

Psalm Sundays

Text

Psalm 31

Topic

**David asks the Lord to
deliver him speedily from his troubles**

Title

"Speedy Delivery"

It's a little dated... But so am I. In the Kevin Costner version of *Robin Hood*, his rag-tag band of merry men were attacked in Sherwood Forrest by barbaric Celts, who had been hired by Nottingham. The fighting was fierce, but Robin Hood and company prevailed.

Their victory was short-lived. The Sheriff was laying back with a much larger English force. The second assault would prove more challenging

There is an element of secondary assault in Psalm 31. The first eight verses read as though David was recalling a past victory - a time in the past when God had delivered him from the fierce onslaught of his enemies.

His situation in verses nine through twenty-four occurred sometime later. It was a much more serious, lengthy adversity. The two seem juxtaposed so that we

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can see David drawing strength from what he had learned about God's mercies in the past in order to face his present predicament.

Until you are with the Lord, you will find yourself either *acutely* or *chronically* assailed by enemies - both flesh and blood and supernatural. The predicaments will, most likely, become increasingly difficult and troublesome. In each of them, your reflection upon the Lord's past mercies will be an important strategy for your deliverance - either *from* the trouble, or *through* the trouble.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 It's Important That You Reflect On The Lord's Mercies In Past Trouble**, and **#2 It's Important That You Expect The Lord's Mercies In Present Trouble**.

#1 - It's Important That You Reflect On The Lord's Mercies In Past Trouble (v1-8)

David was looking back on a previous predicament. Listen carefully to verse twenty-one:

Psa 31:21 Blessed *be* the LORD, For He has shown me His marvelous kindness in a strong city!

That is the NKJV. It mentions "a strong city," but it is taken by many commentators to be metaphorical.

Other commentators take it literally, basing their decision on how this reads in other good translations. Here it is in the NIV:

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Psa 31:21 Praise be to the LORD, for he showed me the wonders of his love **when I was in a city under siege.**

In verse eight David recalls, “[You] have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a wide place.”

Putting that together, David was definitely describing a time in his past when he was besieged in a city, but the Lord delivered him to “a wide place.”

We are not told when or where this was. It does sound, however, like a time we know of before he was king, and while he was on the run from King Saul. David saved the city of Keilah only to be seemingly trapped there by King Saul. Here is the account from First Samuel 23.

1Sa 23:7 And Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah. So Saul said, "God has delivered him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars."

1Sa 23:8 Then Saul called all the people together for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.

This may not be the incident Psalm 31 is about, but it certainly sounds like it. If not, it was something very much like this from David’s past. He reflected on it as a present strategy.

Psa 31:1 To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. In You, O LORD, I put my trust; Let me never be ashamed; Deliver me in Your righteousness.

David saw no shame in putting trust in the Lord. Rather than develop his own strategy for battle or retreat, David would seek the Lord for His strategy.

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The apostle Paul would say, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH" (Romans 1:16-17).

If you are a Christian, you've been delivered once-for-all from the penalty of sin. You have passed from death to life; you've been translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. You've been declared righteous by grace.

You need never be ashamed to trust Jesus - even though your enemies mock and deride you. You will seem a fool to the world; weak and dependent. Trust in the wisdom of God.

Psa 31:2 Bow down Your ear to me, Deliver me speedily; Be my rock of refuge, A fortress of defense to save me.

Psa 31:3 For You *are* my rock and my fortress; Therefore, for Your name's sake, Lead me and guide me.

Is that painted rock thing still a thing? Way before it ever was a thing, a dear saint in our fellowship, Susan Calhoun, used to paint rocks with Scripture on them. I have a couple. One she painted, she misspelled "fortress" as "fortrest." Now every time I read it in the Bible, I think "fortrest."

You know what: **Fortrest is a great devotional thought.** As believers we know we're in the fort; but we can worry its defenses might not be sufficient. I mean, how many times in history or in fiction does the enemy figure a way over, under, or through the walls?

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Or we wonder how long will the siege continue, and do we have enough toilet paper.

The Lord is a fort of rest. Don't forget to rest in your adversities.

Psa 31:4 Pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me, For You are my strength.

David felt he had been caught in the net. Think of those net traps in the jungle, where you trip it and it closes around you while lifting you high off the ground. You're stuck there, waiting for your foe to return.

If there is something we could call the secret, or the key, it is to know, "For You are my strength."

It's not by might, nor by power, but by the Holy Spirit that you are to approach all of life, including your troubles. Having begun in the Spirit, you won't find strength walking according to your flesh.

