

### Psalm 31 – In Whom Do We Trust? (2 of 3)

**III. The Basis (31:7-9)** – The basis for the focus and commitment in the life of the believer is not in himself. That David was righteous is not the issue. David's righteousness, like all believers' righteousness, pale to nothing compared with the mercies of God as an appeal for help and deliverance. David said that he was glad and rejoiced in God's mercy. This means that even before actual help arrived, David was able to rejoice already. It was in the merciful God that he rejoiced. He knew that no matter how lonely, painful and difficult the trials were, the mercies of God would be his assurance. Mercy refers to punishment one deserves but is withheld after the repentance of sins. Mercy is not God closing both eyes and sweeping sins under the carpet. The sinner must sincerely repent of his sins and cry to God for mercies! This was the intent. This means that David must have searched his own soul and knew that the trials he endured were not due to sins committed. They were tests sent by the LORD to strengthen his faith and trust in Him. The word "glad" focuses on the external demonstration of joy whereby David spun around in exuberance; whereas the word "rejoice" is more inward whereby David's demeanour brightened up. This was due to David's relationship with the LORD. He knew that the LORD would come to His aid in His time and not his. That was why David said confidently that the LORD had considered his trouble (past tense). As far as David was concerned, the certainty of the LORD's help was assured, for it was to the mercy of God that he appealed to. God is always merciful. This is God's immutable character. He does not change with time or circumstance.

This understanding is seen in the use of the synthetic parallelism in verse 7. David added that the LORD had known (past tense) his soul in adversities. The emotional and mental struggles that David faced were already known to the LORD. Even though the help of the LORD may not have come yet (use of future tense in "I will be glad and rejoice"), David knew that it would. He would wait patiently for God's timing which is the best for him. It was not about physical deliverance but a maturation of his relationship with his LORD. The intimacy and personal relationship with the LORD was paramount in David's witness. With growth in spiritual maturity, his witness for Christ would be enhanced. If the only way to grow was to endure injustice in this life, then so be it. God always knows best! David evidenced this truth in his life as a fugitive when King Saul wanted to kill him on many occasions. David did not retaliate. He could not touch the LORD's anointed in order to shorten his life as a fugitive. **1 Samuel 26:9-12** (KJV), "And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless? **10** David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish. **11** The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that *is* at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go. **12** So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw *it*, nor knew *it*, neither awaked: for they *were* all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them."

Believers must learn this precious lesson on trust and patience. David's ultimate desire was not to get out of the physical adversity but to grow in grace and in the knowledge of his LORD Jesus Christ. His spiritual maturity was paramount and not his physical deliverance. Sometimes the physical deliverance will not come. But it should not matter to the believer. What matters most is that he is drawn closer to his LORD through prayer and trust. This improves the clarity of his witness for Christ.

**Verse 8** (synonymous parallelism) – There were many times when David's enemies nearly caught him, but they did not. He knew that; he definitively admitted that it was the LORD who did not shut him up and not the hand of the enemy! This means that if his enemies were to capture him, it was not them or their clever devices but the LORD who allowed it to happen! The constant conscious knowledge of the LORD's sovereignty in the believer's life is crucial in times of great adversities. This is the doctrine that gives strength to the believer's soul as he languishes within himself. Doubt in God's love and care and perhaps one's own salvation are struggles that may enter into the believer's psyche before they are chased away by the truth of God's infallible and inerrant Word. Thus David made supplication to his LORD. The emphasis here is the LORD and not his enemies. Regardless of how powerful his enemies were, like king Saul and Absalom who had armies against David, David knew that it was the LORD who was in absolute control over them, his freedom and his safety.

Using synonymous parallelism, David shared that the LORD set his feet in a large room where he was not boxed in by his enemies. He was able to escape. Time and time again the LORD saved him. He escaped all the ploys and cunning devices of his enemies. No matter what they tried to do or how many men they had to help them, they did not succeed in capturing him. They planned in darkness and with the help of the best tactician and the whole nation on their side, and yet David was kept safe. He had room to escape! The LORD was there for him.

