

The Heavy Weight of Redemption

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[0 : 00] Well, please do be seated. It's great to share and open God's Word with you today. First Psalm 130 and then our next installment looking at the book of Jonah this evening.

If you do have your Bible, please do open it to Psalm 130. And before I read it for us, it'll be helpful for us to get our bearings first on this psalm.

Now, notice first what type of psalm it is. A psalm of ascent. This is one of the songs which the Jewish pilgrims sang heading up to Jerusalem on their way to be with the Lord.

To be with the Lord and His people. We're not off to Jerusalem. We're not off to the temple, are we? So what does this psalm look like for us then?

Now, Jerusalem, it was a picture of Jesus Christ who was to come. So for us to read, for us to pray, for us to sing this psalm, we do so not on our way to Jerusalem, to the temple, but instead as we go to meet with Jesus, to meet with His people.

[1 : 21] That's the first thing for us to notice. Second most psalms of ascent, they're communal. This one, though, deeply personal, isn't it?

At least it begins deeply personal. You see, what we have here in this psalm, what we have is the internal thinking of somebody going to meet with God.

Someone who is going to meet with the Lord, with their covenant, faithful God. So what we have then aren't the cries of someone in bed hitting the ceiling, but instead the eternal processes of somebody who knows, who is confident they're going to meet with their holy, loving, faithful God. And I think that's exciting. Exciting to listen in on this conversation that this person is having. And what we're going to see is two weights in this psalm.

We're going to see the weight of sin and the expectant weight of the Lord. That's the passage. Great. Let me read it for us. And then I'll pray. Let me read Psalm 130.

[2 : 43] Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord. Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness. So that we can with reverence serve you. I wait for the Lord. My whole being waits. And in his words I put my hope.

I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning. More than watchmen wait for the morning. Israel, put your hope in the Lord. For with the Lord is unfailing love.

And with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins. Let me pray and ask God for his help. Let's pray. Father, this morning may you incline our hearts to your word.

Free us from all distractions. Other things threatening to take our mind off you. Open our eyes, we ask. See truly wonderful things in your word this morning.

[3 : 53] Unite our hearts together in reverent fear of you and satisfy our souls in your steadfast love.

We ask and pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, let's think first about the distressing weight of unbearable sin.

Let's click that on. I can't get it to work. Let's think first of what are the depths? What are the depths which the psalmist here is thinking about? What comes to mind perhaps? Perhaps you think of Afghanistan.

Pretty dark right now, isn't it? Taliban taking over at incredible speed. People hunted down, being killed. A million children are expected to die by the end of this year of starvation.

A million. Is that the depths? I was on Facebook yesterday seeing a father pouring out his soul at his son's suicide.

[5 : 04] Is that the depths? Or perhaps you think of what's the deepest, darkest place has ever been. Perhaps a concentration camp. Dachau concentration camp.

Where the opening words to the psalm are written on the wall. Is that the depths? There are depths that most of us hopefully won't know.

But we know what it's like though, isn't it, to be in the depths. The doctor comes in. The friend phones and tells you what the doctor said to them.

I'm sorry, there's nothing left that we can do for you. The wife comes home to find the husband has left her to be with another woman. The person you thought was your best friend.

Mocks you in front of everybody else because you follow Jesus. Out of the depths, I cry to you, Lord. Out of the depths, the feeling of drowning.

[6 : 10] Holding on to life by your fingertips. It feels like you're descending as if the world is bearing in upon you. Perhaps that describes you this morning.

It feels like the world is caving in as you have the anguish of bereavement. The distress of a diagnosis. The shock of unemployment. The helplessness of addiction. The pressure of debt. The longing to have a child. The loneliness of wanting a romantic relationship. It feels like life is swelling you up.

Perhaps you read verse 1 and say, yeah, that's my cry this morning. Out of the depths, I cry to you, Lord. And if that is you, I'm really glad you've made it here today. You're in the right place today.

For others here, verses 1 and 2 perhaps don't describe you. You're not sinking.

[7 : 12] You don't feel like the world's pressing in on you. You are on solid ground. That's great for today. But perhaps one day you won't be on such solid ground.

So whether this morning you are in the depths, feel like you're drowning, whether you are on standing on sure and solid ground, this psalm is for us. And as I shared with the kids, this psalm is especially for all of us in the real, in a deeper way because we are all on our way to meet with the Holy Lord and we are sinful people.

Just look at what the psalmist cries. Look why he feels like he's in the depths. Look at verse 3 together and notice the surprise. Notice here that the depths the psalmist cries from and not from suffering, crashing upon him, but instead the depths he cries from is the weight of his own sin.

The psalmist, he's not crying from the depths of injustice done to him. He's not crying out for, one, for sickness to go away. He is crying out because he wants rescued from the evil within himself.

I don't know most of you. It's one of all being here seeing friends who didn't expect to be here. But we all have the same problem. Our sin.

[8 : 45] If your Lord kept a record of our sins, who could stand? And that makes sense. Why he's crying out, doesn't he?