Psa 31:5 Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

Where have we heard that before? From Jesus, on the Cross, when He committed His spirit to the Father and died.

Jesus quoted from The Book of Psalms more than any other book in the Old Testament. Notice Jesus did not quote, "You have redeemed Me." He wasn't being redeemed; He was the Redeemer. He was God in human flesh, come from Heaven to earth to be our Substitute in order that we might believe in Him and be declared righteous by God.

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Jesus quoted from here, but this is not considered a prophecy. It is a prayer; and it is one we all can sing. One commentator said,

The language was appropriate for Jesus, as it is for all others in the hour of death; and His use of the words furnished the highest illustration of their being appropriate in that hour. The act of the psalmist was an act of strong confidence in God in the midst of dangers and troubles; the act of the Savior was of the same nature, commending His spirit to God in the solemn hour of death. The same act of faith is proper for all the people of God, alike in trouble and in death.

In a moment, David will point out that our times are in God's hands. We "commit" to Him by realizing He's got us, will never leave us, and will ultimately bring us home.

Psa 31:6 I have hated those who regard useless idols; But I trust in the LORD.

David went directly to the Lord. He didn't seek help from other sources. He didn't try to mash-up the Torah with the wisdom of men, or their made-up religions.

Psa 31:7 I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy, For You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities,

How does the Lord to know your soul in adversities?

Strong's Concordance says this Hebrew word can be translated, "make known." God already "knows" you thoroughly. **He wants to make known, to show you, and your adversaries, what He already knows.**

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Think of Job. God knew him thoroughly. He permitted Job to be tested. Through it He made known that, "though [God] slay me, yet will I trust Him" (15:4).

God knew this about Job before Satan was allowed to afflict him. **Job did not know how he would react under real stress. And Satan was confident Job would curse God.**

Iron Mike Tyson once said, "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth." Job got punched in the mouth, figuratively, but continued to use his mouth to praise the Lord.

Whatever the Lord decided in answer to David, he would categorize it as "mercy," and would "rejoice and be glad."

Psa 31:8 And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a wide place.

This sounds like what occurred at Keilah. Let me finish reading that episode.

1Sa 23:13 So David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah and went wherever they could go. Then it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah; so he halted the expedition.

1Sa 23:14 And David stayed in strongholds in the wilderness, and remained in the mountains in the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand.

God set David's feet in a "wide place." Note - It was still a place of danger.

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Recall a time in the past when God's mercy attended your adversities. If you're having trouble, go all the way back to when you got saved.

If you have been a believer since a very young age, you can still go back to the knowledge that God saved you.

Jesus delivered you from death, from the power of sin, and from the captivity of the devil. You didn't deserve it. It was wholly His mercy.

You can trust Him to be merciful today and every day. His mercies are new every morning. You may not recognize them. That is because this side of Heaven they can be what C.S. Lewis labeled, "severe mercies." It is more important that the Lord "make known your soul," than you be in a state of blessing and bliss. That is what awaits us, in eternity. For now, God is working to finish what He has begun in you.

#2 - It's Important That You Expect The Lord's Mercies In Present Trouble (v9-24)

What do Jonah, Jeremiah, and Jesus have in common? No, it isn't that their names all begin with the letter 'J.'

They each quoted from Psalm 31 in their adversities.

The writer of Psalm 73, Asaph, also seemed inspired by Psalm 31. Those guys are four of the Bible's greatest sufferers. If this psalm could comfort them, think of what it can do for us.

Psa 31:9 Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in trouble; My eye wastes away with grief, Yes, my soul and my body!

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Psa 31:10 For my life is spent with grief, And my years with sighing; My strength fails because of my iniquity, And my bones waste away.

These feelings need no exposition. If you're human, you've experienced them. One thing that does need clarification is that David seems to blame what he is going through on his own "iniquity," on his own sin.

Other translations read, "My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails **because of my affliction**, and my bones grow weak" (NIV). We miss the point if we say, "David brought this trouble on himself." That is what Job's comforters claimed - to their shame.

Commentators blame David as an easy out, because the things he suffered defy their shallow approach to human emotional pain. They won't admit a believer can continue to hurt.

David knew emotional pain. It was part of knowing his soul. He worked through it - but it took time. He suggests it took **years** - "years with sighing."

When you are hurting, it can take time to work out spiritually. Time doesn't heal the wounds. But it gives you the opportunity to work things out with the Lord.

Sure, you are to rejoice in the Lord always. But that is sometimes more of a future hope - a place to get back to as you seek the Lord.

