

# Going Up and Feeling Down

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[ 0 : 00 ] So we're going to turn immediately to God's Word, and our reading today comes from the Psalms, Psalm 130, and you will find this in page 518 of the Pew Bible, 518, Psalm 130, and we shall read the whole Psalm together.

Let us hear then the Word of God, a song of ascents. 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 plea for mercy.

If you, O Lord, should 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 wait 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.

[ 1 : 17 ] Amen. And may God add his blessing to this, the reading of his Word. Just a moment of prayer. Amen. Make the book live to us, O Lord.

Show us thyself within thy Word. Show us ourselves, and please show us our Savior. And make the book live to us, for Jesus' sake.

Amen. My favorite rock group, pop group, music band, is a group called Oasis. And even though they disbanded just a number of years ago, they're still very much my favorite group.

And I think the reason for this is that the lyrics of their songs encapsulated the mood and the thoughts of the generation in which I grew up. I could sing the words of their songs with all my heart.

Because at the time, the words of their songs were in line with the cries of my heart. And I think this is why the book of Psalms is so popular amongst the people of God.

[ 2 : 23 ] More than any other book of the Bible, the book of Psalms capture the cries from the heart of the people of God. There is an honesty, a transparency, a realism in the Psalms that we can all identify with.

And take great assurance and encouragement from. And if we're honest, there's an honesty, openness, realism and transparency in the Psalms that we often don't find too much with each other.

My title this afternoon is Going Up and Feeling Down, which I've taken from the heading of the Psalm and the first words in the Psalm.

If you look to the heading of the Psalm, a song of ascents, which quite literally means a song of going up. Well, going up where, we might ask? Well, going up to Jerusalem, as we've seen last week in Psalm 121, all the Psalms from Psalm 120 to Psalm 134 all have this heading, a song of ascents.

For they are the songs that the pilgrim people of God sang as they were going up to Jerusalem, which God had commanded them to do three times a year. Three times a year in order to celebrate the three great feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Atonement.

[ 3 : 48 ] So the Psalmist was going up. But if we look to the first words in the Psalm, Out of the depths I cry, verse 1.

The Psalmist is going up, but the Psalmist is feeling down. So the Psalmist was going up, but he was feeling down. You know, I don't know what sort of a week or indeed month or life you've had.

But maybe as you come here today, that's exactly how you feel. Feeling down. And to be honest, maybe you don't really want to be here. But it's become tradition to you and you just like to be here on a Wednesday.

Maybe you're feeling down due to circumstances that you find yourself in. Feeling down due to choices, maybe bad choices that you've made. Feeling down due to situations that you find yourself in.

Or feeling down at the ongoing battle we sin in your life. Well, we're here. And if we are truly Christians, then just like the Psalmist, we are a pilgrim people.

[ 4 : 58 ] Not en route to a physical Jerusalem, but en route to the heavenly Jerusalem. So this Psalm has got something to say to us as a pilgrim people.

And if we listen in and learn from the Psalmist, I am sure that this is a Psalm that all of us will come to know and love and enjoy. And to be able to sing with all of our hearts.

I'd like to take the Psalm under three headings. In verses 1 and 2. Needing God's mercy. Needing God's mercy. In verses 3 to 6.

Knowing God's mercy. Knowing God's mercy. And then finally, in verse 7 and 8. Sharing God's mercy. Sharing God's mercy.

Well, firstly then, verse 1 and 2. Needing God's mercy. It's always right, no matter what part of the Bible we're in. But especially when we're in the Psalms.

[ 6 : 00 ] To note the tone. To note the tone of the Psalm. And the Psalmist here is, he's not rejoicing. He's a man who's despairing. He's in the depths of despair.

He is shouting, I'm distressed. He's a man who's sunk to the bottom. And he can't sink any lower. These words make me think of a song that the Beatles sang in the 60s.

Help. I need somebody. Help. Not just anybody. Help. You know, I need someone. Help. John Lennon, who penned those words, said that those words were not just a lyric.

Those words were the cries from his heart at that particular time in his life. But, says John Lennon, there was no one to help.

The Psalmist is crying, help. But he's not looking to family and friends. He's not doing what the pop song of the 90s says, search for the hero inside yourself.

[ 7 : 09 ] Nor is he looking within for the answers. And that's the view taken by modern day therapy and counseling. That all the answers are within. Now, don't understand me, friends. I'm not knocking therapy and counseling.

