

Summer in the Psalms
 Psalm 30
 ABC 7/4/21

As we're all well aware, disaster, disease, danger, & death are always all around us. In 2011 the medical community switched from the 9th revision of the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases & Related Health Problems* to the 10th edition. Under ICD-9 there were 18,000 classifications. It expanded to 140,000 codes in version 10. Who knows what version 11 has in store in just a few years. Codes were added that describe precisely what the medical condition is & what caused it. There are very specific codes for things like injuries in opera houses, squash courts, & chicken coops. There are separate codes for being bitten by a turtle & being *struck by a turtle*, whatever that means. There's one for *bizarre personal appearance* & another for a *very low level of personal hygiene*. Makes me wonder if those codes are in my records. If you walk into a lamppost the code is W22.02XA. There are all kinds of codes for injuries received while sewing, ironing, crocheting, doing hand-crafts, you name it. My favorite is V91.07XA: *Burns due to water skis on fire*. I'm not sure how that's possible, but it must happen.¹ Disease & death are always all around us. It's been this way since Adam & Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden & it was that way in David's day as well. We don't know the exact sickness David had that spurred him to write Ps 30, but I'm sure it's included in ICD-10. It appears he was ill to the point of death & God healed him (2). So he writes this thanksgiving psalm. But thanksgiving psalms are closely related to psalms of lament in that they're expressions of praise to God for having heard & answered a cry for help. In Ps 30, some of David's words of lament are preserved vss 8-10. He'd been deathly ill but God rescued him, bringing him up from what he describes as **Sheol & the pit**. Now, having been rescued, he not only praises God himself but calls on others to join him in his praise. We could summarize this psalm in that it moves in David's life from prosperity, to the pit, & then to praise. Let's read it & see what God has for us this morning. **Ps 30**

¹ <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111904103404576560742746021106.html>; www.emrandhipaa.com/emr-and-hipaa/2011/09/23/crazy-and-funny-icd-10-codes/; www.ICDList.com

In this beautiful psalm David sings God's praise while looking back on a time of crisis in his life. The crisis came not in a time of opposition or persecution but in a time of success & prosperity.

1. A New Victory – From Death to Life² (1-3) The psalm begins with a joyful expression of thanksgiving: **I will extol You, O Lord**. This means God is being lifted & raised up to His rightful place at the center of life, where His greatness & majesty are acknowledged in worship & thanksgiving. The reason for David's thanksgiving is immediately spelled out: **You have lifted me up**, like a bucket drawn from a deep well. David experienced 3 problems: being in a figurative pit, enemies around him who wished him dead, & sickness as to death. God delivered him from it all.

A. God has lifted him up (1) & brought his soul up from Sheol (3) David says he'd already fallen into the depths or the grave. He'd fallen into what was apparently his final illness & was on the brink of death. He had one foot in the grave, so to speak. But God kept him alive so he didn't **go down to the pit** (3). God kept him alive.

B. Enemies rejoice over him His enemies rejoice over his misfortune &, hopefully, his death. They're rubbing their hands with glee, thinking David was only receiving what he deserved. He was so sick his enemies had, in their minds at least, laid him out in his coffin. But because of God's rescue David's enemies couldn't rejoice over him (1).

C. God healed him (2) David was sick & close to death. But God reached down & pulled him up out of death's pit when, apart from God, there was no hope for him at all. David is healed & lifted up because he cried out to Yahweh, **O Lord my God**. He knows, as Moses did, that God is his healer (Ex 15:26). What do we learn here? From time to time I get comments such as, *the prayer chain is only for health needs. Why don't we pray for something important?* Are there other things to pray for? Of course. But is it wrong to pray for health? Obviously not. David did & the NT tells us to do so as well. God is the great Physician. So when you're sick, pray & ask others to pray. It's through prayer that David's experienced the healing power of God. Js 5:14–15 exhorts anyone who is sick

² Outline adapted from Warren Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful*, Ps 30

to call for the elders of the church & they are to pray over him.³ When God answers, remember it's He who's healed you & thank Him for it, as David does. In vs 4-5 David experiences...

