

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

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Bible Text: Psalm 30

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I know that tonight's Psalm is going to connect with you. It's a Psalm that is intended to do that and there will be many things that come to your mind about your past spiritual experience as we go through this because David is reciting some of his own spiritual experience which is common to the people of God as he recites this Psalm and the whole idea of this Psalm is to direct you to the thought that God's faithfulness is great. "Great is thy faithfulness," we sing quite often here at Truth Community. We'll sing it at the end of this message as a fitting response to what David says here in Psalm 30.

Now, this is one of those Psalms that you don't often hear taught and so it's one of the benefits of going through the Psalms sequentially like we're doing that we get the benefit of finding some treasures in Scripture that perhaps are otherwise overlooked, but Psalm 30 doesn't immediately strike you in that way. As you read through it the first time or 2 if you're just reading it without any other connection or preparation, it's a Psalm that oddly seems to lack a logical progression. Some of the Psalms are very clear in their structure and you can divide them into 3 verse segments and it's very clear and obvious about what's going on. Psalm 2 was a Psalm like that where the different speakers were just very evident as you went through the progression of the Psalm. Psalm 30 is not like that, however, the pieces of this Psalm fit together when you see the overall theme of the Psalm and that overall theme is a theme of praise, of thanksgiving to God.

Look at verse 1 with me. We're just going to pass through to help you see the theme that will help these other pieces fit together. It will give us kind of a framework to hang the rest of the Psalm on. The theme of this Psalm is praising God. Psalm 30:1 says, "I will extol You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up." I will extol you. I will magnify you. I will praise your holy name. That's the theme that he starts on. Then as he progresses on you see this theme of praise repeated in verse 4, for example where David writes, "Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones, And give thanks to His holy name." In verse 9 he says, "What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise You? Will it declare Your faithfulness?" Then again in verse 12 he says, "That my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever." So what's on his mind as he writes this Psalm, what he intends to convey to us is this sense of praise; an expression of gratitude toward God; of extolling and magnifying and giving thanks to God for his exalted nature and for the blessings that he has given.

So every true Christian is already hardwired to want to do that. It is resident in our hearts as believers in Christ with a new nature to want to honor the God of our salvation. We naturally respond to the suggestion and the grounds that would cause us to give praise to God and so I have no doubt in my mind that for most of us as we walk out of here tonight, we're going to be filled with gratitude and thanks and praise to God as a result of having studied Psalm 30 together tonight and so that's a great reason for the people of God to come together and that's what we're going to do here this evening.

David in this Psalm, as we go through it, we're going to see 4 aspects of God's faithfulness so that we will join David in praising God. There are really 4 different perspectives or 4 different features of godly life and of God's character that David highlights for us from his own personal experience. The Psalm is designed for you to identify with this, to say, "Oh, I've seen those things in my own life and I join with David in giving thanks." Or, "I recognize these aspects of God's character and, yes, they are praiseworthy. It is worthwhile for me to declare the exalted nature of God in response to what Scripture has said to me here this evening." And so for those of us that love God and I number all of you among that, for those of you that love God, this Psalm will resonate with your heart. You will find music in this Psalm that is sweet to your soul that you want to join in the chorus of worship that David is giving to us here.

Well, he starts out, first of all, the first aspect of God's faithfulness that he highlights is that he gives praise to God for God's faithful answer. It's praise for God's faithful answer that we see first of all in this Psalm. David starts out in the first 3 verses of this Psalm exalting God, thanking God, praising God, because God has rescued him from an illness that threatened his life. David was on the brink of death and it was uncertain, it was unclear whether he would survive the illness or not and as he writes this Psalm, he's on the other side. Look at verse 1 with me. He says,

1 I will extol You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up, And have not let my enemies rejoice over me.

David had sunk into a low physical condition that he could not get himself out of and when he says, "God, you lifted me up," it's the picture of God delivering him like pulling a bucket out of a well. That down in the depths was David's life, uncertain was its future and God reach down into that condition where he could not lift himself out of and God lifted him up and brought him out of that condition. He is giving full credit to God while giving passing notice to the enemies who enjoyed seeing him suffer and no doubt would have been delighted if David had perished on the spot.

