

Psalm 130

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Preacher: Robert Buttermore

[0:00] Jack, one, two, one, two. Are we on? There we go. All right, good morning. Mike, thanks for praying. We were talking a little about Psalm 130 earlier.

Like Matt was saying, this is a psalm of a sense. A psalm they would sing and recite as they're three times a year going up to the temple, making their pilgrimage.

And I thought it was neat thinking through. We just went to Louisville, Kentucky for a pilgrimage.

Together for the Gospel Conference. And during that trip, trips like that are always fun.

They're kind of jovial. The kids are traveling in the minivan. We don't really get into the depths the way the psalmist is talking about here with sin over you. But the kids do stuff that makes you feel like you're in the depths sometimes.

But I think this psalm, it's good to think through how the Israelites might have read through this and thought through this. Because as they're having fun and traveling on their pilgrimage, to think through why they're making this pilgrimage, to understand the depths that they're in without God's grace, was a good reminder for me.

[1:09] And also this is a favorite psalm of Calvin, Augustine, and also Allison from Shoreline Kids. So cool fun fact about it.

All right. So I'm Rob Baltimore. Like Mike was saying, I've been a member of Shoreline here since we planned it about eight years ago. And I've served this church as a member and a deacon. And today I get to serve God's church by preaching his word.

Like I said, it's from Psalm 130, which is page 324 in our Pew Bibles. I always wanted to say that. We'll get Pews one day.

To start today, so I want to begin with reading a portion of Pilgrim's Progress, a book by John Bunyan from the late 1600s. This is a beautiful story, if anybody's read it, about a man named Christian as he goes through the progress of his life as a pilgrim, a traveler in a foreign land. The timelessness of how John Bunyan wrote this book is amazing, and it shouldn't be missed by any Christian. I cheated it. I recently listened to it on audiobook, but would highly recommend. Should I grab a mic, or are we good?

[2:19] Okay. In this story, so Christian's walking through his life. He's with a temporary companion named Hopeful. And Christian and Hopeful have just come through an example and a warning in a statue of Lot's wife.

This, for them, is a picture to remain on the path God has established. But soon after the scene, Christian sees a set of steps that go over a stone wall, which leads to what's called the easiest going.

This quickly goes downhill. They meet another traveler named Vain Confidence. And by the way, John Bunyan doesn't use his imagination very much in naming his characters. So Vain Confidence falls into a deep pit on this path of easiest going and disappears from sight and from the book.

Following this, Christian and Hopeful hit a storm, rising waters, and cannot make their way back.

They finally fall asleep and are found by the owner of the grounds. His name is Giant Despair, who is a giant.

They are quickly thrown into prison, beaten, and suffer all sorts of terrible things. So my portion of the story starts there. It says, So when the morning was come, the giant goes to them again and takes them into the castle yard and shows them, as his wife had bidden them, these, said he, these were pilgrims, as you are, once, and they trespass in my grounds, as you have done.

[3:33] And when I thought fit, I tore them in pieces. And so within ten days, I will do you. Go, get down to your den again. And with that, he beat them all the way there.

They lay there for all day on Saturday, in a lamentable case as before. Now when night was come, and when Mrs. Dividends and her husband, the giant, were got to bed, they began to renew their discourse of their prisoners.

And withal, the giant wondered that he could neither by his blows nor his counsel bring them to an end. And with that, his wife replied, I fear, she said, that they live in hope that some will come to relieve them or that they have picklocks about them by the means of which they hope to escape. And sayest thou, my dear, said the giant, I will therefore search them in the morning. Well, on Saturday, about midnight, they began to pray and continued in prayer till almost break of day. Now, a little before it was day, good Christian, as one half amazed, broke out in his passionate speech. What a fool am I, thus to lie in a stinking dungeon when I may as well walk at liberty. [4 : 43] I have the key in my bosom called promise that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle. Then, said hopeful, that is good news, good brother. Pluck it out of your bosom and try.

Then Christian pulled it out of his bosom and began to try at the dungeon door, whose bolt, as soon as he turned the key, gave back. And the door flew open with ease. And Christian and hopeful both came out.

Then he went to the outward door that leads to the castle yard. And with this key, open that door also. After, he went to the iron gate, for that must be open too. But that lock went damnable hard. Yet the key did open it. Then they thrust open the gate to make their escape with speed. But that gate, as it opened, made such a creaking that it waked giant despair, who hastily rising to pursue his prisoners, felt his limbs to fail, for his fits took him again.

