

Psalm 130 | “Hope in the Depths”

Preached on January 26, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles to Psalm 130 this morning. *[pauseeee]*

Last week in the previous psalm, it talked all about the problems and afflictions that come from outside of us—from people who would do us harm. *[pause]*

That is certainly something that can and does happen—people who hate God, hate His people, and so persecute or revile us.

But here’s the thing, way too often people act like their problems are *only* due to others outside of themself. *[pause]*

They point the finger at the world, the culture, Satan, or others, but they never look at themselves.

Yet what we find today is that the problems of our lives don’t only lie outside of ourselves, but can also lie within us, due to our sin. *[pauseeee]*

We must not be so outward-focused that we neglect to see that some of our problems are from inside of us.

So let’s READ the psalm to see how the psalmist looks inward at his sin, and yet, we will also see what he does with it. *[READ]*

This psalm is about sin and forgiveness, and we all long for forgiveness, whether we admit it or not. *[pauseeee]*

“There’s a Spanish story of a father and son who had become estranged. *[pause]*

The son ran away, and the father set off to find him. *[pause]*

He searched for months [but] to no avail.

Finally, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper. *[pause]*

The ad read: ‘Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father.’ *[pause]*

On Saturday, 800 Pacos showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers.”¹
[pauseeee]

Deep down everyone desires forgiveness, for deep down they know that when they sin, there’s something not right...

¹ *Bits & Pieces*, October 15, 1992, pp. 13. Found at: <https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/f/forgiveness.htm>.

They feel guilt, they feel separation, they feel that something's "off".

That's why 800 guys named Paco showed up, hoping for forgiveness. *[pauseeee]*

It's said that "Not long before she died in 1988, in a moment of surprising candor in television, Marghanita Laski, [a] secular humanist and novelist, said...

*'What I envy most about you Christians is your forgiveness; I have nobody to forgive me.'*²
[pauseeee]

We all long to be forgiven, and the psalm this morning shows us what to do with our sin, and where we can find forgiveness.

And the first thing that we see in this psalm is that...

I. We need to call out to the Lord for forgiveness. (1–2)

There in verses 1–2, we see the psalmist cry out to the Lord, asking that the Lord be attentive and hear his pleas for mercy.

And in the following verses, we see that it's really his sin that causes him to say this, and to desire forgiveness. [pauseeee]

The psalmist gives us a great example of someone who not only recognized his sin, but called out to the Lord about it, too. *[pauseeeee]*

Our world doesn't talk about sin much. [pause]

You bring up the 'sin' word, and it's almost like you have said the most rude, most socially disgusting thing that you could have ever said.

People recoil at that word—they do not like it, nor do they approve of others talking about it. [pausee]

Go somewhere and bring up the 'sin' word, and just look at people's faces, and watch how they respond.

Our culture is averse to talking about sin, but I want you to know something—to avoid talking about sin is one of the worst things you can do. [pause]

It's not talking about sin that's the worst, but *not* talking about sin that's not good.

And here's why—if you don't talk about sin, then you can't talk of forgiveness. [pause]

It's forgiveness that people need, and you can only experience forgiveness if you actually recognize and admit your sin. *[pauseeee]*

² John Stott in *The Contemporary Christian*. Found at: <https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/f/forgiveness.htm>.

That's seen in what the psalmist does, but we also see this truth throughout Scripture—forgiveness follows repentance. *[pause]*

Peter says to the crowd in Acts, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”³

And 1 John 1:9 tells us, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” *[pauseee]*

Confession of our sin is the precondition for forgiveness, and this is not some hard, high standard of perfection or godliness.

No, in order to receive forgiveness, God doesn't say, “You must put your life back together first.” *[pause]*

Actually, it's the opposite—it's actually admitting and confessing that my life is not perfect or put together, but that I'm sinful. *[pauseeee]*

God simply desires for us to admit our need and our plight, and to reach out to Him.

That's what the psalmist does—he cries out to the Lord for mercy. *[pauseeee]*

It takes humility to do this because you have to admit your sin, and to say, “I can't do anything about it myself.” *[pauseeee]*

You see, it's often our *pride* that gets in the way of our confession of sin.

We don't want to admit that we did wrong, but would rather skirt around that truth. *[pauseee]*

Deep down each of us knows that we are a sinner, and we have felt our guilt before God.

