

Psalm 30

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For the last few weeks, we've considered various reasons the psalms give us to not be afraid in the midst of trouble. There are certainly reasons to fear in a time like this, but there are better reasons to trust the Lord. We trust the Lord because he is the King of all creation. We trust the Lord because he ransoms our soul from the power of death. We trust the Lord because humility requires quiet contentment in his sovereign will. And we trust the Lord because the unshakeable joy we find in him endures beyond the grave.

Psalm 30 adds yet another reason to the list. This morning, however, I don't just want you to listen for why you should trust the Lord. I want you to listen for what trust in God looks like, what it sounds like, how it speaks and acts both during and after a time of trouble. The Bible doesn't plop us in front of a forest called "trust God" and say, "Go that way. Good luck!" The Lord gently and patiently shows us how to trust. He doesn't say, "Just do it." He says, "Do it this way. Do it that way."

Here's the better reason Psalm 30 gives us to trust the Lord. It's found in verse 5. "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 painful as they are, as much as they tarry, hurt, and humble us, if you're a Christian, the consequences of sin are momentary; the favor of God is eternal. Our experience of the Lord's discipline, whether on account of things we have personally done wrong or as part of living in a cursed and broken world, transpires on the canvas of his enduring and unmerited favor.

Now if you believe that, if you believe the consequences of sin are momentary and the favor of God is eternal for every follower of Christ, then you will do two things. Your trust in the Word of God will play out in two ways: You will praise God, and you will pray to God. That's what trust sounds like. That's what trust does in the midst of trouble. Trust praises God and trust prays to God. Let's consider what each of those looks like.

1) THE FAVOR OF GOD COMPELS GRATEFUL PRAISE

We don't know exactly which situation in David's life prompted him to write this psalm. The superscription says it was for "the dedication of the temple," which



suggests a time immediately after the disastrous census he took of Israel 1 Chronicles 21 and the dedication of all the materials his son, Solomon, would need to actually construct the temple. We can't know for sure. We do know, based on the biblical record of his life, that the personal testimony he gives in Psalm 30:1-3 could be said of a long list of difficult situations David encountered throughout the course of his life.

He begins not by rehearsing all the details, but by rejoicing in the Lord's intervention. Verse 1, "I will extol you, O LORD." I will magnify you. I will exalt you. I will use my mouth to make much of you in the ears of those who hear me. Praise will be on my tongue, not complaining. Gratitude will characterize my speech, not grumbling. Then he gives us a litany of reasons, all which capture expressions of God's saving power in David's life.

The LORD, Yahweh, the covenant-making, covenant-keeping God, has drawn him, vindicated him, healed him, raised his soul from the grave, and restored him to life. Five verbs. Five actions. It's a beautiful picture of God's intervention in David's life. The Lord has done for David what he could not do for himself. He preserved his physical life – delivering him from countless enemies. And in an even deeper sense, he preserved his spiritual life – delivering him from the ultimate enemy of sin and the divine sentence of death his sin deserved.

Friends, we experience exactly the same sort of divine rescue through the work of Christ in our own lives today. If you are a Christian, if you have turned away from trying to create life for yourself by breaking all the rules, or keeping all the rules, and turned toward Jesus and the life he alone can give you, then know this: the Lord has drawn you up in an even greater way than he drew up David.

He has stopped your ultimate foe, Satan, from keeping you enslaved to sin and rejoicing over your condemnation. When the Holy Spirit graciously enabled you to run to Jesus, when you cried out for him to restore your relationship with God, Jesus healed you. He reconciled you to his Father. Once you were a child of wrath, dammed for destruction and going "down to the pit" like the rest of mankind. Now you are a child of the Living God. King Jesus has "brought up" your soul from Sheol, from the grave, in a spiritual sense, and promised that he will resurrect your body, restoring your life in a physical sense, on the day he returns.

So what are we to do? Mumble a few words of gratitude while we endlessly rehearse all the blessings we've lost and all the issues we have with our

government officials because of the coronavirus? No. We praise the Lord. We extol the Lord – not just for what we believe he will do for us, but what he has, through the person and work of Christ, already done for us. David lived through quite a series of ups and down over the course of his life. But he doesn't look back and say, "Well, that was pretty rough." No! He looks back on his life and says, "Praise be to God."

We need to live there, friends. Not just on Sunday morning. All the time. Every day, especially when our minds are prone to fixate on how long this pandemic is lasting or the economic damage it's causing. The world looks at their life and sees a host of reasons to grumble and complain. A Christian reviews their life and sees abundant reason to rejoice – not because we're more "positive" or "optimistic," but because we know just how good God has been to us through Jesus.

In every situation, no matter what sort of trouble you perceive around you or within you, the good news of the gospel remains the matter of first importance. It's all we need to live with abundant joy and summon our brothers and sisters in Christ to join us in the same – even if it's through a video chat.