And so that he could by no means go after them. Then they went on, and they came to King's Highway. And so were safe, because they were out of his jurisdiction. Now when they were gone over the stone wall, they began to contrive with themselves what they should do at this stone wall, to prevent those that should come after from falling into the hands of giant despair.

[5 : 57] So they consecrated to erect there a pillar, to engrave upon the side thereof this sentence, Over this stone wall is the way to Doubting Castle, which is kept by giant despair, who despiseth the king of the celestial country, and seeks to destroy his holy pilgrims.

Many, therefore, that followed after, read what was written, and escaped the danger. This done, they sang as follows. Out of the way we went, and then we found what was to tread upon forbidden ground, and let them that come after have a care, lest heedlessness makes them, as we, to fare, lest they for trespassing his prisoners are, whose castles doubting, whose names despair.

Longer section there. So this little portion of Pilgrim's Progress is just a small way in which this book takes scripture and puts it into narrative. It shows the reader how scripture overlays with the realities of life.

So this section where Christian realizes he has something on him the whole time to get out of this dark situation is so spot on with Psalm 130. It helps us plant the truth of God's word as we progress through the sermon.

Alright, so the goal of this sermon is to show everyone what it means to enjoy forgiveness and freedom. And this forgiveness and freedom is only available at the great cost of Christ's blood and your repentance.

[7 : 19] This path is not an easy one, but it is so worth it. So let me pray that we would trust Christ right now to guide and sustain us through the sermon and that he would fan a flame in all of us to be not only hearers of his word, but also doers of it.

Speak, O Lord, as we come to you right now that we might receive the food of your holy word. Lord, would you take your truth and plant it deep in us.

Lord, would you shape and fashion us into your likeness that the light of Christ might be seen today in us, in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.

Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us all of your purposes for your glory. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Psalm 130.

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.

[8 : 23] If you, O Lord, could mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared. 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. 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. First question here. What is the posture of your heart when you hear the verse that says, If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, who could stand? I believe this is the telltale sign that will determine how you understand Psalm 130. There are two ways to go through life. It's either going to be you making the rules or someone else making the rules.

But either way, someone is making the rules. Either way, you're going to be held to a standard. I was thinking through this. If I'm honest, my Christian life has been a constant of the Lord being the principal rule setter, but sadly also this rollercoaster of letting myself and others be the ones who set the standards at times.

[9 : 36] The point of this is to show that there's never a time when we are free from being held to a standard. And so much of culture and therapy tells us don't live to their standards but live to your standards.

That will be your path to freedom. But if we're honest with ourselves, we don't even live up to our own standards. Think of the last time you've had this revelation. We say tomorrow is going to be the day. Tomorrow is the day I'm going to set up this list of everything I need to do and I'm going to do it.

I can't live like this. I need a new routine. But at 9 a.m. the next day you woke up early, you got a few things done, then you get distracted with X, Y, and Z and the wheels have fallen off.

So that standard you set 12 hours ago is nothing more than dry marker on a whiteboard and all you've really accomplished is to drive your emotional state into the gutter. And you're beating yourself up because Pokemon Go lasted longer than the simple achievable standard you set for yourself.

the depths. So you may be an emotional gutter after not meeting the standards you set for yourself for a daily routine but what about the true and perfect standards that we are all called to live up to that are set by a true and perfect God?

[10 : 49] The difference of these depths or gutters here is the power and perfection of the one who is calling you to the standards. If we as creatures can be in gutter by missing our own mark consider the depths the psalmist is writing about when he sees himself missing the mark of the perfect mighty and infinite God.

The psalmist here starts off by being in a dark place a place he calls the depths which is this beautiful and horrible language the Old Testament uses for being not in a small bit of trouble but often used for showing that there is a great column of water and weight and shore destruction coming.