2. A New Day – From Anger to Favor 4

Our joy in God's grace must be shared. David calls on God's faithful ones to join him in praising God. Their praise isn't focused on David's healing, but on remembering God's **holy name**, literally it's for *the remembrance of His holiness*. David wants others to share his joy & lend their voices with his to **extol** & exalt God for who He is. David's story of deliverance is intended to motivate his fellow **godly, faithful saints** to praise God with him. After expressing thanks to God for his healing the psalmist turns to God's people around him & asks them to join him in praising God too. It would be right for David to have asked them merely to thank God because their king had been spared. But he does something better than that. He asks them to praise God, not merely because God had been gracious to him but because it's God's nature to be gracious. In other words, David was calling on the people to realize this is how God is & because He's like this, it's how He treats all His people. God's answers to prayer are to be shared & God is to be praised for it by us all. 5

God does what He does because of who He is. God always acts in ways consistent with His own nature & character. Thus His wrath passes quickly. **His anger is but for a moment**. God's wrath is meant to lead us to repentance & healing because **His favor**, His *acceptance & good will*, is forever. The contrasts in vs 5 are the motivation for David's praise: from God's anger to God's favor; from chastening for a moment to a lifetime of His grace; from a night of weeping to a morning of joy. For David, this was the dawning of a new day after a painful time of suffering in darkness. As Jeremiah tells us, each morning God's mercies are new (Lam 3:22–23). Of course, taken by itself, out of context, vs 5 could simply mean that *into each life a little rain must fall* or *every cloud has a silver lining* or *you've got to take the bad with the good* or *cheer up, things will get better*. But that's not what it's getting at. David is talking about God's disfavor versus His favor. David's thinking of the character of God & not merely of a balancing out of the good & bad times. The point is that God is displeased with sin & can never be indifferent to it. He judges it with a holy anger.

³ Donald Williams & Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Psalms 1–72*, vol. 13, The Preacher's Commentary Series, p 240

But for His people, God's discipline & anger are short-lived. They pass quickly. What remains is His **favor**, which lasts for our lifetimes & on into eternity. Weeping comes as a visitor, but God's gracious **favor** is with us permanently & forever.

Harry Ironside tells that when his father was dying a friend visited him &, leaning over, said, *John, you're suffering terribly, aren't you?* His dad didn't deny it. He said, *I am suffering more than I thought it was possible for anyone to suffer & still live. But, he added, one sight of His blessed face will make up for it all.*⁴

That's the Christian's ultimate perspective. It's the faith that triumphs over everything else. For the people of God, the sufferings of this life are minimized in light of God's unending favor & grace. Even if our miseries are great here, for reasons known only to God, they'll be more than compensated for later. This isn't true for unbelievers. For them it's just the opposite. For those who go their own way now, there may be times of temporary rejoicing. After all, the world & sin has its pleasures. Even the wicked have occasions of joy on earth. The wicked do prosper, right? But their eternity will be God's disfavor in hell. For them the anger of the Lord will last, not only a lifetime, but forever.

3. A New Heart – From Pride to Humility The psalmist now recaps what he's had to live through & the steps which led him out of this crisis. The review takes the form of a dialogue between David & God. He begins by admitting the fatal mistake he'd made. He'd taken all that God had given him for granted. He felt secure.⁵ **6-10**

David is revealing his prior sin of self-confidence & pride & is linking it to his illness. He recalls the time God turned His face away from him because of his sin. At some point in his reign, David came to think of his circumstances as secure because of his own work. He presumptuously claimed, *I shall never be shaken, I will never be moved.* He thought he was secure. David had certainly experienced moments of great success. 2 Sam 5:10 tells us, **David became greater & greater.** Why? because **the LORD God of hosts was with him.** All his success clearly came from God. 2 vss later we read, **David realized that the LORD had established him as king over Israel, & that He had exalted his kingdom for the sake of His people Israel (5:12).** But David had forgotten that. He'd come to

⁴ H. A. Ironside, *Studies on Book One of the Psalms*, p 175

⁵ Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, International Theological Commentary, p 106

believe his **prosperity**, his careless ease, the tranquility of his life & kingdom, belonged to him because of him & it would never change. This is a constant temptation for all of us. One reason God permits trials is so we won't get comfortable in our faith & stop growing & depending on Him (Job 16:12). As David found out, **prosperity** without humility can lead to adversity. His kingdom, his mountain, seemed strong, but God showed him how weak he was. As James tells us,

“GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil & he will flee from you. Draw near to God & He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; & purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable & mourn & weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning & your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, & He will exalt you (4:6-10).