He's off to meet this Holy Lord. He's deeply conscious, aware of his sins and he knows he can't stand before him. See, what this psalm does for us, what the psalms often do for us is that when we are suffering, when we feel like we're in the depths, it is so easy to become curled in upon ourselves, isn't it?

But actually what psalms like this do is that they help us curl out of ourselves and realise actually we've got an even bigger problem on our hands. This psalm causes us to look up and to sober us. And actually what this psalm does, it's radically different to the rest of the world. I'm a fan of rugby. I enjoyed the Lions tour in the summer to South Africa, even though we, well, we lost.

That tour. But I was reminded during the summer of the film *Invictus*. I wonder if you've seen the film before. It's based upon the 1995 World Cup in South Africa. And in that film, you hear the poem *Invictus*.

[9 : 58] Let me see if I can get this up. No. Can you put the poem up, please? Brilliant, here we go. Let me read this poem for us by a guy called William Ernest Henley.

He says this. Out of the night that covers me, black as the pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever God may be for my unconquerable soul. In the fell clutch of circumstance, I have not winced nor cried aloud.

Under the bludgeonings of chance, my head is bloody, but unbowed. Beyond this place of wrath and tears looms but the horror of the shade, and yet the menace of the years shall find me unafraid. It matters not how straight the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll. I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul.

I'm talking about you, but for my friends, that poem sums up how they think of life. I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul. As if COVID wasn't enough to point out that's not true, is it?

[11 : 05] But the way the poet here processes suffering starts off similar to Psalm 1130. He's in darkness. But he's a way off.

It matters not how charged with punishments the scroll. Isn't that ridiculous? It does matter. It really matters. When we stand before God, we will finally be held responsible for our sin. That scroll will be unraveled.

It will be a charge sheet greater than you or I could ever imagine. And it will be our names on top of it. It does matter what charges are on the scroll.

And when that happens, every person will finally know that they are not the master of their fate. They are not the captain of their soul.

[12 : 10] Just think again of verse three. If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, who could stand? Just think of one sin in your life for a moment.

Just one. Perhaps it's impure thinking. Perhaps it's being quick to anger.

Perhaps it's choosing comfort over serving someone. Just think of that one sin in your life. Just think of that one sin in your life this past week being marked down again and again and again and again. And again. Who, Lord, could stand? See, verse three is the issue for every person who doesn't follow Jesus.

If you're here and you aren't a Christian, this is the biggest issue in your life. If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But, praise the Lord, the psalm doesn't stop at verse three.

[13 : 28] Have a look at verse four with me. But with you there is forgiveness. Start with reverence, we may serve you.

But with you there's forgiveness. Praise the Lord for verse four. If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, who could stand? No one. But with you there is forgiveness.

We have real guilt, we have real responsibility, but there's also real forgiveness on offer. Now, the psalmist doesn't quite know how it's possible, how this works, but we know.

Perhaps you're here and you aren't a Christian. Let me tell you how we know. Well, when the God who the psalmist is talking to showed up on this earth in the person of Lord Jesus Christ, what did he do?

He bore the responsibility for our sins. He took our charge sheet, the scroll with our name on. He took the punishment for it and he gave us his perfect one so we can be forgiven.

[14 : 35] Doesn't that make you want to praise God? Worship him for what he's done. Makes a psalmist, but we'll get to that in a moment. See, if verse three is the main issue for non-Christians, I think verse four is the main issue for Christians.

Because how quick we are to forget that with the Lord there's forgiveness. Satan whispers in our ear, doesn't he, that sin, it wasn't a big deal.

And when you do it, he shouts and others say, that was it. That was the sin that broke the straw on the camel's back of God's forgiveness. So what do we do?

When we feel like we are, if we are honest, the scum of the earth, when we feel like we are, we're double-minded hypocrites, when we don't want to come to our Heavenly Father in prayer because of how wretched we feel, we remind ourselves there's one verse from this one psalm.

With you there is forgiveness. With Jesus, there is forgiveness. There's no forgiveness and how guilty I can make myself feel. There's no forgiveness and balancing my good deeds with my bad, but with you, Lord, with you, Jesus, there's forgiveness.

[15 : 57] But notice the flow in verse four as well. It doesn't end with forgiveness, does it? We are forgiven, yes. Why?

For what? So that with reverence we may serve you. So that with fear we may serve you.

There's this old, dead, clever guy called John Calvin. He's a bit of a brain back in his day and he talked about the fear of God and I think he's right on this.

He really helpfully describes what the fear of God is. He talks first about the fear of God as creator. That's what the psalmist knows in these first few verses that God is so awesome.

He knows that he can't come before him. Fear of God as creator and then secondly the fear of God as redeemer. What does it mean to serve the redeeming Lord with fear?

[17 : 00] What does it mean to serve the redeeming Lord with fear? By Mike Reeves you should buy. Not being sponsored to say that. Great book. And he says that fear of God isn't serving him in groveling, shriveling as if serving some tyrant.

Instead the fear of God is an ecstasy of love. A joy that senses how overwhelmingly kind he is. How magnificent he is. How good he is. How true he is.

And therefore it leans what you've done. I will serve you. See when we realise we've been forgiven much when we think of that charge sheet, that scroll.