These waters bring about death and destruction similar to the place the Egyptians in Exodus 15 5. If you remember when the Lord through Moses they delivered Israel from sure death by the hands of Pharaoh it says the floods covered them they went down into the depths like a stone your right hand oh Lord glorious in power your right hand oh Lord shatters the enemy.

so this is the language the psalmist is invoking here to describe where he is at the start of this psalm so that's our first benchmark there where the psalmist is so the psalmist here repeats the word Lord eight times in Psalm 130 and there's eight verses so he's establishing the fact that he right off the gate is not the rule setter for himself but God is the psalmist is communicating to us that he's in the place of submission and the Lord is in the place of authority over him there's no tug of war going on here there's no questioning on who the creator is or who the creator is and who the creature is that's where the word mercy comes in the psalmist says Lord I'm in trouble I'm in the depths here there's no way out I'm feeling like the Egyptians Lord your standard is over me like the Red Sea I have no chance to escape on my own I need your unmerited favor that can only come from you he says Lord do you hear me so far we have not talked much about forgiveness and not much about freedom that's all about the change so so far we established we need forgiveness or what we need forgiveness from the failure on our own part the iniquities we have and our inability to stand on our own but then like a shot in the middle of the darkness a burst of light comes through the psalmist reminding and preaching himself true truth verse 4 says but with you there is forgiveness the psalmist knows who the Lord is this isn't a come to Jesus moment it's a come back to Jesus moment for him he knows the character of the Lord prior to this and is preaching to himself

the good news of what he knows about this God think of Christian from Pilgrim's Progress and his sudden realization at this point he had the pick lock the whole time but he just remembered at this point and he used that as the psalmist here uses self-talk so to explain this self-talk a little bit I saw this beautiful quote from Dr. Morton Lloyd-Jones who was a British minister from the early to mid 1900s and he talks really well about self-preaching and the great benefit of it he says have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you're listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up you have not originated them but they start talking to you they bring back the problems of yesterday and the past somebody is talking who is talking yourself is talking to you so this man's treatment he's talking about the psalmist was this instead of allowing the self to talk to him he starts talking to himself his soul has been depressing him and crushing him so he stands up and says self listen for a moment I will speak to you the main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself you have to take yourself in hand you have to address yourself preach to yourself question yourself you must say to your soul why are you downcast what business do you have to be disquieted you must turn on yourself abrade yourself condemn yourself exhort yourself and say to yourself self hope in God instead of muttering in this depressed unhappy way and then you must go on to remind yourself of God who God is and what

[15 : 11] God is and what God has done and what he has pledged himself to do then having done that end on this great note defy yourself defy other people and defy the devil and the whole world and say with this man I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance who is also the health of my countenance and my God so what Martin Lloyd joins here saying is he says don't stuff your feelings but honestly pour out your soul like the psalmist does here in the beginning of Psalm 130 talks about being in the depths don't sugarcoat it but be honest this isn't just stoicism that tells you to grin and bear it but it's also just not cognitive therapy where you just replace negative thoughts with positive ones and you improve your emotional state so to show what the result of this proper talking to the self looks like we go right back into the psalm the last part of verse four here if we're talking or preaching to ourselves properly with the truth of the Lord this forgiveness that we are treasuring will lead to a fearing of the Lord so we have to ask ourselves the question how does the psalmist tie together forgiveness with the fear of God he says soul with God there is forgiveness so that the Lord will be feared the forgiveness is there to drive the end result of the psalmist fearing

God forgiveness first and then fear we can't get the order wrong or else this falls apart so now what does this mean when the psalmist says that you may be feared to help ourselves we can look at other translations I looked at the NIV it says so that we can with reverence serve you which hints at this outward focus of fear of God the fear of God doesn't have to do with an inward focus of harm against us but the proper fear of God drives our gaze outward at his awesomeness and might and love one way to think about the psalmist is getting at here with the fear language is how to understand what healthy and unhealthy fear are like I saw this from John Piper from Desiring God he says there is a fear that is slavish and drives us away from God and there is a fear that is sweet and draws us to God in Exodus 20:20 Moses warned us against one and toward the other Moses said to the people do not fear for God has come to test you that the fear of him may be before you that you may not sin so John

Piper says the clearest illustration I've ever seen of this kind of good fear was a time one of my sons looked at a German shepherd in the eye we were visiting a family from our church he says my son Carson was about seven years old they had a huge dog that stood eye to eye with a seven year old he was friendly and Carson had no problem making friends but when we sent Carson back to the car to get something we had forgotten he started to run and the dog galloped behind him with a low growl and of course this frightened Carson but the dog's owner said Carson Carson why don't you just walk the dog doesn't like it when people run away from him if Carson hugged the dog he was friendly and would even lick his face but if he ran from the dog the dog would growl and fill Carson with fear that is a picture of what it means to fear the Lord God means for his power and holiness to kindle fear in us not to drive us away from him but to drive us to him fearing God means first fearing to abandon!

