

PSALMS

Chapter 30

I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me.² O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.³ O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.⁴ Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.⁵ For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.⁶ As for me, I said in my prosperity, “I shall never be moved.”⁷ By your favor, O LORD, you made my mountain stand strong; you hid your face; I was dismayed.⁸ To you, O LORD, I cry, and to the Lord I plead for mercy:⁹ “What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?”¹⁰ Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me! O LORD, be my helper!”¹¹ You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,¹² that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

30 title *A song.* See titles of Ps 18; 45–46; 48; 65–68; 75–76; 83; 87–88; 92; 108—all psalms of praise except 83; 88. In addition there are the songs “of ascents” (Ps 120–134). *For the dedication of the temple. Of David.* If “Of David” indicates authorship, the most probable occasion for the psalm is recorded in 1Ch 21:1–22:6. In 1Ch 22:1–6 David dedicated both property and building materials for the temple, and he may well have intended that Ps 30 be used at the dedication of the temple itself. If this is the case, vv. 2–3 would refer to David’s predicament in 1Ch 21:17–30. The “favor” of v. 5 would be an echo of the “mercy” of 1Ch 21:13, and v. 6 would refer to his sin of misplaced trust in a large, superior army (see 1Ch 21:1–8). Later, the psalm came to be applied to the exile experience of Israel. In Jewish liturgical practice dating from Talmudic times it is chanted at Hanukkah, the feast that celebrates the rededication of the temple by Judas Maccabeus (165 B.C.) after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes (168). In such communal use, the “I” of the psalm becomes the corporate “person” of Israel—a common mode of speaking in the OT. (CSB)

Both Psalms 30 and 31 are concerned with deliverance from death. Both appear to be psalms written during David’s old age, when he was hurrying to hand over the throne to Solomon and to complete preparations for the building of the temple before his own death. Since the principal danger he faced at this time was the conspiracy of Adonijah, the enemies referred to in these psalms may be the plotters who sided with Adonijah. This circumstances and theme are parallel to those of Psalm 6. The main difference in Psalm 30 is that it seems more joyful. (PBC)

In 2Sm 24 and 1Ch 21, David took a census of all men capable of fighting, indicating a reliance on human power over God’s strength. As a consequence for this rebellion, a plague came on Israel, and 70,000 men died. In repentance, David bought land, built an altar, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord. This psalm was likely written to dedicate this land, the place where God’s temple would later be built.

of the temple. Lit, “for the house.” (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–3, restored by the Lord; vv 4–5, praiseworthy favor; vv 6–7, strength in His favor; vv 8–10, appeal for help; vv 11–12, joy and thanks. (TLSB)

30:1–3 Introductory announcement of the occasion for praise. (CSB)

30:1 *drawn me up* – The vivid imagery that associates distress with “the depths”—so expressive of universal human experience—is common in OT poetry (see 69:2, 15; 71:20; 88:6; 130:1; La 3:55; Jnh 2:2). The depths are often linked, as here, with Sheol (“the grave,” v. 3) and “the pit” (v. 3), together with a cluster of related associations: silence (see 31:17; 94:17; 115:17; 1Sa 2:9), darkness (see 88:6, 12; 143:3; Job 10:21–22; 17:13; Ecc 6:4; La 3:6), destruction (see v. 9; 18:4; 55:23, “corruption”; 88:11; Isa 38:17; Hos 13:14), dust (see v. 9; 7:5; 22:15, 29; Job 17:16; 40:13; Isa 26:19; 29:4), mire (see 40:2; 69:2, 14), slime (see 40:2) and mud (see 40:2; Job 30:19). (CSB)

As water from a well, David has been lifted up from death and despair. (TLSB)

These are feelings of a man who had stumbled into a deep cavity and had thought he would perish. (Leupold)

my enemies gloat over me – Could be translated “you did no cause to rejoice” – you gave them no reason to celebrate. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

30:2 *I cried to you for help* – He earnestly fell back upon prayer in his extremity. (Leupold)

healed me – Physical healing (elsewhere used for salvation). (TLSB)

The psalmist did not have to be physically ill to say God healed him; it probably was a restoration to a healthy spiritual and physical life with God’s blessings. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

30:3 *grave*. Figurative of a “brink-of-death” experience, as in 18:5; Jnh 2:2. (CSB)

This word, occurring 65 times in the Hebrew OT, is still obscure. Since the derivation of the word is uncertain, the context must determine the meaning in each case.

