

# A Psalm of Restoration

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[ 0 : 00 ] This is the last in a short series in the Psalms that we're doing. Next week, Rupert Hunt Taylor, another one of our staff members here, will be beginning a series in Sermon on the Mount.

So do come back next week for that. But this afternoon we are reading Psalm 30. So please do turn with me to Psalm 30. And you can find that on page 461 in the Church Bibles there.

So 461, this is Psalm 30. A Psalm of David. A song at the dedication of the temple. I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me.

O Lord, my God, I cried to you for help and you have healed me. O Lord, you have brought up my soul from shale. You restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.

Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment, and his favour is for a lifetime.

[ 1 : 16 ] Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved.

By your favour, O Lord, you made my mountain stand strong. You hid your face. I was dismayed. To you, O Lord, I cry, and to the Lord I pled 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? Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me. O Lord, be my helper.

You have turned for me my mourning into dancing. You have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.

O Lord, my God, I will give thanks to you forever. Now, before we turn to think about this psalm, let us pray together this lunchtime.

[ 2 : 26 ] Let's pray. Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.

For his anger is but for a moment, and his favour is for a lifetime. Merciful Father, we come before you this lunchtime humbled as we consider the vastness and the beauty of your creation and the smallness of our own lives.

Humbled as we are reminded of your favour, your grace, which heals us, which restores us, us, the sinful people. Lord, might you help us to sing praises to you.

Help us to glory in your name. And no doubt many here, even today, are feeling low. Life's pressures and difficulties crowding in.

Perhaps others are full of the joy of life, full of thankfulness, perhaps enjoying a time of real prosperity. Whatever our situation, Lord, would you bring each of us to the point of recognising our need for your healing grace, the need of utter dependence upon you.

[ 3 : 48 ] And would you please speak to us through your word for all scriptures breathed out by you and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

So help us now, Lord, as we come to your word. For we ask it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Well, please do have Psalm 30 open in front of you, as we think about this for a few moments. Now, we all know that moment when you're exposed, when the veneer of having everything under control and altogether is shattered, and the reality of our lives is laid bare.

It may be a serious, debilitating illness, cancer, a stroke, something undiagnosed. It may be some other life-threatening situation.

You're in danger. Many of you have no doubt faced those moments when you've had to come to terms with your own limits. Your health has been taken from you.

[ 5 : 18 ] It may be a work situation where everything has fallen apart. The project you've been working on crumbles. Perhaps your job, your livelihood, is in danger.

These are difficult moments. You hit rock bottom. I'm sure you felt that at some moments in life. Perhaps that's where you're right now.

You perhaps thought you had it all together. You thought you could manage life on your own. Now, of course, you never say that in reality, or even think it, but isn't that the reality so often?

We get on with life, coping on our own, making decisions, doing life, without much of a real thought for the Lord. But something has happened.

Something has come along to expose the reality, and you realize you never did have it together. You never really were managing life. You were never really in control of things.

[ 6 : 20 ] It's all fallen apart, and the Lord seems absent. Well, it's a moment like that, a moment of utter despair that lies at the very heart of our psalm this morning, there in verse 7.

A moment when David's imagined security and his prosperity is suddenly stripped away, and he's left exposed. He's left in utter dismay, disheartened, distressed.

He's been knocked for six, and he's left pleading to the Lord for mercy. Now, perhaps that's surprising. At first glance, this is a psalm packed full of praise to the Lord.

Look how it starts and how it finishes. Overflowing praise. And yet, if we were to stop there, we would be missing the real bite of the psalm.

If we merely observe the fact of praise in the psalm, we're missing the answer to the why question. Why is David so overflowing in praise? Well, the psalm gives us the reason.

[ 7 : 30 ] David is so full of praise because the Lord has graciously restored him. Just look at verse 1. I will extol you. In other words, praise enthusiastically.

I will praise you enthusiastically, O Lord, for you have drawn me up, and have not let my foes rejoice over me. Or verse 2. O Lord, my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.

Or look to the end of the psalm, verse 11. You have turned my mourning into dancing. David is full of praise because the Lord has restored him, has rescued him.

Restored from what? Well, as we'll see, it was some sort of near-death experience that had been confronted with his own frailty. And that had exposed his own prideful self-reliance.

And that led him to utter dismay. His was an attitude that basically said, look, God, it's okay. I've got this. I can do this. I can do life. But he was exposed, as we'll see.

[ 8 : 39 ] He hits the depths of despair at the end of verse 7. And yet, it is a psalm full of praise and thankfulness. So, we're going to trace David's journey from dismay to praise.