David shouldn't have grown prideful about his **prosperity**, but humble. What would humility in his **prosperity** have looked like? Gratitude. He should have thanked God for what he had, as should we, rather than being arrogant about it. **Prosperity** in this world is both a gift (for which to thank God) & also a test (in which to renew our trust in God & not in ourselves). Both **prosperity** & poverty serve God's eternal purposes for His people. Earthly **prosperity** isn't a sign of God's eternal favor & poverty isn't a sign of His disfavor. If you're in a season of seeming strength & security, the word for you from this psalm is to humble yourself before God, thank Him, realize the fragility of your prosperity, & acknowledge His kindness & your own unworthiness. Don't say in your success, **I will never be moved.**

In vs 7 David realizes his success was because of God's **favor** & he expresses his dismay when God hides His face from him. To be separated from the face of God is death. Ps 104:29 says, **You hide Your face, they are dismayed; You take away their spirit, they expire & return to their dust.** David knows the face of God brings blessing, as God taught Israel through the blessing given by Aaron, **The LORD bless you, & keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you, & be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance on you, & give you peace** (Num 6:24–26). David comes to realize that only God can give him a kingdom that **cannot be shaken** (Heb 12:28). If you're in a season where God's face seems hidden, don't take that as God's final word to you. In Christ, it isn't. We're feeble. Our world is fragile. Our economy is flimsy. Our health is frail. Our peace is precarious. When we're prosperous, God is the Giver & we should humbly thank Him & not presume we won't be moved.

& when God takes it all away, know He has eternal purposes for us in it. This is His test to reveal who we really are & purify us for His final favor. God wouldn't allow David to continue in his pride. Just as God had raised him up, He could also bring him down (7). God brought problems into David's life. David was afflicted with enemies who gloated over him, with sickness, & nearly dying. These were all to remind him he was being prideful & forgetting God. For David, & for us, it's far too easy to confuse God with what we believe to be God's gifts to us. God doesn't let such a claim to independence & self-sufficiency go unchecked. He redemptively abandoned David to sickness. God hid His face from David (7). He turned His presence away from him. But this move was redemptive so that the feeling of divine absence caused David to come back into the arms of God.⁶ David has learned his lesson. He no longer looks for any other security than what he has in God. David's sin is a common failure for all of us. We replace God-confidence with self-confidence, which is never a good trade. We often think we can prosper by our own work & without relying on God. We must learn from David. Knowing he'd sinned, David kept crying out to the Lord for mercy & even debated with Him. *Am I more useful to you in the grave than I am alive on earth? Can I praise & serve You when I'm dead?* (Ps 88:7–12; 115:17; Is 38:18–19). In other words, his death would remove a voice from the choir of those who sing God's praises on earth. Ps 115:17 uses a similar expression: **The dead do not praise the LORD, Nor do any who go down into silence.** Expressions like these have led some to claim there's no knowledge of eternal life in the OT. But there is, even in the psalms (21:4). Not as much as has been revealed to us, but it's there. While at this point David didn't have the full revelation about eternal life, what he says is true. When he's dead, he won't be able to worship God on this earth or be His witness in this world. David appeals that this is reason enough for his life to be spared. He knows that God made the world for His glory & that He rightly deserves to be praised (Eph 1:6, 12, 14). So David begs that God spare his life to preserve His praise. He reasons with God on the basis of God's glory, which is a good way to pray. Since it's in the best interest of God (according to David) to preserve his life, he asks for divine mercy & help. Notice, David doesn't just present his request to God. He reasons with Him &

⁶ Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction & Commentary*, ed. David G. Firth, vol. 15–16, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, p 159

explains why God ought to grant his request (9). The thought of reasoning with God might seem strange to us, but we see it here. Obviously, it's not that God doesn't already know the reasons we give. Instead, reasoning with God forces us to think through why we're making our request. Are our requests selfish or are they God-honoring? David continues, remembering the Lord is his **helper** & the only source of grace, rescue, & life. His prayer isn't dry & formal but intense, personal, & heartfelt. He expresses the greatness of his need & his recognition that only God can help him. That's David's argument in vs 9, but then in vs 10, no more reasoning. He just pleads for God's grace: **Hear, O Lord, & be gracious to me; O Lord, be my helper.** & God does show Him grace, as seen in vss 11-12.

