

# "But With You There Is Forgiveness" Psalm 130

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Let us take a moment and ask for God's blessing. Father in heaven, we pray that you would give us hearts of flesh this morning.! We pray that you would give us hearts of flesh this morning. So that we may perceive here and perceive and to take into our hearts and to act upon your word.

Lord, we don't want to be people that hear your word and do nothing. Instead, Lord, we want to hear your word and by your strength act upon it, Lord. Lord, your word leads us to you. And in you there is freedom. There is the forgiveness of sins. There is liberation from bondage of guilt and shame. And Lord, we pray that you would do just that to us today. Give us soft hearts, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Some of you... Well, first, it's great to be back. It really is. We've been away for a few weeks for a summer vacation. It is a privilege and honor to be back. It's great to see everybody here this morning. Some of you, a few weeks ago, would have heard or even watched the video of Astronomer CEO Andy Byron and Kristen Cabot, the head of HR of Astronomer, getting outed in an adulterous relationship during a Coldplay concert.

[ 1 : 1 7 ] The camera was panning on various people in the audience and Chris Martin, the lead singer, would sing an impromptu song about them. It was funny and it was clever.

And then it panned to this couple and immediately the man turned around, or no, he ducked down out of the camera and the woman turned around and they were clearly mortified. And it turned out that these two people were not married to each other. They were in a relationship that they should not have been in. They were caught in the act. And the internet went crazy. They were mocked. Their identities were posted everywhere. Memes about them abounded. On a more serious note, their jobs were lost. Their relationships were destroyed. They found themselves in a pit that they dug themselves. And it's remarkable, this situation.

[ 2 : 2 1 ] It's remarkable because despite all the talk in the West, in Canada, in the US, in Europe, about expressive individualism, about individualism, about sexual liberation, the idea that we are free to express ourselves in any way we desire with anyone we desire, consequences be damned, sin and guilt and shame seem to be alive and well in our day.

It seems to just, it's so obvious that these people were mortified, they were guilty, they were ashamed because they knew what they did was wrong, because there truly is, counter to the prevailing sentiment, there is an objective right and wrong and we are all keenly aware of it. Whether such sinful behavior is caught on a stadium big screen, at a Coldplay concert, or is done in secret at home, or anywhere in between, we may try many different kinds of remedies to deal with a fallout of such sin, to deal with our guilt and our shame.

We are experts, experts, like professional level experts, at ignoring our sin, minimizing our sin, normalizing it, relativizing it, blaming it on circumstances, on this person, on that person, on my parents, on my children.

We are experts at finding ways to deal with our guilt and our shame. But we all know that these are false remedies for a real sickness and these remedies are not just ineffective, but they actually perpetuate the sin and guilt and the shame that we feel that we find ourselves in.

[ 4 : 1 1 ] So what should be done? If sin, shame, and guilt are persistent features of even our society, no matter how hard we've tried to escape them, how can we truly address sin and the shame and guilt that comes from them?

We're in Psalm 130. We continue on in our summer series on the Psalms of Ascent. And Psalm 130 offers us a blueprint of how to deal with our sin, how to deal with our shame, how to deal with our

guilt.

It is one of the seven penitential psalms in the Psalter, the only penitential psalm that's within the Psalms of Ascent.

Doctors of the church, theologians, reformers, have found such profound comfort and joy in this psalm precisely because it provides a guide out of shame and guilt caused by our sin.

So we'll jump right into it. We'll look at verse 1 to 3 at the desperate cry. Verses 1 to 3. If you could follow along with me, that'd be fantastic. I think we have some more Bibles at the back table.

[ 5 : 25 ] Feel free to get up at any point to grab one and follow along. Verses 1 to 3. Before we read, just a couple of bits here. The psalmist here has done wrong.

He's finding himself in a pit of his own digging. He has disobeyed the lovely, just, and gracious law of God. And I think it's important first that we state this because throughout the Psalter and throughout the Bible, there are instances where God's people find themselves in the depths.

And sometimes they're in the depths and sometimes we are in the depths because injustice has been done to us. We have suffered some kind of loss.

We are finding ourselves in a very low, depressive state. Maybe a series of unfortunate events has befallen us and we find ourselves in the depths.

In this case, by the way, all those situations, oftentimes, if not all the time, are not because of our own doing. This is not the case here.

[ 6 : 33 ] The one, the psalmist here who is in the depths, who is in this pit, he is in there because he has disobeyed the lovely, just, and gracious law of God.

It's his fault. Regardless of what he has done, and it is not expressly communicated to us what he has done, but whatever it is he has done, he has sinned first and foremost against the Almighty, against God himself.

