

# Psalm Sundays

Text  
Psalm 130

Topic  
From what he calls “the depths,”  
the psalmist cries out to the LORD  
trusting in His forgiveness

Title  
**“You Take My Depth Away”**

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How long can you hold your breath underwater?

Most people in good health can hold their breath for approximately two minutes. That’s why every time a character in a movie or television show goes underwater, I start a stopwatch.

Often they are submerged for a ridiculously long time, performing their oxygen-depleting heroic acts.

Some celebrities are the real deal underwater:

- 👤 *Extraction* Director Sam Hargrave claims Chris Hemsworth held his breath underwater for nearly 3 minutes.

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🧑‍🦱 In filming the extended underwater sequence of *Mission Impossible Rogue Nation*, Tom Cruise consistently held his breath for between 5 & 6 minutes.

Both of them are going to be put to shame by a girl.

When we return to Pandora in the sequel to *Avatar*, a large portion of the story will be told underwater. Rather than rely solely on CGI and special effects to simulate the underwater realm, director James Cameron filmed scenes underwater with the actors. Kate Winslet eventually got to the point where she was holding her breath for a full **seven minutes**.

Now that I've got you Googling for the world's records:

🧑‍🦱 Set in 2012, the men's record is 22 minutes and 22 seconds.

🧑‍🦱 The women's record is a little over 18½ minutes.

If I've inspired you to go for *your* personal best, wait until your swimming pool water is at its coldest. Breath-holding records are attempted in cold water because you can hold your breath up to twice as long underwater as you can on land. If the water is cold, your body slows its heart rate and metabolism in order to conserve oxygen and energy.

Something else that I cannot recommend since it sounds fairly dangerous. The Guinness Book of World Records allows contestants to hyperventilate for up to 30 minutes with pure oxygen before they submerge for their record attempt. It helps the body expel carbon dioxide. Technically, it's called "oxygen-assisted static apnea."

In Psalm 130, the psalmist said, "Out of the **depths** I have cried to You, O LORD." "The depths" are an illustration. In this psalm the "depths" illustrates the spiritual state that the psalmist was in.

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He reveals his spiritual state in verses three and eight. He mentions both his and the nations "iniquities." He, and Israel, were drowning in their iniquities. He, and Israel, were **backslidden**.

Being backslidden is like drowning in the depths. You keep sinking further and further, holding your breath, but with no hope of air.

No hope, that is, until you cry out to the LORD. Immediately you find you can again breathe.

How is it possible? That cry-out apprehends a glorious truth: **God has forgiven your sin.**

- 👤 Maybe no one here is a nonbeliever, although I doubt it.
- 👤 Maybe no believer here is backslidden, although I doubt it.

No matter: All of us can marvel at, be grateful for, and be humbled by, God's forgiveness of our past, present, and future sins.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Dwell Upon God's Forgiveness Of Your Sins**, and **#2 Revel In God's Forgiveness Of Your Sins.**

### **#1 - Dwell Upon God's Forgiveness Of Your Sins (v1-6)**

I start with a disclaimer: "Breathing" is being used as an illustration that we can all relate to. *This has nothing to do with physical breathing techniques.* I'm not going to have us all, with our eyes closed, breathe out our sin, then breathe in God's forgiveness.

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The Jewish pilgrims sang psalms 120 through 134 on their journey to annual feasts in Jerusalem.

This one would remind them of God's immediate, full forgiveness whenever they turned to Him. They had backslidden many times in their storied history, but always God would hear their cry from the depths and they'd be restored.

William MacDonald, author of the very good *Believer's Bible Commentary*, gives this quick lesson on God's forgiveness:

There is forgiveness for the *guilty sinner* and there is forgiveness for the *sinning saint*:

- 👤 The first is *judicial* forgiveness, that is, forgiveness from God, the Judge. It is obtained by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It covers the penalty of all sins - past, present and future. It is possible because of the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary; in His death He paid the penalty for all our sins and God can freely forgive us because all His righteous claims have been met by our Substitute.
- 👤 The second is *parental* forgiveness - the forgiveness of God, our Father. It is obtained by confessing our sins to Him. It results in a restoration of fellowship with God and with His family. It, too, is purchased for us by the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross.

Maybe you are not in Christ. You are here today to confront the fact that your sins need forgiveness through Jesus.

If you are a believer, "If [you] walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth

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is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (First John 1:7-9).

God's forgiveness is always just a cry away.

Psa 130:1 A Song of Ascents. Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD;

I can think of one prominent Bible character who cried out to God in the ocean, from the "depths." Yep, it's Jonah.

