

Psalm 31: Trust even in terrible distress



Psalm 31 (30) (Mode 2. 5....31 / 4.....32)

The psalmist has experienced a serious breakdown as a result of the way others are treating him. He remembers God's love and goodness and the times when his trust in God has been vindicated. He struggles to find that trust again and to invite others to join him in it. The psalm is written by a person who sees himself as belonging to those bonded to God by fidelity to the covenant (the hasidim, verse 23).

The psalmist seems to draw on the experience of David as a model. He does not claim to be without fault (verse 10), but he is innocent of that of which he is being accused (verse 18), and wants justice, not revenge, against his enemies.

In you, Lord, I seek refuge.

Let me not suffer shame.

May your justice be my security.

Come close to hear me!

Come quickly to rescue me!

Be my rock of refuge, my mighty stronghold.

You are indeed my rock, my fortress.

Go before me; be my guide.

The net tightens around me.

Release me for you are my protector.

Into your hands, Lord, I commit my spirit.

Into your hands I commit my spirit.

‘Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit’. Having said this, he breathed his last’(Luke 23:46).

‘While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit’’(Acts 7:59).

‘Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God’s will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good’(1Peter 4:19).

‘In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of every human being’(Job 12:10).

You have redeemed me, faithful God.

‘But as for me, I walk in my integrity; redeem me, and
be gracious to me’(Psalm 26:11).

‘Rise up, come to our help. Redeem us for the sake of
your steadfast love’(Psalm 44:26).

‘They did not keep in mind his power, or the day
when he redeemed them from the foe’(Psalm 78:42).

How foolish, my Lord,
those who worship worthless idols.

‘Thus says the Lord: What wrong did your ancestors find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthless things, and became worthless themselves?’(Jeremiah 2:5).

I place my trust in you.

I exult and celebrate your kindness.

You saw my affliction.

You watched over me while I was in danger.

You did not put me at the mercy of the enemy.

You set me on open ground.

‘Then the Lord said: I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings’(Exodus 3:7).

‘We cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression’(Deuteronomy 26:7).

‘Who is God except the Lord? And who is a rock besides our God? - the God who girded me with strength, and made my way safe. He made my feet like the feet of a deer, and set me secure on the heights’(Psalm 18:31-33).

A list of physical, psychological and emotional ills.

Be gracious to me, Lord,
for I am in distress.

My eyes are swollen from grief.
I am racked with pain.

Sorrow consumes my life.
My days are filled with sighs.
Guilt saps my strength.
My bones waste away.

My enemies mock me.

I am the butt of their jokes.

I am an object of dread to those who see me.

They turn and run the other way.

‘Lord, you have seduced me, and I was seduced;
you have overpowered me, and you have
prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day
long; everyone mocks me’(Jeremiah 20:7).

No one thinks of me.
It is as though I was dead.
I am of no use,
like a discarded pot.

‘We have become like the rubbish of the world,
the dregs of all things, to this very day.’

(1Corinthians 4:13)

I can hear the whispering of the crowd:
'Attack from every side!'

They scheme to take my life.

But I trust in you, Lord.

You are my God.

My life is in your hands.

'Blindly they wandered through the streets, so defiled with blood that no one was able to touch their garments. 'Away! Unclean!' people shouted at them; "Away! Away! Do not touch!" So they became fugitives and wanderers; it was said among the nations, "They shall stay here no longer.'" (Lamentation 4:14-15).

Rescue me from my enemies

Ruthlessly they hunt me down.

Show your servant your radiant face.

In your kindness save me.

‘The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace’(Numbers 6:24-26).

‘Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his supplication, and for your own sake, Lord, let your face shine upon your desolated sanctuary’(Daniel 9:17).

The following lines are not in the liturgy

Do not let me suffer shame,
for having called on you, my Lord.
May the wicked be ashamed;
let them go in silence to the grave.
Let the lying lips be stilled,
lips that speak insolently against the just.

How abundant is your goodness
to those who revere you,
to those who find in you their refuge.
Let everyone see your goodness.

In the secret hiding place of your presence
you protect us from their scheming.
In your tent you hold us safe
from the tongues of the violent.

‘According to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness’ sake, O Lord! ‘(Psalm 25:7).

‘They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness, and shall sing aloud of your righteousness’(Psalm 145:7).

‘They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord . . . my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the Lord (Jeremiah 31:12,14).

‘By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation’(Psalm 65:5).

Blessed be the Lord,
who has shown me wonderful love.

I said in my alarm,
'I am excluded from your presence.'
But you heard my supplications
when I cried to you for help.

Love the Lord,
all you who are holy.

The Lord preserves those who believe,
but repays in full those who act in pride.

Be strong, let your heart take courage,
all you who hope in the Lord.

‘Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous,
be strong. Let all that you do be done in
love’(1Corinthians 16:13-14).

‘I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications’(Psalm 116:1).

‘I love you [rhym], O Lord, my strength’(Psalm 18:2).

‘Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!’(Psalm 27:14).

‘Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love’(1Corinthians 16:13-14).