

Psalm 130:3-4 The Grace and Power of Divine Forgiveness (Part 2)

³ **If You, LORD, should ^[a]mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? ⁴ But *there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.***

But with You forgiveness! We have just heard how God's forgiveness is 1) amazing, 2) heartfelt and personal, 3) unique to Him, 4) just and 5) costly. *Only the death of the Son of God could pay for it!* There's no way we can repay Him, all we can do receive it in faith as a free gift and serve our Saviour with hearts overflowing with thanksgiving.

Isaac Watts wrote in His hymn "Alas and Did My Savior Bleed":

*But drops of grief can ne'er repay the debt of love I owe;
here, Lord, I give myself away, 'tis all that I can do!*

6. Forgiveness is free

But with You there is forgiveness! It is the gift of God! It is not from us, but from God. It is not a wage we earn by trying hard to become worthy of God. It is a gift of His mercy to the helpless who cry out to Him from the depths and having nothing to give to Him but their sin. Psalm 130:7 says: ⁷ **O Israel, hope in the Lord; for with the Lord *there is mercy*, and with Him *is abundant redemption*.** God paid for this infinitely expensive gift and then gives it freely to us. Romans 3:24 says: **For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified** (forgiven and declared righteous) **freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**

Free means it can't be earned. You can't work for it. You don't deserve it. You aren't entitled to it. No one can pay for it. It is by God's grace alone through Christ alone and received by faith alone. That means God shows no favoritism in giving this gift to sinners. It is for all who cry to Him out of the depths, pleading for mercy, wanting to enter into a right relationship with God. **Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.** (Romans 10:13) His forgiveness covers every kind of sin and every kind of sinner. No one can look at another and think, "I'm more worthy of God's love than he is." No matter who you are, if God has freely forgiven your sins, it cost Him the same price for each one: the death of His Son.

7. Forgiveness is full.

When God forgives our sins, He forgives *all* of them, *forever*. Psalm 130:4 says: **But with You there is forgiveness**, and later describes how rich and full that forgiveness is in verses 7-8: ⁷ **with the LORD *is abundant redemption*.** ⁸ **And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.** Psalm 103 says: **He forgives all your iniquities.** When the LORD God put our sin on Jesus, He put all of them on His Son. When Jesus in love willingly paid for our sin, all our iniquities were nailed to His body and put away in Him. By one sacrifice He put away all the sins of all His people – and that gift covers all our sins everyday for all our lives. We can draw water from that well of salvation every day by praying as Jesus taught us to pray: **Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.** God's gift of forgiveness does not run out; it has no lack; it is not limited. As often as **we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** (I John 1:9)

What a God this is! What a gift this is! He offers this to every sinner. He offers to you a pardon that is full, free, heartfelt, and paid for at His own expense. Will you come to Him as a sinner and cry out to Him for mercy today? Will you trust this God? Or do you refuse Him because you want to hold your head high, proudly boasting in your own goodness? Do you refuse Him because you'd much rather hang onto your sin than bow before Him?

That's what George Wilson did in the 1800s. He was a postal clerk in the United States. He robbed a train and in so doing killed a guard. He was caught, convicted, and sentenced to death by hanging. But there were some doubts surrounding the facts of the case, so President Andrew Jackson granted Him a pardon to release him from his death sentence and set him free. But Wilson hated President Jackson so much that he refused the pardon. So Wilson suffered the full penalty for His crime and he was hanged. Will you refuse the abundant pardon God offers you and pay the full penalty for your sin? Would you rather have your sin than have God?

³ **If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? ⁴ But *there is forgiveness with You...*** What an amazing and incomprehensible gift that God should send His Son for me, and that His Son should die for me! **Who is a God like You who pardons iniquity?! How blessed is He whose trespass has freely been forgiven, whose sin is wholly covered before the sight of heaven!** (TPH 32B)

3) The fruit of forgiveness

³ **If You, LORD, should ^[a]mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? ⁴ But *there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.***

What does free forgiveness produce? Some say it produces easy sinning for Christians. If God hands out forgiveness so cheap, doesn't that invite Christians to live a life of sin? *Let us sin and then ask for forgiveness and the sin is all gone!* Some misrepresent true Christianity as supporting this view. They believe that forgiveness should come at a cost to us so we won't sin so easily.

