

Psalm 31
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Lynchburg, Virginia

EXHORDIUM

We have said that the Psalms make a manly religion and they most certainly do. It is good for us in a largely feminized Christian culture to hear the strength of these words and apply ourselves to a manly religion. These words will make men of us but not because we are so strong. On the contrary, they call us to stand upon the Word of God, trusting in the Lord as our rock and fortress.

It is good for us to call our men to strength but do our women and girls want a manly religion? The answer is most emphatically yes. We often note the differences between men and women in their basic makeup. Women seek security. Even strong women seek an even stronger man. She wants to be protected. What better way to find this security than to find it in the Lord, himself. The reality is, ladies, that no matter how good of a man you have got, he cannot fully or adequately protect you. You can only find that ultimate protection and security in the Lord. As we look at these Psalms, you can understand, like David, that God is always faithful, strong, able and willing to save. So, yes our ladies do need a manly religion, so that they can rest secured that their God is in control.

EXEGESIS

Ps 31:1-12 31 In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness. 2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me. 3 For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me. 4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength. 5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.

David first pleads to God for deliverance. He appeals to God's righteousness for his own deliverance. God's righteousness here is His faithfulness. He knows that God has made promises to him and he calls upon God to remember and to act. Furthermore, as we see later on in the

Psalm, David calls upon God to make a distinction between him and those men who love lies. David understands that he is a sinner and is not calling upon God to act on his behalf based upon absolute righteousness. But David does call upon God to look and make a judgment between him and those who both hate him and hate God.

David needs speedy deliverance and asks God to act quickly. He asks God to be his strong rock and a house of defense because God is his rock and fortress. This is David bolstering his own faith as well as a reminder for God to act in the roles that God has promised to fulfill for David.

David further reminds himself and God that he is asking God to act for God's own glory, for his name's sake. That is, to earn or display a great name. David desires to walk and be led to the glory of God.

When David calls upon God to deliver him from the net of his enemies, he is at the same time asking God to act against those enemies. We ought not to be afraid to ask God to stand against those who devise evil against us.

David commends himself to God as his redeemer, calling God a God of truth. This stands in contrast to those who are telling lies. God did defend David on numerous occasions and in due time revealed the truth. His righteous one was vindicated. But this often took time and in the meantime David was maligned, misunderstood and persecuted. Even in all of that, David is committed to Yahweh to be the God of truth and to reveal the truth in his life.

6 I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the Lord. 7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities; 8 And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room. 9 Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly. 10 For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed. 11 I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me. 12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel. 13 For I

have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.

V. 6 David here pours out his complaints to God. He boasts that he has hated them that tell and listen to lying vanities. That is an interesting boast. We would tend to tell God that we love them and yet hate their sin but David is not afraid to tell God that he hates those who lie and seek to destroy him on false charges.

V. 7 I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy. How can we be glad in the midst of trouble? We can only do so if we remember what God has done and trust in what God will do. We call this hope and it is the key to current and future joy. Hope in God. **Heb 11:11 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**

David consoles himself again. He reminds himself that God knows his trouble and is merciful. He believes that God knows that he has a tortured soul and that it is enough for him to wait for God to act.

V.8 He fills as if he is shut up and consumed by the enemy but believes that God will give him a way of escape.

V-9-13 Calls for God's mercy. David is full of grief, crying out to the Lord. He is characterized by sighs, weakness, loss of weight, reproach, dismay, rejection, shame, brokenness. He is slandered, fearful, and in danger of losing his life. This reminds us of how David relates to Jesus Christ. Furthermore, as we go through various trials, we identify with David and with Jesus.

V. 10- **Because of mine iniquity.** David had pleaded for God's righteousness. He now admits his own sinfulness and sins and pleads for God's mercy.

14 But I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God. 15 My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me. 16 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.

David obviously penned this Psalm after this series of trials. But he is recalling the way that he felt and thought in the midst of it. We can see that he goes back and forth in his emotions, at one point feeling desperate, in the next encouraging himself that God is watching out for him.

