

# Overwhelmed to Overjoyed

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Date: 25 August 2024

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[ 0 : 00 ] It's lovely to be here. So encouraging to see all the people I don't know. Don't read into that, that it's discouraging to see all the people that I do know. And it's great to be here with you and to have this psalm open in front of us.

Let me pray, and then we'll think about this wonderful, wonderful song. Merciful Father, nourish us with your holy word, we pray.

Grant us listening ears, attentive minds, open hearts, malleable wills and humble attitudes. We are conscious that in Scotland, in our day, there is a famine of your word.

So we are thankful to be here together this morning. May Jesus be glorified as we think together and may we be transformed. Please send your spirit so that these words on this page might be alive in us.

Merciful Father, nourish us with your word, we pray. In Jesus' supremely exalted and ever-satisfying name, we bring these requests before you, our Father.

[ 1 : 05 ] Amen. Eight years ago, I moved to South London, to Bermondsey, to work for the Proclamation Trust. And as an act of self-preservation, I decided to become a Millwall football supporter.

Now, Millwall, if you don't know, are the most unpopular team in the whole world. In fact, their theme song is, No One Likes Us, No One Likes Us, We Don't Care. We are Millwall.

It was a great company to be amongst. And the very first time I went to the Millwall football stadium, the New Den, they were playing Barnsley in the third round of the FA Cup.

Stadium was full. Everyone was truly buoyant. Until, after 12 minutes, Barnsley took the lead. And in their thick Yorkshire accents, they sang the song, Everywhere We Go, Everywhere We Go, We're the Barnsley Boys Making All the Noise Everywhere We Go.

Their tune had radically changed by halftime. Because Millwall had had a real resurgence and were winning 4-1. And as the second half kicked off, my newfound Millwall brethren, with one voice, all sang that inimitable football chant.

[ 2 : 25 ] You're not singing anymore. You're not singing anymore. You're not singing. You're not singing. You're not singing anymore. That amazing taunt to ridicule the opposition.

And not only were they singing in unison and totally deriding the Barnsley fans, they were also making a profound theological point. Because it is demonstrably true that we sing when we're winning and we don't when we're not.

And we don't when we're not. You don't have much singing in the midst of chronic illness in the world. There's not much singing on the oncology ward.

There's not much singing in the household of a fracturing marriage. There's not much singing in the depths of depression. There's not much singing when you're overwhelmed and overcome by stress.

The world out there is completely convinced that you sing when you're winning and you don't when you're not. And I want to tell you this morning that Christians need to be the exception that proves the rule.

[ 3 : 42 ] That because of the Lord Jesus Christ, his birth, his life, his death, his resurrection, his ascension to the right hand side of the Father, his soon return to remake the world, that Christians of all people have reason to sing even on the darkest days.

And let me tell you, if you can learn to sing a gospel song about Jesus even on the darkest days, it will massage hope into your hearts and be a provocative witness as the world watches on.

We sing when we're winning and we don't when we're not, except for all of you guys, that because of Jesus, you're to sing all of the time. And I want to say Psalm 130 is a wonderful song to sing even on the darkest of days.

It is a song we're going to have to learn to sing in the good times, so it massages gospel hope into our hearts in the bad times. It is a wonderful song that God has given us in his word to sing back to him.

And I'm sure many of you know on the darkest days, it's very hard to think of words to say. And God has graciously given us words so that in the depths of sorrow, when we're overwhelmed by misery, when we're drowning in work, when we're sinking in stress, Psalm 130 will be a wonderful tonic in the midst of all of that.

[ 5 : 18 ] Psalm 130 is one of the 15 Psalms of Ascent, a sort of psalter within the psalter in Book 5 of the Psalms, a collection of psalms to help orientate post-exilic Israel hearts, to focus on God and to hope in him, especially as they make their three times a year pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the yearly festivals that he prescribed in his word.

So let me read Psalm 130 again, and then we'll dig in. Psalm 13.

My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.

And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities. It's a song in four verses, and I want to look at them each in turn. And notice number one, verses one and two.

We see the psalm is pleading from the depths. He's pleading. Pleading from the metaphorical depths. And let's be clear, that metaphor is incredibly apt.