Verse 4, "Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name." Why? Verse 5, "For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime." To say it a little differently, "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning."

Anger isn't categorically bad. At root, it says, "I'm against that. I'm opposed to that." It's what we feel when someone violates something that is precious to us. You should be angry when a child is abused or dies of starvation. You should be angry when someone is mistreated on account of the color of their skin. If you're not, something's wrong.

In the same way, it is good for God to be angry whenever we sin, for God to not be emotionally neutral when we go our own way, when we say "no" to his rightful authority as our Creator, assaulting the glory of his majesty. He has been and always will be "against" that, and rightfully so. For him to feel otherwise would be unjust.

As a sinner, you don't just deserve God's anger. He is, in fact, righteously angry with you. He's against you. He's opposed to you. The glory of his justice compels him to punish you, both in this life and after you die in the eternal fire of hell. The anger of



God isn't a theoretical construct invented by manipulative preachers to make people take their spiritual life seriously. It is part and parcel of the moral foundation of the universe.

Yet what has that same Righteous Judge done for us as his people? He poured out the cup of his holy anger against us on himself, on the person of his Son, Jesus. Isaiah 53:5, "But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed."

If you cry out by faith to Jesus for salvation from the wrath of God, you will discover to your eternal joy and amazement, that no more wrath remains for you. It is spent. Exhausted. Poured out. Finished. So we no longer tremble in fear of God's judgment. We run to him with confidence as our loving Father. For we know, in the words of Charles Spurgeon, "Payment he will not twice demand. First at the bleeding surety's hand, and then again at mine."

So why then does David still speak of God's anger in his life as being for "a moment"? As part of the people of God, redeemed through faith in God, David still experienced God's opposition to sin in his life. But that anger, that opposition, was no longer the wrath of a Righteous Judge, it was the discipline of a loving Father.

Proverbs 3:11-12, "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights." Hebrews 12:10-11 tells us even more. "[God] disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

Every experience of the Lord's discipline in your life, Christian, every time his love for you and jealousy for your eternal joy in Jesus compels him to be righteously indignant and to forcefully oppose your drift down the path of sin – all of it transpires on the canvas of his eternal favor toward you in Jesus.

His discipline is momentary – painful for a time. His favor is eternal – extensive, enduring, and ultimately decisive. God's unmerited favor, his grace toward you in Jesus, isn't just a present fact in your life, Christian. It is the prevailing power in your life, so much so that even his discipline becomes an expression of his favor.



Experiences of God's discipline really hurt. Life in this fallen world, living out our days in a universe cursed by God on account of our sin, is painful. Children die. Parents die. Pandemics ravage. Jobs are lost. Bank accounts are depleted. Weeping carries. I'm so grateful David said that because it's true. Weeping comes and doesn't leave quickly. This COVID-19 outbreak isn't leaving quickly.

Yet what can we confidently say because of Jesus? Verse 5, "Joy comes with the morning." In the same way that morning invariably follows night, the grief in your life will give way to joy. Malachi 4:2, "But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall."

We experience as much time and time again during our life on this earth, brothers and sisters, as the Lord heals broken relationships and physical illnesses. He brings comfort after long seasons of grief. He provides community after years of isolation and loneliness. He makes financial provision after decades of poverty. He brings an end to global pandemics using the wisdom of fallible leaders to restore the blessings of health and prosperity. Praise God for the "mornings" we experience here and now.

But praise God even more for the morning that awaits, for the day Christ returns and the glory of the divine favor that we experience now in part is finally enjoyed in full. All the challenges of this pandemic give weight to the beauty of the "morning" promised in Revelation 22:1-3.

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him."

The favor of God compels grateful praise. We praise God for the mornings that dawn. We praise God for the mornings yet to dawn.

But what do we do with the fact that we're still weeping? We're grieving in an acute sense as long as this pandemic lingers. And we'll still be grieving in a chronic sense after it departs. Until Jesus returns, corruption remains – within us and around us.

Experiences of the Lord's discipline, though light and momentary, still tarry. What are we to do with that?

2) THE DISCIPLINE OF GOD COMPELS EARNEST PRAYER

Before David answers that question in verses 8-10, he lingers in verses 6-7 to help us recognize our need for the Lord's discipline in the first place. Verse 6, "As for me, I said in my prosperity, 'I shall never be moved.'" What's that? It's the sin of presumption.

Have you ever done that? Because I'm smart, everything will be ok. Because I'm wealthy, everything will be ok. Because the Lord has blessed us with elected officials from my preferred political party, everything will be ok. Friend, if you feel like your security, your safety, your stability and confidence for the future has taken a hit over the last 6 weeks, you need to reexamine why you thought you would "never be moved" in the first place. For hope in our material or physical circumstances is no hope at all.

On March 23, Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson penned the following. "In our nation's long, involuntary lent, fear abounds. We should oppose it with all we have, for as long as we can. But when we come to the end of our strength and lie back, the universe will hold us."