V.14 David emphatically chooses God, no matter what the circumstances. He is fully committed to God's providential workings, even serving God in the midst of defeat and despair. However, he is not content to stay there. He knows that God is able to rescue him and he repeatedly calls upon God to do so. He says, "Thou are my God." David owns God as his own, even in, perhaps especially in these times of trouble. He does this, also knowing that God is all-powerful, thus admitting God's divine Providence in his own sufferings. This is what we might call black coffee Calvinism. David is not afraid to be there.

In fact, this black coffee Calvinism is what enables David to call upon God to do something. Yes, men are acting freely in persecuting him. They have chosen to not serve Yahweh faithfully and thus seek to harm God's chosen one. However, David knows that God can countermand their evil wills and he calls upon God to do so.

It is interesting that those opponents of Calvinism often pray like Calvinists. We ask God to intervene in someone's life for salvation, or we ask for traveling mercies, by which we mean that God should override the free will of the drunk driver next to us on the freeway. Or we pray for safety, by which we mean that God should override the free will of the potential mugger in the street.

V. 15 We, as David, call upon God to look upon us and shine His countenance on us, which means that God chooses to favor us over those who seek to harm us. This Psalm has some imprecatory aspects, that is, blessing to God's people and curses to His enemies. We feel compelled to be ashamed of this in this day and age but David was not ashamed to say such things. But we do leave this up to God. My times are in Your hands. Therefore Lord, do something. The wicked are caught in their own snares. God reveals their wickedness and they go down. No doubt, many a politician and false preachers have gone down by the prayers of the saints. God reveals them for what they are as God's people pray. The righteous will eventually be vindicated.

17 Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave. 18 Let

the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

V.17-18 Let me not be ashamed for I have called on Thee. This is a very bold prayer! Can you pray this way? Dear God, rise up! Do something. They mock me and you and if you do not do something, I will be put to shame because I said “Thou art my God, my rock and my fortress.”

Lord, do not shame me, shame them. Take them down to the grave. Put them to silence. He calls God to judge those who speak lies with great pride and contempt against God’s people.

19 Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! 20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

God is not just good. His goodness is great. That is often difficult to see in troubles, especially if you believe that God is in control of things.

After David calls upon God to act, he again reminds himself that God rewards the righteous, especially for those who trust in God ‘before the sons of men’ that is, the watching world. We should not be afraid to call upon God to act and to judge between the righteous and the wicked.

God shall hide us from the wicked and from the pride of man. This is a prayer of faith. Even if there is no place to hide, God is able to hide us. There have been many stories through the ages where enemies were simply blinded to the sight of God’s people. Missionaries have told stories where the soldiers or police looked right at their bibles and didn’t see them or simply overlooked some obvious detail. God can certainly hide reality from our enemies. He exists in the world in which we live and is a greater reality than the things that we see.

In the world of men, we sometimes seek protection by worldly means. But we know that when we choose to play by the world’s rules, we often lose our protection. Remember Jesus’s admonition to turn the other cheek. When we put ourselves in God’s hands, we can then see that the deliverance is from Him.

Tongues by themselves, do not kill. But liars can easily stir up enough strife to put wicked men to action. David was the object of many conspiracies against his rule, his life and his reputation. He could not fight all of these accusations so he commended himself to God in them all.

EXHORTATION

As we see in so many Psalms, David comes full circle. He begins by praising God, he continues pouring out his heart in despair and calling upon God to save him and then he ends with more praise.

21 Blessed be the Lord: for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city.

22 For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.

I said in my haste, I am cut off.

Do you feel cut off? Are you wondering where God is? Have you ever thought that God had abandoned you? Have you ever said, “God, where are You? What are You doing?” David felt that way. But take another look at David conclusion to the matter. He felt cut off and abandoned by God but he later admits that it was hasty conclusion.

What does that mean? It means that he came to that conclusion too quickly. But look at all the evidence in the Psalm that God really had cut him off. His enemies had got the better of him. They had spread lies. David was in despair. He feared for his life. His neighbors and friends and family had been disloyal to him. Where were the signs of God’s favor? Was it not exceedingly clear that God had abandoned him? David thought so and therefore concluded that God no longer looked upon him with favor. Have you ever come to that conclusion? If so, you do so too hastily. If you feel cut off but call upon God, God will hear the voice of your supplication. He will respond and deliver. Do not judge God too hastily. Do not judge yourself too hastily. Wait. Call. Pray. Trust.

23 O love the Lord, all ye his saints: for the Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. 24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.