These things are okay in themselves. But these things always need to be governed by the cross and scripture. Otherwise, it's disastrous. But the Psalmist, he's not looking to these things.

He's in the depths. And he has a need and a hunger for God. As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you.

He wants God to hear him. He wants God to take notice of him. And many people in the depths, and it's only then that they ever begin to think about praying. People are probably calling out to God due to the present state of our country.

The country's in a terrible mess. Are we going to be in Europe? Are we going to be out of Europe? Is Scotland going to be out of Britain? Or maybe because they're locked up in a police station or in a prison cell.

[ 8 : 15 ] Or maybe somebody is crying out to God from the sickbed that they find themselves in. They need God. They're hungry for God to intervene.

But what folks usually want in situations like that is. They're hungry for a miracle. What they want is a miracle. They maybe want their financial position to be resolved.

They want maybe to be let out of jail. Or to be healed from the illness or the sickness that they have. Now don't understand me friends. The Lord is concerned for these things.

But it seems that there are other concerns more pressing than these. There are bigger fish for the psalmist to fry. But what does the psalmist want? Well the psalmist wants mercy.

Verse 2. Oh Lord hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy. Mercy is a real need.

[ 9 : 14 ] Because if you look ahead to verse 3. Verse 3 tells us that the psalmist's real problem is his iniquity. It's his sin that's got him in the depths.

He's crying to God from the depths. He is crushed under the weight of his sin before a holy and righteous God. It's his sin that's got him in the depths.

And friends that's the world's real problem. Not everybody might agree with that. Not everybody might believe that. But name me a problem in the world or in your life.

That's not caused by your sin. Or the sin of someone else. Behind the country's current financial meltdown lies greed.

Behind broken relationships. Selfishness. Behind the crimes of those in prison cells. It's sin that's the problem. And even those in sickbeds with diseases and illnesses.

[ 10 : 15 ] These are from the effects of sin in a world separate from God. Friends we don't need a miracle for our situation. We need mercy for our sin.

Because friends you and me and all the world are exactly like the psalmist. Needing God's mercy. Because like the psalmist. Our real problem is sin.

Needing God's mercy. Well secondly in verses 3 to 6. Knowing God's mercy. Knowing God's mercy. Knowing God's mercy is knowing the real gospel.

Look at verse 3. The psalmist knows that the real problem is sin. Which leads to real judgment. Verse 3. If you Lord should mark iniquities.

Oh Lord. Who could stand? I heard the story of the author Conan Doyle. He's the fellow who penned Sherlock Holmes. And apparently he wrote a letter to 12 of the most respected men in London.

[ 11 : 19 ] And all that it said in the letter was flee. All is revealed. Flee. And within 24 hours. Six of those men had made arrangements to leave the country.

Flee. All is revealed. Now friends. I wonder. I wonder if we had to make a DVD of your life. Your thoughts. Your words. All that you've done.

Maybe all that you've failed to do. I wonder. What rating would you put in that video? I don't know about you. But certainly for me. I don't know how many X's that video would have.

But imagine. Imagine I gave the DVD of your life. And I gave it to Richard and Bob there up at the sound desk. And we were going to put the DVD on. In front of folks.

Here. Today. I wonder what your reaction would be. That if all was to be revealed. I bet your reaction would be.

[ 12 : 20 ] Like six of Arthur Conan Doyle's friends. To flee. Right out of this church. Right out of this city. Right out of this country. That if all was going to be revealed.

You would flee. Now I wonder why that would be. Well it's probably because you couldn't stand. People really knowing who you really were. What really went on in your mind.

And in your heart. Because you probably know that you couldn't stand. Under the weight of the judgment. Of all these good Christian people in here. They would judge the life out of you. What makes us think that we can stand.

Under the weight of the judgment. Of a holy God. If God marked our iniquities. Who could stand. Who could stand. Not the prime minister.

Not the pope. Nor any of our policemen. Any prisoners in our prisons. Nor any person in this building. Romans 3 and 23.

[ 13 : 19 ] For all have sinned. And fall short of the glory of God. That's a bit of an alien thought to most folks. Isn't it? Because most folks theology goes something like this.

He's making a list. He's checking it twice. We're going to find out who's naughty and nice. And the naughty is always somebody else. It's never me. I'm always nice. But the psalmist knew.

That he couldn't stand under the weight of God's judgment. The psalmist knew this. And that's why he cries for mercy. Because verse 3 is about the real justice of God. Real sin leads to real judgment.