And this is an important thing for us to remember. All sin is primarily against the Lord, for it is he who has created a good and ordered world and everything in it, including us, made in his image.

This is a very essential point for us to remember this morning because it helps us to understand that no sin is harmless, even if it's done in secret, even if it doesn't necessarily affect us.

Why? Because it is first and foremost against God. And therefore, no sin is morally neutral. It's never victimless.

[ 7 : 37 ] It is a sin, if it is sin, then it is an offense to the good and gracious triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who has created all things from nothing out of love.

God has created us for himself out of love so that we may enjoy his love and serve him and by doing so enjoy perfect freedom. A beautiful line in our prayer book, service to you is perfect freedom and it is true.

Sin, then, is to mar and to neglect and to manipulate God's good and perfect design and thus treat him as if he were an afterthought to belittle him, to say that he is not king on the throne, the king of kings and the lord of lords, but something else.

And we don't do it just once or twice. It's a daily feature of our lives. The guilt and shame we experience from sin then are not simply social reactions to a set of socially agreed upon morals.

Again, this is where we are excellent at relativizing our sin. rather, they stem from violating the very essence of our creation. They go all the way deep, all the way to our very bones.

[ 9 : 01 ] Really, what sin does is it inverts reality. It causes us not to rise to the divine but to descend into the depths thinking that in our sin we are rising to the top.

It inverts everything. It makes everything upside down. Instead of giving glory to God, we spit on his name. Our only hope for the ongoing law-breaking and distortion of this reality that God has created and has called it good, that God has made it out of nothing is to understand that we have dug the very pit we're in and our only hope is to appeal to God himself for mercy.

Crying out to him for mercy is both the most difficult thing we can do in escaping this pit of despair and the only way to truly get out. And this, and then we'll come to scripture here, verses 1 and 2.

This is what we read about in verses 1 and 2. It says this, Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy.

The psalmist here, he is in a low spot. The depths throughout the Bible are referred to as the place of nothingness, the place of sheol, the grave.

[ 10 : 25 ] There is no life in the depths. And what the psalmist here is doing is crying, a continuous cry. He is pleading. He is not kind of gritting his teeth and he's somewhat at the end of his rope and

fine, I'll cry out to the Lord.

He is continually crying out. He is realizing that his position in life is completely untenable and that he has no hope except if God would intervene.

Therefore, this cry is a humble one. There is no escaping the pit, this voice admits. We can all keep digging as much as we will, believing somehow we'll hit a tunnel and tunnel our way out but all of that is for naught.

So what we see here in verses 1 and 2 is a proper posture of the heart but it's also a very bold and audacious request. Why should God listen and show mercy when we are constantly sinning first and foremost against him?

Not just once or twice. It's not like I messed up once or twice. Okay, you know, overlook it but it's just a constant feature of who we are. Why should he, perfect God, creator of all things, who's created everything perfect?

[11:49] Okay, perfect out of love. Why should he intervene for us when we are in a pit of our own digging essentially spitting at him?

The psalmist acknowledges this verse 3. If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who would stand? It's quite the statement.

It's quite the admission. God, you are perfect and just and holy. I am not. I have no right standing before you. You are complete and whole.

God, you have never been in anyone's debt. There are no self-justifying arguments or excuses that I can offer that you haven't somehow considered.

In your judgment. Therefore, God knows all and therefore there is no consideration that has escaped him. If we are condemned by our sin, by his judgment, there really isn't anything left to do or to say, God, you are the ultimate moral authority.

[13:04] There is no higher court of appeal above you. This is what he's saying in verse 3. But praise be to God that the implication of verse 3 is that God certainly does not keep a record of our iniquities.

In heaven, there is not a library full of catalogs of every fib we have said, every minute we have stolen, every thought of revenge we have entertained, every temptation we have given into.

There is no catalog of that, okay? Terabytes of memory couldn't hold it all. But God, he doesn't count our iniquities.

For could we stand? The answer is no. Praise be to God. But it is one thing for God not to mark our iniquities and it's another thing for him to show mercy.

Does he merely turn a blind eye to our sin? In some ways, isn't that how we'd prefer it? To have God leave us be so that we do not suffer the penalty of our sins, yet we can still be our own people, not his subjects, but we can be independent rulers of our own kingdom.

[14:20] We think this might be freedom, but it's not. It's just another form of bondage. For we are made by God to serve him. If we do not serve him, we will serve something else.

It's just the reality of it. But anything or anyone that we serve over and above the Lord will not lift us up from the pit, but perpetuate our descent.

There's one way out, a million ways down. God will hear our cries, but will he act on our behalf?

It's a very important question. And this leads us to our second point, the God who hears. Look with me at verses 3. We'll read verse 3 again and verse 4. If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared. God can hear your cry for mercy and will grant you forgiveness.