Look at it again with me, "I will extol You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up, And have not let my enemies rejoice over me." So it's a God-ward focus with a passing glance at the enemies who were opposed to him and what David is saying in these first 3 verses is, "God, you heard me in my distress. You heard me when I called out to you. I know that you heard me because my condition changed and I attribute that to your loving, faithful care, for your loving, faithful answer to the prayer that I made to you in my distress." It reminds me, as I'm standing here, of Jonah's prayer in Jonah 2 where from the

belly of the fish, he cried out to God for deliverance and the fish kind of coughed him up, let's say, and coughed him up on dry land and Jonah gives thanks to God because he heard him from the belly of the fish. David, in the bottom of a well, so to speak metaphorically speaking, cried out and God heard him there. Christian friend, don't you have, unless you're a very brand-new Christian, don't you have times in your life that you can look back on and say, "There was no way out of that situation and I was discouraged or I was deathly ill and I cried out to God humbly for mercy with no means to provide deliverance by my own hands," and God delivered you? Don't you have elements like that in your past, in your Christian past, to draw upon to thank God for? Well, that's what David is doing here. He is thanking God for answered prayer. He is grateful to God that he did something by God's power that David could not do for himself. David looks back and he remembers his cry for help and recalls how God healed him.

Look at verse 2, he says, "O LORD my God," and there again we are seeing the name Yahweh that is so prevalent in the Psalms. "O Lord, my covenant keeping, promise keeping, faithful God. My God of loyal love." There is an element of relationship that is expressed in how he says this.

2 O LORD my God, I cried to You for help, and You healed me.

David here is thanking God for answered prayer and he recalls how God healed him and he remembers the desperate condition that he was in. He could have died. Look at verse 3, he says, "

3 O LORD, You have brought up my soul from Sheol;

The realm of the dead, saying, "That's how close I was. I was right on the brink of the realm of the dead but

You have kept me alive, that I would not go down to the pit.

I was standing right on the edge, Lord. I was leaning forward and about to fall into it and by your mighty hand you grabbed me and you rescued me." He's alive because God kept him alive, otherwise he would be in the realm of the dead. It was a fresh display of God's loyal love.

Do you know that from some physical experience in your past? Has there been a time where God spared you, perhaps in an accident that by all physical forces should have been fatal to you? Well, this Psalm reminds you to look back on that and to give thanks to God for it. Were there times of great spiritual distress that you found yourself in, profoundly discouraged? Perhaps under the attack of people who disliked you and you were outnumbered and weak in comparison to their power but now you stand in a realm of God's blessing and being able to see that he delivered you from those hostile forces? Perhaps being under the influence of wicked spiritual leaders or those who were hostile to you in a spiritual environment and they held all of the power and you were not able to do anything to defend yourself and they wouldn't hear your case? Maybe through their

teaching, maybe from the way they dealt with you personally? Maybe it was just that they were just not oriented toward Scripture and godly in things? Well look, all of that and you prayed and you cried out to that, what you are supposed to do as a Christian is to call that to mind and say, "God, I remember this and I thank you. I extol your name. I declare your greatness and your faithful love because I attribute that deliverance from that situation to your gracious loving response to the prayer that I made to you while I was there." Looking out and knowing so many of your situations, I know for a fact that many of you have experienced this personally and deeply. Well, you should be at the front of the line. You should be jostling to get in the front, to be the first one to say, "God, thank you. I declare your praise because I remember this. It's fresh on my mind. I haven't forgotten."

David's context here was a physical illness and as you see just from the fact that he was about to die and David says, "You kept me alive," in that context of the physical illness and knowing that many of you have walked of those roads as well, James Montgomery Boice applies this for us in an effective way, I believe. We are mindful and almost all of you are happy to take advantage of modern medicine and modern technology and I think it's good that you do but James Boice emphasizes that we as believers in God, we as believers in the God of the Bible, we as Christians, should have a bigger view about modern medicine than simply trusting in the doctors to tell us to do what is right that will heal us. He reminds us that spiritually speaking, biblically speaking, for the God who is in providential control of all things, modern medicine is simply a tool in the hands of God to bring relief to his people. Dr. Boice said this and I quote, "When you are sick, pray. Ask God for healing. And when you are well again, remember that it is God who healed you. Thank him for it as the psalmist does."

