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Scripture

Psalm 31

- 1 In you, O LORD, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.
- 2 Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily.
Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.
- 3 You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
for your name's sake lead me and guide me,
- 4 take me out of the net that is hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.
- 5 Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.
- 6 You hate those who pay regard to worthless idols,
but I trust in the LORD.
- 7 I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love,
because you have seen my affliction;
you have taken heed of my adversities,
- 8 and have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;
you have set my feet in a broad place.
- 9 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
my eye wastes away from grief,
my soul and body also.
- 10 For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my misery,
and my bones waste away.
- 11 I am the scorn of all my adversaries,
a horror to my neighbors,
an object of dread to my acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from me.
- 12 I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;
I have become like a broken vessel.
- 13 For I hear the whispering of many —
terror all around! —

as they scheme together against me,
as they plot to take my life.

- 14 But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, "You are my God."
15 My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.
16 Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.
17 Do not let me be put to shame, O LORD,
for I call on you;
let the wicked be put to shame;
let them go dumbfounded to Sheol.
18 Let the lying lips be stilled
that speak insolently against the righteous
with pride and contempt.
- 19 O how abundant is your goodness
that you have laid up for those who fear you,
and accomplished for those who take refuge in you,
in the sight of everyone!
20 In the shelter of your presence you hide them
from human plots;
you hold them safe under your shelter
from contentious tongues.
- 21 Blessed be the LORD,
for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me
when I was beset as a city under siege.
22 I had said in my alarm,
"I am driven far from your sight."
But you heard my supplications
when I cried out to you for help.
- 23 Love the LORD, all you his saints.
The LORD preserves the faithful,
but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily.
24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the LORD.

Devotional

It is so easy to read a scripture that reminds us of God's love and strength and power, and to think that 'I will do better, I will make my faith more apparent'. It is also easy to become distracted from God and living a Christian lifestyle, maybe even an hour later that same day. The coffee maker breaks. The car is covered in ice and snow. A loved one becomes sick. An assignment goes awry. Things little and big don't turn out how we want or expect and suddenly we are transformed from the spirit-filled worshiper in a church pew to the hopeless and burnt-out person with a flat tire on the side of the road, itching to post

a Facebook status or Tweet releasing our frustrations. ‘Why does this always happen to me? What did I do to deserve this?’ It is so easy to ask these questions and more, to wallow in our hurt and frustration and self-pity, and to forget momentarily that we are Christians and we have God right there with us. We have God with the caffeine withdrawal, with the bitter ice and snow, with the diseased family member, and even in the hopeless assignment. We can look at all of the things that went so wrong, all of the sins we’ve committed, and all of the things that we were hurt by, and take refuge in our strong and forgiving God—our rock in good and bad.

Prayer

Lord, in this season of repentance we ask you to surround us with your great presence and love. Allow us to see you in every aspect of our lives yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Teach us to turn to you in our good times and bad times, and forgive us for all of the times we try to exclude you from our lives. Lord, we are hurting from things self-inflicted and those brought to us by others. Relieve us of this pain. Lord, we forget to thank you for all of the ways you are there for us, and all of the ways you show us love. Help us to give better thanks to you, and to worship gladly. We especially thank you for the greatest gift you could have ever given us—your Son, who’s death saves us from our sins and shortcomings. Thank you, God for thinking so much of your people, and extending to us a love that none could ever measure. From our humble lips to your mighty ear. Amen.