

Title: **FORGIVENESS, BLESSED FORGIVENESS!**
Text: Psalm 130:1-8
Date: Campus Church Conference, Welwyn, England
 Saturday Evening — April 21, 2007

Introduction:

I do not know you; and you do not know me. Yet, I know that we all have two things in common.

1. We are all sinners.
2. We all need forgiveness.

If you will turn with me to Psalm 130, I want to talk to you about forgiveness, the blessed forgiveness of sins in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Psalms 130) "A Song of degrees. Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. (2) Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. (3) If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? (4) But *there is* forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. (5) I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. (6) My soul *waiteth* for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: *I say, more than* they that watch for the morning. (7) Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD *there is* mercy, and with him *is* plenteous redemption. (8) And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

"There is forgiveness with Thee!" — What a blessed word of grace! I have a message from God for you, a message you need, and a message I need. Here it is...

¹ Every time God allows me to preach, let me be certain that I...

1. Deliver a message. — Don't ramble.
2. Deliver His message.
3. Tell only what I know by experience.
4. Deliver the message in the power of the Holy Spirit.
5. Make Christ the object of my message.
6. My motive is the glory of God.
7. Deliver the message in the language of the people.
8. The message grips my own heart. — If it doesn't grip my heart, it won't grip anyone else's heart!
9. Preach in love.
10. Expect people to believe.

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Proposition: There is forgiveness with our God! — *“If thou, O LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared!”*

This is one of David’s psalms called “A Psalm of Degrees.” These are psalms that begin in humiliation and end in exaltation. They begin in a deep, deep valley and end on the mountain top. They begin with mourning and end in praise and exultation. Let’s begin where David began. I hope we can end where he ended.

A SINNER IN NEED

Here is a sinner in the depths of desperate need (vv. 1-2).

(Psalms 130:1-2) “A Song of degrees. Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. 2 Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.”

In all probability, this psalm was written as a penitential psalm, arising from David’s broken heart, after his great sin with Bathsheba, after his horrid evil against his faithful friend Uriah. If that is the case, this psalm is the response of David’s heart to the message of God delivered by the prophet Nathan.

(2 Samuel 12:13) “And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.”

(2 Samuel 12:24-25) “And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him. 25 And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah (Beloved of the LORD), because of the LORD.”

CONVICTION

David had been in the depths of sin. Now he is in the depths of humiliation, brought low before God by reason of his iniquities. He was, as it were, in prison, shut up under the law, under the conscious sentence of death and condemnation.

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Conviction is a horrible, deep pit, wherein is no water, a pit out of which no man can extricate himself. It is a pit of corruption, dung pit, where we are made to know the bitterness of our sin and the foulness of our transgressions.

Conviction brings sinners into an awareness of their deep poverty of soul in a beggarly dungeon, a state of utter helplessness and bitter bondage.

The depths David was in were a deep sense of sin that brought him low, being sensible of his sin. Before Nathan came to him, he was haughty, self-righteous, and self-sufficient. Now he is broken, heavy hearted, and bitter because of his sin. Now he sees himself in his contemptible state, as one utterly unworthy of any favor from God, deserving of his wrath and displeasure; as a polluted guilty creature, loathsome and abominable, wretched and undone, the very chief of sinners, more brutish than any man, and as a beast before the Lord. – Have you been there? Are you now in such depths?

HOPE

Holy Spirit conviction brings us into such depths, lays us low as prisoners under arrest in the dungeon of darkness. But God's prisoners are prisoners of hope! David was in distress, but not in despair.

(Zechariah 9:9-12) “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. *10* And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion *shall be* from sea *even* to sea, and from the river *even* to the ends of the earth. *11* As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein *is* no water. *12* Turn you to the strong hold, ye **prisoners of hope**: even to day do I declare *that* I will render double unto thee;”

(Zechariah 9:16-17) “And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they *shall be as* the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land. *17* For **how great is**

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his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.”

Holy Spirit conviction causes sinners to look up, out of their pit, unto God in Christ upon the throne of grace and cry out like Jonah, “*Salvation is of the LORD!*” It is conviction arising not from law and wrath, but from the gospel and grace!

David was intense, earnest, and fervent, because he was in desperate need. He says, “*Lord, hear my voice let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!*” He comes to God as a suppliant, a beggar, for mercy and grace. He pleads not his merit and righteousness, but his need!