And that's the last thing that the psalmist or any of us needs. Why? Because justice condemns the sinner. Justice is no use.

I heard the story of a minister who was traveling through a 30 mile an hour zone. At 50 mile an hour. It wasn't me.

[ 14 : 20 ] But it could have been me. Because I've done that plenty of times. And he got caught. And he was up at court. And he was going to get his license to a car from him. And he made a plea.

He made a plea to the sheriff. And he said. Please. I'm going to ask you. Please go and have mercy on me. I need this car. I need this car to do pastoral visits. To visit this sick.

And go to hospitals. And something like that. And the judge just peered over the top of his glasses. And he said. This court does not deal in mercy.

This court deals in justice. Justice is the last thing. That any of us would want. Because justice means that the sinner must be condemned.

But the psalmist knows that in the real gospel. There is real forgiveness. Verse 4. But with you there is forgiveness.

[ 15 : 18 ] There are a lot of verses in the Bible that begin with a great but. But for me this is the best one hands down.

It's my favorite and so much so I'm going to read it again. But with you there is forgiveness. Does that not bring great joy and great relief to your heart this afternoon.

As it does mine. That there is forgiveness. Not that there might be or there could be or there may be be. But there is forgiveness. And the psalmist knows the source of this forgiveness.

But with you there is forgiveness. The source of forgiveness is the Lord himself. Not with me. Thank God it's not with me. It's not in my pedigree.

It's not in my performance. It's not in my faithfulness. But with you there is forgiveness. God has done something. Not with me. But with you.

[ 16 : 16 ] And as I am sure that the psalmist walked about Jerusalem. And the temple courts in particular. He saw God's provision for sinners. Lambs being bought and sold.

And sacrificed for sins. On the altar of God. Only by grace can we enter. Only by grace can we stand. Not by our human endeavor.

But by the blood of the lamb. And what the psalmist saw in the temple. Lambs being bought and sacrificed in the altar of God. For the atonement of sin. What the psalmist saw in the temple.

Was only a foreshadow. And a pointer to that great provision. That God had made for sinners. In the Lord Jesus Christ. But with you.

There is forgiveness. Maybe there's someone here this afternoon. Who's never really experienced. The forgiveness of God. Maybe you think that the depths of your sin.

[ 17 : 19 ] The depths of sin that you are in. Are far too deep. Friends. Let me tell you. That the depths that the Lord Jesus Christ sank to on the cross. Makes the depths of your sin look like the drop.

In an ocean. Or maybe there's someone here who thinks. Well. Well I know God can forgive certain things. But you know. There's this one particular thing. I don't think.

God could forgive that. But. Well look to the last verse in this psalm. He himself. Will redeem Israel.

From all. Their sins. All. Their sins. Not some. Not most. Not a huge percentage of. All.

Their sins. Friends. There's no one here. Who is too good. That they don't need the. Forgiveness that Jesus offers. And there's no one here. Too bad.

[ 18 : 18 ] That the forgiveness of Jesus. Cannot reach. But with you. There is forgiveness. And the evidence of that forgiveness. That you may. Be feared. Fear of the Lord.

Is the beginning of wisdom. Those who have been forgiven. Will want to live wisely. In the fear of the Lord. Which is. Really being in awe. Of his character. And works. And also being.

Obedient. To his commands. The Lord Jesus said. If you love me. You will obey my commands. And not only. Does the real gospel. Bring real forgiveness. And deal with the real judgment.

Of God. The real gospel. Also brings. Real assurance. Verse five. And six. Charles Spurgeon. Says that in these verses. The psalmist.

Has come out of the depths. Of anguish. To the heights. Of assurance. And where does this assurance. Come from? Well verse five. It's in God's word.

[ 19 : 11 ] I wait for the Lord. My soul waits. And in his word. I hope. It's not. Not in his own feelings.

But in the facts. Of the word. Of God. Martin Luther. The great reformer. Was asked. Do you feel forgiven? And Luther replied. No. Or it was probably nine.

Wasn't it? Nine. But the word of God. Tells me. That I am. And he went on. To pen a hymn. And this is what he wrote. Feelings come.

And feelings go. And feelings are deceiving. But my warrant. Is the facts. Of the word of God. For nothing else. Is worth believing.

I trust in God's unchanging word. For it cannot. Be broken. You see friends. We can't trust feelings. They go up. And they go down. But we like Martin Luther.

