



Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia

"your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" psalm119:108

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Sermon Meta Information

Title:	The Blessing of Forgiveness	Location:	Brisbane South
*URL:	http://www.prc.org.au/resources/sermon/trevor-marshall/html/tm-20070304.html	Date:	4 March 2007
Preacher:	Trevor Marshall	Series Number:	-
Passage:	Psalm 130		
Sermon Series:	-		

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Sermon

Introduction.

Listen to **Psalm 130**, *'Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD; Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning— yes, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.'* There are three extremely important points that flow out of this Psalm that all of us need to take very seriously.

1. A tragic condition to consider.

- a. There are times in life when you feel as if you have fallen into a very deep hole, you have hit rock bottom. The opening words of **Psalm 130**, *out of the depths* express the condition of hitting rock bottom. Extreme poverty can sink you into the depths of despair. Strip a man of all his possessions and isolate him from his family and friends and he can easily slide into deep despair. The prodigal son experienced the depths of poverty when his money evaporated and his party friends abandoned him. In despair he *longed to fill his belly with the food thrown to pigs. (Luke 15:11-32)* Abject poverty and poor nutrition that often follows inflicts excruciating pain in body and mind. In Afrikaans the term for abject poverty is *'brandarm'* which means to be so poor that it burns you. Living with the sensation of burning in your body, heart and mind can sink you into deep despair. A person who has lost loved ones can be overwhelmed by sorrow and plummet into the depths of grief. The sorrow can be so deep that nothing brings comfort and life seems empty, useless and worthless. You can sink into the depths when depression wrings your life of everything that is pleasant and worthwhile. Listen to **Spurgeon** on this matter; *'The soul becomes more sorrowful, down to that very depth which is just this side of despair. Earth hollow, heaven empty, the air heavy, every form a deformity, all sounds discord, the past gloom, the present a puzzle, the future a horror. One more step down, and the man will stand in the chamber of despair, the floor of which is blisteringly hot, while the air is biting cold as the polar atmosphere.'* Sinking down into the depths because of poverty, sorrow or depression is a tragic and terrible

condition to be in. Those who have hit rock bottom can testify to the fact that life at rock bottom is wretched.

- b. The depths to which poverty, sorrow or depression can sink you are not as tortuous as the depths that come through the guilt of sin. The depths of sin's guilt have horrors that are not found in poverty, sorrow or depression. The depths of poverty, sorrow and depression had a rock-bottom, but with the depths of sin, each depth reveals another, and then opens up to another. The depths of sin's guilt are the bottomless pit. The fall into the depths of sin is accompanied by fading light and thickening darkness. Those in the depths of poverty can be helped by another's good works; those in the depths of sorrow can find support and encouragement from fellow sufferers, and those suffering depression secure some relief through modern medicine. Who among men and women can relieve the depths of sin's guilt and the horror of its consequence? The depths of sin's guilt is not simple a troublesome conscience, but a knowledge of the truth and terrifying reality that you have greatly offended God. The truth convinces you that every individual sin of your great multitude of sins fully deserves God's wrath, judgement and punishment. It is in the depths of sin that often a light shines, but it is not a light that gives hope or direction, but the light of the law that places you sins under the spotlight of God's holiness. The shining light of the law opens up another depth of sin's guilt and reveals that you are in great, abiding and immediate danger. The light of the Law vindicates God and rightly and justly condemns you. The depths spoken of in **Psalm 130:1** are the depths of sin's guilt. The guilt of sin imprisons the heart, mind and soul with the certain knowledge that there is no escaping the judgement of God, who is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. In the depths of sin's guilt you become fully aware and conscious that you are in the place of guilt before God, your sins have sunk you into the depths and God's righteousness and holiness have pursued you. The danger you are in does not come from your sin, but from God whom you have greatly offended and due to his nature he cannot ignore your sin.