The first thing we'll see is, David's prideful self-reliance is exposed. And then we'll look at David's plea for mercy. And then finally, David's praise because of restoration.

So firstly then, verses 6 and 7, David's prideful self-reliance is exposed. Central here is David's complacency.

That's the source of his despair. This is where the bite of the psalm is to be felt. And we're starting in verses 6 and 7, as these really inform the whole psalm.

So let's just look at those verses again. Verse 6. As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved. By your favor, O Lord, you made my mountain stand strong.

[ 9 : 46 ] You hid your face. I was dismayed. What's going on here? What's going on? David recounts a time when he enjoyed great prosperity.

Look at the start of verse 6. He looks back to a time when he was really on a roll. Life was going well. So much so that he was able to say, I shall never be moved.

And yet, in a few short lines of poetry, David descends from prosperity to dismay. End of verse 7.

Three lines and David's world is turned upside down. What's happened? What's gone on? Well, the Lord has turned his face away.

David's experienced some sort of life-threatening situation. Why? Why? Because David has become self-reliant, self-confident, complacent, relying not on the Lord.

[ 10 : 49 ] There's no mention of the Lord in verse 6, is there? As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall not be moved. David's reliance was on himself, not the Lord.

His prosperity had blinded him, seduced him. And as one preacher put it, we see here that prosperity can mask a fatal complacency, which sudden trouble exposes like nothing else can.

Now, have you ever noticed this in your own life, perhaps? When sickness or danger or life-changing situation comes along, it uncovers our complacency.

It exposes our thinking that basically amounts to self-reliance. Isn't it the case that when trouble comes, we start praying like we've never done before?

We were complacent. And yet, isn't it so true that God seems most present in our prosperity? God seems closest when things are going well.

[ 11 : 54 ] And yet, we often attribute all the things that are going well to ourselves. Don't you tend to basically echo David's words in your own thoughts? As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved.

And it's so easy, isn't it, to slip into that way of thinking and feeling. I know that I can do that very easily. Things are going fairly well. Things are going smoothly. And I can think, you know what? Things are good. I've got my plans in place. I've got the pension sorted. I've got the insurance organized. God must be quite pleased with me. But that's complacent foolishness.

Our circumstances do not determine how things are with the Lord. When we stop for a moment, we see the reality, as David puts it in verse 7.

And the reality is, that it is by the Lord's favor that he's become strong, that he's enjoyed prosperity. For you and for me, all good things come from our heavenly Father by his favor.

[ 12 : 58 ] But it seems that the David of verse 6 had forgotten that. And so with devastating brevity, we see the Lord's response to David's prideful self-reliance.

You hid your face. I was dismayed. This is the loving discipline of the Lord in action. God turns his face away.

He withdraws his favor, and David descends into utter dismay, utter distress and darkness. His world fell apart. David came face to face with the absence of God's face, and it was bleak.

He cried for help. And yet the Lord's discipline is a loving discipline. The Lord does this, to teach his child that self-reliance is utter folly, and to drive him back to himself from repentance and faith.

Perhaps you know this yourself. The Lord disciplines those whom he loves. Perhaps you know that experience of going through a difficult time, as the Lord teaches you that to rely on your own strength is foolishness.

[ 14 : 11 ] So don't waste those moments of the Lord's loving discipline. That was David's experience, his prideful self-reliance that led only to despair in the end.

But let's look on to verses 8 and 10. We see David's plea for mercy. Verses 8 and 10. David sees the reality, as we've seen.

He experiences the despair of the Lord's turning away, and he does the only thing that he can do. To you, O Lord, I cry, and to the Lord, I plead for mercy.

All of David's imagined security crumbled away. It evaporated. But his real security emerges there in verses 8 and 10. The rock of his real security is there, verse 8.

It's the Lord. The Lord, in his kindness, has lovingly disciplined him so that he might turn back to him, seeking mercy and restoration. And the exact words of his plea are there in verses 9 and 10.

[ 15 : 17 ] 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? Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me. O Lord, be my helper.

David knows that there is nowhere else to turn to, no one else to turn to, but the Lord alone. And you and I have nowhere else to turn to when our imagined securities crumble away and we're left exposed, in dismay, exposed by a serious illness or a life-threatening situation.

Perhaps you're confronting death itself. What does David do? He turns to the Lord. So one right response to severe illness may well be to confess to the Lord that now you've seen what you've always been, a frail creature who needs him to sustain you in your every breath.

Now that is not to say that every difficulty in life, every moment of dismay is God disciplining you because of self-reliance. But sometimes it might just be the case that the Lord is wanting to shake you from complacency, shake you from thinking you can do it all on your own, shaking you, bringing you even to the depths of David's despair so that you turn to him, turn to him in utter dependence, crying out for restoration.