[ 20 : 06 ] Can trust the facts. Of the word of our God. For they never change. Isaiah 40. Verse 8. The grass withers. The flower fades. But the word of the Lord. Will stand forever. And the word of our God.

Says. In Psalm 103. Verse 12. As far. As the east. Is from the water. West. So far. Does he remove. Our transgressions. From us.

And trusting in God's word. Involves all of him. Verse 6. My soul waits for the Lord. More than watchman. For the morning. More than watchman. For the morning. With morning. Comes light and hope.

But the psalmist. Now assured the forgiveness. And assured by the word of God. Knows that the Lord's coming. The Lord's coming. All those temple sacrifices. Were only pointing forward.

So he. He knew. And was now assured. That the Lord's coming. Was more reliable. The Lord coming. To deal with his sin. Was more reliable. Than the coming of the morning.

[ 21 : 04 ]    Needing God's mercy. Knowing God's mercy. And thirdly. And finally. Verse 7 and 8. Sharing. God's. Mercy. 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. Contrast. Verse 7 and 8. With verse 1. And his first cry. The psalmist. Was only interested.

In himself. In God. Now his interests. Extend to his. His fellow men. The psalmist. Has gone. Has gone. From being a. A penitent prayer.

To a passionate preacher. When you need. And then you know. God's mercy. You can't keep it. To yourself. You've got. To share it.

[ 21 : 58 ]    Again. The Charles Spurgeon. Have you no wish. For others. To be saved. Then you are not. Saved yourself. Be sure of that.

When we need. And we know. God's mercy. We can't keep it. To ourselves. We have got. To share it. The psalmist. Is no longer. Sunk in his own. Situation. He has. Good news.

And he has. Got to share it. Verse 7. O Israel. Hope in the Lord. For with him. There is steadfast love. With the Lord. There is hesed. The covenant love. Of a faithful God.

And with him. Is plentiful. Redemption. This is the God. Of Genesis 1. And Genesis 2. The God. Who was generous. And abundant. In creation.

He is plentiful. And generous. In redemption. The generosity. Of God's love. And redemption. Is far greater. Than all of our sins. But I wonder.

[ 22 : 55 ]    If you noticed. Two things. From these verses here. The first thing is. That the psalmist. Is preaching to us. To hope in the Lord.

To hope in the Lord. Not in anyone. Or anywhere else. Nor in Buddha. Nor in Allah. Or anyone else. Only in the. For only with the Lord.

Is there forgiveness. Only with the Lord. There is steadfast love. And only with the Lord. Is there full. And plentiful. Redemption. And secondly.

Verse 8. That this. Redemption. This love. This forgiveness. Is only. For Israel. So that gives us a question.

Then doesn't it. Who then is Israel? Well in the psalmist day. Israel were an ethnic people. But people could force their way. Into the covenant people of God.

[ 23 : 52 ]    Remember. Rahab the prostitute. Ruth the Moabite. Or Naaman the Syrian. They forced their way into the people of God. That's the way it always was. People could force their way in.

But today. There is no need to. Try and force your way in. For Paul writes in Galatians chapter 3. Verse 28 and 29. For there is neither Jew nor Greek. Slave nor free.

Male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ. If you belong to Christ. Then you are Abraham's seed. And heirs. According to the promise.

Who is Israel? If you belong to Christ. So friends. There's a good question. To ask ourselves. As we sit here this afternoon. Do I belong to Jesus Christ?

Not do I belong to this church. Or any other church. Or any other organization. Do I belong to Jesus Christ? Well if you do.

[ 24 : 56 ] There is forgiveness for you. If you do. There is unfailing. Steadfast covenant love for you. If you do. There is full. And plentiful redemption.

For you. Are you here this afternoon? And as yet. You don't belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. Well can I urge you. That before you.

Leave this place. This afternoon. You would learn. From the experience. And the model. Of the psalmist. That you would cry. To the Lord.

About your sin. The Lord Jesus Christ. The one who loved you. And who gave himself. For you. A cry. Is all that is needed.

But it is to the Lord. That you must cry. For forgiveness. Cannot be found. Anywhere else. Nor. In anyone else.

[ 25 : 53 ] Let us pray together. Let us pray together. You see at just the right time.

When we were still powerless. Christ died. For the ungodly. Very rarely. Will anyone die. for a righteous man. Though for a good man, someone might possibly dare to die.

But God demonstrates His own love for us. And this is that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Our loving Heavenly Father, we thank You that with You there is forgiveness. We thank You for the indescribable gift of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In whose name we pray. Amen.