

From Sorrow to Singing Psalm 30:1-12

Spanish troops had overrun the country of Holland led by the infamous and ruthless Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, Duke of Alva. He was the secular arm of the Papacy and the Spanish Inquisition. Under the direction of the Pope, it was his mission to bring the country back under the rule of Spain and into the arms of the Catholic church. At his command, thousands were sentenced to torture, imprisonment, or burned at the stake. Citizens of Holland called it the Council of Blood. To fight back, they cut the dikes down in an effort to drown the Duke's troops. They fought to retain the right to worship God without interference from the Pope or priest.

John Herwin was one of those prisoners held in the Duke's prison. History reveals that before his conversion to Christ, he was a drunkard. But on this day, he sat in a prison for his passionate and strong faith in Christ, a man described as being filled with the Spirit of God. One chronicler noted that Herwin would sit in prison and sing the psalms, drawing many to the prison doors to hear him sing.

His actions further infuriated the Duke who ordered his execution. At the place where he was to be martyred, he lifted his head toward heaven and began to sing. He motioned to the crowd and invited them to join him in singing. The song he sang joined by the crowd was this psalm, **Psalm 30**.

Scholars remain divided as to the occasion for its writing. Some suggest it was at the dedication of David's palace in Jerusalem, others think it was the dedication of the house of God, which had not yet been built. Still others conclude it was written after his second and successful attempt to bring the Ark to the city comparing **verse 11** with his dancing excitedly before the Ark as it was carried to the city.

As we read **verses 1-5**, we can see that David's praise to the Lord is understandable.

I. DAVID'S PRAISE TO THE LORD IS UNDERSTANDABLE – vv. 1-5

David begins by exalting the Lord. It means to hold

someone in high regard by thinking or speaking highly of them. It can mean to glorify, magnify, or revere. David's understanding of and experience with God have created within him an overwhelming sense of adoration for which he wants to praise God.

The word exalt refers to an upward motion that extends away from the speaker. Visualize David reaching upward toward heaven as if he has a basket in his hands and in that basket contains all the praises he is offering to God who is worthy to receive all that and so much more. You can almost see the joy on his face in his actions and through his words.

Now why is David giving such glory to God? In the following verses, he gives several reasons for his praise to God.

First, the Lord lifted him out of the depths and did not let his enemies gloat over him. The word lift refers to bringing something up from below toward you. Think of bending over to pick something off the ground. For example, you may remember when your child fell and scraped a knee, and you picked them up to give them comfort. If you have a pet, you reach down and pick them up and hold it in your arms. You lift it up and bring it toward you.

In this case, David has experienced the blows of an enemy, he has felt the sting of criticism and watched them with smugness gloat over his misfortune. Yet in that moment He felt the loving, comforting, caring hands of God stoop down and pick him up from his despair and draw him to Himself.

Have you ever had a bad day, when you felt the Lord reach down and lift you up out of that pit?

I for one am glad that the Lord draws me up to Himself when I'm having a bad day. We've all experienced those times of despair where the Lord lifted us up with a verse, a song, a word from a friend.

David was in some kind of distress, which he calls the depths. He is sunk down low. **Think for a moment about how much pressure there is the further down you go in the ocean. The Titanic is about 2 ½ miles below the surface of the ocean. The**

pressure at that depth is almost 3 tons per square inch, which is about 360 times the pressure of what we experience on the surface. Now that may not register for you, so let me put it in perspective with something we can understand. We all know what a school bus looks like, right? The pressure at the location of the Titanic is equal to 46 school buses sitting on your chest.

David had been experiencing some pressure from which God lifted him up. Notice in **verse 2** that David called out to the Lord for help, and he was healed. Some scholars believe that David had some physical ailment that was causing him a lot of distress that God healed him from. Some suggest that it was during the plague after David had commanded a census be taken, that David himself was physically afflicted from it from which he cried out to God who healed him.

We can feel extreme pressure from relationships, from bills, from health concerns, job responsibilities, life in general. They can be overwhelming. They can weigh us down and make us feel like we have a ton of bricks on our shoulders. In those moments remember to call out to God for help.

His cry was made to the Lord God. In the Hebrew its Jehovah Elohim. He is the covenant keeping God and the all-powerful God of creation. David is calling out to the only one who has the power to help him out of his situation, the one with whom a covenant has been made, the one who keeps his promises.