THE REVELATION

Here is the revelation of God’s glory (vv. 3-4).

David had seen the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and this is it...

(Psalms 130:3-4) “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? *4* But *there is* forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.”

Here is a fact we must face, acknowledge and confess. — **We are all sinners in need of forgiveness!** No one will ever know the forgiveness of sin until he is made to know his own sin. You will never seek mercy until you need mercy.

1. **We are all sinners by imputation** (Rom 5:12, 18, 19).

(Romans 5:12) “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”

(Romans 5:18-19) “Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life. *19* For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

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2. **We are all sinners by birth and nature** (Ps. 51:5; 58:3).

(Psalms 51:5) “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

(Psalms 58:3) “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.”

3. **We are all sinners by choice and practice** (Rom. 3:9-18).

“*How abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water!*” (Job 15:16)—“*The mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity!*” (Pro. 19:28)

(Romans 3:9-18) “What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; *10* As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: *11* There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. *12* They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. *13* Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips: *14* Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness: *15* Their feet *are* swift to shed blood: *16* Destruction and misery *are* in their ways: *17* And the way of peace have they not known: *18* There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

4. **We are sinners at heart, at the very core of our beings** (Matt. 15:19-20).

(Jeremiah 17:9) “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

(Matthew 15:19-20) “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: *20* These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.”

Martin Luther once said, “I am more afraid of my own heart than of the pope and all his cardinals.” In its essence, sin is a heart matter. We must see sin in its true character (Luke 16:15).

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(Luke 16:15) “And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”

Sin is not just an offensive deed that needs forgiving. It is a pollution of heart that needs cleansing. Sin is man’s inward, defiant, heart declaration of independence from God. Sin is God’s would-be murderer! Sin is man’s heart enmity against (hatred of) the holy Lord God!

John Bunyan once described sin in these words. — “Sin is the dare of God’s justice, the rape of his mercy, the jeer of his patience, the slight of his power, and the contempt of his love.”

You and I are a constant mass of sin! We have sinned. We do sin. We are sinning. And we will yet sin. I wish that were not so, but it is. This is a fact we must face, acknowledge and confess before God. Blessed is the man who, in his heart, is made to acknowledge his sin! There is no mercy for those who are righteous in their own eyes; but there is nothing but mercy, abundant, saving, everlasting mercy for every sinner who acknowledges and confesses his sin (Ps. 32:3-5; 1 John 1:9).

(Psalms 32:1-5) “Blessed *is he whose* transgression *is* forgiven, *whose sin is* covered. 2 Blessed *is* the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit *there is* no guile. 3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. 4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. 5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.”

(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.”

5. Look at verse 3 again. **That man who knows and confesses his sin will always justify God.**

Here David declares that God’s wrath against sin and the punishment of it is righteous and just. We say with David, God is right when he speaks and just

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when he judges. If the holy Lord God should mark iniquity against us, not one of us can stand before him.

(Psalms 130:3) “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?”

Now, look at verse four and rejoice!

(Psalms 130:4) “But *there is* forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.”

What a blessed word of grace! “*There is forgiveness with thee!*” Jehovah, the great, almighty, holy Lord God against whom we have sinned is the great Forgiver! “*He delighteth in mercy!*”

(Isaiah 43:25) “I, *even I, am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.”

(Isaiah 44:22) “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.”

(Isaiah 55:7) “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

(Jeremiah 31:34) “And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

(Hebrews 8:12) “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

(Hebrews 10:17) “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

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I have read these passages to you, laying great stress upon the fact of God's forgiveness, because there is nothing in the world more difficult for an awakened sinner to believe than the fact that God can and will forgive his sin.

“No revealed truth is more generally doubted and disbelieved than this, the plainest of all revelations, that the Lord is gracious and full of compassion, and ready to pass by the iniquities of his people.”

— (C. H. Spurgeon)

When your sin is set before you in the light of God's holiness your first instinct is to fear that it cannot be forgiven.

- The law says, “There is no forgiveness!”
- Your conscience says, “Your sins can never be forgiven!”
- Satan says, “You cannot be forgiven!”

Bunyan describes Satan, as he was attacking the city of Mansoul, sending Captain Past Hope and Mr. Despair with hurling accusations, with the roar of the tyrant's drum beating loudly, especially in the dark hours of night, so that the men of Mansoul could hear nothing but “Hell-fire!” Thus Diabolos held them in bondage and fear.

