

Psalm 31, Verses 1-13, Virtual Bible Study Transcript

Hello everyone. We are continuing our study of the Psalms and this week, it is Psalm 31. Psalm 31 is a praise and thanks and prayer and comfort all at the same time. It's a wonderful prayer talking about God being our fortress and our rock. You can almost hear some of the themes of A Mighty Fortress is Our God in this and in several other things about the confidence that we have in God, our Savior. So let us get into it.

Psalm 31. The 31st psalm is a universal psalm of thanks, a psalm of prayer, and a psalm of comfort, all at the same time. It is spoken in the person of Christ and of His saints, who, on account of the Word of God, are plagued their entire lives—inwardly with fears and troubles; outwardly with persecutions, slander, and contempt. Yet they are comforted and delivered by God out of all of them. This psalm belongs in the Second and Third Commandments and in the First and Second Petitions.

So thus says Luther on Psalm 31.

Now, Psalm 31.

¹In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me!

²Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily!
Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!

³For you are my rock and my fortress;
and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me;

⁴you take me out of the net they have hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.

⁵Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

⁶I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols,
but I trust in the LORD.

⁷I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction;
you have known the distress of my soul,

⁸and you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;
you have set my feet in a broad place.

⁹Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted from grief;
my soul and my body also.

¹⁰For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away.

¹¹Because of all my adversaries I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors,
and an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me.

¹²I have been forgotten like one who is dead;
I have become like a broken vessel.

¹³For I hear the whispering of many—terror on every side!—
as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life.

Now, this is the first 13 verses Psalm 31, so we don't exactly hear that full comfort and grace that we normally hear at the end of the Psalms, which we will hear at the end of this Psalm 31. But since it's a

longer Psalm, it's broken up in Luther's commentary. But first off, let's just go through it. "In you I take refuge. Let me never be put to shame." Isn't that something we would all wish? And how do we do that? If we take refuge in God, then no matter what we do, we will not be put to shame. So often, we're afraid to be embarrassed. Maybe we're sometimes embarrassed that we are old-fashioned in our faith, or embarrassed that we don't want to talk about our faith when everybody else seems to be into something else. And we're just not quite sure how to say it, and we're uncomfortable with it. And yet, if we take refuge in God, we take refuge in His Word, then there's nothing to be ashamed of. We know that God's Word is truth, and we can hold fast to that.

I like this, "Incline your ear to me. Rescue me speedily." How many times do we say, "God, are you there? Are you listening?" And you can hear the echo of that here. "Incline your ear to me, Lord, hear my prayer and rescue me speedily." And God does rescue us. It may seem slow in our eyes, but we are always, always in His hands and therefore always rescued. We need not be afraid, even if we lose our life. He rescues us because we receive eternal life.

"You are my rock and my fortress. And for your namesake, you lead me and guide me." Why does He lead us and guide us? Because He loves us. And because we are called by His name, we are His children. That's what we mean when we remember our baptism every Sunday morning, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. "For God's namesake." His name is upon me and we are His namesake and therefore we are His. And because He loves us, He will guide us and lead us. Even if we feel like we're falling into the net of despair, of tripping up into secret sin, or public sin for that matter, or we've not acted with integrity, or a politeness as we ought to as Christians. We've fallen into that net that Satan has set for us, but we still take refuge in Christ.

And then here we hear the words of Jesus Christ Himself. "Into Your hand, I commit my spirit. You have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God,." Jesus says that on the cross. "Into Your hands, I commit my spirit", as He dies. And He commits His whole being to the Father. And it's actually through His sacrifice, right at that moment, how God has redeemed, not Christ, but us because He is a faithful God and He honors the sacrifice that Christ has made for us.

"I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols, but I trust in the Lord." Now hate seems like a strong word. And in today's society, especially the tolerant freedom of religion culture that we live in here in America. It seems wrong to say, "I hate those who have regard for false and worthless idols." But what are we saying? We do hate the fact that they worship something that is not actually God. Something that has no hope and no promise and no ability to save. So we should rightly hate the worthless idols and hate that these people are worshiping them. So much so that we should be willing to share the Gospel with them, because they are lost without the Gospel. And so it is appropriate to hate the idols and hate the fact that people worship those idols. Not to hate the individual themselves per se, but to hate the fact that they are receiving a false sense of comfort, which is no comfort at all.

