to Jesus with joy. This is what David wanted Israel to think of as they dedicated the temple.

It's what we should think of every time we come to this place. Sunday by Sunday singing our song of praise to the God of life.

You know that's why we gather on Sunday. Right? It's to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. For us every Sunday is Easter. It really is.

[39 : 21] We receive this life life. We just acknowledge before we close. That if you do not receive this life and if you go to corruption and you face God's eternal wrath and judgment, it won't be because God was mean to you.

It will be because in this moment and in moments like it, when you've heard the truth of the gospel, you ignored it and you rejected it and you denied it.

You will go to an eternal hell because of you and no one else and nothing else. But there is hope for you. He extends this offer of life through Jesus to you if you will but come to him for it.

Turn from your sin and self and your self-sufficiency and your self-satisfaction and everything you think is good about you and cry out to him because truly, whoever will call out to him in Christ will be saved.

And if you turn to Christ today, this life will be yours. And we'll look forward to seeing you next Sunday as we gather again to praise the God of life.