So David says, "Lord, I cried to you for help and you healed me." Well, if you've gone through an illness, if you've been through some serious physical troubles, you asked God to help you, you asked others to pray and now you're on the other side of that physical ailment, well, the right and proper thing for you to do is to say, "God, thank you. I asked you for help and what do I find myself now but in a condition where that condition no longer troubles me. God, I asked you for help. I believe that what transpired was by your hand. You were doing good to me. You were faithful to answer my prayer and, God, I thank you for it. I just can't help myself but be grateful to you, God, because of what you have done for me in my physical distress." So David is praising God, declaring the faithfulness of God, and one of the things that he looks for, one of the things that he expresses here is, "I prayed to God and he answered and so I am declaring his faithfulness to the world in this Psalm and I join with the people of God in thanking him for it."

Now, I realize that you're probably like me and we're a lot quicker to pray and ask for something than we are to rush back and thank God for the answer when it comes. Let this just be a gentle reminder to remember that on the front side as you ask to have it in your mind, "Lord, when the deliverance comes, I'm going to remember to thank you on the other end." And then when it does come, to actually spend time thanking him rather than moving on to the very next request. We want to have a heart toward God that expresses a

faithful gratitude that praises him and doesn't simply use him in times of distress and then move on with our lives as if he had never responded to us. No, we want to be loyal in return. We want to thank God in return for his goodness to us. So David praises him for answered prayer.

Well, as you go on in the next part of the Psalm, you see a different aspect that David gives for praising God and this is kind of independent of the human condition. He praises God for God's faithful kindness. God's faithful kindness and these things are all woven together in one sense like a seamless garment. They are all expressing different aspects of God's faithfulness but you can see different colors in a seamless garment and appreciate different aspects of the design of the garment. Well, we thank God for his faithfulness and we realize that there are different aspects to his faithfulness that we give him thanks for. So as you move on into verse 4, what you find is this: David wants others to join him in praise. He wants other people to share in the gratitude; to join in and that there would be more voices added to the choir that is giving praise to God and his personal experience from the first 3 verses motivates him to call others to join him in praising God.

Look at verse 4 with me. He says,

4 Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones, And give thanks to His holy name.

David now here is speaking beyond his personal experience and is exercising spiritual leadership and says, "You have heard me declare my thanks to God for what he did in my life and how he answered my prayer. Now," David's says, "now I want you to join with me. I don't want to be a soloist when I am praising God here. There should be a chorus of voices, you godly ones. You should be glad. You should be eager. You should be motivated to join with me as I lift up my voice in praise of our God." So he calls upon them. He commands them. He uses an imperative and Scripture here in this verse is commanding you as well, "Join in the praise of God." You see, this isn't just information that Scripture gives to us here. It's not simply telling a third person story that you can observe from a distance and say, "Oh, that's nice." No, you see, this is designed to influence your own heart. This is designed to so move and motivate your heart that you say that it moves your heart as you understand it to the point that your volition, your will is engaged and you say, "Yes, I will join with this man of God as he praises him."

This is not a detached study and saying, "Oh, what did David say 3,000 years ago?" We understand that we're under the authority of this word that Scripture brings to us and says, "You sing praise to the Lord, you his godly ones. You give thanks to his holy name." And you know, there should be no reluctance in your heart whatsoever to join with that. There shouldn't be any hesitation. When men of God get up and call us to praise God, to give thanks to his holy name, we should be eager to respond. To join in that because our heart affections are so wedded to the glory of God because we recognize his great and high and lofty nature. Because we're mindful of the benefits that he has bestowed upon us. That he saved us from our sins that by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. That he has been merciful to us throughout the course of our Christian existence. We have a great future hope ahead

of us that eternity will be spent in perfection with the glory of God and we understand those things. We call them to mind. It's fresh in our thinking. So whether you look to the left or to the right, you're just surrounded with the blessing of God and you're just so overwhelmed by his kindness and goodness to you that you say, "Yes, I will join in the praise. Yes, I will also give thanks to his name."

Is that your heart tonight? Is there anything that holds you back from unreservedly joining in and responding to the command of Scripture here in verse 4? There shouldn't be anything regardless of the trials or the sufferings or whatever is going on in life. We can set those things aside and say, "Whatever else those things may be, my God is certainly worthy of my praise and I'll rise above the earthly circumstances and just acknowledge his name. Forget about myself, magnify him. That's what I want to do." That's what Scripture calls us to. That's the character of a true believer that we think that way.