**Verse 9** (synthetical parallelism) – After sharing his heart's and mind's condition, David then cried to the LORD to have mercy on Him. He leaned on His mercy. Now he cried for His mercy to be upon him. It is one thing to acknowledge that God is a merciful God (part of His character). This characteristic had to be personalized by David. He did so by crying to the LORD to be merciful to him. This is exactly the right way to pray and ask God for help and deliverance. The heart and the desire determine the cry. When they are in sync, the prayers are heard. If it is only the cry but not the heart, the LORD knows the hypocrisy. He will not hear such a cry. To do so would encourage hypocrisy. When the heart is right, so will the cry. David's cry was that he was in trouble. The word "trouble" in verse 9 is not the same as the one in verse 7. The "trouble" in verse 7 means "misery" or "affliction." The pain factor is emphasized. The "trouble" in verse 9 means "cramp" or "besiege." It is like a person who is boxed in or being cornered or squeezed or surrounded. There was nowhere to go or anyone

to turn to for help. Samuel the prophet was gone. David's parents were safely hidden in Moab. The people of Israel were too frightened of King Saul to help for fear of being slaughtered. David could only look up! This was exactly why the LORD directed and controlled all the people and circumstances in David's life to bring him to this state of helplessness. It is in such a state of helplessness that the turning to the LORD for help becomes meaningful. Such an experience can never be forgotten. It stayed in David's soul for life. These are special turning points that every child of God needs to have and cherish for life.

David added to this cry for help by using synthetic parallelism. The boxed-in feeling caused his eye to be consumed with grief, i.e. vexation. Not only was David weeping outwardly, he was also weeping inwardly. His soul and his belly, i.e. his innermost being, were weeping as well. The grief was not superficial. It was very deep. His entire being was involved in this cry to the LORD for His mercy to come to David.

This is the way that God wants all His children to ask for mercy. It is not a perfunctory asking; whether God's mercy comes or not does not matter! Such superficial crying is mockery to God. This is the kind of man-pleasing prayer that is too common today. David's cry for the LORD's mercy was real. God made it real by allowing his enemies to box him in so that he was completely stripped of all human or earthly dependency. This is the only spiritual condition a believer has to be in to learn God dependency.

**IV. The Attacks (31:10-14)** – The attacks on God's children will be incessant. They will not stop because the world crucified Christ. The world has not changed one bit. Satan is still the prince of this world. The spiritual darkness in the world remains. Just as it crucified Christ for doing God's will, it will continue to persecute believers who are doing God's will. To do God's will is to be like Christ! Thus David stated that his life was spent with grief. David did not mean that every moment of every day had been of grief and there was not even one moment of joy or happiness. He experienced much joy in the LORD as many of his psalms testify. However, generally speaking, the overall experience of his life was one of grief. This was the life of a man after God's own heart! When one desires to do God's will at every turn of his life, he will want perfection in life. When perfection does not come, grief sets in. David did not wish to fail or disappoint his God. However, like all of us, he was not perfect! Believers must know that God expects holiness and not perfection as we serve Him in this mortal flesh. But that does not mean that David did not grieve when there was no perfection in his obedience to the LORD. His years were spent with sighing, i.e. groaning and mourning. Such a life is experienced only by those who serve and are close to their LORD. The ones who are far from the LORD and love the world hardly groan, even when they sin. They are not sensitive to sin in their lives the way David was. The nearer a believer draws to God, the more sensitive he is to sin because he is more holy. The one who withdraws

further away from God is closer to the world and less sensitive to sin and evil around him. David was holy and near to God.

We know that the sorrow David experienced was not due to the persecution of his enemies but to his own failure to keep himself holy in the face of temptations. Using synthetic parallelism, David shared that he was weak because of his iniquity. It was not a physical weakness but rather a spiritual one. When a person is in sin and is aware that he has sinned, all the air seems to be sucked out of his spiritual balloon. He becomes very disappointed with himself. After all that he knew God had done in his life through Christ and had equipped him with all that he needed to be victorious in the face of temptations, yet he failed God. This is a miserable feeling to have. David felt so bad that he described it as his bones consuming him. This means that the pain was inside his being. He was very disappointed with himself for failing God by sinning. Whether it was in thought or in words, David did not state. A sin is a sin whether expressed or not expressed. David the child of God David knew it.