No prison ever held a man so strongly, no whip ever tortured a man so cruelly as the guilty fears of a conscience under the conviction of sin. I want especially to address you who are so aware of your guilt and sin that you think, “I have no hope. I am lost, undone, and must be forever damned. I cannot be forgiven!”

God's forgiveness of sin is a fact so plainly, repeatedly, and fully revealed in Holy Scripture that it simply cannot be denied, even by you whose sins seem to rise like a mountainous boil of corruption reaching to the very heavens. O blessed Spirit of God, sound these words of yours in the hearts of every sinner here – “*There is forgiveness with thee!*”

I know that there is forgiveness with our God. Let me tell you how I know that God almighty forgives sin, forgives the very chief of sinners. **I know that there is forgiveness with God because...**

1. **His dealings with the first sinners in the world gave them hope of forgiveness** (Gen. 3:9, 15, 21).

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- He sought them out.
- He preached the gospel to them
- He made a sacrifice for them.
- He clothed them with the skins of the sacrifice.
- “I’ve gotten a man from the LORD!”

2. **God’s very name is Forgiveness** (Ex. 34:5).

(Exodus 34:5-9) “And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. 6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, 7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. 8 And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. 9 And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it *is* a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.”

3. **The whole purpose of the ceremonial law given to Israel was to proclaim forgiveness.**

- The first ten chapters of Leviticus deal with atonement.
- Leviticus 16 – The Day of Atonement

4. **This was the message of all the Old Testament prophets** (Acts 10:43).

(Acts 10:43) “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”

5. **This is why Christ came into the world** (Matt. 1:21).

(Matthew 1:21) “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

There was and is no other way whereby God could forgive sin.

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(Galatians 2:21) “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

(Isaiah 45:20-22) “Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye *that are* escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god *that* cannot save. 21 Tell ye, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? *who* hath told it from that time? *have* not I the LORD? and *there is* no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; *there is* none beside me. 22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else.”

6. **The Holy Spirit was given specifically to convince chosen sinners of forgiveness and to communicate to guilty sinners the forgiveness of all their sins** (Zech. 12:10; 13:1; John 16:7-11).

(Zechariah 12:10) “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only *son*, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.”

(Zechariah 13:1) “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.”

(John 16:7-11) “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. 8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”

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7. **The Son of God taught us to pray for forgiveness** (Matt. 6:12).
“*Forgive us our trespasses.*” And he prayed for it for us. — “*Father, Forgive them!*”
8. **Every ordinance of divine worship proclaims the forgiveness of sin.**
 - Prayer
 - Praise
 - Baptism
 - The Lord’s Supper
9. **The Lord Jesus Christ sent his apostles to tell the whole world that God forgives sin** (Luke 24:44).

(Luke 24:44-47) “And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me. *45* Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, *46* And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: *47* And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

He sent me to preach forgiveness to you. The preaching of the cross is the proclamation of forgiveness (Acts 13:38-39).

(Acts 13:38-39) “Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: *39* And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

10. **There is a great multitude of sinners who have been forgiven of all sin by the grace of God through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ** (Rev. 5:9-10), **and I’m one of them!**

(Revelation 5:9-10) “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; *10* And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

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I cannot finish the Psalm. Let me just point out two more things in it, as I wrap up my message. Look at verses 5-6.

WAITING IN HOPE

Here we see a sinner waiting in hope.

(Psalms 130:5-6) “I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. 6 My soul *waiteth* for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: *I say, more than* they that watch for the morning.”

Oh, may God give each of us grace to do what David here describes himself doing.

- Wait for the Lord.
- Hope in his word. – This is the basis of faith.
- Wait in anxious anticipation, watching for the *Sonrise!*

MERCY SURE

Here is a delightful declaration of sure mercy and grace (vv. 7-8).

(Psalms 130:7-8) “Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD *there is* mercy, and with him *is* plenteous redemption. 8 And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”

“**Let Israel hope in the LORD!**” Why? Upon what grounds?

- “*With the Lord there is mercy!*” — The Prodigal!
- “*With him is plenteous redemption!*”
- “*He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities!*”

Application:

(Proverbs 28:13) “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy.”

(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.”

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Illustration: *The Wordless Book*