David says, "Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones." He's referring to those who have a covenant relationship with God like he does and then he goes on. I like this next verse. This is perhaps the most well-known verse of Psalm 30, what I'm about to show you. David informs their praise with profound insight into the way that God deals with his people. He gives us great insight, great reason to join in praising God as he writes what he says in verse 5 and this is one sweet verse. He says in verse 5, having said, "Sing praise, give thanks," you say, why? Well, David says, "For," because, let me tell you why, here's what should come to your mind as a reason to extol the glorious name of Yahweh. David says,

5 For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; Weeping
may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning.

Notice the contrasts that are woven deeply into this verse. There is the contrast between God's anger and his favor. There is the temporal element of "but for a moment," and "for a lifetime." There is the difference between weeping and shouting for joy. A difference between night and the morning. There is contrast just anchored in this particular verse of Scripture and David remembers coming off his severe test where he thought he might die and now on the other side of the trial, having suffered under the weight of his illness, he looks back on that and says, "Do you know what? God didn't abandon me to my suffering."

Here's the thing, beloved, here's what you need to see is that David's experience of the temporary nature of that suffering that he went through, he is using that simply as an illustration at this point to point to a much greater principle about who God is and the way that he deals with his people and expresses his love to us. David is illustrating how God cares for us. How God deals with us and here's his point: yes, God brings us into trials. We go through some difficult times in life and sometimes they last for a while. Sometimes for an extended period of time, but what we need to do as we grow in our Christian maturity, a couple of things here, as your Christian life, years go by and you gather more Christian experience and you see the way God works out his Providence

over time, corporately together as we're here and there are hundred people in the room and more than that on Sunday and we have kind of a shared corporate testimony that tests what David is saying here, we will find something that is true. Yes, God brings us into trials and he brings trials into your life, but here's the key point: over time and across the experience of God's people, something emerges that is very precious. God proportions his dealings so that we know much more about his blessing than we do of his discipline. Let me say that again: God proportions his dealings with us so that we know much more of his blessing than we do of his discipline. The difference, David says, is like comparing a man who stays overnight someplace, the weeping may last for the night, compared with the blessing of a man's entire lifetime. The shout of joy comes in the morning and a new day dawns and it's marked by joy and light and gladness. What does that tell us about the character of God? What does it say about the nature of God? Oh, beloved, get this really big important point because it will inform you toward praise. It will motivate you to extol God for his faithfulness: God is good. When I say God is good, I don't mean God is good, I mean God is good! He is really, really good. He is really, really kind to us. He expresses favor to us that is out of all proportion with what we deserve.

Beloved, God does not deal with you according to your sin. If he did, life would be miserable for you indeed. If you received what your sins deserved, there would just be incalculable difficulty and sorrow and judgment and discipline and chastisement, but that's not the mark of your Christian experience, is it? I want you to answer that question in your own heart. Just that interminable sense of chastisement and sorrow and pain, that's not the interminable mark of your Christian experience, is it? No, by contrast, quite to the contrary, if you're a Christian, you know an awful lot about God being good to you. You know an awful lot about even just in a temporal sense of having things to enjoy and relationships that you share and even just human love before we begin to enter into the fact that he has given us his precious word and he has given us the Lord Jesus Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit and we have the whole future of eternity before us to enjoy that forever.

No. No, we should not think these small, meager, miserly thoughts about the goodness of God. If you would step back and look at it, you would realize that God has been so good to you, particularly in comparison to what you deserve, that it's out of all proportion and yes, sometimes we go through some dark times. I've been through those dark times. I wondered as one year turned into 2 and turned into 3 if it was ever going to stop and it was painful. But do you know what the long-term testimony of my life is? That God blessed me and once he set aside that sorrow, it's been replaced with just incalculable gladness and joy and blessing that is out of all proportion to anything that I deserve. Yeah, walk through darkness for a time but the testimony of my life and, beloved, if you would think about it, the testimony of your life as well as a Christian is, I've seen a whole lot more of the good hand of God than I have of his discipline. Period. End of question. End of sentence. End of paragraph. End of story. God is good to his people.

What you and I need to rise up to do is to recognize that and to set aside our tendency toward grumbling and complaining as Philippians 2 speaks about, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." Set aside our disputing over a narrow view of temporary

problems and say, "Do you know what? When I remember the big picture, God has been awfully good to me. When I connect my experience with those of the local body that I am joined together, I see God's goodness in the hands and on the lives of the people around me. It's not just what he does with me, it's what the people that I am joined together with in this body of believers, he is good to them too," and there is just all of this testimony of the great goodness of God and all we can do is thank him and praise him for his faithful kindness to us because that is the way he deals with his people." Look at the big picture and praise him for that and if you're in distress right now and it's been a long night for you, this Psalm doesn't minimize the difficulty of the sorrow that you're going through, rather it gives you the spotlight of hope that you need to focus on.