Yet amidst that, instead of turning to Christ, many people suppress that knowledge by denial, distraction, or deflection.

But just notice that the psalmist doesn't do anything like that, but rather, he faces his predicament head on. *[pauseee]*

The psalmist cries out to the Lord, and pleads for the Lord to hear and to be attentive. *[pause]*

You can tell that he is earnestly desperate for the Lord to forgive.

And this is no empty repentance, like a child repeating the word “sorry” even though it's the last thing that they want to do.

No, this is genuine, this is deep, this is real. *[pauseeee]*

³ Acts 2:38.

This is the kind of thing that God is looking for in our confession—you must recognize and admit your predicament, and then plead for mercy. *[pauseeee]*

He says there in verse 1, “Out of the depths I cry to you.” *[pause]*

He understood his situation with clarity: he was in the depths. *[pauseeee]*

It does no good to ignore your situation, but it only helps to admit and recognize your condition. *[pause]*

The word ‘depths’ is often used in the Bible in connection with the depths of the sea.

And that’s what the psalmist felt like, he felt like he was in the depths of the sea, due to his sin. *[pauseeee]*

Have you ever felt that way when it came to your sin? Have you ever felt in the *depths of sin and guilt?* *[pause]*

That is really the feeling that anyone who turns to Christ for salvation feels right before they turn to Jesus for forgiveness.

They feel like they are in the depths of sin. *[pause]*

Their sin has brought them low, darkness surrounds, and death looms. *[pauseeee]*

When you are in the depths, you know that you can’t get yourself out.

When you are in the depths, you feel apart from God, like you are separated by billions of gallons of water.

And so what is your only hope in the depths? The mercy of God! *[pause]*

That’s what the psalmist knew, he knew that in the depths of his sin, the Lord was his only hope. *[pauseeee]*

Guess what the psalmist’s words teach us—you are not too far gone when you are in the depths. *[pause]*

The Lord can hear you in the depths! *[pause]*

Your voice isn’t too muffled, too far away, too quiet—but He hears a sinner’s call from the depths. *[pauseeee]*

Not only that, but He cares for you in the depths.

You are not too far gone, you are not a lost cause, it doesn’t have to be all over for you in the depths, but His love reaches you there. *[pauseeee]*

The psalmist shows us that forgiveness can go as deep as the depths that you are in.

Forgiveness can always reach the bottom, like an anchor dropped with no rope tied to it. *[pause]*

No matter how many fathoms or feet you are down, His forgiveness will meet you there.

And it's actually from out of the depths that God saves, helps, and forgives sinners, and so if you are in the depths of sin, know that there's hope for you. *[pause]*

Many people today think that the answer to our problems is self-help methods, but listen up: self-help will not help you in the depths,⁴ only the self-existing, saving God. *[pauseeee]*

The psalmist in the first 2 verses shows us that we need to call out to the Lord for forgiveness.

And in order to do this, you must know that you are dependent solely on His mercy. *[pauseeee]*

Have you recognized and acknowledged your sin before God, and cried out from the depths of your sin and guilt for the mercy of God?

That is, have you truly repented of your sin, and placed your faith in Jesus Christ's work on your behalf? *[pauseeee]*

In our desperation and need, we cry out to Him for mercy.

It's directed towards Him, not other places, for only He can address our sin problem.

And that's what we find next, for...

II. We absolutely need to be forgiven and God forgives! (3–4)

The psalm says in verse 3, "If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" *[pause]*

In that statement, he is showing us that we are in absolute need of forgiveness, every one of us. *[pause]*

Each of us has committed sin, or another name for it is 'iniquities'. *[pause]*

No one is the exception, for as he says, "Who could stand?" *[pauseeee]*

Each of us has sinned, but not only that, our sins are *many*. *[pause]*

That word 'mark' is the idea of keeping a record...

If God kept a record, marking down each and every sin that we ever committed, and then held it against us, we would be done for.

⁴ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 16, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 482.

