

We turn to Psalm 31 and the Psalmist's description of *his own prayers, as well as his description of Christ's prayers!* For David speaks prophetically of Christ's prayer on the Cross in Psalm 31:5, a verse in which Christ commits Himself into the Father's hands as He dies, saying, "Into your hands I commit my Spirit." Because of His willingness to pray and suffer *in our place*, these words express the perfection of Christ's saving work. May our exposition of this verse, and the rest of Psalm 31, bring us great hope when *we* find ourselves in the midst of great trials, even when facing death.

Monday: Read Psalm 30:4-7 & 31:22-24

The God of Undeserved Deliverance

Both Psalm 30 and 31 focus on the ups and downs of the life of faith. At times, David boasted, until God chastised his pride, "I shall never be moved" ... "You hid your face; I was dismayed" (Psalm 30:6-7). In seasons of dismay, David gave up on God's help: "I said in my alarm, I am cut off from your sight" (Psalm 31:22). No matter what the situation-- sinful pride or despairing doubt -- David confesses in the end that God is worthy of praise, and encourages all God's people to join him in praising the Lord as a God of undeserved deliverance:

"Sing praises to the Lord, O you His saints, and give thanks to His holy name" (Ps 30:4).

"Love the Lord, all you His saints! The Lord preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride. Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!" (Ps 31:23)

Meditate and Pray: What a consistent, calm and reliable God we have – never in a hurry, never tired of our failures, and never raising His voice in frustration – always there to help! Thomas Brooks writes about God's consistent help for all our ups and downs:

The life of a Christian is filled with interchanges of sickness and health, weakness and strength, want and wealth, disgrace and honor, crosses and comforts, miseries and mercies, joys and sorrows, mirth and mourning....

All honey would harm us, all wormwood would undo us; a composition of both is the best way in the world to keep our souls in a healthy constitution. It is best and most for the health of the soul that the south wind of mercy and the north wind of adversity do both blow upon our lives....

And though every wind that blows shall blow good to the saints, yet certainly their sins die the most and their graces thrive the best, when they are under the drying, nipping north wind of calamity, as well as under the warm south wind of mercy and prosperity."

(Thomas Brooks)

Tuesday: Read Psalms 31:1-5

Hanging by a Thread

There is an urgency in the opening words of Psalm 31. David cries out for rescue; his situation is desperate and his only hope lies with the Lord. Such complete dependency, with no one else to turn to, creates the right environment to cast himself upon the Lord (verse 5). This quote expresses the sense of commitment to God's wisdom and will on the part of the Psalmist:

No man can possibly commit his life to God with sincerity, but he who considers himself exposed to a thousand deaths, and that his life hangs by a thread, or differs almost nothing from a breath which passes suddenly away. David being thus at the point of despair, leaves nothing to himself to do but this -- to go on his way, trusting in God as the keeper and governor of his life. (John Calvin on Ps 31:5)

Meditate and Pray: Lord, we do not despise death bed prayers of repentance, for who else is in a better position to lean wholly on you than a dying man? Teach us throughout our lives to learn how to lean more on you and not on our own resources, righteousness, and righteousness.

Wednesday: Read Psalm 31:1-15

For Every Day of the Week

All our days will not be as dramatic as Psalm 31:1-5. Often life is characterized by quiet perseverance in and even slogging through the mundane. But in just such days the skill we need of casting all our cares on the Lord is practiced and rehearsed. Like first responders; like bomb drills; like preparing for a high-jacking of the aircraft you fly – some of David’s trials may never be part of our experience. *But we can only learn to function in such critical situations by a faith exercised by long practice in the school of discipleship.* It is the habit of trust expressed, for example, in Psalm 31:14-15. These will stand us in good stead in the evil day: *But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God.” My times are in your hand...*

Meditate and Pray: Sing about such daily, habitual trust in God, using the words of *Trinity Hymnal* # 684:

1 My times are in thy hand;
my God, I wish them there;
my life, my friends, my soul, I leave
entirely to thy care.

2 My times are in thy hand,
whatever they may be;
pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
as best may seem to thee.

