

MOUNT SINAI MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

MONDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

Psalm 30

Under the Divine Knife

Quote

“God uses hardship and affliction as a means of discipline, a means of training His children, of helping them mature in their spiritual lives.”

John MacArthur

I. Introduction

Chiseling Away Everything Else

Michelangelo was an extraordinary talent, considered by many to be the most skilled artist who ever lived. He excelled as a sculptor, designer, painter, and architect. To this day his statues of Moses and David, to name a few, are widely recognized and internationally acclaimed. On one occasion Michelangelo was asked how he was able to take a solid block of jagged Italian marble and carve from it a beautiful piece of art like his famous statue of David. “That was easy,” the great sculptor said. “I just chiseled away everything that did not look like David.”

Throughout the lifelong process of sanctification, this is what God is doing in the life of every Christian. He is chiseling away everything that does not look like Jesus Christ. He delights in taking hardened, jagged blocks of humanity, those who have been flawed by sin, and chiseling away everything that does not conform to the Lord Jesus Christ. This can be a painful process, undergoing God’s knife, as he carves away, cutting back all that does not resemble Christlikeness. But it is in loving discipline that God prunes us back, knowing that it will yield righteousness and holiness and enable us to grow into the image of his Son.

This was the experience of David in Psalm 30. This psalm of thanksgiving focuses upon God’s loving discipline of David in which he chastened him for his sin of self-sufficiency (v. 6). This divine punishment was no small matter in his life as God brought him under the painful ordeal of a life-threatening illness. Having felt

the crushing blows of God's anger and tottering on the brink of death, David cried out for mercy and was forgiven. He was elated to have a new start with the Lord; his saddened soul was restored with rejoicing, dancing, and singing.

This psalm is a "song" of thanksgiving written by David on the occasion of "the dedication" of the temple, literally, the "dedication of the house." Confusion arises at this point as to what the dedication references. Is this a reference to when the property and building materials of the temple were dedicated (cp. 1 Chr. 21:26; 22:1) or the dedication of David's palace? Is it a reference to the location of the property purchased by David from Araunah (2 Sam. 24; 1 Chr. 21), or is it a reference to the dedication of the new palace in Zion (2 Sam. 5:11–12)? As far as the sickness that threatened David's life, history does not record the incident. Many interpreters have used this to deny the accuracy of the psalm title. But an absence from royal records cannot be used to deny the historicity of this event.

II. Commentary

MAIN IDEA

After facing a life-threatening illness because of his sin of self-sufficiency, David cries out to God in repentance, and God hears his cry, forgiving his sin and healing his sickness.

A the Rejoicing After God's Discipline (30:1–5)

SUPPORTING IDEA: David states his resolve to rejoice in the Lord after he has delivered him from the depths of the pit.

30:1–3. In this psalm David began at the end. He started by looking back on a time of severe but loving discipline from the Lord. He rejoiced that God had delivered him out of this painful ordeal which was brought on by his own sin (cp. v. 6). In this rejoicing, David determined to exalt the Lord because he had lifted David out of the depths of a near-death experience (cp. 71:20; 130:1). The language used here is of drawing water from a well (cp. Exod. 2:16, 19). So God had lifted David out of a deep hole.

Apparently, David found himself facing death and knew the occasion would allow his enemies to gloat over him (cp. Pss. 35:19, 24–27; 38:16; 2 Sam. 1:17–20). He called to God for help. The Lord healed him from an illness brought on by his sin

(v. 6) and spared him from going down into the pit of death (Pss. 28:1; 30:3; 88:4). Furthermore, God brought David up from the grave, sparing his life from divine justice against his sin which almost led to his death (1 Cor. 11:30; Jas. 5:19–20; 1 John 5:16).

