

Psalm 31

Written by K B Napier
Wednesday, 18 May 2011 14:45

This Psalm was given to the Chief Musician of the temple, for public playing and singing. It is a fact that most of scripture is given over to various warnings and horrendous situations. It shows just how sinful people can be!

Yet, behind all this is the worship of the one true God, and the many promises He makes to those who obey Him. What David describes – his problems and then their treatment by God – is all genuine. God really does do these things. He can remove a problem in an instant; He can overcome enemies with a word. He heals and He makes good. He is Almighty God! We do not believe in a vacuum – we can read of God's actions in scripture – and they are all true. So, our faith is not pie-in-the-sky, but actual and historical.

Verses 1-5

1.

In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.

2.

Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.

3.

For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

4.

Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength.

5.

Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

Psalm 31

Written by K B Napier

Wednesday, 18 May 2011 14:45

David begins his psalm with a statement of absolute faith: “In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust”! He had complete faith in Jehovah, and so David could say he would not be disappointed, “ashamed”). This is a rare thing today – do YOU truly have faith in God, enough to say you will never be disappointed with what happens to you? David believes, and says to everyone, that God would “deliver (him) in (His) righteousness”. God would keep him safe because God is Himself holy and true. David is not kept safe merely because he is praying for safety, or even because he is a king. He is kept safe because God desires to protect him... BECAUSE HE IS RIGHTEOUS.

To “bow down” the ear means to pay special attention to a mortal, to listen to his pleas for protection. Note that David does not ask for protection at any time, but NOW (speedily), such was his precarious position. We do not know what this particular time was, but we do know from the Psalm that David was in trouble, and so immediate help was required. Some things need urgent attention, such as when the Egyptian soldiers were bearing-down on the Hebrews with their backs to the sea. But, other situations can be dealt with in a longer space of time. Even so, when and how God responds is completely up to God. But, He WILL respond.

David asks God to be his “strong rock” or place of safety, a refuge... ‘rock’ being a particular reference to God Almighty. God was his “house of defence”, or stronghold. In David’s day these houses were tall towers built of stone, with no entry on the lower levels except one door, which was heavy and locked from the inside, impenetrable to an enemy. David, then, was saying that he hid behind God, Who would save him. Is this how you think of God’s protection? Do you believe He keeps you safe?

David is immovable in his faith: “For thou art my rock and my fortress”. He has no doubt. Do YOU have doubt, hidden behind outward words of trust? Many Christians, in order to seem faithful to their peers, outwardly say they have faith in God. But, inwardly, they do not, and some even disbelieve God will save them or help them. If this is so, they will NOT be helped, because their heartfelt doubts prevent it. Far better to admit to doubt and work through it, than to pretend. So, be honest!

God is our help; He helps because He wishes to; He guides us along a true path for the same reason. “Therefore, for thy name’s sake lead me, and guide me.” We should pray to be guided along HIS path, not the path we have designed in our minds based on our own thoughts and cleverly constructed plans!

Psalm 31

Written by K B Napier
Wednesday, 18 May 2011 14:45

Enemies and situations make their human plans to destroy or mislead us, often secretly. So, David asks God to “Pull (him) out of the net that they have laid privily for (him).” Though a mighty warrior and king, David acknowledges that he could not get through his troubles on his own, but needed the divine strength of God.

Knowing God was His strength, David said, “Into thine hand I commit my spirit”. He trusted God implicitly – unlike most Christians who ‘trust’ only insofar as they seem to get help as *they* perceive and want it. Our committing to God should be absolute, not conditional! We must trust no matter which way God takes us, or how hard His help can sometimes be. This is because the God of truth has redeemed, or bought, or rescued us. He can be trusted because He is always true and always comes to our side when we ask with holy lips. Ever wondered why you may not have been helped in the past? Then read this part again, for God demands our allegiance and obedience before He will help us.

Verses 6-10

1.

I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD.

2.

I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities;

3.

And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.

4.

Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly.

5.

For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.

Psalm 31

Written by K B Napier
Wednesday, 18 May 2011 14:45

David was very open in his views! He says “I have hated them that regard lying vanities”. Do not cover-up this term – David *literally* means he ‘hates’. Do YOU dare hate what is evil? He hates those who enact “lying vanities”. That is, he hates those who propound empty falsehoods, things that are nothing, lies, who indulge in worthless activities. Do you hate them too? You should, because they are tools of the devil, of no value whatever! On the other hand, David trusts in the Lord alone. The comparison is stark and we in our modern age must take note... David, too, was in his own ‘modern age’! Sin does not change with time – only ways to express it.

Rather than enjoy the sins of his time, David preferred to rejoice in God’s mercy. It often amazes me just how patient God is with us, and how merciful in allowing us to live when we have let Him down. But, that is what God is – merciful! We should never presume upon His continued mercies, for at any time He can crush us into the earth if we continue deliberately in sin and disobedience.