1. *Sheol* can mean the resting place of mankind’s mortal remains (Jb 17:16; Is 38:10).

2. *Sheol* can also mean “realm of the dead,” into which all enter who depart this life, righteous as well as wicked (e.g., Gn 37:35; Jb 7:9; Ps 16:10; 31:17; 89:48). In this sense, it is a general term used very much like the English phrase “the hereafter” or “the beyond.” The phrase “to go down into Sheol” means “to die, to depart from the land of the living.” But it should be noted that when the righteous are said to descend into Sheol, their fate beyond is rarely taken into account. The hope of the pious in the OT is expressed differently (e.g., Ps 73:24).

3. *Sheol* can mean the place where God’s judgment overtakes evildoers. In this sense, Sheol receives those who are taken away in God’s anger. Korah’s rebel band went down to Sheol because they had provoked the Lord (Nu 16:30, 33). Harlots go to Sheol (Pr 5:5). The anger of the Lord burns to the depths of Sheol (Dt 32:22). According to Ps 49, all people die physically, the righteous as well as the ungodly (v 10), but there is a difference in their existence in the hereafter. The confidence of the psalmist is expressed in the words “They [i.e., the wicked] are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd.... But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me” (vv 14–15). Clearly, there is a sharp contrast between the doom of the ungodly and the glorious hope of the believer, who hopes to rest securely in the hands of God (Ps 73). (TLSB p. 792)

pit. Metaphor for the grave. (CSB)

The grave or death. David did not literally die but feared for his life before God spared him. (TLSB)

30:4–5 Call to the gathered worshipers to take up the praise of God – God’s saving acts, sometimes involving miracles—as in the exodus from Egypt, the desert wanderings and the entrance into the promised land—and sometimes not, but always involving the manifestation of God’s sovereign lordship over events.). (CSB)

30:4 *saints.* It is one of several Hebrew words for God’s people, referring to them as people who are or should be devoted to God and faithful to him. (CSB)

Holy ones. Saints are not holy because of their own righteousness but because God redeemed them and declares them holy. (TLSB)

praise – The original says, “give praise to his holy remembrance. (Leupold)

name. Lit. “memorial” (see Isa 26:8; Hos 12:5). – His “name” connotes the remembrance of all his mighty works. (Leupold)

30:5 *anger.* God’s anger is always an expression of his righteousness. (CSB)

lasts only a moment. See Isa 54:7. (CSB)

This contrast beautifully portrays the distinction between the Law and the Gospel. God rightly condemns and punishes sin, but because of Christ’s work, His Gospel and favor continue forever. The Gospel predominates. (TLSB)

favor – Hebrew *chen*, “approval” or “affection,” related to the idea of grace (see “grace,” p 1902; see also “gracious,” p 842). Often used in the Hbr expression “found favor in someone’s eyes” (cf Gn 6:8; 39:21; Ex 3:21; 11:3; 12:36; 33:12). Common also in the writings of Solomon, especially Proverbs. (TLSB p. 6)

tarry for a night. Lit. “come in at evening to lodge.” The figure is that of a guest lodging for only one night. (CSB)

Evening is the time of darkness and danger and so it represents the time of suffering. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

morning – “Morning” is the time of light and life, a new day, and so it represents healing. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

30:6–10 Expanded recollection of the Lord’s gracious deliverance. (CSB)

30:6–7 In security he had grown arrogant, forgetful of who had made his “mountain stand firm,” but the Lord reminded him. (CSB)

30:6 *never be moved* – He spoke as do the wicked (see 10:6), hence lost the blessing of the righteous (see 15:5). (CSB)

moved – Disturb my well-being, unsettle my security. (CSB)

David apparently had been given success and security by the grace of God, and in reflection on that he asserted that was “safe and secure” and could never be moved (s.v. Ps. 632:2) (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

