

## THE PSALMS: MUCH LOVED, MUCH MISUSED PSALM 30

Ps 30 tells a story. Life is going well for David. Remember he is the king of Israel. He is winning his battles. He has money, all that he needs. He is used to living on nothing, on the run, in the wilderness. He was used to camping and living in caves. He was like a guerrilla fighter, hunted by the king of the day and the state army. He is on the run for years, and has huge popular support. But there was always some who would be willing to betray him.

Then Saul dies. He ends up being made king. Suddenly he has all he wants, living in luxury. The hand of God is on him. He is winning battles against the enemies. Life is good. He says "When I was prosperous I said Nothing can stop me now."

Some suggested that this was the time when he counted the army of Israel. He took a census of his fighting men. There was nothing wrong with that. But motivation was wrong. His top army commander Joab knew it. Joab did not want to do it. But when you are the king, what you say goes. David's motivation was one of pride and security in his army. The count was over million – a huge army even by today's standards.

This is so typical of us. Things are going well, we think we are invincible. How much do you pray when things are going well? My guess: a lot less than when things are going badly. There are seasons in our life when things can go really well and it is very easy to become spiritually weak, apathetic. We lose that sense of dependence on God. We can become proud and self-reliant. It is one of the traps of late middle age. We have more time, more money. Maybe kids left. Less financial pressure. Got good job. Do we really need God?

I was at Taupo Baptist for 13 years. For the first 4 years I was here, we grew from a church of 201 average attendance to 330 average attendance. Now is pretty good growth for any church really. I felt confident. I was doing a good job. I was a good leader. We were doing some good stuff. Then we went through some problems. Numbers declined. I got seriously sick with depression. I look back and wonder if I became proud of our "success" (and I put that in inverted commas as such growth is not a good measure of success). I know one thing – tough times bring you back to the point of realizing your total dependence on God. If God brings an increase, praise God for that. If God allows numbers to decline, praise God. This is his church. (Not a cop out for bad leadership or taking responsibility to do things well.) I am far less concerned with numbers now and far more concerned to see a church that reflects the heart of God. As a place of prayer. A place where those on the edges of society are welcome. As a place of honesty and grace. As a place of reconciliation between all peoples.

I wonder; have you become spiritual complacent. Are you cruising at the moment. Life is good with family and finances. The question is - what is happening in your heart.

David then became seriously sick. God turned from him - withdrew something of his protection. "You turned away from me." God had not left David. But it felt like that. He was seriously sick and on the edge of death. When troubles come into your life do you think "God left me. I don't feel his presence." God allowed him to become sick. We take our health for granted. When we get sick, we realize just how vulnerable we are. It only takes one slip, trip, fall, car crash and suddenly we can't walk, move arm. When Ros first came to Taupo, she slipped on a gutter at school and was suddenly totally immobile. She wasn't doing extreme sports - just taking kids to school and didn't see a dip, rolled ankle over, broke bones. Suddenly she was totally dependant on others.

David cried out to God. He begged for mercy. God bought his healing. Now he is thanking God. I am sure the doctors of the day gave him their potions. Whether they did any good or not in those days I don't know. Possibly not. But I am sure they used their medicines. Maybe they worked. But David sees his healing from God. He realizes that all he has comes from God. Every blessing we have. We are totally dependant on God for all we have.

He closes by saying, "I am not going to be silent. I am going to praise God and give thanks to him." How often are we silent. We cry out to God when things bad. But then when turn around, we forget about God and move on. Jesus says that rocks will cry out if we do not praise God. No matter your circumstance today, you have so much to praise God for. But we are often silent. This place should rock on Sundays.

You are a child of God's and you don't deserve it. You are a ratbag, broken, weird!! (except me of course!)

You have an eternal future. Death is not end for you. You have not earned that.

Many of you were born in NZ, not into a slum in a poor country. God determined that - you are not superior.

Many of you took medication this last week. Thank God for his healing.

All of you ate this last week. You had food at your table and a roof over your heads. This is not because you worked hard: God provided it. He provided the job and the rain, sun.

Our lives are dependant on God. This is what the fear of the Lord means. Means that we realize that our lives are totally dependant on God. He is the source of all we have. Your health, your job, your money, your future. Your spouse.



God sometimes disciplines us. Not out of vengeful anger. Only for a moment. Mercy favour are everlasting.

vs 5 "For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favour lasts a lifetime! Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning."

This is not saying. There will be good and bad times. The bad will pass so cheer up What he is saying is that sometimes God will discipline us. Sometimes bad things happen, of which we don't understand why – the things of life. But as his children God's favour is on us, outweighs any momentary displeasure that comes from our sin. God's heart is for us. He is not continually grumpy angry. He is a happy God who looks at us filled with joy. Sure there are times grief, even anger at what we do but it is far outweighed by the favour of God.

And our suffering is only temporary. Some Christians seem to have more their fair share. Most of us, if we think about it, experience more good than bad. Most of us can look back and say God has been good to us. So much to praise him for.

Even if we can't look back and see more good than tough stuff. Reality is it is temporary in the face of eternity. Now I know we can't grasp eternity. But it is a long time and will make any suffering seem temporary.

Many of you have had babies. I have been told that labour is very painful. Us men have no idea at all. But when you see your child, new life first time, pain seems very temporary, for the absolute joy of that precious baby.

When we see Jesus, the suffering we have been through will melt away. It will seem insignificant compared to the joy, pleasure of being with our creator.

Key Warning though. If we are not believers, we can experience pleasure in this life. You can have moments of pure heaven on earth. You might also experience times of hell. But you will experience God anger in the life to come. The suffering of this life is nothing compared to hell of eternity without God - a life of constant regret at refusing the free offer of Jesus Christ.

What is God saying to you through this Psalm

Have you become spiritually complacent?

Have you lost your sense of total dependence on God?

Have you remained silent when you have received God's gifts

Have you doubted God's delight in you?

Are you ignoring the reality of eternity without God - hell?

Paper. Write down what God is saying to you

Write down good things God has given you this week, that you have taken for granted.

Download or listen to this message at:

[www.icbc.org.nz](http://www.icbc.org.nz)

#### REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

1. Share a time when it seemed God had turned away from you. How did it feel? What thoughts went through your mind? What happened spiritually in that time?
2. Share a season in your life when everything seemed to be going well? How did this feel? What was your thinking like in this season? What happened spiritually?
3. "Seasons of success are more dangerous than seasons of failure." Discuss this statement. Is it true?
4. What things can we build into our life that will enable us to navigate the different seasons of our life? How can we help each other in the different seasons?
5. "Late middle age can be a dangerous time for our spiritual wellbeing." Discuss (debate!) this. Does it ring true? How can we counter the dangers?
6. What has God been saying to you through this Psalm and message?

#### Bonus Questions on the Handout on the Psalms

1. Have you been guilty of mis using the Psalms by taking them too literally or as promises of a good life?
2. What is your favourite Psalm? Why?
3. Recall a time when the Psalms ministered to you deeply.



CENTRAL BAPTIST

LOVE GOD : LOVE OTHERS