[ 7 : 08 ] That feeling of drowning. That feeling of sinking. That feeling of the surface being a long way off. That in the midst of suffering and sorrow and sin and tragedy, isn't that how it feels?

It feels dark. And it feels cold. And it feels lonely. And it is deathly quiet.

And so when the psalmist says, out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. We have a real sufferer singing in his situation.

And it's a desperate cry. He cries to the Lord. Hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my voice. God, hear me.

I am here. I'm alone. And you are my only hope. It is the desperate cry of a drowning pilgrim directed to his covenant gods.

[ 8 : 16 ] And what is his plea as he's sinking? Well, into verse two, his plea is for mercy. He is crying to God that God would intervene.

And in crying for mercy, he's confessing that he is right where he deserves to be on account of being a sinner in a fallen world. And let's be clear.

The result of all suffering, the result of all tragedy, the result of all sorrow and misery is sin. Not proportional sin.

That's what Job tells us, isn't it? You aren't suffering because of what you've done necessarily. But the result of being fallen people in a fallen world is that there is sorrow and sinking and difficulty. That the world doesn't work. That the world has gone wrong. And so sin and misery and death and tragedy and dysfunction and loneliness are just an indelible stain on a perfect creation inflicted by human sin.

[ 9 : 25 ] And therefore, all of us, no matter what situation we're in, when we're sinking, our need is mercy. God to be kinder to us than we deserve.

God to intervene to rescue us from the situation that sin has brought us to. God, would you be merciful to me?

There's that incredible story, isn't there, of the defecting general who went AWOL on the battlefield and is brought before Alexander the Great. And just as Alexander the Great is about to declare sentence, which would be death, his mother runs it and says, my emperor, my son deserves mercy. And Alexander the Great says, my dear lady, if he deserved mercy, it wouldn't be mercy because mercy is completely open handed all of the time.

He's treating people better than they deserve. And this is what this man is crying. I'm in the depths. And my only hope is that you are merciful to me.

[ 10 : 40 ] Pleading to God that he wouldn't be treated as his sin deserves, not leave him in the depths where sin has led him. But as he cries in the second stanza, he has a light bulb moment.

As he's there alone in the quiet, in the suffering, in the sadness, in the silence. He thinks about all that he knows about God.

And it's as he reflects on God himself that he starts to realize that the depths won't be his final resting place.

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? He asks a rhetorical question. He does a thought experiment.

Lord, if every time I did what I shouldn't or didn't do what I should, you made a note on my record that I was a sinner.

[ 11 : 43 ] Lord, if every time I said what I shouldn't or didn't say what I should, you made a note and it was on my record forever. Lord, if every time I thought what I shouldn't or didn't think what I should, you made a note.

Lord, what if every second of my life I didn't love you with all of my heart, soul, mind and strength as you deserve, you made a note. Lord, if you made a note of all of that, then humanity has no hope. Because the record even for a day would condemn us. A record even for a day would mean that the depths, that's it. That's the best you can hope for.

That's the most you can deserve. I am 42 years old. It's been a very hard life, as you can see. If I only sinned once a day for those 42 years, which let me tell you is a ridiculously low estimate, then I would have committed already 15,000 acts of treason, which them in and of themselves would be carrying a sentence of death.

They are all capital offenses and I have, let me tell you, insurmountably more than 15,000 capital offenses on my records. And as the drowning pilgrim thinks, a ray of light shines in to the depths.

[ 13 : 12 ] Verse 4, but with you, there is forgiveness. That actually God in and of himself is merciful. He is kind.

He is loving. He is not condemnatory. His natural reflex is to forgive. That penitent people who come before him and say, hear me, have mercy on me, I'm sorry.

His default reflex is forgiveness. But with you, there is forgiveness. That you may be feared. And do you see that because God in and of himself is forgiving, sinners drowning in the depths have hope.

The hope is found in the very character of God himself. That he is merciful and kind and gracious.

And therefore, the cries of desperate sinners drowning will always be heard.

Because God's ears are always attentive to the cries of penitent people drowning in the depths. But do you see how verse 4 works?

[ 14 : 21 ] If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand. But with you, there is forgiveness that you may be feared.

With you, there is forgiveness that you may be feared. I would not run the world like that. If I was in church, I would flip it completely the other way around.