But the truth is that free and gracious forgiveness produces **fear** – the fear of God, godly fear. That’s God’s purpose in forgiving sinners: that He may be feared! Godly fear does not mean fright or terror. It means *a deep reverence for God that is amazed by His love and inwardly driven to love Him and obey Him because of how great He is towards us*. God’s loving forgiveness does far more to produce fear in believers than all His warnings of punishment. Yes, God’s warnings are also intended to produce godly fear in us: **Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.** (Hebrews 4:1)

God’s good news results in fearing God. In Jeremiah God says that the amazing news of His forgiveness will bring all nations to fear Him!

⁸ I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me. ⁹ Then it [Jerusalem] shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise, and an honor before all nations of the earth, who shall hear all the good that I do to them; they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and all the prosperity that I provide for it.

Divine forgiveness is not only gracious; it is powerful. It is not only free; it is life-changing! Before we were saved, our view of God was small. We ignored Him. But when we came to know God as our Saviour, our view of God was transformed. We stood in awe of His power and love. When you see just how amazing forgiveness is, how utterly undeserved and gracious, how expensive for God, it will not allow you to go ahead and sin easily or lightly. It will make you stop and think, and meditate and say with Joseph when Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce him: ***How could I do this great wickedness and sin against my God?***

In the book of Revelation the redeemed saints in heaven sing the Song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb. They respond to God’s mighty and glorious works of salvation by singing: **Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?**

Forgiveness produces fear: deep awe at such amazing love that makes you want more of God, not less of Him; less of sin not more of sin. Forgiveness teaches you that sin brought misery and God brings freedom. Why then would you want sin when you have this God? Knowing true forgiveness makes you love God and hate sin. You know you are a believer, and your sins are all forgiven, when this fear lives in you: *a fear in which your sins are very grievous to you, and God’s redemption is very precious to you* – which is what Psalm 130 is all about.

So what does the fear of God look like in Scripture? Psalm 130 actually goes on to describe the forgiven sinner’s wholehearted devotion to the God who has loved Him. Psalm 130:5-8 describe the believer’s godly fear:

⁵ I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope.

⁶ My soul *waits* for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning—*Yes, more than those who watch for the morning.*

⁷ O Israel, hope in the LORD; for with the LORD *there is* mercy, and with Him *is* abundant redemption.

⁸ And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Let’s take note of three marks here of the godly fear that forgiveness produces in our lives:

- 1) The fear of God means waiting for the LORD (Psalm 130:5-6)
- 2) The fear of God means hoping in the LORD (Psalm 130:7)
- 3) The fear of God means telling others about the LORD (Psalm 130:7-8)

Notice the essence of the fear of God which the full forgiveness of God brings into our lives: it drives us into His arms to wait for Him, hope in Him, and proclaim Him. The fear of God is very personal. Yes, it has the side of running away from His wrath and punishment. But there’s also the other side of running to God as your Hope, Confidence, Refuge and as the first and greatest Love of your life. The God who saves you from your sins is so good that you spend the rest of your life longing for Him! *The fear of God is nothing but faith beholding with awesome wonder the greatness of His power and love and desiring to be near to Him all the time and drawn ever nearer.*

1) The fear of God means waiting for the LORD (Psalm 130:5-6)

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits. (5) What is this forgiven child of God waiting for? He’s waiting for His full (“abundant”) redemption to come (see verses 7-8) when the struggle with sin will be over, when God has brought us to perfection, and when God is all in all. When God forgives our sins, this is the Mother grace of a right relationship with God which opens up the door to every other blessing of God’s kingdom. We don’t have all these blessings in full measure yet, but we wait for them and for the day when our faith will be sight.