4. A New Song – From Mourning to Gladness There's a shift back to the joy of vss 1-3 in vss 11-12. This is who God is. Because He's revealed Himself as the God of vs 5, we can know that vs 11 will come true: morning will come, rescue will come, relief will come, joy will sound the final note, no matter our present trouble or distress, if we are His people. Having remembered his illness & God's healing, David rejoices in what God has done. 7x in this psalm David wrote or implied, **You have** (1-3, 7, 11), bearing witness to the strong & gracious hand of God working on his behalf. Even God's chastening was an expression of His love (Heb 12:1-11). Once David knew he was forgiven & accepted, he moved from the funeral to the feast. He took off the sackcloth of sadness & put on the garments of gladness. David was singing to the Lord from the depths of his being. He realized he'd be singing praises to God **forever** (12), so he wanted to start immediately. Every difficult experience of life, & David had many of them, is an opportunity to have a pity party or attend a rehearsal for singing in the choirs of heaven. We have a lifetime of grace (5) to prepare us for an eternity of glory. Freed from the chains of his own self-esteem & self-importance, his life takes on a new dimension. **Mourning** is replaced by **dancing**, one of the signs of rejoicing in Israel (1 Sam 18:6) that had a place in their joyful worship (149:3; 150:4). **Sackcloth**, a coarse cloth worn as a sign of grieving & repentance (Gen 37:34; Ps 35:13; 69:11), is replaced by festive garments of gladness. This is a joy which can't be contained. David breaks forth into songs of praise & thanksgiving because he's discovered that God's grace has proved sufficient for all his needs. Here

is the God who can truly be addressed as, **O Lord my God** (2). It's to his God that he'll now **give thanks to forever**. The road back to spiritual health may have been hard, but David's now at peace with God & is fulfilling his purpose to praise & extol God.⁷ He wouldn't, he couldn't, remain **silent** (12). Remember Charles Wesley's hymn, *O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise?* What's the advantage of having a 1,000 tongues to sing God's praise when the one tongue we do have is **silent**? Jesus told us that our mouths speak from what fills our hearts (Lk 6:45). If we're not singing God's praise it's because our hearts aren't full of Him. Instead, they're filled with the things of this world, things that will perish & pass away. We must fill our hearts & minds with God. Think about Him for who He is, for what He is, & for what He's done. & then, when our hearts are overflowing with His praise, speak about Him to others, as David does in this psalm. As we do so, we'll find that God delights in such praise & we'll be drawn to Him even more than we are now. & we find that God uses our praise to attract others & win them to faith. As a result, we'll have even more cause for rejoicing than we do now.⁸ Let's follow David's example of moving from our selfish pride to humble prayer & joyful praise of our great God. **PRAY COMMUNION**

The theme of resurrection appears to be present Ps 30. It begins with praise to God for **You have lifted me up** (1). This lifting up, this reviving, this resurrection can refer to a variety of things. It can speak of the grave or other sufferings. An interesting parallel to Ps 30 is found at the beginning of Ps 130 where the psalmist says, **Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD**. This psalm is one of the songs of ascents that pilgrims would sing on their way up to Jerusalem & to the temple. The climb to the temple symbolized their rescue by God from the depths of need in which they found themselves. So, the praise of David in Ps 30 for being lifted up out of the depths is a theme appropriate to the temple & its dedication, as the title indicates. It expresses the purpose of the temple in the lives of God's people. The temple is where the people gather to praise God for delivering them. It's the place where they express their needs to God in prayer. It's the place where God displays His mercy & forgiveness to them in the sacrifices offered there. It's the place where

⁷ Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, International Theological Commentary, pp 106–107