What if someone told you that your pastor was sunken so low in depression that he "wept by the hour as a child - yet didn't know what he wept for?" Or that he described life as a "beclouding hopelessness?"



If someone told you that, your pastor would be Charles Spurgeon. The Prince of Preachers fought emotional pain all his life.

We need to retire our cliches and understand that Christians can hurt and yet be godly.

Psa 31:11 I am a reproach among all my enemies, But especially among my neighbors, And *am* repulsive to my acquaintances; Those who see me outside flee from me.

Psa 31:12 I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind; I am like a broken vessel.

Psa 31:13 For I hear the slander of many; Fear *is* on every side; While they take counsel together against me, They scheme to take away my life.

These verses describe David's treatment by others. Not just enemies; "neighbors" and "acquaintances" treated him badly.

Again, we are not told what event prompted all this, but it would certainly apply to the time David fled from the palace as his own son, Absalom, marched to overthrow and kill his father.

If you've never been treated any of these ways, I'm happy for you. Don't discount the possibility that, one day, you might be treated these ways.

Psa 31:14 But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD; I say, "You *are* my God."

Are you being ignored or mocked or slandered? Not by Jesus. Not by your Father in Heaven. Not by the indwelling Holy Spirit. In the Lord's merciful love you find all that is necessary to overlook the onslaught of others.

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The more we 'get' that all that matters is the opinion of Jesus, the less we will be hurt by others.

Psa 31:15 My times *are* in Your hand; Deliver me from the hand of my enemies,
And from those who persecute me.

We use the expression, "Just wait until I get my hands on you." If you're saved, you are in God's hand. He got His hands on you at the Cross. He holds you tight.

Psa 31:16 Make Your face shine upon Your servant; Save me for Your mercies' sake.

We talk about "lighting up" when we see someone. God lights up seeing you.

Psa 31:17 Do not let me be ashamed, O LORD, for I have called upon You; Let the wicked be ashamed; Let them be silent in the grave.

Psa 31:18 Let the lying lips be put to silence, Which speak insolent things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

David wasn't wishing his enemies would die. He wanted them to be as silent as dead men.

Psa 31:19 Oh, how great *is* Your goodness, Which You have laid up for those who fear You, *Which* You have prepared for those who trust in You In the presence of the sons of men!

Psa 31:20 You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence From the plots of man; You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion From the strife of tongues.

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Psa 31:21 Blessed be the LORD, For He has shown me His marvelous kindness in a strong city!

Psa 31:22 For I said in my haste, "I am cut off from before Your eyes";
Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications When I cried out to You.

The gist of these verses is that, previously when David was besieged in the "strong city," and thought himself "cut off" from help, God had delivered him. It gave David hope of deliverance in his present trouble.

David spoke of being hidden "secretly in a pavilion." God was his fortress - his fortrest.

A while ago, we pointed out the most common description of a believer in the New Testament is to say you are "in Christ." Listen to these two verses from Colossians run together: "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God (3:3), in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:3).

You might be in a city under siege. You might be being hunted down in the wilderness. "In Christ," you have every spiritual resource available to you.

Psa 31:23 Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints! For the LORD preserves the faithful, And fully repays the proud person.

This describes the end of all things:

- 👤 In the end, believers will be preserved.
- 👤 Nonbelievers will receive their pay, their wages - the wages of sin (which is eternal death).

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Psa 31:24 Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart, All you who hope in the LORD.

Hope in the Lord; He will strengthen your heart; you'll be courageous as you face adversities.

It's not a formula; it's not Hope + Strength = Courage. It is three simultaneous things that are present as you walk with the Lord.

- 🧠 Hope in the Lord. He saved you; He goes on 'saving' you; He will save you in the end. He may rapture you; that is our blessed hope. If not, if you die, into His hands you commit your spirit.
- 🧠 Strength in the Lord is the promise He has provided all you need for life and godliness. You are stronger than you know, and He wants to show you that you are.
- 🧠 Courage makes me think of our idiom, "take courage." We "take" it from "hope" and "strength." It's yours; take it.

In the most recent *Wonder Woman*, there are hints early on that Dianna is more than she knows. At one point in her training, she instinctively brings her arm bracelets together and a wave of power is emitted that bowls everyone over.

(BTW - Jesus did something like this. When the mob came to get Him, in answer to their question, He said, "I AM," and they all fell backward).

I'm not saying we should be able to knock people down. I am saying that we have more power than we realize in our adversities.

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