We need to realize that we can't rely on our own brilliance. You can't rely on your own prosperity because we are just humans and he is the great Lord over all creation.

[ 17 : 05 ] We must realize that. We can only be in one place at one time. He is everywhere all the time. We can't possibly do everything that needs to be done.

But he can fix anything he wants to. We are unable to know everyone or everything. But he knows everything.

In light of these things, isn't it utterly foolish to think that we can rely on our own strength, our own wisdom? In light of these things, isn't it utterly foolish to think that we can bring about our own

restoration?

restoration. So when you are brought face to face with your own I can do this on my own sort of attitude, the response is not I can get myself back on terms with the Lord.

I'll do extra quiet times. I'll pray twice as long each day. No, that's falling back into the same trap of relying on yourself. What we do is do what David does.

[18:10] Turn to the Lord, crying for mercy, pleading for rescue. We recognize that we can't earn any favor. He must rescue us. And so we turn to him in repentance, pleading for mercy, turning to him.

That's the bite of the psalm. But there's a wonderful balm. David's praise is because of restoration. He's been in the pits. He's turned to the Lord seeking mercy. And we see David's wonderful praise because of the restoration that he's been given.

As I've said, David's foolishness, his foolish self-complacency, and the consequent loving discipline of the Lord lies at the heart of this passage. Verses 6 to 10. And without grasping this, we miss the reading for the joyful outpouring of praise that bracketed in verses 1 to 5 and the end, 11 and 12. David's plea for mercy is met by the Lord's favor. It is met by restoration. And that is a great source of joy for David and every Christian believer. He is surely right, isn't he, in verse 5, that the Lord's anger is but for a moment and his favor for a lifetime.

[19:35] Or as David puts it in another way, weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. Weeping is just an overnight visitor.

In fact, it doesn't even stay the whole night because joy comes with the morning. And of course, during the night, as I'm sure David found, the morning seems a long way off.

It seems an unending night. Sometimes that diagnosis which tears away your self-reliance is one which isn't just going to disappear overnight.

For the Christian tested by terminal cancer, the night will be long, will be lonely, bitter. But even then, David's promise is real, isn't it?

Joy comes in the morning. Even if it's not until that wonderful morning when every tear will be wiped away. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

[20:44] The Lord graciously restores David. And just note that wonderful contrast at the end of the psalm that speaks of this magnificent restoration. You have turned for me my mourning into dancing.

You have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness. In a moment, David is taken from the scene of a funeral to the joy of a wedding.

You don't get more extreme than that. Sackcloth against gladness. What a contrast. What a restoration that has been brought about by the Lord's help and mercy.

And David's response to the wonderful favor shown by the Lord is to sing the Lord's praise and not be silent. Just look down there at verse 12. Let's notice here the purpose of the Lord's discipline. It's not limited to bringing about repentance, that seeking the Lord for mercy, that confession of sin, that turning away. The purpose of restoration is to bring primarily praise and thanks to the Lord.

[22:00] It's not primarily for our own well-being and comfort, but it is primarily for the glory of the Lord. Just look again at verses 11 and 12. You have turned for me my mourning into dancing, then verse 12, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.

O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever. We are restored ultimately to bring him praise, to speak of him, to give thanks to him forever.

And so David's profound personal experience, restored from the depths of dismay, to joy beyond measure, moves him to urge his people to do likewise, to rejoice, to praise the Lord.

Look again at verse 4. Sing praise to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. His Lord, who restored him, is also their Lord and our Lord.

God, as you turn your face towards Christ in faith, you can have confidence that Christ, God's face, is turned not away from you, but towards you.

[23:22] His anger is but for a moment. Joy comes in the morning. For the Christian, any sorrow, painful and necessary as it may be, that exposes a sinful complacency is temporary as we turn to the Lord whose favor is unending.

We can know restoration. This is a wonderful truth that must move us to praise our gracious Lord. Lord. So let's pray, shall we?

Father, we do thank you for your word to us this afternoon. Thank you as we read of David's experience as he was in the depths.  
His life was threatened and that exposed complacency and attitude that said, I can do it on my own. But Lord, what wonderful restoration.  
Restoration so that he would praise you. And would we hear this lesson? Would we come to terms with our own complacencies?  
[ 24 : 43 ] And if we are in the depths, would we not try and work our way out but turn to you pleading for mercy, knowing the restoration that we have through Christ and all of this so that we might praise you and not be silent.  
So we thank you for this psalm, this lunchtime. Help us to respond in our minds, in our hearts and in our lives.  
We ask this for your namesake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
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Amen. Amen.