Is that true? Is that our confidence as Christians? No! That's just the lie of verse 7 in polished form. What's the truth? Verse 7, "By your favor, O LORD, you made my mountain stand strong..." If verse 6 is the inner voice of presumption, verse 7 is the humbling doctrine of the providence of God.

Absent the favor of God, there is no such thing as true security, lasting prosperity, or real confidence. There were times in David's life when he experienced the Lord's discipline, when the Lord withheld an awareness of his favor from David on account of his presumption and self-sufficiency. The dismay David felt in that moment, the fear he tasted as the things of this world he thought he could trust crumbled around him, wasn't a mirage. It was real.

The Lord graciously and lovingly allowed him to sense the inevitable end of continuing to wander away from the path of obedient trust. It wasn't pretty. It was terrifying. It stopped David in his presumptive tracks and sent him running back to the Lord and his favor as his only hope, his only refuge.



May it do the same for you, my friend. To whatever degree you have invested your confidence for the future in the prosperity of this world and inevitably found yourself shaken and dismayed, stop. Confess your pride to the Lord, and run to Jesus for forgiveness and choose to trust anew in the favor of God as your only refuge.

Christian, you are never secure because of your circumstances. You are secure because the Lord loves you, because God is for you, because his favor is upon you – all because of Jesus. When we wander away from that, we need the Lord's discipline.

So what do we do when our experience of the Lord's discipline, whether on account of things we have personally done wrong or as part of living in a cursed and broken world, tarries for the night? We pray for God's mercy. Verse 8, "To you, O LORD, I cry, and 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?'"

What's David doing? He's showing us what trust does, what trust says, when we're experiencing the Lord's discipline and find our life threatened as a result.

The coronavirus belongs in this category. What is it? It's a taste of the curse of sin and in that sense, is an expression of the Lord's discipline, a reminder that all is not well in the world. Something's gone terribly wrong. The first man and women tried to take God's place and look at the results. Sin is devastating.

Therefore, when we face the threat of a mortal physical illness, we know it's not random. We know it's not nature doing its thing. It's an experience, at a broad but very real level, of the Lord's discipline, which compels us to do what? To cry out to the Lord who ordained it to deliver us from it. We ask God to have mercy and uphold our physical life – not because we deserve it, but for the sake of his name, so we can praise him for his faithfulness, praise him for his mercy, and continue to glorify and honor him through our life in this world!

A Christian told me a few weeks ago, "I almost feel guilty about the fact I don't want to die. I find myself thinking, 'If I really love Jesus, then I won't care if I die, because I know I'll get to be with him.' But I do care. I don't want to die. But I have no idea how to talk to the Lord about that without sounding like I'm 'demanding' or 'loving' life in this world more than I love him."

Is it wrong to not want to die even though we know it will not be the final world over our life as believers? Should the gospel make us indifferent to death? Can we way anything more than, “Thy will be done,” when a pandemic encroaches? Absolutely. We should follow David’s lead.

“Lord, be merciful to me, help me, protect my life, so that I may glorify your name in this life. I’m eager to do that, Lord. I don’t want to live for myself. I want to live for you. I want to serve you. I want to love you. I want to show as many people as possible just how good and great and glorious you are. I want them to know you and experience your love through mine. I want to stand up in front of my brothers and sisters and say, “Let me tell you how the Lord has been good to me.” I want to praise you and honor you with the gift of life you have entrusted to me. So for the sake of your name, Lord, not my own comfort and ease, uphold my life.”

That’s a God-centered request pouring out from a God-centered heart. It’s what trust sounds like when our physical life is threatened. The discipline of God compels earnest prayer for God to do what only God can do – deliver and rescue us from the curse of sin.

CONCLUSION

Whenever the Lord does that, friends, whenever he delivers us from the discipline of suffering or death and mercifully restores and sustains our life in this world, there is only one right response. Look at verse 11. “You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness.”

That wasn’t a shift in the winds of fate, Lord. That was your mercy. That wasn’t our elected officials getting their act together. That was your mercy. That wasn’t just public health people doing what they’re supposed to do. That was your mercy. Humility sees the mercy of God behind every deliverance from suffering in this life. The Lord turns mourning into dancing. The Lord loosens sackcloth. The Lord clothes us with spiritual and physical blessings that gladden our hearts.

To what end? Verse 12. That our glory (every one of God’s image-bearers) “may sing your praise and not be silent.” He made us to worship him, to sing not just with our mouths, but with our entire life. And he has given us in Christ and the favor that is ours in him, an eternal abundance of cause to do so that we might “give thanks” to his name forever.



For every Christian, the consequences of sin are momentary; the favor of God is eternal. The latter compels us to earnest prayer. The former compels us to grateful praise. It's where David starts. It's where David ends. It's where we too must live, friends, as King Jesus rescues us from trouble without and trouble within day after day, whether it comes in the form of a pandemic or not.