David said that God had brought him up out of the grave. The KJV uses the term Sheol. Scripture has also likened it to the place of silence, darkness, destruction, or corruption. Sheol is referred to as the place of the dead, a place of dark gloom, a place cut off from life and from God. Various passages in Scripture refer to it as a place with no light, no remembrance, no praise of God, no sound, no escape. **Proverbs 1:12** refers to it as a ravenous beast that is not satisfied.

Let's be clear, David hadn't died, but is speaking here figuratively of being at the brink of death, something he referred to at the end of **verse 3** where God had

spared him from going down to the pit. This is another understandable reason why David was exalting God. He was in the pit and God lifted Him up.

It was early spring and I was in college. The weather was not conducive for track practice to be outside, so we were doing drills in the gym. So was the baseball team. They were in one corner, and we were in the other. They were working on batting with a wiffle ball. We were putting our equipment up when I heard "Oh, no! Look out!" That's the last thing I remember before slumping to the ground. When I finally came to, I learned that the batter lost grip on his bat which then sailed through the air across the gym and came to rest on the back of my head knocking me out. When I came to, the track coach was standing over me and eventually lifted me up from what felt like being in the grave.

David felt the sparing hand of God on his life as he was lifted out of the pit. Maybe that's where you are right now, feeling like life is about to end. God is reaching out to lift you up. Grab hold of Him.

When we feel the pressure of life circumstances that bring us to the point of despair, Johnson Oatman gives us some encouraging words in his hymn.

Lord, lift me up and let me stand
By faith on heaven's tableland;
A higher plane than I have found –
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

David seems to be so caught up in the moment of reflecting on what God has done for him, he pauses in **verse 4** and invites the crowd to join him in giving praise to God.

I have enjoyed sitting at a concert listening to the singing of a guest musician. In the middle of the song or at the chorus, with a wave of their arm, they have gestured to the audience to join in and sing along.

That's what David is doing in **verse 4**. It's testimony time and he has been sharing reasons why God is to be exalted: God lifted him up, helped him, healed him, spared him. He is singing God's praise and then in a grand gesture he invites the crowd to join in. "Come on, sing with me, sing about God's holiness."

Holiness is the basis of God's punishment and discipline. Holiness is also the basis for His pardon and forgiveness. David had known both. **Hebrews 12** makes it abundantly clear that for the believer, God's discipline is a measure of His love for us so don't lose heart. And how wonderful to know that He pardons us. What He does, even in His discipline, is done out of love, even if at the time it doesn't seem like it. And we see both sides of His holiness in **verse 5**.

Our remorse over our own sin can cause weeping because we have brought on the Lord's wrath. But even that is temporary as we experience the pardon of God for our sin remembering that as we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive our sin and cleanse us from our unrighteousness (**I Jn 1:9**).

As David states, our suffering and God's anger are only for a moment, otherwise who could endure. But God's favor lasts for a lifetime. David contrasts the length of time God's anger is meted out with the length of time of His favor and our rejoicing. The one is temporary while the other lasts forever.

John Piper gives us five things to remember about the wrath of God.

1. God's wrath is just. We deserve it. We have violated His standard. He would be neither just nor holy if He didn't mete out wrath for sin.

J.I. Packer writes: "**God's wrath...is a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil.**" God is both right and justified in His actions against sin.

2. God's wrath is to be feared. By that I mean we are all guilty of sin and condemned because of our sin. We all deserve the death penalty. And God's power will bring it about with eternal punishment.

3. God's wrath is the same in both the Old and New Testaments.

Nahum 1:2 "The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies."

Romans 1:18 "For the wrath of God is revealed

from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

4. God's wrath is His love in action against sin.

5. God's wrath is satisfied in Christ so that by faith in Him, we will not experience the eternal wrath of God because Christ took that wrath on Himself on the cross. We have a beautiful picture in the Old Testament in the Passover lamb. When the angel of death came into the land of Egypt, those homes with blood from the slain lamb smeared on the door posts were passed over. The people inside were spared from the wrath of God. Jesus is our Passover lamb.

It is understandable why David exalted God, which naturally results in his unshakeable confidence.