⁸ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1–41: An Expository Commentary*, pp 266–267

they meet with God to hear His blessing through His priests. This very personal experience of David is meant to lead Israel, & us, to faith, praise, & prayer. David clearly calls on all the saints to sing it with him (4). We're all to thank & praise God just as David did. We must never rush through the Psalms but learn to pause & ponder on them so their poetic beauty & profound truths will penetrate deeply into our hearts. Meditation, as we've seen, means muttering, the repeating of the words over in our minds & with our mouths. As we consider the great truths of these words, turning to them again & again, we will find more & more encouragement. The truth contained in vss 5 & 11 is very simple & a common teaching of the Bible (Ps 126:6; Jn 16:20–22; 2 Cor 4:17). But the poetry of these words carries the truth home to us with power. **5, 11**

As sure as David could be of this, we who are in Christ are even more sure & even more secure. Why? Because in a way David couldn't yet see, we have the cross & the resurrection, which isn't only another example of joy sounding the last note, but it's the once-and-for-all accomplishment in history proclaiming loudly that *joy will win*. Joy will have the last laugh, the final say, & sound the last note. As sure as Jesus conquered the grave, so will we. God doesn't give us earthly assurances that we'll have no nights of weeping. But in Christ, God does give us the final assurance that the night will end, morning will come, & joy will be the final result.

Today we again have opportunity to remember & meditate on what God through Christ has done for us. Think of Jesus' death & resurrection. Through this He brought the dawning of a new day for all who trust in Him (Mt 28:1). We have even more reason to thank God than David understood. The cross has revealed to us an even deeper dimension of God's response to our sin & suffering. Thanks to Christ's defeat of death by His resurrection, we've been saved from that ultimate evil. Jesus Christ is the One who has **abolished death & brought life & immortality to light through the gospel** (2 Tim 1:10). By His salvation of us He turns our mourning into dancing & replaces our sackcloth with gladness. How can we not joyfully give our thankful gratitude & joyful worship to our Lord Jesus Christ? We're to be God's thankful saints. If you have no thanks to give you should probably refrain from the elements of communion. The eating of the bread & drinking of the cup is to be a giving of thanks from beginning to end. Jesus took the bread & what? Gave thanks. In

the same way, He took the cup & what? Gave thanks. Therefore, we too should **sing praise to the Lord & give thanks** (12). As we come to the table to remember our Lord, we must be thankful, humble saints. As Spurgeon once said, *Can't mourning saints come?* Of course, but learn to sing & give thanks. *Can't weak & feeble saints come?* Of course, but don't remain weak & feeble. *Can't groaning saints come?* Of course, but groaning is out of place when you have the gift of His sacrifice for you. That should stop your groans & moans & turn them to thanksgiving, praise, & worship. People express their praise & delight spontaneously concerning far less things than the joys of God & the privileges of His people. Therefore, we must **sing praise to the Lord, you His godly ones, & give thanks to His holy name** (4).⁹

For David, the bringing up of his soul from the pit, was figurative. He was as good as dead. He despaired of life itself. He thought he was a goner. Yet God brought him up & restored him from a near-death illness. But for David's greater Son, Jesus, it was literally true. From Friday evening, & all day Saturday, & into Sunday morning, Jesus was in the grave. But then God drew Him up, & spoiled the rejoicing of His enemies, & brought Him up all the way, not just from the brink of death, but from death itself. Because God hid His face from Jesus for a time on Friday (Ps 22), joy came Easter Sunday morning. & because of Jesus, we experience joy, not wrath, as our final end.¹⁰

The night before His death, Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples. **While they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, & after a blessing, He broke *it* & gave *it* to the disciples, & said, "Take, eat; this is My body" (Mt 26:26).** We eat of the bread thankfully & joyfully, acknowledging that it was His sacrifice for us that lifted us up from the pit of sin & death. BREAD

When He had taken a cup & given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Mt 26:27-29). We drink of the cup thankfully & joyfully, knowing that one glorious day, we'll drink it with Him in His Father's kingdom! CUP Stand & sing...

⁹ Charles Spurgeon, *Singing Saints*, 10/3/1886, <http://spurgeongems.org/sermon/chs2489.pdf>

¹⁰ David Mathis, *Joy Comes Through the Mourning*, www.desiringgod.org/messages/joy-comes-through-the-mourning