And the truth is, He *knows* every single sin that we have committed, so it's not like we could fool Him. *[pause]*

He knows and sees every sinful motivation, every sinful act, and every sinful thought that you have ever committed. *[pauseeee]*

Imagine what your sin list would look like—that would be one LONG list! *[pauseeee]*

If He held all of that sin against us, we would stand guilty and condemned because He is a just God, and cannot let sin slide. *[pause]*

We would not be able to stand in judgment, but would be condemned where we stand, and would only be able to sink back or fall back into guilt and shame. *[pauseeee]*

Who could hold their ground before the all-seeing, all-knowing, perfect justice of God, if He held all of our sins against us? No one! *[pause]*

The truth is that we are guilty and condemned in our sins if God didn't forgive us, but here's the glorious, good news—"but with [the Lord] there is forgiveness." *[pauseeee]*

Aren't you thankful that we don't have to face the "if" part of that "if...but" statement, instead, we can rejoice in the "but God" promise of forgiveness! *[pauseeee]*

Thank the Lord that He is forgiving, and so with Him there can be found forgiveness!

What good news!

Our sins only and ever deserved to be "marked down", but because of the Lord, there is a way for them to not be held against us. *[pauseee]*

That's what forgiveness does—it's where an offense is no longer held against you...

It's like the offense used to be marked down on our account, but forgiveness wipes the slate clean. *[pauseeee]*

This is what Jesus did for us, who believe in Him...

Colossians 2 says that he has "forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross."⁵ *[pause]*

Our sins used to be marked down on our account, and we owed a sin debt, but through Jesus' work on the Cross, He canceled that record of debt by nailing it to the Cross and paying for it. *[pauseeeee]*

"In a dream, Martin Luther found himself being attacked by Satan. *[pause]*

⁵ Colossians 2:13b-14.

The devil unrolled a long scroll containing a list of Luther's sins, and held it before him. *[pause]*

On reaching the end of the scroll Luther asked the devil, 'Is that all?' *[pause]*

'No,' came the reply, and a second scroll was thrust in front of him, then, after a second, came a third, but now the devil had no more. *[pause]*

'You've forgotten something,' Luther exclaimed triumphantly.

'Quickly write on each of them, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, cleanses us from all sins.'"⁶ *[pauseeee]*

We absolutely need to be forgiven and God forgives through His Son, Jesus Christ, who shed His blood for us. *[pauseeeee]*

The Lord doesn't have to forgive sinners, for He would be completely just to mark our sins and hold them against us, yet with the Lord there is forgiveness...

Now that's something to always rest upon—with the Lord there is forgiveness! *[pause]*

What a glorious thing to cling to, what a marvelous truth to hold dear, what a wondrous statement of grace! *[pauseeee]*

Know this—if you have never repented of your sins and trusted in Christ's death on your behalf, there is forgiveness available for you—forgiveness awaits! *[pausee]*

In ourselves, we only bring our sins that should be held against us in judgment, but God brings forgiveness to those who repent of their sins and trust in Christ's work on the Cross for them. *[pauseeeee]*

Now there's a fascinating statement in verse 4 that could be easily overlooked.

It says, "But with you there is forgiveness, *that you may be feared.*" *[pauseeee]*

Many times people do not think about what this is saying...

Yes, God purposes that in forgiveness we would be freed from guilt and experience His love.

But here we see that there's another purpose for forgiveness, and it's so that we would fear Him. *[pause]*

That is, that we would have a proper relationship with Him of loving, obedient, reverential service. *[pauseeee]*

⁶ K. Koch, *Occult Bondage and Deliverance*, p. 10. Found at: <https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/f/forgiveness.htm>.

Some people think that forgiveness means that they can now go and sin more, since they can always just ask for forgiveness for it.

But forgiveness is not extended to you so that you can run free in more sin, rather, it's so that you would run free in service to the Lord. *[pause]*

So really, forgiveness should draw us up into obedience, and not away into licentiousness. *[pauseeee]*

God in His forgiveness wants to create a people who fear Him, that's why Titus 2:14 says that Jesus Christ...

“gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” *[pause]*

Put succinctly—because of God's great mercy, forgiven people seek to live for Him, who has redeemed them. *[pauseeee]*

Does God's forgiveness lead you to want to live for Him? *[pause]*

Just remember that you absolutely needed to be forgiven, for if He marked all of your sins and held them against you, there would be no hope. *[pause]*

He is the great and perfect God and Judge, while you are a great sinner.

