

IN PREPARATION FOR THE 50<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT CONFERENCE – 06/20-23/2025  
**CHRIST, OUR JUBILEE**

WEEK 6 – JUNE 09-14, 2025

**Psalm 130: Christ, Our Redemption**

Anniversaries commemorating the founding of churches or Districts are precious opportunities for believers to gather in the joy of worshipping God with love and gratitude for Him. However, these celebrations also harbor a latent spiritual danger: the focus on numbers – the number of years founded, the number of believers, the number of new members joining the church, or the amount of money in the bank account – instead of focusing on God Himself. Therefore, the emphasis on numbers can be accepted only if through those numbers we see clearly the blessings of God poured out on the Church. But in reality, behind this focus on numbers is pride in the achievements that I, My Church, or My District have achieved through My own sacrifices and efforts.

This year's District Conference is our 50<sup>th</sup> Conference, a number so huge, so special, and easily capturing our attention. However, may the Lord remind us that what we should focus on is not this number, but God Himself, who founded our District, who has loved, cared for, guided, and corrected our District throughout the past 50 years, who is Our Jubilee, and on Whom we must focus in this Conference. We are to worship Him and praise the marvelous works He has done for each individual, for each congregation, and for the entire District.

And in the sixth week of our program *In Preparation for the 50<sup>th</sup> District Conference*, it is fitting to meditate on Psalm 130, a special Psalm revealing God as our *Redeemer*.

Psalm 130 is the sixth of the seven Penitential Psalms (i.e., Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). These Psalms emphasize the power and mercy of God for those who cry out to Him when in despair, both physically and spiritually. Perhaps the Hebrew pilgrims used this Psalm to confess their sins and seek God's forgiveness and blessing as they returned to Jerusalem to worship Him.

The Reformer Martin Luther greatly loved Psalm 130, and he called it one of the "*Pauline Psalms*" because this Psalm presents forgiveness and redemption by God's grace alone and not from human's effort. It can be said that this is one of the clearest expositions in the Old Testament of the way of salvation through grace, based on the atonement of Christ. And from this Psalm, Martin Luther composed the hymn "*From Depths of Woe I Raise to Thee*."

**DESPAIRING CONDITION** (vv.1-2). The psalmist begins this Psalm with an image of a person in "*the depths*," a term referring to the depth of the sea, where a person is covered by deep and dangerous waters, a place where no matter how good a swimmer one is, they cannot save themselves (Psalm 69:1-3). The "*depths*" engulfing and pulling the psalmist under are not the sufferings or dangers in life, nor are they the attacks of enemies, but rather his own sin (verse 3).

The psalmist is crying out under the weight and waves of his sin. Sin is a problem that only the Lord can deal with; only He has the power to forgive sins and save the psalmist from being buried under the weight of guilt. "*The voice of my supplications*" also means "*the voice of my pleas for mercy!*" (ESV) and what the psalmist expects from the Lord is nothing other than His mercy.

Sin has separated the human race from God (Ephesians 2:1-3, 12; Colossians 1:21), and placed the sinner under His wrath (Colossians 3:5-6). What is frightening is the spiritual blindness that prevents people from knowing God, from recognizing and properly assessing the harm of sin, as a result they continue to do evil and drift further away from God (Psalm 14:1-3).

Humanity always wants to find a solution to its desperate and lost condition. They strive to do good, pursue philosophies, seek liberation through religion and asceticism, but they fail to recognize an important truth: all their efforts are being made "*in the depths*" of sin, "*all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment; we all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away*" (Isaiah 64:6) and thus have no value to bring them out of the "*depths*."

Regretfully, many people have experienced salvation but because they do not nurture their spiritual lives through close fellowship with God and His Word, they have become insensitive to sin. They justify their sin, they try to minimize the harm of their sin, and gradually lose God's perspective on sin. Today, many believers fear the consequences of sin more than sin itself, and that is why many believers are hiding sin and living double lives.

Some other believers forget that "*For freedom Christ has set us free,*" as a result, they "*submit again to a yoke of slavery,*" slavery to the law (Galatians 5:1). Instead of running to Jesus seeking forgiveness and restoration (1 John 1:9), they try to solve their sinful condition and justify themselves through works (Colossians 2:20-23). These believers will fall into two states: either they become despair when their efforts do not yield the results they desire or they will become prideful and judgmental of others when they think their efforts have been successful. And regardless of the state they are in, these people will not be able to experience a joyful life in the Lord.

What the psalmist encourages us to do is that no matter what the circumstances, no matter how desperate, we can still call upon God's mercy. Have you truly been born again and become a child of God? If not, pray to ask God to forgive your sins and receive Him as Lord and Master of your life. If you have truly believed in the Lord but are still suffering from the sins that beset you, if you are losing joy because you live a double life hiding your sin, then this is the right time for you to run to the Lord and plead for His mercy.