What about your life? Where is your heart? What is your greatest goal and dream? Is it to get a promotion at work? To have a beautiful home? To become a famous soccer player? Or is your heart dominated by the fear of God: you stand in awe of the one who has saved you and long for more of Him and the sight of His glory and living in His presence more than anything else. Has He captured your heart and mind like this? Ask Him today to give you this kind of faith in Him that fears Him, loves Him and longs for Him with all your heart.

2) The fear of God means hoping in the LORD (Psalm 130:7)

⁵ I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and **in His word I do hope....** ⁷ O Israel, **hope in the LORD; for with the LORD *there is* mercy, and with Him *is* abundant redemption.** The forgiven child of God waits for the LORD **in hope**. Hope is full confidence that what we're waiting for is really there and is really coming to us because the faithful God has promised it in His Word, even though we don't see it yet. We wait for full redemption with the same hope that watchmen wait for the morning. The night is still here and the darkness is still around them, but they know for sure that the morning is coming and a new day will dawn upon them. This is how the forgiven sinner fears God: He looks confidently to the LORD for the new day of full redemption to dawn. Fearing God means that you revere God's power and faithfulness with awe and fully expect Him to accomplish fully all that he has said He will do for you.

What about your life? Where is your heart? What is your greatest goal and dream? What do you long for and hope for more than anything else? Is it to get a promotion at work? To have a beautiful home? To become a famous soccer player? To live comfortably? Or is your heart dominated by desiring God: you stand in awe of the one who has saved you and more than anything else and everything else in all the world, you long for more of Him and for more of the sight of His glory and for living in His blessed presence. Has He captured your heart and mind like this? Ask Him today to give you this kind of faith in Him that fears Him, loves Him and longs for Him with all your heart.

*In the end, the heart longs not for any of God's good gifts, but for God Himself. To see Him and know Him and be in His presence is the soul's final feast. Beyond this there is no quest. Words fail. We call it pleasure, joy, delight. But these are weak pointers to the unspeakable experience: **"In Your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore"** (Psalm 16:11). – John Piper*

3) The fear of God means telling others about the LORD (Psalm 130:7-8)

Notice what else this believer does in the last two verses: ⁷ O Israel, **hope in the LORD; for with the LORD *there is* mercy, and with Him *is* abundant redemption.** ⁸ **And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.** He moves from the individual (¹ **Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD;** ² **Lord, hear my voice!...** ⁵ **I wait for the LORD**) to the corporate (⁷ **O Israel, hope in the LORD!**). This God is so great and His salvation so good, that he must break out in proclamation and call all Israel to hope in Him. How can we not encourage others in the Church to put their trust in Him, and to keep hoping in Him, especially when disappointments or distractions cool down their zeal for the LORD God? How can we not tell the world how He has saved us and what glorious future is waiting for all who trust in Him? **Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I *am* God, and *there is* no other.** (Isaiah 45:22)

This is what happens to us when forgiving God of love fills our hearts and loves – that forgiveness changes us and moves us to love one another and share His love beyond ourselves. **Beloved, as God so loved us, let us also love one another,** says John the apostle. ¹⁹ **We love** ^[a] **Him because He first loved us.** ²⁰ **If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen,** ^[b] **how can he love God whom he has not seen?** (I John 4:19-20)

So Moses and Israel opened their mouths and showed their fear of God (see Exodus 14:31) by praising Him for His "fearfulness" on the other side of the Red Sea after God had saved them from Pharaoh and his army: **Who *is* like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who *is* like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?**

And the *New* Israel in heaven also opens its mouth and proclaims the same praises by singing the Song of Moses the Servant of God and the Song of the Lamb after God has brought them to the other side of their suffering and persecution to glory: **"Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the** ^[a] **saints! ⁴ Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested."**

Indeed, ***there is no God like unto our God who pardons the transgressions of His people!***

Conclusion

Are you crying out to this Great and Good God for His saving love to lift you out of the depths of sin and distress? Do you trust that the work He did in Christ's death is enough to provide for you a full forgiveness that lasts a lifetime? Are you devoting your whole life in love to this God who first loved you? In view of the mercies of God, let us offer our lives to Him as a sacrifice of thanksgiving!