But praise the Lord that with Him there is forgiveness through Christ, so how could we NOT live for Him, who did so much for us? *[pauseeee]*

Based on this good news, the psalmist hopes in the Lord, and that's what we find next...

III. We can have confident hope that God forgives. (5–8)

Due to the knowledge of God's forgiveness, the psalm writer confidently hopes and waits for the Lord.

And when you skim through verses 5–8, that's what you see. *[pause]*

He repeats this idea of waiting and hoping in the Lord, and the repetition of saying the same thing sort of conveys the idea of waiting, waiting, and waiting. *[pause]*

He says, “I wait...my soul waits...I hope...my soul waits...hope in the Lord!”

In fact, the Hebrew words used for ‘wait’ and ‘hope’ here can actually refer to the same idea...

To wait for the Lord is to hope in the Lord—to hope in the Lord is to wait on the Lord. *[pauseeee]*

Now when we use the word ‘hope’ it can sometimes convey uncertainty...

We say, “I hope that I will get an ‘A’ on the test,” or, “I hope that it all works out, but I don’t know.” *[pause]*

Do you hear the tone of uncertainty? *[pause]*

Or we use hope in the way of just talking about our desire or wish, like, “I had high hopes of making the team.”

But the Biblical meaning of hoping and waiting is a very confident thing.

It’s to await in confident, eager expectation that something will happen or that someone will come through. *[pause]*

So it’s looking forward in faith to something, waiting for it to happen. *[pauseeee]*

The psalm writer knows that with God there is forgiveness, but now he waits and hopes in the Lord that He will come through and show all of what this redemption entails. *[pause]*

Really, he put His hope in His forgiving Lord, and that’s what we are to do, too—our only hope is in the Lord’s grace and mercy to forgive! *[pauseeee]*

If you think about it, we need to hope in the Lord’s forgiveness because many times it doesn’t *feel* like we are forgiven...

It’s not something that you can necessarily see with your eyes, so like the psalmist, we must hope in His Word. *[pauseeee]*

I’ve heard numerous Christians say, “I know God’s Word says that those who trust in Christ are forgiven, but I don’t *feel* forgiven.”

Well guess what?

It takes confident hope in His Word, who says that in Christ we have the forgiveness of sins, and we must await our redemption in its fullness, when Christ returns. *[pauseeee]*

Romans 8 says, “And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we *wait eagerly* for adoption as sons, the *redemption* of our bodies. For in this *hope* we were saved.”⁷ *[pauseeee]*

We wait and long for that day more than a watchman for the morning. *[pause]*

A watchman would be alert and intensely wait for the morning because the morning meant that the darkness and its dangers were no longer a threat.

And here’s the thing with the watchman—he *knew* that the morning was coming, no matter how long the night felt. *[pause]*

⁷ Romans 8:23–24 (italics is mine).

So also, we should wait in confident expectation, knowing that the day of redemption *will* come, and what a glorious day it will be!

This is no blind optimism or wishful thinking, but eager, expectant, trust-filled waiting.
[pauseeee]

Through Christ, we have been forgiven and redeemed—hope in that precious Word! Trust it!
[pause]

If you have placed your faith in Christ alone, all of your sins are forgiven!

But we eagerly await the day when our bodies will be redeemed, and we won't have to struggle against sin anymore. [pause]

We long for that, we wait for the Lord, and hope in Him and His Word for that day. [pause]

Our souls wait for this, meaning, it's a deep, soul hope that we have. [pause]

This is not some shallow hoping, but a deep, confident hope that comes from within.

We rest in His promise of forgiveness, and we eagerly wait for the everlasting good that Christ will bring when He returns. [pauseeee]

In verses 7–8, we also see the *reasons* why we can hope in the Lord because he says, “For with the Lord there is steadfast love.” [pause]

The reason why you can trust that there is forgiveness in the Lord is because He is loving!
[pauseeee]

Do you truly know and believe that God is full of steadfast love, or do you view Him as a mean tyrant? [pause]

Do you see Him as ready to hit you over the head at any little sin, or do you see Him as loving?
[pauseeee]

Know this—you can hope in Him because with Him there is steadfast love! [pause]

With us, there is often sin, failure, weakness, and unkindness, but with Him, there is steadfast love. [pauseeee]

Another reason why we can hope in the Lord's forgiveness is because “with him is plentiful redemption.”