I would say, you start fearing me. You start relating to me rightly. You start doing the things that I want and making less of a mess of your life.

You start putting those bits in place. Then we'll talk about forgiveness once your record looks slightly better than it is already. That's not how grace works.

God forgives us that we might fear him. We might relate to him rightly. God lifts us out of the depths. So out of the depths, we might honour him and love him and serve him.

[ 15 : 21 ] And yes, we'll be stuttering and stumbling. Yes, there'll be one step forward and two steps back. But this God forgives. And as those that know what forgiveness is, it is incumbent upon us to fear him and honour him and love him and serve him to the absolute best of our ability.

And therefore, because God is gracious, because his reflex is to forgive. Know that there are no depths too deep, no sin too grave, no chasm too wide, no rap sheet too long, not to be scaled and surpassed by the infinite depths of the mercy of God.

I don't know many of you. I don't know your situation. But know that you cannot sink to a depth so low that God's mercy is not highly efficacious in your situation.

If you turn to him and say, God, you're a forgiving God, I have messed up. My rap sheet is awful. I have no hope of standing before you.

Then he is a God who forgives. And therefore, there's hope. And that is why even on the darkest day, this is a great song to sing. This is a song we can sing any and every day that reminds us that no matter how badly we mess up, God is bigger and greater than the mess that we've made.

[ 16 : 53 ] And so from the depths that he started, a glimmer of hope starts to invade his mind. And then see the third stanza.

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchman for the morning, more than watchman for the morning. See, this isn't a quick fix. This isn't a get out of depths free card that you can just play any moment and suddenly you bob up to the surface and everything's fine. That this is future hope secured by God himself. That this is the reality that will be true in your life when Jesus returns and makes all things new. Some people will continue to reap the whirlwind for the sin that they've sown. Some people will continue to suffer the consequences of the sin of others in their lives. But this psalm, and this verse in particular, says that on the strength of God himself, the depths that you feel will not be your permanent residence.

[ 18 : 08 ] The worst day of your life won't be the final word over your life. The final word over your life is forgiven in Jesus Christ. And that is the best news.

But there might be waiting. A lot of waiting. Look at the metaphor, more than watchman for the morning.

The psalmist is really pleased with it because he repeats it twice. He thinks that's a good line. We should probably put that one again. More than watchman for the morning. More than watchman for the morning. I may not look like it, but I am a hopeless romantic.

And a few years ago, I took Aileen glamping on the Isle of Skye in a yurt in March. It was horrendous.

We booked three nights. We stayed one night and we came home early. And this is why. We had a beautiful yurt with a waterbed. We had an open fire in every sort of hot water bottle you could imagine.

[ 19 : 15 ] And so, kitted up, wearing every bit of clothing we had with all of the duvets and all of the hot water bottles, we settled down for the night at 11 o'clock. I could see my own breath as I slept.

And I looked at my watch after two hours. And I realized I'd only been in bed for 10 minutes. It was that excruciating. And 11 o'clock came and midnight came and one in the morning came.

And I thought, I'm going to die. People are just going to find me. I think I'd been dead for years because of the rigor mortis from the colds. Two o'clock came.

Three o'clock came. Four o'clock came. Five o'clock came. Six o'clock came. Seven o'clock came. Seven thirty-four in the morning. The first ray of sunshine broke over the cooling hills, hit our tent, and I was euphoric because I thought, I'm going to live.

I am going to live. This will not be my last day on earth in this cold. This is the hope of the psalmist.

[ 20 : 24 ] That he is cold and alone. He has hope in God's word. And he knows that the dawn of all things new will soon break over the hills and it will not be his final resting place, the depths.

The agony of not thinking you're going to survive, but this says sunrise is coming. Hold on.

Keep hoping. And what is he ultimately hoping in verse four? And in his word, I hope. In his word, I hope.

I don't know what you think about that. That sounds a bit flimsy, doesn't it? We're in the middle of teaching my little son Isaac about promises. He loves promising things that he never delivers. And we all know that, don't we?

Human promises, people make great claims that they don't follow through on. How do we know that this God is not like that? How does he know that this isn't some sort of flimsy word that he's been given to help him get through?

[ 21 : 31 ] Well, there is a wonderful, wonderful thing hidden in this psalm that's hidden in our translations. Do you see that in these three stanzas, there's couplets of the word, the Lord?

