

# A PSALM OF FORGIVENESS

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PSALM 130 • TV-434A

A television broadcast sermon delivered  
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by  
**HENRY T. MAHAN**

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## **Psalm 130**

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

I want to read a Psalm to you today and it is **Psalm 130**. I'm going to speak on this subject: "**A PSALM OF FORGIVENESS.**" I think you will enjoy this message and I think it will be a blessing to you.

This is one of those Psalms that we should memorize and take around with us all the time. It is a **Psalm of David, Psalm 130**. Listen to it; "*Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee O Lord; Lord hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If Thou Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? But, there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared.*"

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*“I wait for the Lord; my soul doth wait for the Lord and His Word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is plenteous redemption and He shall redeem Israel from all His iniquities.”*

This Psalm has been a great blessing to the people of God for many centuries. I want to give you some examples of the testimonies of people to whom this Psalm was a very, very, special blessing. To some of them, it was literally, a turning point in their lives. I think that this will make you even more interested in what I have to say about this Psalm of forgiveness, **Psalm 130**.

There is a well-known preacher, many, many, years ago, in England. His name was Thomas Guthrie. He was invited to a village to preach the gospel. When he got to the village, the people sent him to the local hotel; in that day they called it an “Inn” (when they needed lodging). When he got to the Inn where he was going to stay while he was preaching in this town, there was a man there dying and the priest had been called to minister what they call the “last rights of the church.”

Thomas Guthrie witnessed this episode with its ritualism, form and so forth. The “last rights” were ministered unto the man and after the priest left, Thomas walked up to the man who was lying in the bed, dying, and he said this to him, “Sir, do you now feel that you have peace with God Almighty?” The man looked at him and replied, “No sir, I do not; I have no peace with God and I am dying with no hope.” Guthrie, opened his Bible to this Psalm, **Psalm 130** and said, “*Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee: O Lord hear my voice. If Thou Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? But, there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared.*”

Guthrie read this Psalm and he talked to him about the mercy of God. He talked about the forgiveness of God in Christ Jesus. While he talked to the man about the grace and mercy of God to sinners in Christ Jesus, he said that the man’s face just lightened up; his heart was lifted and his heart rejoiced in the good news. He believed the gospel like the Eunuch of old, like the thief on the cross and received saving grace in Christ Jesus.

Guthrie stayed with him until he died and then he went to his room. He sat down and wrote a letter to his wife and this is what he said, “My dear, I have witnessed a miracle this day; I found a man in the state of nature, dead and dying. I saw that same man in a state of grace, rejoicing in the mercy of God through Christ Jesus. I left that man in a state of glory like the thief of old. My dear, pray for me that I shall be the bearer of this good news to many more sinners before God calls me home.” Oh, how great and how marvelous is the mercy of God and the forgiveness of God, yea, to “*the chief of sinners.*”

Most of you have heard of Martin Luther. He was one of the great, great preachers of the gospel in Germany, over 500 years ago. He was one of the key men that God used in the great Reformation. They asked Martin Luther one day, (this scholar, this student of the

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scriptures, this great reformer, this preacher of the Gospel), which Psalm out of the 150 Psalms in the Bible, he considered to be the greatest of all the Psalms.

This is interesting isn't it? I'd be interested in knowing which Psalm that he considered to be the greatest of all the Psalms. He replied; "I don't know that I could single out any one Psalm but I can tell you the three Psalms that are the greatest blessings to me." He said, "It is **Psalm 32** and David's Psalm of Repentance in **Psalm 51**, and **Psalm 130**," (my text). "*Out of the depths have I cried. O Lord, hear my voice, be attentive to my supplications. If Thou Lord shouldest mark iniquity, who shall stand? There is forgiveness with Thee.*" Martin Luther said, "**Psalm 130** is one of the greatest Psalms."

Martin Luther was going through some of his greatest trials in Coburn. His deepest persecution and affliction was brought upon him by the powers that be, because he preached the gospel. While his friends gathered about him to encourage him one night, he smiled and lifted his voice and said, "My friends, come and let us sing **Psalm 130**. Let us wait on the Lord like those that wait for the morning and let us hope in His promise."