In fact, verse 8 goes on to say, “He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” [pause]

Talk about *plentiful* redemption!

What a promise, what an assurance we can have—He is a redeeming God! [pauseeee]

To redeem something is to buy it back, and so liberate, rescue, or deliver.

And that's what God has done—He has redeemed us by the blood of Christ shed on our behalf.
[pauseee]

We were condemned in our sins, for we had sinned against the holy God.

Our sins meant death for us, and separation from the Lord, but Christ took on flesh, and died for our sins. [pause]

By being our substitute, He took the punishment that we deserved, and so redeemed us from the penalty and punishment of our sins.

And in response, we say like that hymn says, “Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it! Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; Redeemed through His infinite mercy, His child, and forever, I am.”⁸
[pauseee]

The promise of the psalm is that the Lord would redeem from *all* iniquities, and that's what we find in Christ—plentiful, abundant, *comprehensive* forgiveness. [pauseee]

Through Christ's sacrifice, every single one of our sins has been forgiven.

Not just one, or a few of them, but ALL of them. [pause]

That list of marked down sins has been nailed to the Cross, and is no longer held against us because Christ paid for it ALL.

And now our sins are removed from us, “as far as the east is from the west.”⁹ [pauseee]

“Someone asked an elderly Christian lady, ‘Does the devil ever trouble you about your past sins?’ [pause]

She answered, ‘Yes.’ [pause]

When the inquirer asked what she did then, she replied, ‘Oh, I just tell him to go east.’ [pause]

‘What do you do if he comes back?’

‘I tell him to go west.’ [pause]

‘And when he comes back from the west, what do you do then?’ [pause]

She said, ‘I just keep him going from the east to the west.’¹⁰ [pauseee]

We can have confident hope that God forgives!

⁸ “Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It!” by Fanny Crosby, 1882.

⁹ Psalm 103:12.

¹⁰ <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustrations/forgiveness>.

That's what the psalmist is showing us, for He eagerly and confidently hoped and waited on the Lord. *[pause]*

He knew that the Lord could be trusted to come through with forgiveness because He is loving and redeems His people.

So also, you can have confident hope that if you have repented of your sins and trusted in Christ's sacrificial death on your behalf, your sins (all of them) are forgiven! *[pause]*

You can bank on it, for the Lord's love and redemptive work backs it up. *[pauseeee]*

As we consider this psalm, we see that it reminds us that...

You can be assured, there is forgiveness found through Christ!

In this psalm, the writer experienced personal forgiveness, and then he called upon Israel to hope in the Lord and experience forgiveness, too. *[pause]*

Likewise, I have experienced forgiveness, and now I call on anyone who has never experienced forgiveness, to find it in Jesus. *[pause]*

So if you are listening this morning, and long for forgiveness...

I want you to know that there is forgiveness available so that you don't have to feel the weight of your sin or guilt before God, but you can find the relief of it. *[pause]*

The Bible says that "repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in [Christ's] name to all nations."¹¹

And so I proclaim it to you today, and know this, the Bible promises that, "everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."¹² *[pause]*

So recognize that you are a sinner, whose sin and guilt have put you in the depths, confess it, and call out to the Lord for forgiveness. *[pause]*

Know that with the Lord there is forgiveness and it's through Christ.

For when we were in the depths of our sins and guilt, the Lord Jesus came down to us on this earth to reach us with mercy and grace by dying for our sin. *[pause]*

He then rose from the grave, showing that the sacrifice was perfect and was accepted. *[pause]*

Will you experience forgiveness today? *[pauseeeee]*

¹¹ Luke 24:47.

¹² Acts 10:43.

For those of us, who have been redeemed and forgiven through Christ, do you rest in that forgiveness?

Do you truly trust and hope in His Word, which assures you that your sins are forgiven?
[pauseee]

The psalmist in Psalm 130 showed us someone who looked inward at his sin, but that caused him to look upward to the Lord for forgiveness. *[pause]*

So for us, when we sin, which we still do at times, even as Christians...

When we sin, we look inward at it, confess it, and then we look upward to the Cross, and see it paid for and dealt with through Christ. *[pause]*

So with every inward look at your sin, look upward to the Cross.

And stand on the promise of 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."