Look at verse 5 with me again. Maybe you're under a sense of chastisement. Maybe providentially your circumstances are difficult right now. You, more than me, grab hold of this verse right here and you anchor your life hope on what Scripture says right here, verse 5, "His anger is but for a moment." The severity of providentially adverse circumstances is temporary, beloved, and you lay hold of that in your sorrow. You lay hold of that when it is hard to read his word and hard to pray because there is just so much sorrow crashing down on you. You let this one verse inform your thinking about it and say, "Do you know what? This has to be temporary." That's the way you think spiritually. This is biblical spiritual logic at its finest, at its best. This is Christianity at its most glorious point when someone who is suffering, a Christian who is discouraged, looks at his circumstances in the light of the character and perspective of God and says, "This must be temporary. This has to come to an end because of the way that God always deals with his children. He deals with us sometimes severely but it's always temporary. The long-term view is that joy will come in the morning," and you don't have to see how it comes out. You don't have to see the solution to this to be able to believe that and thank God for it and let that be your portion of hope for the evening because, beloved, and if you knew how much I was straining the passion that I want to say this with, you would be amazed: that's who God is. God, that's who he is. It can't be any other way. The story of your life even in your present sorrow is not going to prove to be the exception. Even Job in his extensive, profound trials of losing his wealth, losing his family, losing his health, what came out? What's the end of that book in Job 42? God gave him back double. God restored it all to him.

So this is who God is and on the authority of God's word, I promise you that if you're in one of those nights of sorrow, it's temporary. You'll look back on this passage and say, "God's word proved true to me too," because that's who God is and that's what he does for his people. You can rely on his promise to care for you and to help you. At the same time I should probably say this: understand that this promise, the context of this, this is only for the people of God. David here, look at the context here, verse 4, "Sing praise to the LORD," who? "You His godly ones, give thanks to His name. For," you, "His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime," and on it goes. The context here is not that this is the universal experience of all people throughout all of humanity regardless of what they do with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No, no, no, no, no. No, no, no, no. Let's not make that mistake in our thinking because actually, for the unrepentant sinner, God's anger is not just for a lifetime, it's for all of eternity. The nature of God's anger is such

that if you're not a Christian, you should be very seriously running to repentance that you could come under the favor of God rather than abiding under the wrath of God, John 3:36.

David holds this out as the promise of the people of God and if you're not a Christian here tonight, let me tell you what they should do for you. They should be a magnet that draws you to Christ. The favor of God and the love of God for sinners and the way that he deals with his people should so move your heart that you say, "I've got to be one of them. I've got to belong to God and I understand that I can only belong to God if I put my faith in Christ and I run to Christ so that I can embrace him and I can be under the umbrella of his favor because the thought of being eternally under his anger is just an unthinkable monstrosity for my own well-being."

You know, in the sins that you love that keep you resistant and hard and unwilling to bend the knee to Christ, if people in hell have the opportunity for conscious thought like that, the eternal woe and anguish is going to be, "Oh, I sold my soul so cheaply! I sold it so cheaply for some cheap sins on earth! Now I've got an eternal judgment upon my head." Why would you do that? It doesn't even make sense, does it? It's completely irrational to deal with life that way, to respond to the Gospel of Christ that way. No, if you're a sinner here without Christ, your only thought should be one of grateful, repentant trust in Christ and say, "Would you have me too?" Christ would say, "Yes, I'll have you too. Welcome into my kingdom." When a sinner comes to Christ under the conviction of God's judgment, then he himself experiences this, "Wow, God's judgment was upon me but do you know what? It was only for a moment. Now that I belong to Christ, there is a shout of joy and I belong to Christ and my sins will never be brought up against me again. Wow." And so wherever you start on the circle, it all comes back to high noon and the high praise of God because of the way that he handles his anger. Does it temporarily to achieve a purpose and then the blessings flow once again.

