

Psalm 130:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

Analysis

The crucial contrast emerges: 'But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' The word 'but' introduces reversal - despite human guilt (v. 3), divine forgiveness exists. The phrase 'there is forgiveness with thee' affirms God's character as forgiving. Forgiveness (Hebrew 'selichah') means pardon, the sending away of sin. This isn't earned but is intrinsic to God's nature. The phrase 'with thee' emphasizes that forgiveness is found nowhere else - not in human effort, religious ritual, or self-justification, but with God alone. The purpose clause 'that thou mayest be feared' explains why God forgives - to produce reverent awe, worship, and obedient love. Paradoxically, forgiveness generates fear (reverence), not presumption. Those who experience undeserved mercy love and fear the Forgiver. This verse is the theological center of the psalm - grace produces godliness.

Historical Context

The Old Testament sacrificial system pointed to forgiveness through atonement (Leviticus 16; 17:11). However, the psalm emphasizes that forgiveness originates in God's character, not merely ritual. Prophets declared God's willingness to forgive (Isaiah 55:7; Jeremiah 31:34; Micah 7:18-19). For Christians, this forgiveness finds ultimate expression in Christ's atoning work.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does forgiveness being 'with' God mean it's found nowhere else?
2. Why does forgiveness produce fear (reverence) rather than presumption or casualness?
3. What is the relationship between experiencing grace and developing godly character?
4. How does this verse answer the rhetorical question of verse 3?
5. In what ways does God's forgiveness serve the purpose of producing worshipful reverence?

Interlinear Text

ל מ ע נ פ ס ל י ח ע מ ב H3588 H5973 But there is forgiveness H5547 H4616

with thee that thou mayest be feared

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 55:7 (Parallel theme): Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Psalms 86:5 (Parallel theme): For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

Daniel 9:9 (Parallel theme): To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;

Colossians 1:14 (Parallel theme): In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

2 Corinthians 5:19 (Parallel theme): To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Isaiah 1:18 (Parallel theme): Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Ephesians 1:7 (Parallel theme): In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

Romans 8:1 (Parallel theme): There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Hosea 3:5 (Parallel theme): Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

Acts 9:31 (Parallel theme): Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.