him as our great security and satisfaction so when it comes to fear of God the Bible treats us as a positive fear not a negative fear it's an inward awe before God it's an inward condition of delight in the magnitude of who he is positive fear does not have torment in negative fear you're totally absorbed in yourself you're only thinking about yourself but in positive fear you're free you're free

from thinking about yourself you are free to serve the Lord and not serve yourself because you have already been served to the uttermost one thing we cannot forget here is that the psalmist is writing all of this pre-Christ so we are centuries before Christ and the psalmist knows this or he knows his plea for forgiveness is going to be heard but it also reveals how slight and tangible was the assurance of atonement they are looking forward to something coming in the future but by the end of the psalm the writer is so confident and assured of his place within God's people that he's calling others to the same assurance of forgiveness through the mercy of the Lord so how much more are we blessed by being on this side of the cross how much more should we be confident and assured that the atonement has already been made on this side of the cross we see promise fulfillment all these years and anticipation that have been building up to this very focused moment in space and time and history ever since Genesis 3:15 the very first announcement of the gospel God has been proclaiming to his people that atonement was going to be made for their sins that the serpent and the curse of sin would be crushed and that applicable to the sermon that the forgiveness of God is available to all who look forward to the cross or look backwards to the cross as their only hope so while the Old Testament saints enjoyed being saved on credit we on this side enjoy the freedom of being saved on debit the money is in the account and the debt is paid we don't have hope or we don't have we don't hope in a future promise but we stand on a promise already beautifully fulfilled in the cross so far the psalmist has walked us through failure forgiveness and now fearful freedom next in verses 5 and 6 the psalmist moves into a posture based on this freedom a posture of waiting with hope so now that the psalmist is all revved up he's gonna wait he was in the pits only mercy can save him and then like pulling the curtains open on a sunny morning he's reminded of the Lord and his forgiveness and this true sense of the fear of the Lord and now he's waiting what's going on here so if you are free from worry about yourself you know that your outcome is secure for all eternity and with the psalmist this reverence for the Lord he's saying

[21 : 32] Lord come whatever may and may it come whenever the psalmist is so captivated with the one that he adores that he says I trust you I know your word and I promise and your promise is good and you are the one who made it he says I can now wait in peace I can now wait because this hope will not fail he chooses the watchman as his word picture here twice for emphasis to show that this could be a monotonous task over and over and over this watchman waits there for the morning to come and sometimes the night might seem endless but the beautiful thing about the morning is that it is certain and its time is determined so this is what the psalmist posture is now based on all that he has gone through in the last five verses he is in a place of security a place of refuge if we think about it his physical place has not changed so all might be sunny and rainbows around him or it all might be fire and ash but what his hope is in cannot and will not be changed this is more than wistfulness or optimism but this is the fruit of deep deep introspection followed by talking to oneself of God who God is and what

God is and what God has done and what God has pledged himself to do so what does this style of waiting look like for us waiting with hope in the Lord we can examine this a couple ways both positive and negative it does not mean waiting with hope that your situation will change waiting for that job and that money because you've always really wanted the satisfaction from it waiting for that person to come into your life or back into your life so that you're whole and complete again waiting for that diagnosis to change so that you can just get on with glorifying God and enjoying him forever the psalmist says no to all these things what the psalmist says he says right now I am satisfied right now I am complete and whole and need nothing that type of satisfaction in God is life changing but also can induce suffering imagine what it means for your life if you forego comfort and go and serve from

John Stott John Stott says the place of suffering in service and of passion and mission is hardly ever taught today but the greatest single secret of either evangelistic or missionary effectiveness is the willingness to suffer and to die it may be a death to popularity by faithfully preaching the unpopular biblical gospel or it may be death to your pride by the use of modest means and reliance on the Holy Spirit or to racial and national prejudice by identifying with another culture or to material comfort by adopting a simple lifestyle but the servant must suffer if he is going to bring light to the nations and the seed must die if it is going to multiply like Jesus talked about in John 12 so when we are free of worrying about ourselves it drives us to go out and serve the Lord and serve other people and that can invoke a lot of suffering so right now the psalmist has moved through fearful

freedom because of forgiveness to a posture of hopeful waiting for whatever comes and now he reaches out to