II. DAVID'S CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD IS UNSHAKEABLE – vv. 6-10

Sometimes our confidence can be misplaced. We see that from David's own experience in **verse 6**. When things are going well, we can become complacent and think that we are secure based on our own efforts.

Nebuchadnezzar felt that way about the kingdom he thought he had built, that is until one day the Lord let him know who was really in control.

That's the lesson Paul conveyed to the Corinthians.

I Corinthians 10:12 "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"

The KJV gives an even stronger admonition – "**Take heed!**" It's a stern warning to watch out, be vigilant or watchful, look with a cautious eye. In other words, watch yourself and don't be overly confident in yourself. That was Goliath's downfall. He was too full of himself and his military prowess and failed to size up his opponent. He thought he was facing some scrawny freckle faced kid, when he was really facing God Almighty. Don't get puffed up.

The KJV uses the word "**prosperity**" which refers to careless ease. It's how the farmer felt in Jesus's parable who went out and built bigger barns.

This verse is one reason some believe that the occasion for the psalm is in reference to when David was filled with pride and took the census. We can feel secure in our bank, or our job, or our status in the community feeling like nothing can touch us and Wham! the rug gets pulled out from us. Such pride leads to feeling like we can be independent of God and then, like Nebuchadnezzar, we see that we really aren't in control, God is. In that moment, David experienced what it is like to have God hide His face and he felt dismayed. He hides His face when we rebel. Depending on your translation, the word "dismayed" or "troubled" means intense agony, terror, or anguish. It can also mean confusion and helplessness. David had gone from feeling secure to a feeling of powerlessness and vulnerability.

Warren Wiersbe puts it in perspective writing: **"One reason the Lord permits trials is that we might not get comfortable in our faith and stop growing."**

David felt he was secure, but God showed him how weak he really was. We are told to be strong in the Lord. Paul says when we recognize our weakness we experience God's strength, that's when we are strong. God will sometimes bring us to a point of recognizing our dependence on Him. When David realized He needed God, God made him feel secure. He gives a beautiful illustration by pointing to how secure a mountain is. Nothing can move it. Even in storms and earthquakes, it will stand firm. David came to realize that his confidence and security were not in himself but in the Lord. Only in God could he stand firm.

So stop trying to be self-reliant and overly confident in your abilities and put your confidence in the Lord.

Remember that God is opposed to the proud (**I Peter 5:5**). So David did the only conceivable thing when he realized what was going on and that his pride had stood between him and the Lord. He cried out for God's mercy, in much the same way that the penitent tax collector did in the Temple. David humbled himself and sought the favor of God raising an interesting question as we see in **verse 9**. "Lord, if You keep your wrath on me and I succumb

to the grave, how can I praise You? What voice can resonate from the dust, what benefit is there?

Often Robyn likes to take a walk around the yard and look at all the different flowers growing in her gardens. She has a lot of good things to say about how they are flourishing. But she can't say a thing about those that have died off. David can't praise God if he's in the grave. In his desperate situation, he realized he couldn't praise himself, that God deserved the praise, and that God alone is his security crying out for mercy. Such a heartfelt attitude or remorse and repentance led him to a place of unhindered worship that we see in **verses 11-12**.

III. DAVID'S WORSHIP OF THE LORD IS UNHINDERED – vv. 11-12

David experienced the freedom and joy that come from being pardoned. His sorrow has been turned to singing, his despair has turned to dancing, his gloom has turned to gladness.

Tony Evans says that **"God took away his rags of sorrow and gave him clothes of gladness. David would not keep quiet."**

Is something holding back your praise?

Is something keeping you from unhindered worship?

David felt exhilarated from God's mercy, and he wanted everyone to know his unbridled joy.

II Samuel 6:16-22a

Michal had a very snarky retort regarding the king's behavior and David responded by saying he would be even more undignified in praising the Lord if need be. He wasn't worried about what others thought. He would praise the Lord as he sought fit.

Walvoord and Zuck tell us that every deliverance by God should prompt us to praise Him. We have two responses to trouble. Every difficulty is either an opportunity to throw a pity party or to proclaim praise. **The question is which will be your response?**
Is your praise understandable?
Is your confidence unshakeable?
Is your worship unhindered?