

Psalm 31, Verses 14-24, Virtual Bible Study Transcript

Hello, and welcome to our devotion on the Psalms. We're on the second half of chapter 31, beginning with verse 14. So we'll read the introduction again from Martin Luther about the whole 31st Psalm. You'll remember if you had listened to last week's, it had ended with something of fear. "For I hear the whispering of many, terror on every side, as they scheme together against me as they plot to take my life." So he's in a despair where he feels like everyone is against him, even plotting against his life. Again, this is King David. It might have been an assassination plot against him during this time. But let us read what Luther has to say.

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 even though it feels like people are going against him and plot against his life, this Psalm is not listed as a lament or a cry for help necessarily. It is listed as a Psalm of thanks and prayer and comfort. So let us see how it ends because in the middle it gets pretty dark.

Psalm 31

¹⁴But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, "You are my God."

¹⁵My times are in your hand;
rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!

¹⁶Make your face shine on your servant;
save me in your steadfast love!

¹⁷O LORD, let me not be put to shame,
for I call upon you;

let the wicked be put to shame;
let them go silently to Sheol.

¹⁸Let the lying lips be mute, which speak insolently against the righteous
in pride and contempt.

¹⁹Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you
and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!

²⁰In the cover of your presence you hide them from the plots of men;
you store them in your shelter from the strife of tongues.

²¹Blessed be the LORD, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me
when I was in a besieged city.

²²I had said in my alarm, "I am cut off from your sight."

But you heard the voice of my pleas for mercy when I cried to you for help.

²³ Love the LORD, all you his saints!

The LORD preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.

²⁴ Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the LORD!

So even though he feels besieged, even though he feels like people are plotting against him, and you might say that, we often feel that same way. We are plagued and besieged by disease, by fear, by struggles, personal struggles with family and friends and neighbors, with our own health, with the struggles of our society going on, with our own wellbeing. And yet, we know and we are confident that the Lord has shown his steadfast love to us, even when we are besieged. Or as he says in another psalm, in the valley of the shadow of death. Even though we are in these dark places and there seems to be no hope, we can still hold fast to the confidence that His steadfast love is with us.

And even in our alarm, when it feels like God is not there when we cry out, "Where is God in all of this? Why is this going on?" We can still be confident that He hears our pleas and especially our pleas for mercy, that He will not cut us off, but He will help us in our time of need. It says, "Love the Lord, all you, His saints! The Lord preserves the faithful, but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride." Not that we serve God because we are looking for a reward, because quite frankly, we have already received our reward in our baptisms when God called us and adopted us as His children. We've already received the great reward of eternal life in paradise with Him. So there is nothing more than He can give beyond that. His love, His grace, His mercy, His comfort, His peace, all of that is already ours. And He promises to give that to us in its fullness when we see Him again.

And in the meantime, while we are here, we can have peace and comfort, even in the midst of struggle and trials and other things that are going on in our lives. And we can be confident, even when it seems that evil succeeds, we know that God ultimately will repay double for all evil that has taken place. And so we can hold fast to the promises of God. In fact, that is what we are called to do. It says, "Oh Lord, let me not be put to shame, for I call upon You. Let the wicked be put to shame, let them go silently to Sheol. " We do pray that wickedness dies. And unfortunately, we pray that all who do wicked would turn from their evil ways and know Christ and find peace and comfort. But we do pray that their lying lips be mute, which speak insolently against the righteous and pride and contempt. There's a lot of voices out there right now. And it seems like it's a confident pray that the lying lips be mute. But let us also live our lives in such a way that there is no truth to the accusations that are applied to Christians and those who call upon God.

Ultimately, this is a prayer of praise not because his life is easy, not because things are necessarily even going well. But it is a prayer of thanks and praise because God is with him and also with us. And that no matter what befalls, we can be confident that He has adopted us. And as His children and heirs, we will receive the inheritance that He has promised to us, not because of what we have done, but because of what He has done for us. And so that is why we thank and praise Him. That is why we find comfort in His Word. Because no matter what, it is true, and He has the final say in everything. When that last trumpet calls, we will rise with all those who have fallen before us to eternal paradise with Christ, restored to that which we should have been and remained in the garden of Eden. And so we thank God for that. Death has no fear. The torments and the persecutions that may come, have no fear because we know God is with us. Hold firm to His promises and hold firm to the Word of God.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, who suffered men to slander You and to bear false witness against You, yet did not open Your mouth save only to pray for Your tormentors, shed abroad Your love in our hearts that we hate not them that hate us and speak evil against us, but enable us to love our enemies, being always ready to suffer wrong for Your name's sake. Amen.