"I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction. You have known the distress of my soul." I don't know as though we often think of being glad of God's love because He has seen our affliction and the distress of our soul. But ultimately, those are the times when we really truly understand and know that God is real, when we are in distress, when we have affliction. And the only thing left that we have is the comfort of God, that's when we really realize how much He loves us and cares for us. And how much strength and courage it gives us to know that God sees our affliction, that He cares for us and that He is there with us to carry us through. And so when things are going well, we don't often think about God, or it's easy to forget for a while that God is

around, and get a little lax in our study. But when things get bad, we turn to God and we hold fast to Him, because, well, that's the only thing we have to hold fast to.

"You have not delivered me into the hand of the enemies. You have set my feet on a broad place." There's safety in a broad place. There's nothing to attack. There's space around, there's comfort and there's peace. And then we talked about comfort, and we need comfort, because we're in a world that has a lot of trials. And as Christians, we will have people who will mock us, and Satan himself will seek to make our lives more challenging, because we are faithful to the Word of God. So, we are often in distress and we are wasted from grief in body and soul, and eye. When we look around this world, don't you sometimes get weary of the chaos and the hatred and the violence that is in this world? And so we are weary and we are in distress, because this world does not know God, and does not know the peace and comfort that comes from God.

So many times we can see the train wreck coming, because people don't believe that there is hope outside of this world. And so they grab for whatever they can hear, or they're seeking only themselves rather than to serve God. And so they do selfish things rather than serve and be gentle and kind to one another. It's sad. And it does feel like we're wasting away from grief. And you can imagine how Christ would be speaking these words as well, as He has taken upon the sins of all of humanity and sees how devastating that is, and for that sake, dies on the cross. It is grief that fills His heart, that we are suffering from so much, and He takes it upon Himself so that we might be free from it.

Now this next part doesn't sound all that encouraging. We'll have to wait until next week to really hear the hope and the encouragement that comes at the end of it. "But my life is spent with sorrow. My years with sighing. My strength fails because of my own iniquity, and my bones waste away. Because of all my adversaries, I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors, an object of dread to my acquaintances. Those who see me on the street flee from me." You can also see Jesus in this. That the adversaries have reproached Him. You have all the people who said, "Glory to God in the highest," on Palm Sunday, yell, "Crucify, crucify," on Good Friday. And everyone was against Him. His disciples from Him and deserted Him. And His bones did waste away that you could count all of His bones. He was punished and then suffered for our iniquities. Not His iniquities, but for ours that He took upon Himself. And so you can see Christ in this, His suffering and His death, as a result of taken upon our infirmities.

"I have been forgotten like one who is dead. I have become like a broken vessel." There are times in our life, that dark night of the soul Henry Nouwen says, a theologian in the Roman Catholic Church. The dark night of the soul, the Valley of the shadow of death. Those periods of life, where you feel like you have no strength left over, and you feel broken. And yet, God is still with you and He still comforts you, and He still provides you with salvation.

"For, I hear the whispering of many, terror on every side, as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life." Now you may never have felt like somebody's plotting to take your life, but you can again, still hear the words of Christ in this. The people did plot to take His life. Not because He did anything wrong, but because He was pointing out the wrong in everybody else. And also declaring that everybody including those who thought themselves holy, needed the forgiveness of God .and people don't like to hear that they are sinners and they're in need of repentance. And so you can hear Christ saying that there are whispering to many and terror on every side, as they schemed together against me, as they plot to take His life.

And they did indeed succeed in taking his life, at least temporarily. And that's the whole point of all of this. These sorrows, these sighings, these wasting away with grief, this distress, it is temporary. It will end, and we will be with Christ. And we will find that comfort in the peace that comes only from God, our Savior.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, we thank You for taking from us that heavy load of our sins which we could not bear, but which You bore in Your own body on the tree, ransoming us from eternal death. Grant us patience and resignation in suffering with You, that we may willingly take up our cross daily and follow You through suffering to glory. Amen.