I don't suppose there is anyone listening to my voice that hasn't heard of John Owen. He was one of the greatest writers on Holy Scripture. He was one of the greatest preachers of the past. It was John Owen who was talking to a young man by the name of Richard Davis. He asked Richard this question, he said, "Young man, in what manner do you hope to go to God?" That is a good question isn't it? Richard Davis (who himself became an outstanding preacher) replied; "Well, Dr. Owen, I plan to go to God through the Mediator, Jesus Christ." John Owen replied; "That is easily said, but I assure you my young friend, it is quite another thing to really go to God through the Mediator Jesus Christ. Most people who use that expression don't really understand."

He said, "I know that by experience, for one day, I myself, was a preacher of the gospel. I preached Jesus Christ; I preached Jesus Christ the Mediator for several years. I personally, had very little, if any experimental knowledge of what it meant to go to God through the Mediator. I preached it but I had very little, if any, real heart understanding and experimental knowledge of what it meant for a sinner to go to God through Jesus Christ the Mediator.

He said, "But Mr. Davis, God in His grace was pleased to visit me with great affliction. I was literally brought to the mouth of the grave. My soul was oppressed with horror and darkness. God relieved my spirit and gave me hope through a powerful application of **Psalm 130**. I received from **Psalm 130** special instructions and special peace and special comfort in drawing nigh to God through the Mediator." Mr. Davis, after I recovered and was back on my feet, my first sermon that I preached was from **Psalm 130**." Isn't that interesting?

Let me give you one more. There was a man by the name of James Vaughn, a writer who was admired by Charles Spurgeon. You will recognize Charles Spurgeon before you

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recognize James Vaughn. He called **Psalm 130**, “The progress of the soul.” He said, “Just as a barometer marks the progress of the weather, so does this **Psalm 130**, sentence by sentence, line by line. It records the progress of the soul and if you are really interested you may test yourself by this Psalm as you read each line.”

Think about it; “*Out of the depths have I cried.*” Have you ever been there, out of the depths? “*O Lord, if Thou shouldest mark iniquity, who shall stand?*” Have you ever felt that? Have you ever been burdened and broken by that terrible feeling that God will bring you to account for every sin? How shall I stand?

“*But, there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*” Do you know that to be true? Have you experienced it? I wait for the Lord; my mouth is stopped and I am still, quietly waiting for the Lord, “*For in His Word do I hope.*” Is that your foundation? Is that you rock and is that your refuge? Have you experienced that? “*Let Israel hope in the Lord for with the Lord is mercy and plenteous redemption.*” Oh, I tell you, what a Psalm!

Allow me in the time that we have left, to take this Psalm and comment briefly on each line and each verse, as I am able to get to it. Take your Bible and open to **Psalm 130**. I hope that when I finish with this message or some time in the near future as God permits, I hope he reveals this Psalm, this message, to your own heart like He did to John Owen. I hope He gives you instruction, peace and comfort from His Word and from this Psalm in particular. Commit it to memory; feed upon it; feast upon it, and rest upon it.

What is the first line; “*Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee O Lord?*” Do you know what this is? This is conviction of sin. What are the depths? It is the deep, heart-felt conviction of sin. David described it in **Psalm 40**. He said, “*Innumerable evils have compassed me about. My sins and iniquities have literally taken hold of me. I’m not able to look up. My sins are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me. O Lord, be pleased to deliver me.*” Do you know something about that? “*Out of the depths have I cried?*”

What depths? It is the depths of pride and self. It is out of the depths of evil thoughts, and evil imaginations. Do you know something about that? There’s the depths of unrest, murmuring, anxiety, covetousness and greed. There are the depths of doubts, fears, depression, pain and sin. Have you been there?