[15:26] Let's just pause and not move forward too quickly. Take that in for a moment. That God who could mark every sin that you've ever done, every thought, ill thought that you've ever had, he could mark it all.

He knows it all. He doesn't. And it's not just that he doesn't mark it, but instead he offers forgiveness instead. A complete forgiveness. There's a bit of a play on words in this psalm that's not obvious in English, but in Hebrew it is, and it's this idea that God does not mark sins, he is not watching us intently in order to catalog our sins, like a watchman, we'll see shortly, watches for the dawn to come, but instead it's as if he takes our sins and puts them in the pit we were in as he lifts us out. There's this incredible exchange that is happening here, where God doesn't overlook our sins alone, he takes our sins from us, and they are lost forever, and we instead ascend with him.

Verse 4 is the very high point of this psalm. Reformers, like I mentioned before, reformers, church fathers, doctors of the church, they have recognized this psalm, Psalm 130, as the gospel in short, and especially verse 4, but with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared.

So God not only hears our cries for salvation, but acts with mercy and love to forgive our sins, and it is an outpouring of his love, his very nature.

[17:22] So just as the apostle John states that God is love, we can also say that God is mercy. He is mercy. So here's the thing, forgiveness for God, God showing mercy, it's not just a skill that he's developed, okay?

It's not he's gone to a trade school to learn mercy, and he has perfected it, he is number one in his field. It is his very nature, okay? He cannot not show mercy. It's not just that he has perfected the muscle of mercy, and he is excellent at it, because he has really honed his skill.

This is who he is. This is who he is. It's his very nature. The original prayer book in the 1662 prayer book in the communion service has a bit that says that God's very nature is to show charity.

It's to show charity. This is who he is. It's his very nature. So therefore, our only hope is to have our sins forgiven, so that we may know and live under and enjoy the lordship of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And this is precisely what the psalmist is referring to when he says that the purpose of forgiveness, this is the second part of verse four, the purpose of forgiveness is so that we may fear God.

[18:47] This isn't a servile fear, rather it is a deeply relational picture of trust and submission and a love that glorifies God and allows us to enjoy our liberation and freedom in him from the ongoing bondage of our sin.

It is more than a desire to escape shame and guilt, but a longing, a longing for the Lord himself. And we see this actually as we continue on in verses five and six.

Read with me. I wait for the Lord. My soul waits and in his word I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.

The psalmist longs for the Lord. Notice again, he is not longing just to have his sins not counted against himself so that he could be free and clear of guilt and shame.

He wants the Lord. He is looking for him. He is desperate for him. He is hungry to know God, to be in a right relationship with him. So the psalmist, he longs for the Lord, yet it seems here that he does not have him.

[20:00] A forgiveness is promised, but it has not yet fully materialized. There seems to be a tension in verses 5 and 6, especially when you consider them coming after verse 4.

Forgiveness is his and yet, which would imply that he is in right relationship with God, and yet he waits for the Lord. There's this longing, there's this sickness, this sickness for the Lord.

Like he cannot wait to see him. So his soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.

The idea is if it's an ancient city, a walled city, darkness comes and with darkness comes bandits, comes murderers, comes marauders.

So watchmen are set on the walls and there's usually three watches. And the last watch, pitch blackness, they're waiting, looking, scanning, waiting just for the dawn to dispel the darkness.

[21:00] Soon as the dawn comes, the darkness is gone. Okay? He is saying, my soul longs for the Lord far greater than watchmen long for the dawn to dispel the darkness. The waiting is not merely for God to forgive a sin here or there, but for God to fulfill his promise that through the seed of the woman, Genesis chapter three, the serpent will be crushed.

The promise that the effects of sin will be destroyed once and for all. That sin itself would be eradicated, that God would dwell amongst his people, that they would be his people with him as their God.

The longing is for God to fulfill his promise that he would be in relationship with us and us with him. And this really is the cry of the human heart.

It is a longing for an ultimate promise that was only fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus defeated death, how? Through death.

He lived, he taught, he performed miracles, and then he journeyed up, ascended towards Zion to Jerusalem to die on a cross for our sins, fulfilling God's justice while demonstrating his mercy.

[22:21] so our sins are forgiven so that we may know him, love him, serve him, and belong to him. We get to enjoy the fulfilled promises of Christ's victory that this psalmist longed for here in the

psalm written 500 years before Christ came.

So what we are reading here in Psalm 130 is a psalmist knowing that forgiveness is on the horizon, but he is waiting for it. And here we are on the other side of the cross where we get to enjoy the victory of Jesus over Satan, over the grave, over sin, if we put our faith and hope in him today. And yet, this is still a call to wait. We are still waiting. Not for Jesus to come for the first time, but to come for the second time.