So no wonder David says, "Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones, And give thanks to His holy name." That's going on in your heart right now, isn't it? Praising this God for who he is? It should be. I don't know how you could do any other response than just say, "Wow, what a great God. How good, how kind, how merciful is he that he would be like that." Let's think about one other thing, think about it this way, this is who God has always been. God's character never changes. God existed before the world began and do you know what? God has always been like this. Here's the thing: no one taught God to be this way. He didn't go to a class and say, "Oh, that's how I should be as God." No, no, he was just always like that. He's always been this way without a speck of diminishment in his goodness. Wow, it kind of humbles us before him, doesn't it and just makes you want to praise him.

Well, David goes on and gives us a third grounds for praising God. We've praised him for answered prayer. We've praised him for his faithful kindness. Thirdly, David praises God for his faithful patience. His faithful patience and, beloved, as we read these next few verses in Psalm 30, this is just like standing in front of a bathroom mirror, you are going to see yourself in what is displayed here as Scripture reflects back your own character.

David, prior to his suffering, had been proud and self-sufficient. There was more than just a streak of arrogance that he confesses to here in verse 6. Look at it with me,

6 Now as for me, I said in my prosperity, "I will never be moved."

David is looking back, reflecting on before God's answer arrived and what his condition was like beforehand and he says, "You know, things were going really great for me in life. I was prosperous and everything was going my way and I stood up and I said I'll never be moved." It was pure arrogance. It was not a trust in God, it was a trust in self and resources. He was self-reliant and he attributed his success to his own efforts. Do you know something about earthly security causing you to boast? Do you know something maybe as a young Christian thinking, "I'll never be moved from my faithfulness to Christ," and then you find that trials come and you're questioning the love of God and shaking your fist at him just days or weeks after you had boasted about how strong you were going to be. I can remember a time like that in my life. The period for me was 5 days from saying, "I'm ready to be a man of God," then sorrow crashed down on a cold November day and I was completely disoriented and what I thought was my spiritual strength proved to be a spider's web that couldn't hold the smallest of pebbles. I was proud. I was arrogant. I was boastful as that young Christian and the sorrows that followed exposed how self-sufficient I really was.

Has earthly security caused you to sin in similar ways in your past? Perhaps you're here now and things in life are going really good and there's just an air that you carry about yourself that, "Do you know what? I'm pretty good here." Well look, we need to realize that God has ways of dealing with that. That God has ways of humbling the proud, of eliminating pride in his children, and what David is describing here is that the intervening suffering after he had that mindset, the intervening suffering cured him of that spiritual pride. The illness that he went through purified his soul so that now he sees that it's only God's grace that gives him security. Nothing about his own abilities secure him.

Look at verse 7, he says and again, notice the contrast. In verse 6 he said, "in my prosperity I said I will never be moved." Now what does he say in verse 7?

7 O LORD, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong;

He said, "It's by your favor that I can look confidently to the future. It's because you are good, not because the political forces are lined up in my favor that I know that I'm going to be secure because, God, it's by your favor that I stand, not by anything in myself." And sometimes it's only severe suffering that can bring you to understand that and actually say it from the depths of your heart. We're far too self-sufficient and proud and boastful, especially in our Western society. The mountain in verse 7 is a symbol of strength, of security, of stability, and David is saying, "My current place of blessing is a gift from God, not something that I produced in my own effort."

That kind of humility doesn't just happen and perhaps, beloved, and I say this to encourage you and help you, not to chastise you, but perhaps the suffering that you're

going through now that really hurts is simply an instrument in which God is humbling you and teaching you not to trust in yourself and to turn away from the pride that has marked your life in the past and you don't recognize it any other way. You know, sometimes the severity of the trial is necessary to show you how deep rooted your pride and arrogance is. I can say that because it took a severe trial to show me how deeply proud and self-sufficient I was, probably still times ahead of sorrow in me to teach me the remnant that's still there. But the point is that don't resent the trial that exposes your weakness. Don't turn against God and don't resent him for bringing trials that make you feel weak because it's in the weakness that you feel under the weight of those trials that Paul says, that's where God makes his strength known.

