

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Sunday School
Placerita Baptist Church
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Psalm 31 — A Rock of Refuge

1.0 Introducing Psalm 31

- Psalm 31 has left its imprint on the lives of biblical personalities. Both Jonah and Jesus cited it in prayer. Jeremiah was captivated by one of its phrases. An anonymous psalmist repeated part of it in another psalm.
- When did David compose the psalm? The “besieged city” (v. 21) is probably Keilah (see 1 Sam 23:1-14).
- In current church liturgy Psalm 31:9-16 is the psalm selection for Passion Sunday.
- The words of Psalm 31:5a were the last words of Jesus, Stephen, John Huss, Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, and many others. “When John Huss was condemned to be burned at the stake, the bishop who conducted the ceremony ended with the chilling words: ‘And now we commit thy soul to the devil.’ Huss replied calmly, ‘I commit my spirit into thy hands, Lord Jesus Christ; unto thee I commend my spirit, which thou has redeemed.’” — James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1994), 1:270.

2.0 Reading Psalm 31 (NAU)

31:1 A Psalm of David.

In You, O LORD, I have taken **refuge**;
Let me never be ashamed;
In Your righteousness deliver me.

31:2 Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly;
Be to me a **rock** of strength,
A **stronghold** to save me.

- 31:3** For **You are my rock and my fortress**;
For Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me.
- 31:4** You will pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me,
For **You are my strength**.
- 31:5** **Into Your hand I commit my spirit**;
You have ransomed me, O LORD, God of truth.
- 31:6** I hate those who regard vain idols,
But I trust in the LORD.
- 31:7** I will rejoice and be glad in Your lovingkindness,
Because You have seen my affliction;
You have known the troubles of my soul,
- 31:8** And You have not given me over into the hand of the enemy;
You have set my feet in a large place.
- 31:9** Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
My eye is wasted away from grief, my soul and my body *also*.
- 31:10** For my life is spent with sorrow
And my years with sighing;
My strength has failed because of my iniquity,
And my body has wasted away.
- 31:11** Because of all my adversaries, I have become a reproach,
Especially to my neighbors,
And an object of dread to my acquaintances;
Those who see me in the street flee from me.
- 31:12** I am forgotten as a dead man, out of mind;
I am like a broken vessel.
- 31:13** For I have heard the slander of many,
Terror is on every side;
While they took counsel together against me,
They schemed to take away my life.
- 31:14** But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD,
I say, "You are my God."
- 31:15** My times are in Your hand;
Deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from those who persecute me.
- 31:16** Make Your face to shine upon Your servant;
Save me in Your lovingkindness.
- 31:17** Let me not be put to shame, O LORD, for I call upon You;
Let the wicked be put to shame, let them be silent in Sheol.
- 31:18** Let the lying lips be mute,
Which speak arrogantly against the righteous
With pride and contempt.
- 31:19** How great is Your goodness,



Which You have stored up for those who fear You,
Which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You,
Before the sons of men!

31:20 You hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the conspiracies of man;
You keep them secretly in a shelter from the strife of tongues.

31:21 Blessed be the LORD,
For He has made marvelous His lovingkindness to me in a besieged city.

31:22 As for me, I said in my alarm,
“I am cut off from before Your eyes”;
Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications
When I cried to You.

31:23 O love the LORD, all you His godly ones!
The LORD preserves the faithful
And fully recompenses the proud doer.

31:24 Be strong and let your heart take courage,
All you who hope in the LORD.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 31

3.1 Outline

- I. Prayer and Trust (vv. 1-18)
 - A. Prayer for Righteousness (vv. 1-3)
 - B. Proclamation of Trust (vv. 4-8)
 - C. Prayer for Favor (vv. 9-13)
 - D. Proclamation of Trust (vv. 14-18)
- II. Praise and Thanksgiving (vv. 19-24)
 - A. Providential Goodness (vv. 19-20)
 - B. Personal Experience (vv. 21-22)
 - C. Practical Imperatives (vv. 23-24)



3.2 Notes

- **vv. 1-3**
 - Repeated in Psalm 71:1-3 with slight variations.
- **v. 1** “Let me never be ashamed”
 - Such shame is not internal and subjective (embarrassment). It is external and objective (disgrace).
 - Repeated in verse 17.
- **vv. 2-3** Figure of Rock
 - Depicts permanence, strength, and security.
 - See Psalms 18:2; 28:1; Genesis 49:24; Deuteronomy 32:4.