3 My times are in thy hand;
why should I doubt or fear?
My Father's hand will never cause
his child a needless tear.

4 My times are in thy hand,
Jesus the Crucified;
those hands my cruel sins had pierced
are now my guard and guide.

Thursday: read Psalm 31:14-19

Peace Through Trust

There are fundamental and descriptive words of faith in Psalm 31 that we must not overlook. For example, “chasah,” /khaw-saw/ in Psalm 31:19, translated “to trust,” means literally to “take refuge, to flee for protection.” In Psalm 31:14, the verb “batah” means “to confidently trust God’s support” and to roll one’s burden onto the Lord’s broad, capable shoulders. The result is the perfect peace of hoping in God alone: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he *trusts* (there’s our verb, “batah”) in thee” (Isaiah 26:3).

Meditate and Pray: Sing about God’s perfect peace, even while admitting *that our experience of His peace is never perfect in this vale of tears.* Exalt that God’s peace partakes of His sinless, sovereign character, using hymn # 704 from the *Trinity Hymnal*:

1 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,
thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,
thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,
whose mind is stayed on thee.

3 Tho' your sins as scarlet be,
tho' your sins as scarlet be,
tho' your sins as scarlet be,
they shall be white as snow.

5 They that wait upon the Lord,
they that wait upon the Lord,
they that wait upon the Lord,
they shall renew their strength.

2 Marvel not that I say unto you,
marvel not that I say unto you,
marvel not that I say unto you,
"You must be born again."

4 If the Son shall make you free,
if the Son shall make you free,
if the Son shall make you free,
you shall be free indeed.

Fri/Sat/Sun: Read Psalm 31:14-24

Goodness Laid Up for You

The comfort of Psalm 31 is strong enough to confront the painful reality of loss in this life. The Psalmist deals with the following fears: the *loss of life itself* (Psalm 31:5); the *loss of comfort through physical and spiritual affliction* (Psalm 31:9-10); and the *loss of community standing and friendship* (Psalm 31:11). Worst of all, he fears that he will *be forgotten* (Psalm 31:12) and even risk *loss of his relationship with God* (Psalm 31:22).

In answer to all such fears, look now at God's "theft and loss insurance policy" in Psalm 31:19-24. First of all, notice the Godward focus as David's language in this Psalm shifts from *I/my/me language* (Ps 31:1-13 & 31:17) to *You/Your/Lord/Them* (Ps 31:19-24) as his vision is lifted from his own concerns to the broader people of God. David's faith lifts his eyes away from his own problems to a confident vision of what God will do, including giving David refuge (Ps 31:20), fortifying David with His wonderful love (Ps 31:21), and *especially* storing up His goodness for David in Psalm 31:19 – a verse to which we turn now for the rest of our meditation on this Psalm.

Meditate and Pray: Think of verse 19 in this way: what a frugal God we have, who "stores up the riches of His grace" for us! Reflect further on the stores of God's goodness and grace, kept safe for your good, with the help of these scholars:

Ps 31:19: Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee...

- *As a provident man will regulate his liberality towards all men in such a manner as not to defraud his children or family, nor impoverish his own house, by spending his substance prodigally on others; so God, in like manner, in exercising his beneficence to aliens from his family, knows well how to reserve for his own children that which belongs to them, as it were by hereditary right; that is to say, because of their adoption.* John Calvin.

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- *Mark the phrase "Laid up for them"; His mercy and goodness it is intended for them, as a father that lays by such a sum of money, and writes on the bag, "This is a portion for such a child." But how comes the Christian to have this right to God, and all that vast and untold treasure of happiness which is in him? This indeed is greatly to be heeded; it is faith that gives him a good title to all this. That which makes him a child, makes him an heir. Now, faith makes him a child of God. Joh 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name." As therefore if you would not call your birthright into question and bring your interest in Christ and those glorious privileges that come along with him, under a sad dispute in your soul, look to your faith as an authoritative gift from God. William Gurnall.*