It's where he perfects his strength and Paul says, "I asked for this to be removed 3 times but now do you know what I say? Now I say..." Let's look at 2 Corinthians 12 and just see this because of the way that it connects. 2 Corinthians 12, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:7, he had received surpassingly great revelations and for this reason, he says in verse 7, 2 Corinthians 7. I'll give you another moment to tap on your iPad there. "For this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me." Why? "To keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me." "Oh God, this hurts!" The second time, "Oh God, this hurts!" Third time, "God, this hurts, take it away from me!" What did the Lord say to him? He said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Paul says, "Ah, God's power is manifested in my weakness, my self-exaltation is actually contrary to spiritual power and effectiveness and a deeper knowledge of God. Do you know what? If that's the case, then I embrace the trial here." He says, "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses." Why? "So that the power of Christ may dwell in me." He says, "Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." When God is breaking your pride and breaking your will, even breaking your spirit under the weight of your trial, understand what's really going on here is he is simply building the stage upon which he will display the sufficiency of his grace to you and for that you give him thanks because he is patiently working out his will in your life.

So it's quite a mirror, isn't it, to have something like this put up and say, "Wow, that's me. This is real life." You know, one of the things that I love about passages of Scripture like this and principles like this is that it shows us how deeply meaningful biblical Christianity is. That this isn't a superficial show of lights and smoke and dust falling down from the ceiling, little glitter bottles being dumped out as if the Holy Spirit were falling when it happened there. No, all of that is superficial external stuff that the church does on the cheap to imitate the world in. That has nothing to do with the reality of true Christianity. Right here we see the reality of true Christianity, of a soul responding to the work of God upon it and being able to understand why trials come and what God is doing in them and what they say about his character and what they say about our own selves and to realize that over time God uses that and changes us and shapes us and makes us more like the eternal Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and he uses all of that to accomplish eternal purposes that will display his grace to us. I like that. There's

something that you can sink your teeth into. And all of a sudden there is a real purpose to the deep sorrows that we go through in life and we realize that out of the gracious hand of God there is a severity in his mercy but more importantly, beloved, there is a mercy in his severity to you and I love him for that, don't you? You've gone through long years of trial and wondered where it was ever going to end, maybe gave up hope that it was ever going to end and God ends it. Then what happens? You appreciate it all the more than if the blessing had been there all along. What a God. What a great and good God.

Well, I guess we have to continue in Psalm 30 here. Look at verses 8 and 9 with me. David looks back in verses 8 and 9 and he remembers how in the midst of his distress he bargained with God for his life. He says,

8 To You, O LORD, I called, And to the Lord I made supplication:

He's remembering a past time when he was praying and he says in verse 9,

9 "What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise You? Will it declare Your faithfulness?"

What is he saying here? What is he remembering about his prayer then? Basically what he's saying is, "God, you should let me live even though I'm on the verge of death here. You should let me live. Why? Because I want to live and I want to live for this purpose so that I can express praise to your faithfulness. I want to praise you but, Lord, if I die, if my voice is silenced, what's going to rise up and praise you? Is the dust over my corpse going to praise your name? Will the clods of sod that are covering my bones, will they declare your faithfulness?" He's saying, "God, it's in your interest to answer my prayer because I will declare your faithfulness if you just spare my life."

David's point here is not about the afterlife. He's not denying the reality of the presence of God after we die. He's simply saying that he wanted to live so that he could praise God among the living. He wanted to be an instrument that could give glory to God and lead others to do the same and do you know what? David kept his word. David kept his word. Do you know how I know that? Because we've got Psalm 30 here to tell us. One of the ways that David responded in obedience in his own faithfulness to the way that God was gracious to him is the fact that he wrote Psalm 30 here. Psalm 30, declaring the great faithfulness of God. God spared his life and David was like the one of the 10 that came back to give thanks to Christ for their healing. David came back and wrote Psalm 30 and here we are 3,000 years later walking in the wake of this Spirit-inspired piece of great poetry that points us to the glory of God. The echoes and the ramifications of God's answer to his prayer are continuing in our own lives here in 2015.

So David is praising God for his faithfulness after the cloud of suffering had passed. The sun was shining again and in his suffering, his prayer was simple and direct. Look at verse 10 with me and, beloved, drink in the simplicity of his prayer here in verse 10. He says,

10 "Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me; O LORD, be my helper."