When we've been forgiven that there is much rejoicing. Much glad service. Because gratitude is what fuels our service. Not guilt. So let's take a step back on what we've seen here in these first few verses.

The psalmist where's he going? He's on a journey to meet with the Lord. Perhaps he's lying awake at night. He feels like he's the only one who can't sleep. And he is deeply, deeply aware of a sin and he cries out.

[18:11] And he knows that a sinner can't stand before a holy God but remembers, rejoices that with him there is forgiveness. We've seen the distressing weight of unbearable sin.

Let's think now about the expectant weight for the redeeming Lord. Look what the psalmist says next in verse 5. I wait.

I'm rubbish at waiting. I'm so impatient at waiting. I didn't think I was that angry a person. I was that impatient. Then I had twins and I realized I was really angry and really impatient.

I wait. We want instant solutions in life don't we? We want instant we want the film on Netflix there and then bam. We don't want to wait for the buffer.

We don't want to read the whole book just the gist of it. Just give me the nuggets of it. We don't want to be sick. We want doctors to know immediately what's wrong with us and how they can treat us.

[19:20] We don't like waiting. The psalmist likes waiting though. What's he waiting for? Have a look from verse 5.

I wait for the Lord. My whole being waits and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord. More than watchmen wait for the morning.

More than watchmen wait for the morning. It's a picture of a soldier on guard isn't it? The soldier. Imagine you're a soldier. The enemy is real.

Your friends, your family are in the city. Waiting is an active thing isn't it? Anyone who works a night shift they know waiting is an active thing. You are desperate for morning to come.

And the psalmist is waiting. Yearning. Longing. Waiting for morning to come. Yearning even more than the watchman in the city waits for morning to come.

[20:16] And morning will come. As certain as dawn follows the night so the psalmist waits to be with the Lord.

As we wait in the depths of darkness as we wait under the seemingly unbearable weight of our sin we do so knowing that the darkness will not last forever.

The morning star will come. Jesus will return. And how can we be sure of that? Why is the psalmist so sure of that? Well we put our hope in the same place as he does.

Look at verse 5. I wait for the Lord my whole being waits and in his word I put my hope. If we look to our heart all we see is our sin.

If we look to God's word we are reminded that we are forgiven adopted safe. The night time for some of us might feel endless.

[21:25] The morning will come. Jesus will return. So keep holding on. Keep waiting. Keep watching.

more than a watchman wait for the morning. More than a watchman wait for the morning. Because the return of Jesus is even more certain than tomorrow's sunrise.

And finally the psalmist turns to us doesn't he at the end of verse 7. O Israel that means O people of God O Christian he says to us today put your hope in the Lord.

Perhaps you've got a bad case of doubt. You read verse 4 and you go that's great it's not quite enough for me though Craig. Look at what God promises you in verses 7 to 8 everyone look down. Israel put your hope in the Lord for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

[22:37] Christian put your hope in the Lord. Tomorrow you might be at the hospital sitting in a chair getting chemicals pumped into you and you need to know this.

Perhaps you're going to lie awake tonight with everything that's going on your brain just will not shut up it will not shut down. You need to know this. Put your hope in the Lord.

Why? Because with him there's unfailing love. With him there is full redemption. His love's not fickle like ours it's not failing it's never late it's always on time it's always what we need it's his covenant love his faithful love his love that says I've chosen to love you.

His love holds on to you so hold on to his unfailing love. But can God really love me like that?

Yes! Full redemption all those sins public all those sins private all those sins committed deliberately all those sins without knowing it's all covered all of it.

[23 : 54] if it was car insurance it would be fully comp wouldn't it? No third party fire and theft here no excess here everything covered full redemption and so when we think about that well we rejoice don't we like a psalmist he repeats himself he himself will redeem Israel from all their sins he's like a child on Christmas Eve he just can't wait for the Lord to come the morning can't come fast enough the day of celebration can't come quick enough see at the start of the psalm he was once in the depths wasn't he of darkness now he's in the mountaintop shouting to fellow believers put your hope in the Lord and so for those of us here who are in the depths learn the character of God from the psalm see his his open ears to your desperate cries as you feel the weight of your sin know that he forgives the guilty in Jesus Christ trust his word knowing that this world is not all there is

Jesus is returning and you will be with him but for those of us who today perhaps started at the mountaintop encourage your brothers and sisters be like the psalmist that ends here in verse 7 brother, sister put your hope in the Lord trust in the Lord because we don't know when we'll need someone to say that to us so let me pray our great God and Father when we think of our sin how wretched we are how foolish and proud we are who are we to come before you but thank you that we can because in Christ there is forgiveness so we can with confidence come to you in prayer knowing that we have been saved by Jesus and we look forward to him returning when we'll fully finally know what that means when not only will we be fully free from sin but all of its effects as well and so Father for those of us here who feel like they are in the depths may you help us point them to the Lord Jesus Christ and whom is our hope may we be a church which encourages one another to put our hope in the Lord and may our confidence always be in your word

Lord Jesus we thank you for the cross what power there is that forgives sinners like us we pray all these things for your glory Amen