David gratefully says he rejoices in God’s mercy, for He gave heed to his pleading in times of trouble; God knew him intimately and knew every thought in his mind and heart, or ‘soul’. Sadly, we tend to outwardly claim trust in God when we are in trouble, but secretly do not believe, because we are not in tune with Him.

David was glad, because God did not give him over to his enemies. Rather, God made him to go free (“set my feet in a large room”), both mentally and physically. The notion of standing in a large room specifically means David was delivered from his problems and was given greater freedom.

The plea is as modern as we are: “Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble”! How often have we uttered those words? It means David was distressed by something happening to him, and this kind of trouble tends to bind us up in our own little world of woes. He was surrounded by whatever caused him grief and he could not escape it. Whereas we, in similar conditions, would call to God as a last resort, David calls upon him routinely, as the *first* resort. And this is why we do not find rest, or, usually, answers. God MUST be our daily source of power and authority.

David was “consumed with grief”; he was wasting away and failing as a man because he was

Psalm 31

Written by K B Napier
Wednesday, 18 May 2011 14:45

surrounded by enemies, who were close enough to kill. Do not think that David was always given peace immediately. He, too, had to wait for God to act. This is why he admits that he was now at the end of his tether. Only God could deliver him and give him peace.

There are times when God seems far away and so we think we are alone. We cry out to God in desperation. God is not far away, but very close; He waits for us to realise our position, and the reality and inevitability of calling upon Him to act. We must be stretched to our human limits... then, God takes us along HIS path, to show that though we reach the end of our human endurance and hope, it is really the *beginning* of entering His path and divine way, which is in eternity.

David's "soul and...belly" were terrified and felt hopeless, but that is precisely when God shows His hand! We think we are in the middle of a personal pit, but when God intervenes, we see we have been in His light all along. But, it takes time for us to reach the end of our own plans and resources, before we see the reality of God and His help. He is not far away, but is at our side all along!

Before seeing God's answer, then, David calls out that his "life is spent with grief", and his "years with sighing". Too often, we spend our lives grieving over what is human and of this earth. Yet, God is above all humanity; His abode is Heaven, where sins, the wicked, and sighs do not exist. We insist on pouring out our tears onto the earth we live on, when God is holding out His hand to aid us; we do not see it because our eyes are fixed only on the earth and its troubles. David acknowledges that he spends too much time in this grief, and he knows the cause: he fails because of his own sin, which ruins his life and health ("my bones are consumed").

Is this not so very true to life? When we give in to fear, grief and depression, everything about us sinks low – our mind, our health, our thoughts; all is tainted by earthly woes, and God is left outside our existence. Then, when we have had enough we cry out to Him for help! He has every right to ignore us, but He does not! Instead, He shows mercy and allows us to repent, activating His help. Great though David was, then, he was no different from us... except that his life was truly rooted in God, despite any sins he committed.

Verses 11-15

1.

I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to

Psalm 31

Written by K B Napier
Wednesday, 18 May 2011 14:45

mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me.

2.

I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.

3.

For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.

4.

But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God.

5.

My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

Because of his lowly reactions and misery, David was scorned by his enemies and kinsmen alike. But his kinsmen were worse. It has been my continued experience that fellow believers can be the worst offenders; they ignore, shun and slander their brethren without reason. And even his friends were afraid to be near David, as they ran away at sight of him. Why should they do this?

There are times when even a person known to us is so low and in a bad state that friends turn away, not wishing to be near for fear of being 'infected' with the same anxieties and problems. In the same way few people are willing to befriend someone with continual problems... a broken leg mends within weeks, but a broken spirit causes misery in others and a fear of being brought down. (Really, it is a sign of superficial friendship). So, they distance themselves. It is far too hard to remain calm, peaceful and positive when a person before you is constantly miserable and stricken. That is why those with the worst problems tend to be alone. It should not be that way, but that is how humans are. And it is why David relied solely on God, who specialises in the lowly and the fearful!

Psalm 31

Written by K B Napier
Wednesday, 18 May 2011 14:45

So, to his enemies and even to his friends, David was like a dead man – forgotten after the initial grief. He was like a “broken vessel”, unfit for anything useful. In this condition of lowliness and fear, he is slandered – his weakness gave enemies a chance to vilify him. At other times he was strong and to be feared. Those who hate us take every opportunity to attack when they see us down! It is why we should not show our failing to all and sundry; but we should reserve it for God and our true friends and family, who stand by us. As David said (verse 13) once his enemies knew he was at a low ebb, they conspired to bring him down, and to kill him.

“But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God”. When we realise we are failing inwardly we must not sit in a corner to mope and fear – we must stand upright and call upon God; we must tell Him we trust Him because He is our God. Everything we do is in His hand. This being so, in reality, we have nothing to fear or to bend low over. He is our strength, therefore all is well, even when the heathen rage all around. We WILL be delivered from our enemies and those who persecute us.