In the depth's of sins guilt the Psalmist says, *I have cried to You O LORD*. No prayers are truer, more real, more earnest, more urgent, and more from the heart than those made in the depths of sin's guilt. Prayers from the depths of sin's guilt are one hundred percent honest and urgent, and desperate with expectation. In the depths of sin's guilt the awareness of God is not vague, but very clear that this is the God to whom you must give account; this is the God whose law you have broken, this is the God whose authority you have challenged. This is God who is very much alive and dealing with you personally. There is no place for vagueness in the depths of sin's guilt. The *Psalmist* was not ignorant of the character and nature of God and cried out purposely and deliberately to the only true and living God. The Psalmist uses the holy name that God gave to Moses in **Exodus 3:14** to confirm the stability of his promises.

- c. From the depths of sin's guilt, filled with conviction of his sin against God he prays, *'Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.'* The Psalmist addresses God not using his holy name but by the title, *'Lord'* signifying his sovereign rulership over all creation. He is crying out to the only one who is able to deliver him from the guilt of his sin. The Almighty God of hosts who has the authority, power and right and to sentence you to eternal damnation is the only one who can deliver you from hell, that dreadful place of unending torment. In the depths of sin's guilt the reality that God alone can deliver you is understood and fully grasped. That you deserve to be condemned is also made very clear. The pain of being in the depths of sins guilt is the understanding that if God does not extend grace and mercy to you, you will spend eternity in hell.

2. A terrible condemnation to contemplate.

- a. While in prayer the Psalmist thinks of his tragic condition and is horrified as he realizes more fully that he is dealing with God who is omnipresent and omniscient. This caused him to exclaim, *'If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?'* If God is the one who marks iniquities no man can stand before his judgment throne and not be condemned. If we were to be judged by men and women, some would stand as their lives in the community have been full of integrity and outstanding service. Men and women cannot perceive what has taken place in the heart and mind. I am sure that if ASIO placed me under surveillance and spied on my life twenty-four hours a day, and installed cameras to watch everything I do, even if they recruited my wife and family to watch me, they would find no case against me. The Lord, who sees my outward

actions, also knows the motivation of my heart, reads the secret thoughts of my mind and measure me against his perfect and holy Law, and therefore sees an innumerable sins, transgressions and iniquities. Listen to **Hebrews 4:13** *'And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.'* The living Bible brings out the correct sense when it paraphrases the verse as, *'Nothing in all creation can hide from him. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes. This is the God to whom we must explain all that we have done.'* Your secret sin, hidden thoughts and camouflaged hypocrisy are as plain to God as if they were done under the spotlight. Nothing you have ever done, thought, said, felt or desired has happened without God as the eye and ear witness. Nothing about your life, not the smallest or most irrelevant thing has been missed by God. *Not a hair falls from your head without God knowing it fully and completely.*

- b. My life might seem very respectful in the eyes of the community, but before God my life must be seen as grossly displeasing. I was a mischievous child and often blamed for things I did not do. There were times when I was given a hiding for something I did not do. Later when the truth came out and my innocence was clear, my Dad would not apologise but say, *'Take it as a hiding you missed because you were not found out.'* His judicious sense was completely wrong, but there was a great deal of truth in what he said. Of all the naughty and mischievous things I did I was probably found out only ten percent of the time. I got away with a lot, but before *God my every transgression, sin and iniquity has been noted in full detail.* The word *mark* used in **Psalm 130:3** does not only speak of God *marking* sin because he witnesses it and is greatly displeased by it, but also as *marking* sin with a view to punishment. Your sin has been marked by God, he has seen it, heard it and been displeased by it, and he has put it on record for future punishment. That a record is being compiled of all your sins is a terrible thought. A record of every offence against God I have ever committed is noted. Listen to Jesus in **Matthew 12:36**, *'And I tell you this, that you must give an account on judgment day of every idle word you speak.'* You will give an account of even those words you have murmured under you breathe expressing your outrage, anger and displeasure at others. The TV show *'This is your life'* deals with a celebrity's life revealing high achievements and some humorous bloopers that provide a laugh. The record of your life in the books of heaven will not be so kind, so selective and so applauding. Your record like mine, will condemn you a million times over and we will have no excuse.