- "... in early Israel, the rock symbol was probably linked to the rocky Mount Sinai, which symbolized the enduring and everlasting covenant" — Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, Publishers, 1983), 238.
- The metaphor reinforces the theme of trust.
- "The picture is of a remote rocky crag or a well-protected military outpost in rugged mountain terrain." — Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 529.
- v. 5 "Into Your hand I commit my spirit"
 - See Luke 23:46. This text is related to the theme of trust. Jesus trusted God even in dying.
 - It may be significant that Christ did not cite the remainder of the verse ("You have ransomed me").
 - Verses 9-11 might have Messianic overtones in light of verse 5.
 - See Acts 7:59 (Stephen).
- v. 5 "God of truth"
 - God can be relied upon and believed. He is always true to Himself and His Word.
 - See Romans 3:4.
- v. 6 "those who regard vain idols"
 - = "worthless idols"
 - See Jonah 2:8.
- v. 12 "I am like a broken vessel"
 - A broken pottery vessel is useless.
 - See Jeremiah 22:28.
- v. 13 "Terror is on every side"
 - David was surrounded by those who mocked him in the midst of his troubles.
 - See Jeremiah 6:25; 20:3 ("Magor-missabib"), 10; 46:5; 49:29; Lamentations 2:22.
- vv. 14-18
 - In these verses David repeats many of the concepts from verses 1-7:
 - Shame (vv. 1, 17)
 - Save (vv. 2, 15-16)
 - "My" ("rock," vv. 2-4; "God," v. 14)
 - Deliver (vv. 4, 15)
 - In(to) Your hands (vv. 5, 15)
 - Trust (vv. 6, 14)
 - Lovingkindness (vv. 7, 16) = *hesed*



- v. 15 “My times are in Your hand”
 - This phrase “does not mean it depends on God how long I live, but my destiny (the occasions when things happen that determine my life) is in the hand of God.” — James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1994), 144.
 - “Underlying the psalmist’s surrender is an understanding of life as made up of a series of decisive moments in which a person can take either appropriate or inappropriate direction” — Wilson, *Psalms*, 532.

- v. 19 “Your goodness”
 - Compare with Romans 8:28.

- v. 23 “love the LORD”
 - Infrequent concept in Psalms (see 69:36 and 116:1).
 - Compare Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

- v. 24 “Be strong and let your heart take courage”
 - See Joshua 1:9; Psalm 27:14.

- v. 24 “All you who hope in the LORD”
 - When God’s people are faced by difficult and trying circumstances, they must judge by what they know for certain from His Word, rather than going by what they feel.

4.0 Singing Psalm 31

My Times Are in Thy Hand

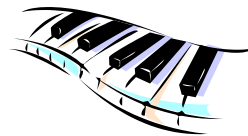
1 My times are in Thy hand;
My God, I wish them there;
My life, my friends, my soul I leave
Entirely to Thy care.

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.

5 My times are in Thy hand,
I’ll always trust in Thee;
And, after death, at Thy right hand
I shall forever be.

2 My times are in Thy hand;
Whatever they may be;
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
As best may seem to Thee.

4 My times are in Thy hand,
Jesus, the crucified!
Those hands my cruel sins had pierced
Are now my guard and guide.



— William F. Lloyd

You Are My Hiding Place

You are my hiding place,
You always fill my heart with songs of deliverance,
Whenever I am afraid I will trust in You,
I will trust in You,
Let the weak say, "I am strong in the strength of the Lord."

You are my hiding place,
You always fill my heart with songs of deliverance,
Whenever I am afraid I will trust in You,
I will trust in You,
Let the weak say, "I am strong in the strength of the Lord.
I will trust in You."

— Michael Ledner
© 1981 Maranatha! Music

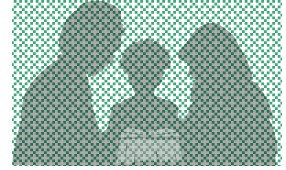
My Heart Rejoices in Thy Name
(Tune: "O, for a Thousand Tongues")

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|--|--|
| <p>1 My heart rejoices in Thy Name,
My God, my help, my trust;
Thou hast preserved my face from shame,
Mine honor from the dust.</p> <p>3 Among mine enemies my name
Was a mere proverb grown,
While to my neighbors I became
Forgotten and unknown.</p> <p>5 How great deliverance Thou hast wrought
Before the sons of men!
The lying lips to silence brought,
And made their boastings vain!</p> <p>7 Within Thy secret presence, Lord,
Let me forever dwell;
No fenced city, walled and barred,
Secures a saint so well.</p> | <p>2 "My life is spent with grief," I cried,
"My years consumed in groans,
My strength decays, mine eyes are dried,
And sorrow wastes my bones."</p> <p>4 Slander and fear on every side
Seized and beset me round
I to the throne of grace applied,
And speedy rescue found.</p> <p>6 Thy children from the strife of tongues
Shall Thy pavilion hide;
Guard them from infamy and wrongs,
And crush the sons of pride.</p> |
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— Isaac Watts, *The Psalms of David* (1719)

5.0 Praying Psalm 31

- Lord, be my Rock. [v. 2]
- Lead and guide me for Your glory. [v. 3]
- Father, I'm trusting You to care for me. [vv. 6, 14]
- I rejoice in your loyal love. [v. 7]
- Thank You for Your protection. [vv. 1-3, 19-21, 23]
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6.0 Applying Psalm 31

- Even when the actions of those around us confirm our sense of abandonment, God is there.
- Total commitment to God is not an option — it is a necessity.
- The Lord is trustworthy, truthful, and faithful — trust Him.

Faith is not a one-time commitment.
It is a radical call for a lifetime of commitment.
Commitment is abandonment to the living God,
who has promised to guard (“preserve”) his own (v. 23).
Such is the life of faith.
The outcome is uncertain;
but faith lets God be God —
by responding to him in “love,”
by living in the strength of “faith” (v. 24a),
by observing his word ... ,
and by waiting in the hope of redemption (v. 24b; cf. 33:18, 22).

— Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*,
ed. by Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, Mich.:
Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 5:270