Some today think that we should just sit back and allow enemies to walk all over us. This was not David’s way! He rode out and fought them and when he was brought low he called upon God to not just save him, but to obliterate the enemy!

Verses 16-18

1.

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.

2.

Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.

3.

Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

Psalm 31

Written by K B Napier
Wednesday, 18 May 2011 14:45

God will save us by His mercy because He wishes to. At the same time He will smile upon us, his smile covering us with His divine light and power. So, we will not be disappointed – when we call, God will answer. When God helps us, He also brings the enemy down low, because they are wicked. Their end will be hell, but before that, the grave. They will be silenced. For those who think we ought to let the enemy have the upper hand, note this – everywhere in scripture the wicked are brought low and are set at nought, their awful voices silenced, their bodies and souls sent to hell. We are not called to help them or to pray for their well-being, but to seek their end through God. (Turning the other cheek, etc., has nothing to do with this).

The lies of the enemy must be silenced, by death or other means, as God sees fit. This applies especially to the wicked men and women who arrogantly and scornfully mistreat believers. We all know who these people are – they are indeed wicked to the core and their demise is already in the mind of God, even before we call upon Him. God WILL protect His righteous people. But, that holiness must be shown.

Verses 19-22

1.

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

2.

Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

3.

Blessed be the LORD: for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city.

4.

For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.

David's mood now changes, from fear to praise, as is often the case with him! "How great is thy

Psalm 31

Written by K B Napier
Wednesday, 18 May 2011 14:45

goodness” he proclaims. It should be our first thought of God, for He is indeed great, and His goodness is boundless towards us. It is a goodness reserved solely for those who fear Him. It is not the general goodness of allowing unsaved men to live, or about sending the sun and rain, etc. This goodness is that which is only given to the faithful, with many blessings. Remember – this is only for those who truly trust in God “before the sons of men”; those whose beliefs are known publicly. (There are no back-seat drivers in God’s family!)

Whilst enemies arrogantly tell us what to do, and try to cause us to sin, God hides us “in the secret of (his) presence”. That is, no unsaved man can ever discover this place of privilege, because only the elect have the key. That is why the unsaved will never know God’s favour – they have no membership in God’s eternal family.

God will keep us hidden safely in His pavilion, His presence. The pavilion or tent was used on a battleground, hence it is used here to speak of “the strife of tongues”. This is reference to the many nations who fought against David and Israel. In our own day we are faced with ever-growing vicious enemies.

“Blessed be the LORD” is another praise given to God by David. God had shown him mercy and protection by giving him a “strong city”. This is not just about Jerusalem, but also about God being his tower and strength.

He admits that in his fear he wrongly said he was cut off from God. No – God knew of his distress. David was so busy fighting his enemy and suffering the anxiety, that he completely forgot to look to God. We all do this. God does hear us when we cry out. Once we cry to Him we should just relax in His arms and wait. But, silly as we are, we let our fears accumulate. And so God allows us to experience those fears to the end of our tolerance, until we again call out to God! We are stubborn people.

Verses 23&24

1.

O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

2.

Psalm 31

Written by K B Napier
Wednesday, 18 May 2011 14:45

Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

David now comes to what he is known for – praising God. “O love the LORD, all ye his saints”! This kind of love means to breathe and desire God as an overwhelming action. It should be the first thing God’s children (saints) should do. God “preserveth the faithful”: He guards and watches over them. Note the condition – being faithful. Then, David adds a note of sarcasm: those who are arrogant and haughty God rewards plentifully! Their ‘rewards’ are God’s anger and punishment.

“Be of good courage” if you hope in the Lord. See that God strengthens our hearts IF we are of good courage. What does that mean? To be of good courage means to prevail, no matter what happens; to be resolute and courageous, and to *display* strength. There are times when we fail to do this and crumble to dust when faced with a tough situation or person. We may even think we deserve to fail. But, it is not how we ought to appear to others, who watch for our demise every second.

We should always display strength of character and belief, and not become an object of weakness. It is not lying, but an outward presentation of what our faith should be. If, as a Bible teacher, I did not present a fully confident front, who would bother to read what I write, or listen to what I say? I must be confident not in myself, but in the Lord. His strength is my strength. I am here to portray Him, not me, and as He is strong so must I appear strong to others. Every believer must show this strength, otherwise we covertly slander our mighty Lord. We must, then, be strong because He is strong. It is our duty to do so.

Then, when we show such a strong front, He strengthens our hearts! We must firstly prove our trust before He makes us strong. It is a sign that we “hope in the Lord”; we wait expectantly until He gives us strength of our own, which is a reflection of His strength, so that we are one with him.

© May 2011

---oOo---

Psalm 31

Written by K B Napier

Wednesday, 18 May 2011 14:45

{loadposition btm_address}