

Psalm 31

Title: Faith in the Midst of Foes

Author and Date: David

Key Verses: Psalm 31:1, 6, 14

Type: Lament / Thanksgiving

Outline

- A. Trust: faith in God (verses 1-8).
- B. Trouble: foes against God (verses 9-18).
- C. Triumph: feelings about God (verses 19-22).
- D. Closing Exhortation (verses 23-24).

Notes

Title: "For the Chief Musician." See the notes on Psalm 4. "A Psalm of David." See the notes on Psalm 3.

Verses 1-3: It is interesting to note that the same wording of these verses is also found in Psalm 71:1-3 with only minor changes. There, another psalmist may have been quoting these verses, or David himself may have been simply re-writing them. The theme of Psalm 31 is faith in the midst of foes, or trust in the midst of trouble.

Verse 1: Israel has cities of refuge (Num. 35:6-15), but the Lord was to be their ultimate refuge. This psalm begins and ends with trust in the Lord (verses 1 and 24).

Verse 3: "For thy name's sake." This is a common expression in the psalms (Psa. 23:3; 25:11; 79:9; 106:8; 109:21; 143:11). The psalmist makes certain requests of God so that when God acts, God will get the glory. God will show himself to be all who he says he is. God will act in keeping with his righteous character.

Verse 5: "Into thy hand I commend my spirit." Jesus died with these words on his lips (Lk. 23:46). To rely upon God when dying sends a powerful message to the living.

Verse 6: For "them that regard lying vanities", see Jonah 2:8. "Lying vanities" may be a reference to false gods or idols.

Verse 8: "A large place" is a place where one can move freely in safety and security (Psa. 4:1; 18:19).

Verse 10: “Because of mine iniquity.” The psalmist’s problems are not only a result of what comes from without (enemies and adversaries), but also a result of what comes from within due to his own sin. Compare this verse with Psalm 32:1-4 and Psalm 51:1-8.

Verse 13: For “terror on every side”, see the words of Jeremiah (6:25; 20:10; 46:5; 49:29).

Verse 15: The psalmist knows that his “times” are in the hand of God (Job. 14:5). This means that God providentially controls the occasions and events one’s life (see verse 10) – one’s circumstances, length of days, and even his eternal destiny.

Verse 20: The “covert” and “pavilion” are references to a protective shelter.

Verse 21: The reference to “a strong city” may be to the time that God delivered David from the hand of Saul in the city of Keilah (1 Sam. 23) or to the time when David was at Ziklag (1 Sam. 30).

Verse: 22: “I said in my haste, I am cut off...” Sometimes one’s faith wavers in the hour of trial. Nonetheless, God responds positively in prayer.

Verse 24: For “Be strong ... take courage”, see Psalm 27:14.

Questions

1. What requests does the psalmist have for the Lord (verses 1-2)?
2. What is the Lord to the psalmist (verses 3-4)?
3. What does the psalmist do with his spirit and how does he describe God (verse 5)?
4. What does the psalmist hate and who does he trust (verse 6)?
5. Why is the psalmist glad and why does he rejoice (verses 7-8)?
6. Why does the psalmist ask for the Lord’s mercy (verses 9-10)?

7. What has the psalmist become because of his adversaries (verses 11-13)?
8. What does the psalmist do in the presence of his adversaries (verse 14)?
9. What requests concerning himself does the psalmist have for the Lord (verses 15-16)?
10. What request concerning the wicked does the psalmist have for the Lord (verses 17-18)?
11. What does the psalmist praise about the Lord (verse 19)?
12. What will the Lord do for those who fear him and take refuge in him (verse 20)?
13. What does the Lord show the psalmist (verse 21)?
14. What does the psalmist say and how does the Lord respond (verse 22)?
15. What does the psalmist encourage the saints to do (verses 23-24)?

Applications for Today

1. Let us make the Lord our refuge, strong rock, house of defense, fortress, and stronghold (verses 1-4). What is the Lord to his people (Joel 3:16; Nah. 1:7)? Why is God a safe refuge for his people (Heb. 6:16-17)?

2. We should never hesitate to commit ourselves to God (verse 5) because we know that our life is in his hands (verse 15). What did Jesus say while he hung on the cross (Lk. 23:46)? What similar thing did Stephen say when he was stoned (Acts 7:59)? Who does Peter say to commit ourselves to (1 Pet. 4:19)?

3. It is good for us to trust in the Lord and say, “Thou art my God” (verse 14). What did Paul do (Phil. 2:24)? What did Jesus (Jn. 20:17), Thomas (Jn. 20:28), and Paul (Rom. 1:8) say about God?

4. Great is the goodness of God (verse 19). What does Paul write about in Romans 2:4 and 11:22?

5. Love the Lord (verse 23). What is the first and great commandment, according to Jesus (Mt. 22:37)? What question did Jesus ask Peter three times (Jn. 21:15-17)? What is to be of the person who does not love the Lord (1 Cor. 16:22)?

6. Be strong and take courage is a much needed admonition today (verse 24). What did Moses (Deut. 31:7) and the Lord (Josh. 1:6, 7, 9) tell Joshua? What did Joshua tell the Israelites (Josh. 1:18; 10:25)? What did David tell Solomon before his death (1 Chron. 28:20)?