We are still waiting for the final victory to be realized. The call is to continue waiting today. However, we are assured that because he came once fulfilling his promises, we can watch for his second coming and trust that he will indeed return as the morning follows the night that when Christ comes, he will dawn upon the earth and all darkness will be dispelled forever.

No more sin, okay? No more guilt, no more shame. We feel it even still, yet we look and long for Christ to return. This is our call today.

[ 23 : 53 ] His forgiveness, in verse 4, gives us confidence that his promises are true so that we can wait with hope, verses 5 and 6. And remember, this is not a passive waiting.

waiting. You go to the dentist or to the doctor, you go to the emergency room, you're waiting. That is not an active waiting, that is a very difficult waiting, especially if you're going to chill, okay?

Seven hours, eight hours, ten hours, overnight. No, no, this is an active hope, an active waiting.

And we see this in the final two verses, and this is point three, the heart set free, verses seven and eight.

Read with me. O Israel, hope in the Lord. For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption, and he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

The heart that is forgiven and hopes with full assurance that God's promises are true, that his promises are yes and amen, will be a heart overjoyed by being rescued from a pit of despair.

[ 25 : 01 ] This is a heart that is lifted up and set free. This is a heart that doesn't continue to tunnel deeper into the pit that we find ourselves in to somehow tunnel our way up.

It is a heart that looks to Christ, calls out to him, is forgiven by him, is set free by him. This is a heart that is lifted up and set free.

And this hope is rooted in three key attributes of the Lord. We see this in verses seven and eight. Steadfast love.

This is not a flimsy or fickle love, but it is a love that loves the unlovable, loves those that are not worthy of loving. It is a sacrificial and self-giving love, and a love, most importantly, that is greater than death itself.

We also see that in the Lord there is plentiful redemption. In the King James Version it says plenteous redemption. The idea behind it is a redemption far greater than our sin and the collective sin of the human race.

[ 26 : 12 ] A redemption that cannot be thwarted, no matter how dark the depths of our soul and our sin we find ourselves in. And finally, the promise that all our sins are forever behind us.

Why? Because Christ has dealt with them completely. And verse 3, he does not mark our iniquities. This is why, and we see this in verse 7 and 8, this is why evangelism, even if it may seem intimidating to the boldest and most courageous amongst us, is always an expression of a redeemed heart.

And this is, I'll just say this, and I hope this brings you comfort, but I hope it also brings you a bit of a challenge. As your pastor, I will never pressure or guilt you into sharing your faith. If you feel convicted to do so through times in God's word or during a church service or hearing a sermon, I'm trusting that's the Lord's work in your life, but what I will not do is I will not guilt you or shame you into sharing your faith.

Because that would defeat the whole purpose of the essence of evangelism. Because what is evangelism? It is the joy of a heart set free, sharing with others how to find liberation.

Okay? If the message of liberation is proclaimed by somebody that is weighted down with shame and guilt in bondage to the guilt from their pastor, or anybody else for that matter, it defeats the purpose.

[ 27 : 45 ] But what happens? We understand that we don't have to live in shame and guilt anymore. Not because we have righted the wrongs, but because Christ himself has. Okay? And we lean on him and we trust in him and we are set free.

And yes, it is sometimes scary and difficult and our flesh takes over and we chicken out. But ultimately, we share our faith. We proclaim the goodness of God.

We tell God's people and those that are yet to become God's people, hope in the Lord from a place where we have experienced that hope. Okay?

We are free. We once were in a pit, but now we are with him. Because Christ is seated in the heavenly places with God Almighty, the Father. We too will go there.

Okay? The heavenly places beside God Almighty is not the pit. Okay? This is liberation. This is freedom. And this is why we share our faith. Because it truly is good news.

[ 28 : 44 ] So friends, if you are in a pit this morning, stop digging. Admit that you are a sinner and that your sin is even darker than you think and that there is no liberation or freedom by keeping it in but only through confession to God Almighty and put yourself at his mercy.

And remember, he will not count your iniquities against you but he offers forgiveness so that he may be feared. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ.

We thank you that your son offered up his very life to us out of love for us and obedience to you. And Lord, we ask that you would help us by your spirit. May your spirit just take that in, dwell on it, meditate upon it, and act upon it. Let us not be those that hear the gospel and then consider it and maybe say, hey, that sounds good and then go on our day.

Lord, today is the day of salvation. Today is the day of restoration. And Lord, we ask that you would help us by your spirit take bold steps towards you to cry out to you and trust that your mercy is for us for it is your very nature.

[ 30 : 09 ] Father, we pray this in Christ's mighty name. Amen. Amen.