Jonah always reminds me of a story. When Geno was in kindergarten, his teacher was telling her students about different kinds of animals.

"Whales are the largest" she said, "but they can't swallow people, because their throats are too small."

Geno objected, saying, "But in the Bible, it says that Jonah was swallowed by a whale."

"That's not a true story," his teacher replied.

"Well, when I go to Heaven", he said, "I'll ask Jonah."

"And what if Jonah didn't go to Heaven?"

**"Then you can ask him."**

God gave him his assignment and Jonah promptly did a 180. Eventually swallowed by the great fish, he said,

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Jon 2:2 ... "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, *And You* heard my voice.

Jon 2:3 For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.

Jon 2:4 Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.'

Jon 2:5 The waters surrounded me, *even* to my soul; The deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head.

Jon 2:6 I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars *closed* behind me forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God.

Jon 2:7 When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer went *up* to You, Into Your holy temple.

From the very real "depths," as well as the depths of sin, Jonah cried out expecting parental forgiveness. So did the psalmist:

Psa 130:2 Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive To the voice of my supplications.

If he prayed while backslidden, his prayers were off-topic. There was a saving relationship with the LORD, but there was no fellowship.

Not until his prayers were "the voice of [his] supplications," and God would be especially "attentive," as any father would be with a prodigal son or daughter who returned.

King David described this in Psalm 32, saying, "When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer....I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will

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confess my transgressions to the LORD," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin" (v3-5).

Psa 130:3 If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

You probably make lists. To do lists... Grocery lists... Check lists... Who doesn't like a good top-ten list?

For some time now, bucket lists have been a common pop-culture reference.

The psalmist supposed that the LORD lists our "iniquities." I'm not sure how the records in Heaven are kept, but the truth is we are all born dead in trespasses and sin. We are already 'marked,' as it were, from the womb.

There doesn't need to be a long list of the sins we've committed. All have sinned and fall short; there is no one who can stand before God.

Sin is the universal problem of the human race. So, whatever happened to sin? People call good evil, and evil good.

I came across this quote. The author is talking about the United States.

For nearly two centuries the mainstream Protestant Churches and the Roman Catholic Church taught that man was guilty of sin and needed to repent. In the second quarter of the 20th century, liberal Protestantism began putting less emphasis on sin and the negatives of the Christian Faith and concentrating on the positives. In the 1950s, Norman Vincent Peale, famed minister of the Marble Collegiate Church in New York City, concentrated on the power of positive thinking, which became the title of his bestselling blockbuster.

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Peale asserted that by concentrating on the positive things of life one could overcome the many fears of failure and develop the self-confidence needed to capitalize on his/her true God given talents and achieve success. He was criticized by many theologians and medical doctors of preaching false hope, but he was enormously popular. He was followed by Robert Schuller, founder of the Chrystal Cathedral in Orange County, California.

Gradually, mainline Protestantism has concentrated on the positive aspects of the Christian Faith. It has been the evangelical churches that have continued to stress the sinfulness of the human race and the need for repentance.

One theologian commented, "Beware preachers and teachers who swap out terms like "sin" and "wickedness" and "depravity," for "brokenness" and "pain" and "trauma."

The psalmist asked, "Who can stand?" Only a perfect man, without sin. That "man" was and is Jesus Christ. He alone was God come in human flesh. Since sin's punishment is death, He could die in our place, as our Substitute. When a person believes on Jesus, that person is **in** Christ.

Basically, God sees you the way He sees His Son. He sees you finished, perfected, by Jesus, Who promised that the work He begins in you at the moment of your being saved will be completed.

You cannot "stand" before God in your iniquities. But Jesus can, and if you are in Him - so do you.

Psa 130:4 But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.

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Unless there is another God-man Who led a perfect life and fulfilled more than 350 Old Testament prophecies to the letter, **there is "forgiveness" only in Jesus.**

"That You may be feared" is the renewed joy of parental forgiveness. We are forgiven and can therefore walk with God, enjoying fellowship with Him, receiving grace and mercy from our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, by means of God the Holy Spirit indwelling us.

Do you feel like you are in the depths? Not from a trial, but from backsliding à la Jonah or David? Are you at that point where you need a breath but there is no air? Cry out.

I 'm suggesting you "dwell" upon God's forgiveness:

- 🧠 First of all - Have you appropriated His forgiveness by receiving Jesus as your Savior?
- 🧠 Second of all - If you have appropriated His forgiveness, do you apprehend it? Meaning, do you grasp the wonder of it so that you fear God in a daily walk with Him that involves your whole mind, will, and strength, holding no sin in reserve?