David confesses that he has had sinful confidence in his wealth. (TLSB)

After he had enjoyed a period of prosperity, uninterrupted success had bred a spirit of security. (Leupold)

30:7 *made my mountain strong* – Reference may be to David’s security in his mountain fortress, Zion; or that mountain fortress may here serve as a metaphor for David’s state as a vigorous and victorious king, the “mountain” on which he sat with such secure confidence in God. (CSB)

David’s kingdom, centered in Jerusalem, which was built on mountains. The mountain contrasts with the pit (v 3). (TLSB)

hid your face. In moments of need the psalmists frequently ask God why he hides his face, or they plead with him not to do so. When he does hide his face, those who depend on him can only despair. When his face shines on a person, blessing and deliverance come. (CSB)

God turned His face, His blessing, away from David for a time. (TLSB)

His prosperity was all undeserved favor from God. David apparently ascribed it to his capable government. Then God turned away. (Leupold)

30:8–10 Shattered strength swept away all self-reliance; at the brink of death his cries for God’s mercy rose. (CSB)

30:9 The psalmist urges that God’s praise is at stake. It is the living, not the dead, who remember God’s mercies and celebrate his deliverances. The Israelites usually viewed death as they saw it—the very opposite of life. The grave brought no escape from God. (Non-Biblical documents from the ancient Near East indicate a general conception that immortality was reserved for the gods but that the dead continued to have some kind of shadowy existence in the dismal netherworld.) The OT writers knew that man was created for life, that God’s will for his people was life and that he had power over death. They also knew that death was every man’s lot, and at its proper time the godly rested in God and accepted it with equanimity. Death could even be a blessing for the righteous, affording escape from the greater evil that would overtake the living. Furthermore, the death of the righteous was better than that of the wicked. There was an awareness that death (as observed) was not the end of hope for the righteous, that God had more in store for them. (CSB)

pit – David may still usefully serve God and others if he does not die. (TLSB)

your faithfulness. To your covenant. (CSB)

30:10 *be merciful to me* – One feels that at this point God’s chastisements had fully achieved their purpose, and the man was shaken out of his unwholesome security. (Leupold)

Direct, personal plea for assistance. David has turned from self-reliance to trust in God. (TLSB)

30:11–12 God answered—and David vows to prolong his praise forever – A vow to praise. Many prayers in the Psalter include such vows in anticipation of the expected answer to prayer. They reflect Israel’s religious consciousness that praise must follow deliverance as surely as prayer springs from need—if God is to be truly honored. Such praise was usually offered with thank offerings and involved celebrating God’s saving act in the presence of those assembled at the temple. Dancing and joy replace wailing and sackcloth so that songs of praise, not silence, may attend the acts of God. (CSB)

30:11 *turned for my mourning* – Complete change of attitude from sorrow to joy. (TLSB)

By “mourning” he means the grief he experienced under God’s anger. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

dancing – Though Egyptians mourned through dance at funerals, Israelites danced for joyous occasions and in praise to God (cf Ex 15:20; 2Sm 6:14). (TLSB)

By “dancing” he means the great joy he had when he was restored and renewed from his trouble. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

sackcloth. A symbol of mourning (see 35:13; Ge 37:34). (CSB)

Rough clothing worn in mourning and humility. (TLSB)

30:12 *heart*. Lit. “glory” – a way of referring to the core of one’s being. (CSB)

Poetic way of describing David’s soul—the most glorious part of himself. (TLSB)

give thanks – God’s deliverances are designed to be occasions for abundant thanksgiving. Moreover, it is the writer’s earnest intent to let the praise for this deliverance ring on forever. The mercy bestowed was great; the praise should keep pace with its magnitude. (Leupold)

Ps 30 David summarizes his feelings and God’s response in v 5. Sorrowful times in life are sometimes caused by things outside of our control and sometimes by our own sins. Trusting in God’s deliverance, David knows that the sorrow he feels will be replaced with joy as God comforts him. We, too, are confident in God’s promise to comfort us and dry our tears (Rv 7:17).

• O God, comfort me with Your presence, and fill me with joy. Amen. (TLSB)