**Verse 11** (synonymous parallelism) – David acknowledged that he was a reproach to all his enemies. The word "reproach" means that he was a disgrace. David was someone that his enemies liked to scold and harass. They obviously called him names and hurled all kinds of insults at him. Lies surely abounded. There was nothing that David could do to alleviate this. He knew that they were probably not all wrong. If they called him a liar, David knew that he had lied before, many times. If they said he was a bad king or a bad shepherd, David knew in his heart that he was not perfect and he had made mistakes and had been a bad king at certain points of his life. However, what hurt David more was how his neighbours regarded him. They too regarded him as a reproach. As his neighbours, they ought to know him better. They lived near him and had no reason to see him as a reproach but they did! David was grieved. They also believed the lies and attacks his enemies levelled against him. But the worst of all were his acquaintances, i.e. the ones who were like his friends. They feared him and did not want to have anything to do with him. King Saul treated all of David's friends as his enemies. David lost friends because of this. That is why he admitted that they feared him. David brought death to all who went near him. Our enemies and even neighbours may think ill of us and it hurts a little. But when friends who are dear to us and whom we care for fear us and avoid us, it hurts deeply!

Using synonymous parallelism, David said that these acquaintances fled from him when they saw him outside, i.e. coming toward them. It is like someone slamming his door shut when he sees you coming. This is a most painful act that a friend can do to another! Some even deserted him. Loneliness is a painful companion to have in time of need.

**Verse 12** (emblematic parallelism) – David's soul wrenching feelings were expressed by this comparison. He described himself as a dead man out of mind. When the living move on with

their lives, the ones who are dead soon fade from their memories. By the manner in which David was ostracised by his enemies, neighbours and acquaintances, it is no wonder that David said that of himself. As far as David was concerned, he was like the invisible man to all his fellow Israelites. No one came to his aid. All his great and mighty acts like killing Goliath and the Philistines, and their song of praise to him, were all forgotten - out of sight and out of mind! It is expected that those who have no one to remember them by after they are dead are the orphans and beggars whose lives meant absolutely nothing to anyone. David felt like his life was a gigantic vacuum void of anything significant. All had deserted him.

He also described himself as a broken vessel, an emblem similar to the one used in the first line of this verse. A broken vessel cannot be fixed. Once it is broken it is as good as thrown away. The ostracism by all of Israel, including his friends, caused David to feel useless like a broken vessel. A vessel is useful to hold something, whether it is water or grain. It has only one purpose. Once this purpose is gone it is useless. It is a miserable thing to feel useless, as if the very purpose of one's existence has been snuffed out. No one cares.

**Verse 13** (synthetical parallelism) – The reason was that David heard the slander, i.e. defamation of many. To be unjustly accused by one's enemies is not as bad as being falsely labelled by one's neighbours and friends. One of the tests that reveal the believer's pride and self importance is when his name is slandered. Slander has a way of spreading like wild fire and it is near impossible to find out the source. The believer has to endure and accept the slander. There is nothing he can do but to accept it. If he has died to self, then the slander will have minimal or no effect on his testimony for and trust in Christ. If he is upset by it to the point of depression, then he has failed God. The pride in him needs to be castigated from his soul. Fear was on every side in David's life. Every which way he turned to escape, the enemies were there. These words of slander were so bad that it could even result in David's death. It was not just the assassination of his character but the taking of his life as well. David was afraid. It is normal to be frightened when one's life is threatened. What should not be normal for the believer is to allow this fear to cause him to sin. He needs to overcome this fear and continue to trust in the LORD regardless of the slander and fear.

The plot was simple. They wanted to kill David. All ways and means were employed by David's many powerful enemies to capture and kill him. They took counsel to device plans to snare David. They needed to trap him so that he could not escape. The whole nation had turned to David's enemies. He became a wanted man, like a common criminal.

**Verse 14** (synonymous parallelism) – In this darkest hour, David declared that he trusted in the LORD. David refused to stop trusting in the LORD. The whole nation was against him. There was nowhere to go or hide. Yet, David kept on trusting. This is the kind of experience in trust that money cannot buy. It is the way of persecution that can produce such deep and precious trust in the LORD. There is no other way except the way of temptations. This is also

taught in the NT. **James 1:2-4** (KJV), "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; **3** Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. **4** But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

Even though verse 14 is expressed as a synonymous parallelism to emphasize the truth of what was stated in the first line, the entire verse 14 is in an antithetical parallelism relationship with verse 13. The contrast is to emphasize David's strong faith and deep trust in the LORD. He declared that the LORD was his God. God is all powerful. He was the One who was doing this to David and not man! When the LORD is understood as the great Architect behind the trials, then the believer will find the necessary inner strength and faith to go through all of them successfully whereby his trust in the LORD will become more real and much deeper. This was David's priceless experience. This must also be every believer's desire - to grow in grace and in the experiential knowledge of God our Saviour as we go through the darkest trials of life and live for Christ.

To be continued.