**SALVATION BY GRACE** (vv. 3-4). There is this one truth that makes the psalmist tremble: if God were to "*mark iniquities,*" no one, including himself, could escape His wrath and judgment. The psalmist affirms that if God kept a record of all human faults, no one could stand before Him, and no one could make excuses for their sins (Romans 1:20; 3:10-12). Verse 3 also reveals another frightening truth: no one can hide their sin from God; He is the One who knows "*iniquities*" and remembers them. When sinners stand before God on the Day of Judgment, they will be judged according to "*the books*" in which God has recorded all their evil deeds (Revelation 20:11-12).

*“But,”* a crucial truth that can bring the psalmist from the *“depths”* of despair to a certain hope of redemption, is that *“with You there is forgiveness.”* The psalmist knows he is not worthy of salvation because of the *“iniquities”* he has committed. While God knows all those *“iniquities,”* *“but with [Him] there is forgiveness”*. The salvation the psalmist receives does not come from anything he has done, but from God alone, from His mercy and grace alone.

How many sins can God forgive? The psalmist indicates that there is no limit to God’s forgiveness for him. The psalmist does not say: *“but with you there is forgiveness for this sin or that sin,”* he simply says: *“but with You there is forgiveness.”* In the original language, this verse actually does not have the verb *“is”* but simply *“With You forgiveness.”* Every sinner can be forgiven when they run to God and plead for His mercy.

God’s Word tells us that when a person repents of sin and receives Christ as Savior, all their sins will be wiped away by the blood of Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:14). God will cast their sins out of His presence (Psalm 103:12), and He *“will remember their sins and lawless deeds no more”* (Hebrews 10:17). Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

We are saved solely by God’s grace (Ephesians 2:8-9), we continue our walk by faith also by His grace (I Corinthians 15:10; Philippians 2:12-13) and we will finish our spiritual journey also by His grace (John 10:27-30; Romans 8:28-30; Philippians 1:6).

Does believing that salvation is solely by God’s grace cause believers to despise God and live a life of sin? No, certainly not! Because salvation by God’s grace is *“that [God] may be feared.”* The experience of God’s forgiveness does not give one license to sin, as some might think, but leads to a deeper fear of God. Pastor Charles Spurgeon translated verse 4 as follows: *“There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be loved and worshipped and served.”* One who is forgiven by God will become gentle, humble, and overwhelmed by God’s mercy. They will cherish the salvation which they have received from God. Such a person, even if they may stumble, deep down in their heart, there will be anguish, and when they stumble, they will quickly run to God for deliverance.

**LIVING A NEW LIFE** (vv. 5-8). When the psalmist recognized his desperate condition (vv. 1-2) and experienced the salvation God granted him by His grace (vv. 3-4), then he began to live his daily life by pursuing new purposes.

The psalmist’s journey of faith moved from repentance to hope and the restoration of fellowship with God. After receiving forgiveness of his sins, the psalmist expressed his expectation of God not only for deliverance from trouble, but specifically for the restoration of intimate and loving fellowship with Him. Now the psalmist seeks nothing other than God Himself (vv. 5-6; Psalm 27:4). The psalmist likened his waiting to watchmen waiting for the dawn, showing his hope in God’s word. The psalmist understood that forgiveness does not depend on feelings but on God’s sure promise.

This is what Jesus said: *“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly”* (John 10:10), and *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). Our life following Christ will be rich, abundant, and joyful when Christ is our Jubilee,

when what we seek is nothing other than Him, and then we can say like King David: “*I said to the LORD, ‘You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing’*” (Psalm 16:2).

Furthermore, the psalmist did not just want to keep the precious gift of grace for himself; after experiencing forgiveness, he moved from the himself to the community and called all Israel to put their hope in the LORD, for with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with Him is plentiful redemption (vv. 7-8). The experience of salvation is not just the psalmist's personal experience, but it is the experience of those who acknowledge sin and receive Christ into their lives (Romans 3:25-26).

**PRAYER.** The theme of this year’s Conference is: Christ, Our Jubilee. The joy of the Jubilee year is first and foremost the joy of “*the captives set free... the oppressed set free*” (Luke 4:19), the joy of those who experience deliverance from the power of darkness to become children of God. Let us offer to God a prayer of deep gratitude for the marvelous saving grace He has given us

Let us pray that each of us will come to attend this year’s District Conference with a refreshed spirit of those who experience new life in the Lord.

Let us pray that God will use each of us to “*proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor*” (Luke 4:19), to proclaim the Good News to those who are still struggling in “*the depths*” of sin.

Amen.