Over the years, I have heard people say, "You know, I just don't know how to pray for this." They are in the midst of a situation and they are trying to figure out what the results should be so that they can know how to pray in response before it happens. Well, that's a big waste of time. Really, that's just a great big waste of time to try to figure out the circumstances and how they should all turn out. Don't waste your time doing that. Don't try to figure out what you think a good result would be so that you can somehow pray better. Simplify your life and make your prayers far more effective and far more meaningful anyway. Look at what David says, he just says, "Lord, hear me. Be gracious to me. Be my helper." That's all you need. Look, if God hears your prayer, then does it matter how the circumstances play out? If God helps you, isn't that going to be better than any particular earthly result? If God is gracious to you, then there is nothing else you need and so ask for the right things. Don't get so soaked up in how you want this or that circumstance to play out. Just lay a hold the faithful character of God and say, "God, your character is what I want. I ask you to be gracious to me. I ask you to help me. Please hear me," and leave it there and rest not on your perception of what the circumstances should be which are going to be faulty and unpredictable anyway, you don't want to rely on your own understanding. Rely instead on the gracious character of God and say, "God, I just commit myself to your grace and to your help and if you hear me, that's all I need. Amen." This completely changes the way we pray. It sure does simplify things. I can say as your pastor, "If I knew you were praying like this sincerely for 5 minutes, I would trade that for 3 hours of self-centered circumstantial praying about all kinds of different stuff." The sincerity of your heart is resting in the grace of God then that is where prayer is designed to lead you.

Now, having recited his past, David describes the present and future affects. It brings us to our fourth point tonight. He has praised God for his faithful answers to prayer. He has praised God for his faithful patience. His faithful kindness. And now fourthly he praises God for God's fateful restoration. David wants everyone to know just how faithful God has been to him. Verse 11,

11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness,

Notice the contrast again. "God, you have turned the situation. You have changed it from mourning into jubilation. From the sackcloth of repentance to the garments of gladness and praise." David says, "Lord, you acted in response to my prayer and whereas before I was having to repent of my self-sufficiency, now I am conscious of your forgiveness and favor and, God, I am so joyful. God, I was in the depth of mourning but now I am rejoicing and I am overjoyed. I can't help but physically express the gladness that is in my heart because of the way that you have shown favor to me in your faithfulness. You restored me. You brought me out of the pit of darkness, of illness, of sorrow, of grief, of false religion and now here I am, Lord. I know that I am in your favor and, God, thank you for restoring me."

I would have liked to have been a bug on a wall listening to Job pray after God restored him like he did. After the depths of his struggle, what words of praise and thanks and gratitude must have come out of his mouth. What words of thanks and glory and filial love must have come forth from Christ after the sufferings of the cross and God raised him from the dead and they were joined together once more in heaven. How intimate, how glorious must it have been for Jesus in the ascension to be restored to his rightful place. The cross of mourning and suffering behind and now restored to the glory of God at his throne. Ah, mark it, write it in your notes: God is a God who restores. God is a God who brings blessing after sorrow. He is a God who brings peace after the storm has blown through and he always does that for his people. Why? Because, beloved, he is faithful. Because he is a God of loyal love.

This will always be the case for us and notice the final exclamation of his soul there in verse 12. He says, "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness," for this result. For this end,

12 That my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

David as he has walked through all of this and he has recited these 4 aspects of God's faithfulness, comes out to the point where he says, "I am resolved in my heart, I am resolved in my mind, I will be a man whose tongue is given over to the praise of God and giving thanks to him. God, I'll do it vertically in private prayer. When you give me opportunity on a public platform, God, you will find me praising your great name for your great faithfulness because I love you so much in response to the love that you first showed me."

David's experience has illustrated eternal truths about the nature of God and how he blesses his people and with those truths anchored in his soul, he commits to honor God forever. He says, "God, it's open ended. It's unqualified. My life is given over to the praise of your holy name."

If you're a Christian, that should be the cornerstone commitment of your heart as well and as I like to say, if you're a Christian, you've got even more clarity about why you should do this than David did because you're on the other side of the cross of Calvary. This great God that David knew as Yahweh and knew him in all of his faithfulness, there was still shadows that are now brought into the light for us, we know this God is the one who took on human flesh in order to suffer for our sins. We know this God is the one who has secured eternity for us through the shed blood of Christ. What can you do but be thankful? What can you do but give thanks and glory to his name? What can you do? Can there be anything that would hold you back from walking out of here tonight with this anchor thought in your mind, "O Lord, my God, I will give thanks to you forever." Will you praise him for that? Will you thank him like that as you go out tonight?

Let's bow together in prayer.

Lord, we thank you for your mercies which are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness to us and you will find us, O God, being those who will give thanks to your name forever. Thank you for the privilege of being born into your family. Let us be children who are worthy of the great goodness of our Father. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.