I will tell you this; deep places beget deep feelings. God does not hear a man simply because he cries. God hears a man who cries out of the depths. You go through the Bible and you will see that blind Bartimaeus cried out of his darkness, inability, and blindness. He said, “*Jesus, Thou Son of David.*” He cried aloud, “*Have mercy on me.*” The people tried to keep him quiet and to be still. He cried out the more; he cried out of the depths. He was heard.

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The thief on the cross was crying out of the depths. Here is a man dying. He couldn't work. He couldn't wash and he couldn't witness. He couldn't walk and he couldn't wait. He cried, "*Oh God, Lord, remember me when You come into Thy Kingdom.*" He cried out of the depths. That is conviction of sin.

Notice the next line; "*Lord, hear my voice; let thine ear be attentive to the voice of my supplication.*" What is this? This is a sincere cry. Where is he? He is crying out of the depths. What is he doing? He is crying unto the Lord; oh what mercy is reserved for those who can call upon the Name of the Lord. That is what Paul wrote in **Romans 10**; "*Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" God said, "Call upon Me and I will answer." *Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee.*"

This prayer, this sincere prayer has the marks, the five marks of a sincere prayer. Do you know what I believe to be the five marks of a sincere prayer? I said to someone just recently, "I wonder how much prayer is real prayer and how much of it is preaching? How much prayer is real prayer and how much of it do we say to impress those about us? How much prayer is real prayer and how much of it is form, duty, ritualism or something else?" This is prayer; "*O Lord, out of the depths have I cried unto Thee. Lord, hear my voice; let Thine ear be attentive to the voice of my supplications.*" This is prayer. This is not reciting a form; this is prayer. God heard this prayer.

I'll give you the five marks of a genuine prayer: First; it is a humble prayer, "*Out of the depths.*" You are low-down. You are down in the valley, you are helpless and hopeless; "*I cry.*" Another thing about a sincere prayer is that it is a fervent prayer. "*Have I cried unto Thee O Lord?*" There's no form, ceremony or duty there. There's no reciting something that we have memorized. "*I cried unto Thee.*"

You know something, you mothers go about your house and you have a couple of children. You hear their little voices in the next room. They are talking and they are singing. They may be chattering or arguing. You don't pay a great deal of attention. But, you just let one of them cry and you are in that room and next to them in a moment. It is a cry; it is a need; it is a fervent call for help. That is what a prayer is. It is a humble, fervent cry to God and it is directed to God.

He said, "*Lord, unto Thee, out of the depths have I cried unto Thee.*" It's not to Mary, it's not to a Saint; it's not to a statue; it's not to a preacher, "*But unto Thee, O Lord have I cried. You hear my voice; you be attentive to the voice of my supplication.*" This prayer is directed to God.

It is a reverent prayer. "*O Lord, God of heaven and earth. O Lord, hear my voice.*" That is what the leper said when Christ came down from the mountain. He ran to him and fell down at his feet and worshipped Him. He said, "*Lord, Master, if you will, you can make me whole.*" That is a reverent prayer. This prayer is personal; "*O Lord, out of the depths have I cried unto Thee. Lord, hear my voice.*"

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All right, look at **verse three**: *“If Thou Lord shouldest mark iniquity, who shall stand?”* Here is personal judgment. David judges himself. This is what David is doing here. He doesn’t talk like a lot of religious people do today, does he? *“If Thou shouldest mark iniquity, who shall stand?”* He admits he is a great sinner who cannot stand on his own before God.

I will tell you this; no man will ever come to a throne of grace until he’s been to a throne of judgment. He has to judge himself. That is what the scripture says; *“If we judge ourselves we will not be judged.”* No man is going to seek grace until he confesses guilt. No man is going to cry for mercy until he is miserable. This is what David is saying, *“Lord, if Thou shouldest mark iniquity, (if God should charge, call us to account, hold us accountable, hold us responsible for our iniquity, for every idle word, for every idle deed, for every sinful imagination, for every carnal act, for every selfish motive, for every sinful act), Lord, who is going to stand?”* Can you?