Israel and says hope in the Lord just like I did he is taking his individual experience and then out of the overflow of his countenance he wants to share it with those who need this come back to Jesus moment so the psalmist reminds him with the Lord there is steadfast love and with him there is plentiful redemption he says I have experienced this and so can all of Israel the tying together here of both steadfast love and redemption points towards the character of God that he has found redemption assumes you need to be redeemed from something namely what we already talked about the iniquities that we cannot stand before and the steadfast love points us to the place of security and refuge we have with the Lord this love that doesn't wax and wane like some capricious God's emotions so far the psalmist has come or so how far has the psalmist come in eight verses so we think about where he started we set that starting point he says from the depths of despair he's doubting inwardly focus to now he's this free man who can then turn outward to people and hold out hope and promises to them with confidence so how much use was the psalmist to Israel before this psalm probably not much how able and ready was he to serve and now look eight verses later what use is the psalmist to Israel the difference between the same person's ability and willingness to serve others is day and night to finish off verse eight the psalmist says he will redeem Israel not just individuals but from uh yeah so he will redeem Israel not just this individual and he will redeem them from all of their iniquities the psalmist is showing here that the lord desires a holy and a righteous people that is who will dwell with him and that is who he wants to dwell with a group of people who are going to be redeemed means they need to be redeemed from something from their iniquities but here also we see he will again we have this promise made by the lord which gives us great confidence because of the one who is going to do the action the lord will redeem his people it means it's as good as done and finally another spot to focus on here is what the lord will redeem us from psalm 130 ends here with all his iniquities talking about

[27 : 25] Israel the lord's omniscient or the fact that he knows everything means that all iniquities and sins are known there's no general vagueness here on what god's people are saved from it's not just general sin but it's the fact that god sees every single little thing he sees the heart and he judges it rightly and he says i will take that on myself all of them i know it all and i pay for it all this gives us the assurance that on judgment day we have no mystery about something that was missed or something that was kept in the dark one thing to notice here what the psalmist is not saying he's not saying that israel are victims of some sort of oppression of political or military power struggle they need redemption from their iniquities the psalmist accurate reflection on himself and god's truth points himself to know what the big overarching problem is it's not outside it's inside the iniquities and sins that we cannot stand before the lord with are the problem the heart wants to rebel but with him we have learned there is forgiveness there is a fearful freedom waiting with hope and there is a steadfast love with plentiful redemption not just for the individual but for all his people to enjoy together so let me end our time here with both a warning and encouragement this warning is for myself and for all of us here at shoreline so if we are people who are not living in the freedom of forgiveness found in the lord we will be a distracted people distracted by searching for our own freedom distracted by trying to show others that we are free when we really aren't that is work that will pull us away from the work we are called to proclaiming the good news to each other out of the overflow of our forgiveness there are people alongside us here that we have been called to be blessings to to live side by side in trench warfare but this distractedness will be like giving yourself a pedicure while you're in the trenches while your friend is taking fire it's unhelpful and harmful and then encouragement shoreline is a place where the one another's of the new testament are alive and active so this is evidence of god's people living out his truth of forgiveness and freedom and then looking outward to serve rather than looking inward encourage one another so if you're available stay here today until 12 30 or 1 o'clock see how many people are still here and then listen in on those conversations and see the encouragement taking place the hard weeks that are discussed and the hope-filled conversations that follow and the same thing we see in community groups during the week we see the same thing deep and beautiful conversations about what it means to live in peace with god yet live in this chaotic world and the other one is greet one another from the new testament how many times do we start service late like we did today because our greeting with someone turns into an in-depth conversation and then these sort of low-volume conversations today they were high volume that persist through the first few verses of this first song or how many here have shown up at a community group they haven't known anyone and found

their welcome like an old family member right away shoreline we are evidence that god is at work that his ancient truths are still applicable and the spirit is alive and active in his people this is reason to rejoice let me close us in prayer oh lord thank you for speaking through your word to us lord thank you for renewing our minds help us as your people grasp the heights of your plans for us lord your truths are unchanged from the dawns of time these truths will echo throughout all eternity and by grace only grace we will stand on your promises and by faith lord we will walk as you walked with us speak oh lord continue to speak through your word until your church is built and lord may all the earth be filled with your glory we pray in jesus name amen please stand with us Thank you.