And do you see the first one is always capital L-O-R-D, translating the Hebrew word Yahweh. The covenant name of God from Exodus chapter three.

The God who says, I am what I am and I will be what I will be. He is the permanent one. He is the one who never changes. And do you see the second Lord is L-O-R-D, O-R-D in small letters, translating the Hebrew word Adonai.

The all-powerful God. God most high, you could say. And do you see that those two together are a wonderful combination that gives us incredible confidence that God's word is absolutely steadfast and sure.

It has always enormous cash value. Because the God who is making it is the God who does not change and the God who cannot be thwarted.

[ 22 : 40 ] The God who says, I am what I am and I am the all-powerful one. Therefore, whatever he says, he has the ability to deliver. What he promises, he has the capacity to provide.

And therefore, when you trust in this word and hope in this word and cling to this word and take this word into your life, it has absolute cash value.

It will pay an eternal dividend. Yes, there might be waiting. But on the day that the sun shines, it will pay an eternal dividend.

What a thing. And so our little drowning psalmist, he comes into land with preaching. O Israel, hope in the Lord.

In the space of six verses, he's gone from being completely overwhelmed to being completely overjoyed.

[ 23 : 44 ] He's turned from feeling alone in the depths to now proclaiming the goodness of God and the steadfastness of God to everybody around. O Israel, hope in the Lord.

For with the Lord, there is steadfast love. 4K, four-dimensional love. Love that's on top, underneath, all around forever.

Steadfast love. Love that's not going anywhere. And with him, there is plentiful redemption. How much redemption is that?

More than you will ever need. Do you see that it is a wonderful cocktail of characteristics in God himself that perfectly meets drowning sinners?

What is God like? Well, he's forgiving. And he's steadfastly loving. And he has plentiful redemption. Be clear, friends.

[ 24 : 47 ] No matter where you are, what you've done, what life is like, in this God there is always hope. Because he is more wonderful than you can ever, ever imagine.

Just as we come into land, let's think about the Lord Jesus. Think about him in Saturday school in Nazareth. And they're singing their choruses.

And one of the choruses they're singing is Psalm 130. And they come to that line in verse 3. If you, O Lord, should mark transgressions, who could stand?

And the Lord Jesus himself, without a shadow of hypocrisy, could put his hand up and say, I can. I have a perfect sinless record.

I have an immaculate rap sheet. If God marked my transgressions, I could still stand because I do not have any. And then think about the scene 25 years later.

[ 25 : 53 ] The Lord Jesus hanging on the cross. The Lord Jesus plunged into the depths of God's rightful judgment on account of human sin.

And think of him sinking all the way to the bottom. Think of him taking all of that punishment, all of the depths crowding in on him. Think of him doing that for you.

So that this God can be forgiving to you because of his son Jesus, who sunk to the depths so you won't have the depths as your permanent resting place. And then think of him now.

The one who says, with me there is forgiveness. Turn to me that you may be saved. Come to me, all who are weary. Confess with your mouth that I am the Lord, that you will be saved from the depths that you have sunk to.

Do you see that Psalm 130 for Old Testament Israel was a great song they could always sing? But do you see this side of the cross in our Lord Jesus, we have every excuse to turn it up to 11, no matter what we're facing or how we feel?

[ 27 : 15 ] Because Jesus says, that word in which you hope is even more steadfast and sure. Because this day I am at the right hand of the Father preparing a place for your eternal dwelling.

That is a wonderful thing, friends. Psalm 130. Jesus who gives us reason to sing on any day, in any situation, no matter what.

Jesus who is forgiven. Who is steadfastly loving, loving you to death. And with him will be proven that there is plentiful, abundant redemption.

So with those thoughts in our hearts, why don't I pray? Father God, we thank you so much for our Lord Jesus Christ. God, we thank you so much for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus who willingly descended into our depths and suffered for us. so that all of us and any of us and each of us who find ourselves in the depths can have the certain hope of reaching the eternal surface of his glorious forever kingdom.

[ 28 : 47 ] And therefore, Lord, teach us to sing this song well. Teach us to sing this song loud. And teach us to sing this song always. And we pray this in the name of our wonderful Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.