I Notice the Psalmist says, *'If you, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord who could stand?'* Is the word *'if'* being used to build a hypothetical situation? Does God not already mark the sins of every human being? Listen to **Revelation 20:12-13**, *'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.'* The very simple and clear sense of these verses is that a full record of your life is kept in the courts of heaven and you will be judged according to you record. There is no doubt that God has a very comprehensive record of you life and it will be used to judge you. Thinking about your sinful and ungodly record in heaven is *a terrible condemnation to contemplate.* On the day of judgment *will* you stand before God and not be condemned? Surely you cannot hope that your record will save you from God's wrath? You cannot but know that your record shouts for your condemnation. Listen to **Martin Luther**, commenting on the *'if'*: *'That is, if Thou hold my sins before Thee, look at them. And not forgive them.'* God does mark sin, but because he is a God who in grace and mercy forgives sins some will stand on the Day of Judgment and not be condemned.

3. A tremendous comfort to celebrate.

- a. When the Psalmist says, *'But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared'* it offers great hope and wonderful comfort to sinners. If there was no forgiveness from the Lord, then every one born of Adam's race would be swept into hell. If there was no forgiveness from God then the Lord Jesus Christ would not have become man and died on the cross at Calvary. If there is no forgiveness from God then there is no gospel, and we like all men and women would be condemned and without hope. It is important to take note of the confidence with which the Psalmist says, *'But there is forgiveness with You, O Lord.'* Our God's forgiveness is a glorious and wonderful truth that should often be part of our praise and thanksgiving. Listen to **Micah 7:18**, *'Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the*

remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy.' Every believer ought to have confidence and great conviction that there is forgiveness with the Lord and that he **delights in mercy**.

- b. We should not be pessimistic about the salvation of sinners. That our God forgives ought to fill us with joyful expectation. Listen to **Spurgeon** encouraging believers on the fact that there is forgiveness with the Lord; *'Why did Jesus come into the world to be the Saviour if God does not delight to save the lost? Why did he offer an atonement if it were not that sin might be put away by that atonement? Why was the fountain filled with blood if it were not God's intent to wash away the stains of his people's guilt? Oh, yes! That accursed and yet blessed cross, or, rather, that bleeding Saviour dying upon it, ought to give us such an assurance of God's forgiveness that we might never doubt it. There is forgiveness with God; each wound of Christ proclaims it with an emphasis, which makes it an absolute certainty.* Our God delights in mercy, he is super-generous in his forgiveness.
- c. God's forgiveness is not like the forgiveness we so often receive from men and women. God's forgiveness is never given grudgingly, or half-heartedly or temporarily. The Lord assures us that his forgiveness is free and full. Think of some of the great promises given in Scripture concerning forgiveness. Listen to **Jeremiah 31:33-34**, *"But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."* For someone like me who knows he has a condemning record, the promise that he will *forgive my sins and remember them no more* is amazing. Think about **Psalms 103:11-12**, *'For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.'* In **Colossians 2:13** Paul says, *'And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.'* What kinds of people have been forgiven? Listen to what Paul says in **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**, *'Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.'* We should be filled with a sense of wonder that our God who is perfect in holiness extends forgiveness to sinners.
- d. That our God forgives is a wonderful truth which ought to comfort us and cause us as believers to celebrate the fact that we are a forgiven people. Our forgiveness was secured and purchased by Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus took upon himself the condemning records of his people and suffered the full judgement and wrath of God in their place. The cost of securing our forgiveness is seen in the agony, pain, suffering and violence of the cross of Christ. To think of sin as a trivial or light matter is to disparage the enormous cost God bore to forgive you. The love of God must always be seen in the cost that he paid in redeeming you from your sins. Your forgiveness was extremely costly.

Conclusion.

There is forgiveness with God but only through Jesus Christ. Your sins have been marked, and every one of them is sufficient to condemn you to hell. God cannot ignore or overlook your sins, and his demand that they be punished will be met. Unless your sins have been punished in Christ Jesus you will carry the full punishment for them. If you know that you are a sinner in real need of a Saviour cry out to Jesus and ask him to be merciful to you. Jesus calls his people to trust him to deal with their sins. You need to know that call of God deep in your heart and know God is drawing you to himself.