

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

I have a small pocket Bible that I keep in my desk drawer in my office. I like to mark verses or passages that are significant to me. While I was reading this Psalm and deciding which lectionary reading I would focus on for this devotional, I noticed that verses 9 and 21 are aligned next to each other in their respective columns. I drew a box around each verse and an arrow across from one verse to the other looking something like this:

⁹ Be gracious to me, O LORD,
for I am in distress



²¹ Blessed be the LORD, for he has wondrously
shown his steadfast love to me ...

I don't recall why I marked these verses as such, but as I reflect on them now, I am struck by how descriptive they are of how I journey through the Lenten season. I begin in a place of “distress,” because I have fallen short yet again when it comes to maintaining spiritual disciplines, and then journey toward blessing the Lord for his steadfast love and faithfulness as I strive to deepen my relationship with God. For me, the Lenten season is not so much a time to “give up” something, but instead to refocus and establish consistency again in places where I have gone off track. In this passage in my Bible, I also have a box drawn around the final verse of the Psalm: *Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD*. This is my encouragement during the rest of the year—to take courage when I'm distressed about falling short again.

Prayer

Almighty God, help us all to be strong and take courage as we examine our lives during this Lenten season to see how we may draw into a closer and deeper relationship with you. Amen.