30:4–5. Excited about the Lord’s forgiveness, David called on all saints to sing to the Lord and praise his holy name. Why? The anger of God’s discipline for his sin lasts only a moment while his favor lasts a lifetime, enduring forever (cp. Isa. 54:7–8). David drew the reader’s attention to the contrasts between God’s anger and favor and his own weeping and rejoicing, with the former occurring in the night and the latter in the morning. The weeping under God’s chastising judgments lasts only for a night, but it will soon be withdrawn when rejoicing comes in the morning.

B the Reason for God’s Discipline (30:6)

SUPPORTING IDEA: God disciplined David for his sin of self-sufficiency and self-centered independence from the Lord.

30:6. In pride David felt secure (using a Hebrew word implying a careless ease) and deceived himself into thinking, “I will never be shaken.” Perhaps David began to enjoy and value the gifts over the Giver, the creation over the Creator (cp. Deut. 8:11–20; 32:15; 2 Chr. 32:2–5; Dan. 4:28–37). In any case he began to trust in his own security and status. His sin was the attitude of self-sufficiency, the sin of independence from the Lord.

C the Reality of God’s Discipline (30:7)

SUPPORTING IDEA: God chastised David by removing his presence from him because of his sin.

30:7. The Lord disciplined David (cp. Pss. 32:3–4; 38:1–17) by withdrawing from him, allowing him to see his need for God. Previously, the Lord had favored him with many blessings. In God’s strength David was strong like a mighty mountain. But God hid his face from him. This pictures a withdrawal of his divine fellowship and removal of favor from his life (cp. Ps. 13:1). As a result, David was dismayed, terribly shaken, and no longer at ease. David was now suffering under the painful discipline of God.

D the Removal of God's Discipline (30:8–12)

SUPPORTING IDEA: David, having pleaded his case in repentance, received the forgiveness of God that turned his sadness into shouts of joy.

30:8–10. To you, O Lord, I called, David declared, as he reacted to the swift chastisement of God. Feeling the pain of discipline, David cried to the

Lord, not on the basis of his own merit, but for mercy. Humbly he reasoned with God, What gain is there in my destruction? David deliberated with God, stating that if his life was taken, the praise he offered God would cease. In other words, “God, how can I praise you from the dust of the grave?”

David, having learned his lesson, pleaded, Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me. This was a cry of repentance, the only way for divine discipline to be removed (cp. Ps. 32:5; 51:4–9).

30:11–12. David demonstrated signs of remorse and repentance by wailing in sackcloth. David knew his confession of sin had been heard by God and the divine hand of discipline was now removed. How so? The Lord had turned his wailing, the result of divinely inflicted pain, into dancing. God had removed his sackcloth, a sign of mourning, and replaced it with dancing, an expression of the rejoicing of his heart (1 Sam. 18:6; Pss. 149:3; 150:4). Cleansed, David's heart was able to sing to the Lord and not be silent.

The mercy of God healed David of his life-threatening sickness, and this filled him with praise (cp. Isa. 38:20, i.e., Hezekiah's recovery). This newfound joy over the forgiveness of his sin was demonstrated by his words, O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever.

MAIN IDEA REVIEW: After facing a life-threatening illness because of his sin of self-sufficiency, David cried out to God in repentance and God heard his cry, forgiving his sin and healing his sickness.

III. Conclusion

Joy in the Morning

Divine discipline is not God saying, “I'm through with you.” Nor is it a mark of being abandoned by him. Rather, it is clear evidence of the Father's love acting for

the believer's good, bringing a straying child back to himself. C. S. Lewis said, "God whispers to us in our pleasures; he speaks to us in our work; he shouts at us in our pain." In the life of every Christian, there are times when he fails to listen to

God and chooses not to obey his commands. Then the Lord uses his severe discipline to cause the hearts of believers to turn to him and obey his instructions.

Just as David went from the extreme lows of painful discipline from God to the ecstatic highs of knowing divine forgiveness, so the Christian will experience both extremes. Not only will there be sorrowful seasons when the Lord must chasten his children for unconfessed sin in their lives, but there will be triumphant seasons when God will fill repentant hearts with his joy. When sin is confessed, weeping may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning.