

Psalm 31

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Date: 12 July 2026

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[0:00] Stay awesome. We're going to look at Psalm 31 tonight. So we're going to read it through. It's quite a long psalm. And I don't know how you'll find it as we read it through.

Statements, prayers, reflections. So let me read to you Psalm 31. For the director of music, a psalm of David.

In you, Lord, I have taken refuge. Let me never be put to shame. Deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me. Come quickly to my rescue. Be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me.

Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name, lead and guide me. Keep me free from the trap that is set for me. For you are my refuge.

Into your hands I commit my spirit. Deliver me, Lord, my faithful God. I hate those who cling to worthless idols. As for me, I trust in the Lord.

[1:22] I will be glad and rejoice in your love, for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul. You have not given me into the hands of the enemy, but have set my feet in a spacious place.

Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in distress. My eyes grow weak with sorrow. My soul and body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning.

My strength fails because of my affliction and my bones grow weak. Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbours and an object of dread to my closest friends.

Those who see me in the street flee from me. I am forgotten as though I were dead. I've become like broken pottery. Another reference to the jar there.

For I hear many whispering, terror on every side. They conspire against me and plot to take my life. But I trust in you, Lord.

[2:28] I say you are my God. My times are in your hands. Deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant.

Save me in your unfailing love. Let me not be put to shame, Lord, for I've cried out to you. But let the wicked be put to shame and be silent in the realm of the dead.

Let their lying lips be silenced, for with pride and contempt, they speak arrogantly against the righteous. How abundant are the good things that you have stored up for those who fear you, that you bestow in the sight of all, on those who take refuge in you.

In the shelter of your presence, you hide them. From all human intrigues, you keep them safe in your dwelling from accusing tongues. Praise be to the Lord, for he showed me the wonders of his love when I was in a city under siege.

In my alarm, I said, I am cut off from your sight. You heard my cry for mercy when I called to you for help. Love the Lord, all his faithful people.

[3:41] The Lord preserves those who are true to him. By the proud he pays back in full. Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for your word. And as we look at it together on this hot evening, I pray that you would give us clarity and attention.

And that Lord, most of all, you would give us your spirit to teach us. You show us what we need to hear from you this evening. Amen. I pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. What do you do when people treat you badly? How do you respond when you find yourself facing problems?

This morning, we had a lovely glimpse of what we do when we're hitting walls, when we're hitting a Red Sea. How do we respond?

[4:42] Well, our response this morning was to be still and trust God. So it's similar, but slightly different tonight. In Psalm 31, we see how David responds to those questions.

And it's a psalm which has been repeated, and you might pick up the, as we've read through it, you might have picked up where other times in Scripture some of these words are repeated.

This is a prayer of David, and he's expressing his trust in God. But Jesus, let's just wait for this. But Jesus, on the cross, prayed these very words.

You would have been very familiar as we read them. He trusted himself to God his Father. Jonah is also referenced in this. And Jeremiah, particularly, if you read through Jeremiah, broken pottery, and that phrase that comes on, that comes again and again.

See if I can find it here. Oh, I'm on the wrong page. What people are saying about him.

[5:58] Sorry, I haven't got the reference here, and I can't find it immediately. We'll come to it as we come along. Let me tell you quickly the flow of the passage, because it might help us to begin to get it into our heads.

Because as I say, there's a lot in it. The psalm opens with David in verse 1, giving a one-sentence overview of the whole psalm.

Verse 1, In you, Lord, I have taken refuge. Let me never be put to shame. Deliver me in your righteousness. So the good news is, if you've understood that verse, then you've got an understanding of what's to come.

And if you fall asleep, you've just got to remind yourself of that verse, all right? Because that is essentially what the psalm is about. Then David goes through then, and in verses, he makes a journey twice.

Verses 1 to 8, David calls out to God for help, and finds God as his refuge. Verses 9 to 22, he does the same thing.

[7:04] He again calls out to God, and finds God to be his refuge again. But this second journey is even more helpful than the first journey, because he goes into a lot more detail, and starts to unpack what his problems were, and what the solution is.

And we begin to really feel, not just here, but we begin to really feel, his predicament, the trouble he's in, but then the joy he knows in finding the Lord his refuge.

The psalm then ends with Psalm 23 and 24, with David exhorting us to love and trust the Lord, to be strong and take heart.

I'm not going to read these chunks again. That was my plan, but as we've read it through already, I'm just going to refer you to various sections, and you can read them through as I'm speaking.

So first of all, we see David's distress in verses 9 to 13. If you read through that, you see that he's calling to God to be his refuge. Why does he need refuge?

[8:15] From who does he need deliverance? Well, he describes there in verses 8, 11, and 15, that he needs refuge from his enemies. So David's enemies are what is causing all of the problems he is facing in Psalm 31.

You see in verse 4, they're setting a trap for him. Verse 13, they're plotting to take his life. Verse 15, they're pursuing him. Verse 18, they're lying and speaking arrogantly against him.

So how does he feel facing these plots, these lies, these troubles from his enemies? We see there in verses 9 and 10, read those through again to yourself, as I'm just explaining this bit.

We see his emotionally and physically, he's a wreck. It's strong, strong language. He's in distress. He says his eyes grow weak as he weeps with grief. He's consumed by anguish. That word comes up there a couple of times. Anguish, a big word.

[9:29] His life with sighing, his strength fails, and his bones feel weak. Emotionally and physically, he's a complete wreck. He's also in verses 11 to 13, he's the contempt of his neighbours.

Even his closest friends see him and are horrified when they see him. Passers by in the street, we're told run from him. He's become like a smashed vase or a broken plate.

Broken and useless. Many whisper against him and are even plotting to take his life. Extreme language, isn't it?

But it is extreme so that it makes the point of David's complete distress and anguish. This wasn't a walk in the park for David, this psalm.

It wasn't a happy days, happy days. He was going through the mill. But why did he write these things? He went through those things, but why has he bothered to record them?

[10:38] Why has God caused this portion of scripture to be written down for us to read tonight? Well, one thing, one thing is that we have to see, first of all, the depth of despair and anguish that David was experiencing to see the greatness of God in restoring him and rescuing him.

The greater the disaster, the greater the display of power and glory of the rescuer. We had that tonight, didn't we, in the Corinthians reading? And we had that this morning as well with facing the Red Sea.

When you're facing a big problem, the rescue is even greater. But it's also perhaps to show us tonight that a Christian and even a godly Christian can experience similar trauma.

And if you're undergoing some form of distress or trouble at present, it doesn't mean you are failing as a Christian.

David's trouble from his enemies was usually because he was seeking to follow the Lord. So distress, anguish, hard times don't mean that you're not following the Lord.

[11:59] We see here, though, that David finds God to be his refuge in all these troubles. And whatever situation you're finding yourself in at present, physical or emotional weakness, perhaps, or perhaps even being misunderstood or rejected by others, these things David was facing, for you too, God can be a refuge if you trust him as David did.

So we're going to look at how, very quickly, at how God was David's rescue. And here we'd be looking at verses 19 to 22. So again, flick through those as you're hearing me.

It's interesting that although he was deeply distressed and the psalm is filled with these problems he had, it's filled in an even greater way with confidence and hope in God.

You can do this maths yourself later, but you'll have to trust me for this. You know, psalms are written in kind of lines, it's poetry. With 17 lines of Psalm 31 dwell on David's problems and 54 lines express his trust and deliverance by the Lord.

So that's encouragement to us this evening. How did David find refuge in God? I've got four things quickly to say on that. The first one's really obvious. he called out to God.

[13:28] He asked God for help in verse 2. Verse 2, be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me. And verse 1, verse 5, verse 15, he's again calling for deliverance.

It seems obvious, doesn't it, that if you want to find refuge in God, you have to call out to God to help you. Although it's obvious, it's what we fail to do very often, isn't it?

We hit a red sea, we're feeling like broken pottery, and what do we do? We try and muddle through and we try and be the strong man, strong woman, when God just wants us first of all to call out to him.

But also, we see here in this psalm that he trusted God's faithful character completely. So God's character comes out big in this psalm.

He speaks in verse 7 of God's love. He speaks in verse 19 of abundance of blessings. And in verse 3, he says, for the sake of your name, lead and guide me.

[14:36] In other words, because of who you are, because you are faithful and because you can be trusted, because you are completely faithful, I can trust you completely.

For the sake of your name, to show your glory in who you are, rescue me from this situation. We see also, thirdly, he committed himself to that God he completely trusted.

Verses 5 and 15 say this, these words we know the Lord said on the cross, into your hands I commit my spirit, that's what Jesus said.

David also added, deliver me, Lord, my faithful God. Verse 15, David says, my times are in your hands, deliver me from the hands of my enemies.

So it's interesting, isn't it, we've got God's hands coming up here. How can God, I was thinking about this, how can God have hands? God is a spirit. But of course, it's a picture language, isn't it?

[15:37] And the hands of God here are repeated to show the securest place to be in your deepest distress is in God's hands.

So David had complete trust that he would be delivered. It didn't mean for him that he wouldn't go through problems, and it doesn't mean that for us either. But God will be with us to take us through them.

We are in his hands. And lastly there, he found shelter in God's presence. Verse 15, no, verse 16, sorry, in verse 20.

Verse 16, let your face shine on your servant. Save me in your unfailing love. Verse 20, in the shelter of your presence, you hide them from all human intrigues.

You keep them safe in your dwelling. So David says that those who take refuge in the Lord are kept safe, because they are sheltered in his presence. We have a God who doesn't act remotely in fixing our problems, but one who walks with us, whether it be through the Red Sea, whatever our issues

are, whatever our problems are, he walks with us through those problems.

[16:59] He's a personal God. We can't look at this psalm and not see, though, how we see Jesus in it. Christ, the fulfillment of this psalm.

How do we see Jesus? Jesus, God's anointed king. Strong hint, particularly in the early psalms, David, God's anointed king, reflects, albeit poorly, but he reflects Jesus, God's super-appointed king.

God's anointed king. God's anointed king. How does he, how does David reflect Jesus? We can see here from the grief and anguish in verses 9 to 13, that in Christ's human experience, particularly in the cross, he suffered these very things, the emotional and physical suffering of verses 9 and 10, the rejection of those around him in verses 11 and 12.

And note this, they conspire against me and plot to take my life in verse 13. The cross of Jesus, isn't it? Yet Jesus, even on the cross, trusted his father, placed himself in the father's hands, and committed his spirit to the father.

So how did Jesus reflect David's trust of the father in a fuller way? Well, we take those, two of those same headings we were looking at for David.

[18:31] He committed himself to God, to the God he completely trusted. And he took, and about the shelter in God's presence.

Those two things. So first of all, he committed himself to the God he completely trusted. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Luke 22, we see Jesus in anguish as he faces the cross.

He prayed, Father, if you're willing, take this cup from me, yet not my will, but yours be done. And from the cross, when all was finished, in Luke 23, verse 46, we're told, Jesus called out with a loud voice, Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit.

So can you see here from those references in Luke how Jesus perfectly submitted to his father who he loved and trusted completely.

Jesus, the perfect king, trusting his father perfectly. Now this next one is a bit more tricky. David found sheltering God's presence in verse 15 and 20.

[19:43] But on the cross, Jesus, of course, did not find shelter in God's presence, but rather God's anger when he was bearing our sin.

But so that you and I may find shelter from God's wrath and find shelter in God's presence.

because of Jesus, we can run to God and find that shelter we need from everything that comes against us. We experience it when we turn to the Lord, don't we?

First of all, he forgives our sin. We have shelter from the consequences of our sin. But as we turn to him throughout our Christian life with our problems, we find shelter in his presence.

if we take time to be in his presence. So because of Jesus, we can run to God and find shelter from whatever comes against us.

[20:51] I played a little trick on you earlier. You thought it was coming to an end, didn't you? I am coming to the end now. Our response. What do you think our response should be from hearing about God being our refuge and how he walks with us through our problems and how he is our loving and powerful God?

What should our response be when we see what Jesus did for us on the cross? Thankfulness.

Thankfulness to God, the Father, for his love for us.

Thankfulness to Jesus for his love for us, his death in our place. Thankfulness for Jesus for his faithfulness to his Father in going right through for us.

But David's application in the psalm to the reader today is at the end and I love this in a passage where you get the application at the end. All right? And it's in verse 23 and 24.

I'm going to read that to you. Love the Lord, all his faithful people. The Lord preserves those who are true to him but the proud he pays back in full.

[22:11] Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord. Because of Jesus, we can take to heart this exhortation and we can experience the refuge of God as it is explained through the whole psalm.

So the application is two things. Love the Lord, the faithful God has rescued us and will continue to be our refuge.

Consider what he's done for you. How can we not love him? The call here is to be faithful and constant in our love for him as it has been for us.

How do we do that? We remind ourselves daily of who God is and what he has done for us. Just what David was doing in this psalm. And we remind ourselves of the refuge we have in Jesus. Be strong and take heart. So when our problems loom large, whether they be the Red Sea or something else, we hope in the Lord who delivers those who trust and wait for him.

[23 : 24] So we wait for him. We stand still but we call on the Lord and stand still. Okay, let me just pray and then back to Nathan.

Oh, then we're finishing. Okay, let me just pray to finish. Father, thank you for this psalm. Thank you for what you've shown us even on this hot evening.

Thank you that our confidence is not in ourselves. Our hope is not in ourselves but our refuge is in you.

Thank you for Jesus that took your wrath in our place so that we could find shelter in your presence. Lord, help us this week as we spend time with you as we read our Bibles as we pray to take shelter in you and to draw our strength from you to find you as our refuge.

Go with us now in Jesus' name. Amen.