This is personal judgment. We have to judge ourselves and justify God in His condemnation. If God condemns us, He is Just. *“He is clear when He speaks,”* David said. I’m guilty! *“Let every mouth be stopped and all the world become guilty.”* Here is personal judgment.

Look at **verse four**: (thank God for this verse); *“But, there is forgiveness.”* *Out of the depths and conviction of sin have I cried (a sincere call) Lord, if you charge iniquity, if you mark iniquity, I can’t stand (and nobody else can), but I rejoice that there is forgiveness with Thee.”*

Somebody said this recently, “These two verses contain the whole of the scripture.” There in **verse three**, *“If Thou Lord shouldest mark iniquity, who would stand?”* That is sin, (universal sin, and universal guilt) and *“There is no difference because all have sinned.”* It is fatal; whom can stand and not all perish.

The next verse says; *“There is forgiveness with Thee.”* My friend, there is salvation. It is free, full, complete and eternal. What did Paul write in the **Book of Ephesians in Chapter Two**? *“You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin, wherein times past you walked, (I walked, we all walked), according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience among whom we all had our conversation in times past, in the lust of our flesh, in the lust of our minds, and the pride of life. We were by nature children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest any many should boast.”*

That is what David is saying here, *“Lord, if you should mark (count sin, evil), iniquity, who is going to stand? But, there is forgiveness with Thee.”*

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*“We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin. He was made sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”*

The poet said:

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.

But, there is forgiveness with thee. Isn’t that good news? Christ came to save sinners like you and me. *“If God should mark iniquity, who could stand?”* Thank God there is forgiveness. There is mercy, and there is grace with Him that He may be feared (worshipped).

Oh, we fear God because of His power, wisdom, glory and greatness. We fear God because we are in God’s hand to do with what He sees fit. I fear to miss Christ. I fear to presume on the grace of God. I fear, don’t you? I fear God; *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”*

Notice **verse five**: here is hope, (listen); *“So, I wait for the Lord.”* Salvation is of the Lord. *“My soul doth wait and His Word do I hope.”* We look to Him; we wait upon Him and we hope. We have a good hope, a blessed hope, a sure hope, and a living hope. That hope is a person. It is, *“Christ in you the hope of glory.”*

Let me give you four things which encourage me (a sinner), to wait and hope in the Lord. There are four things that have to do with Him and none of them with me. Paul says, *“He’s the chief of sinners. He’s less than the least of all the saints. He’s unworthy to be called an apostle.”* Here are four things that encourage me.

First of all, it is God’s will to show mercy. That’s right; He says, *“I will be merciful; I will be gracious.”* It is His will.

Secondly, it is His glory. That is His greatest glory, which is to show mercy. Moses asked Him, he said, *“Lord, show me your glory.”* He said, *“I’ll show you My glory; My glory is My goodness. I’ll pass by you and reveal to you My goodness. I will be merciful; I will be gracious.”* That is God’s glory.

Thirdly: It is His power. *“He’s able to save.”* That is right; *“He’s able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him.”*

I can’t break a heart, but He can. I can’t give a man a new heart, but He can. I can’t save a sinner, but He can. I can’t put away your awful guilt, and my awful guilt, but He can. I can’t write a name in the Lamb’s Book of Life, but He can. He said, *“It is the Book which*

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*He hath written.*” He has the power. Paul said that, *“I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to do all that He promised and to keep that which I have committed unto Him; He is able.”*

Fourthly, it is His faithfulness. Our Lord Jesus rested in the faithfulness of His Father, the faithful promise of His Father. He said, *“All that My Father giveth Me shall come to Me and him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out. I came down from heaven not to do My will but to do the will of Him that sent Me; (this is the will, the purpose, the power, the faithfulness of Him that sent Me) that of all which He hath given Me, I will lose nothing and raise it up the last day.”*

Look down at **verse 7**: *“Let Israel hope in the Lord for with the Lord there is plenteous redemption.”* There is plenty and never a shortage of grace, never a shortage of mercy, and never a shortage of redemption. *“He is plenteous in redemption.”*