## #2 - Revel In God's Forgiveness Of Your Sins (v5-8)

Waiting. It's mostly unpleasant. We hate to wait. I grew impatient waiting for the web page about waiting to load that I'm going to quote from.

- 🧠 You will spend around two years of your life waiting in line. That figure probably needs to be adjusted to accommodate COVID19. You can spend two years waiting at Smart&Final.

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👤 Americans hate waiting at the DMV most of all.

Think LA traffic is bad? In 2010, in Beijing, there was a 12-day traffic jam over a 62-mile stretch.

It took people on average three days to make the journey.

Not all waiting is unpleasant. We will wait in line, even camp out, for an event or product that we desire. The psalmist wrote about waiting on the LORD:

Psa 130:5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope.

He wasn't waiting to be forgiven. He wasn't waiting to feel forgiven. Nor was he waiting to be worthy of it. Forgiveness has always been instantaneous for a believer.

I would cite The Parable of the Prodigal Son. Immediately upon return to Father, you are forgiven.

The psalmist was waiting to see how God was going to work in his life in the aftermath of his sinning. He spent his waiting getting into the Word of God. There he would have renewed "hope," which to a believer means certainty. God would not - He could not - refuse forgiveness to a repentant believer.

Psa 130:6 My soul waits for the Lord More than those who watch for the morning - Yes, more than those who watch for the morning.

Don't read this as if the watchman couldn't wait for his shift to end. Think of it in a Cat Stevens way: *Morning has broken like the first morning.*

Delivered out of the depths, it was a new day, and the possibilities were many.

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King David had been in the depths, but cried out to the LORD.

After his sin with Bathsheba, God told David the child they conceived would die. The king nevertheless fasted and prayed, waiting on the LORD to see the outcome.

100% confident in God's parental forgiveness, David actively waited on the LORD to heal his child. When the child died, David went about his life joyfully.

The context of this psalm is forgiveness from your **iniquities**. We're not talking about a *trial* you might find yourself in; or an *injury* or an *illness* that afflicts you. If that's your situation, *we're not suggesting you are in the depths of sin, needing to repent*. Don't burden yourself unnecessarily.

Psa 130:7 O Israel, hope in the LORD; For with the LORD there is mercy, And with Him is abundant redemption.

Psa 130:8 And He shall redeem Israel From all his iniquities.

Living in a fallen world, we are used to natural resources becoming depleted. Regardless your environmental politics, as an example I cite the fact that in 100 years, the world's rain forests will be gone. I guess that generation will learn if we need them or not.

The LORD's resources can never be depleted. He has just as much "mercy" for you as always. It is full, and free.

In the '80s, Mama Celeste advertised her pizza-for-one, saying, "Abbondanza!" The LORD's provision for **you** is "Abbondanza!"

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“Redemption,” and “redeem” dominate the closing words. Our minds immediately go to the transaction by which a person is purchased out of slavery. We think in terms of initial salvation.

Israel - here portrayed as a single person - had long been redeemed out of slavery in Egypt. The psalmist was using “redeem” in a different sense. Redeem is also used in non-theological language in the phrase “to redeem a situation.” In our psalm, the idea is that the LORD will redeem the wreckage and the ruin that an Israelite, or Israel, might make in his backsliding.

Sin has consequences. David’s son died. How did the LORD redeem it?

- 👤 For one thing, in the aftermath, a forgiven David would write Psalms 32 & 51. These have been a comfort to who knows how many prodigal sons and daughters.
- 👤 For another thing, in the aftermath, a forgiven David would say to his servants, “But now he is dead... Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (Second Samuel 12:23). Those words have been a comfort to who knows how many grieving parents.

Are you going to write the next best-selling Christian book, or establish a world-wide ministry?

Probably not. It doesn’t make the LORD’s redemption less important. You rise from the wreckage to serve Him.

**I**t almost sounds as if we are soft on sin. No; we’re generous in grace. We’re ecstatic that God does not mark our iniquities.

Some take it too far. There is a teaching that since your present and future sins are already forgiven, it insults the Cross to confess sin and ask forgiveness.

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Let me ask you this: Would that fly in your earthly family? Can your kids disobey and disrespect you without repentance simply because you love them?

We should never think teaching on grace leads to a license to sin. But when we do sin, one thing is true:

*Where sin abounds, God's grace is Abbondanza!*

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