

PSALM 31

A CRY OUT OF DEEP TROUBLE

This Psalm bears a title that reads, "To the chief musician, a Psalm of David." The dedication to the chief musician proves that this song of alternate strains of grief and woe was indeed intended for public singing. Perhaps such Psalms as this might have been set aside as being too mournful for corporate worship, if special care had not been taken by the Holy Spirit to particularly mark them as being designed for the public edification of the Lord's people. And is there not, in such Psalms, a peculiarly distinct reference to the Lord Jesus? He certainly manifests Himself very clearly in the 22nd Psalm, which bears this same title; and in the one before us now, we plainly hear His dying voice in the fifth verse. In all the holy songs of His saints, Jesus is the Chief Musician.

In the Psalm itself, we learn (verses 1-8) that faith and prayer must go together; for it is the prayer of faith that becomes the prevailing prayer. David gave up his soul, in a special manner, to the care and safe-keeping of God (verse 5). And with those same words, our Lord Jesus yielded up His last breath on the cross as He made His soul a free-will offering for sin – laying down His life as a ransom. But in the Psalmist's case, we notice that although he is a man in distress and trouble, yet his great care and concern is about his soul – his better part. During times when persons are perplexed about their worldly affairs, and when their cares and troubles multiply, they imagine that they may be excused if they neglect their souls. But it is quite the reverse! Such times are when we should be even more concerned to look after the state of our souls, so that even if the out-

Overview of the Psalm, adapted from Charles Spurgeon:

The Psalmist, in dire affliction, appeals to his God for help, with much confidence and holy persistence! And before long, he finds his mind so strengthened that he magnifies the Lord for His great goodness. Some have thought that the occasion in David's troubled life which led to this Psalm was the treachery of the men of Keilah (1 Sam. 23:1-13); but after reflection, it seems to us that the Psalm's very mournful tone and its allusion to David's own iniquity demand a later date – and so it may be more satisfactory to illustrate it by the period when Absalom had rebelled, and David's courtiers had fled from him, and lying lips were spreading a thousand malicious rumors against him. It is perhaps quite as well that we have no specific occasion stated, or we might have been so busy in applying it to David's case that we would have forgotten its suitability to our own.

There are no great lines of separation between the thoughts in this Psalm. The theme goes up and down – falling into valleys of mourning and rising with hills of confidence. However, for convenience, we may arrange it thus: David testifies his confidence in God and pleads for help (verses 1-6), expresses gratitude for mercies received (verses 7-8), particularly describes his case (verses 9-13), vehemently pleads for deliverance (verses 14-18), confidently and thankfully expects a blessing (verses 19-22), and shows the bearing of his case upon all God's people (verses 23-24).

ward body perishes, the inward soul may suffer no damage. Every believer will meet with dangers and deliverances during his lifetime until he is delivered from death – his last enemy. But the Lord looks upon our souls when we are in trouble to ensure that they are made better, and not harmed, by the affliction.

David's troubles made him a man of sorrows (verses 9-18). Herein he was a foreshadow of Christ, Who was very much acquainted with grief. However, the great difference between them was that David's afflictions were merited by his own sins, but Christ suffered for ours. Here we read how David's friends dared not give him any assistance when he was in his time of affliction. Let us not think it strange if we are also thus deserted by our earthly companions, but let us not forget that we do have a Friend in heaven who will never fail us! He will be sure to order all things for the best, for all who commit their spirits into His keeping. The time of our life is in God's hands; it is His prerogative to lengthen or shorten, and make bitter or sweet, according to the counsel of His own will. Remember that the way of man is not in himself, nor is it in our friends' hands, nor even in our enemies' – but in God's alone. In this faith and confidence, the Psalmist prays that the Lord would save him for His mercies' sake, and not for any merit of his own. He also prophesies the silencing of those who reproach and speak evil of the people of God; there is a day coming, when the Lord will surely execute judgment upon them. In the meantime, we should engage ourselves – by well-doing – to silence the ignorance of foolish persons.

Instead of yielding to impatience or despondency under our troubles, we should turn our thoughts to the goodness of the Lord toward those who fear and trust in Him (verses 19-24). All blessedness comes to sinners through the wondrous gift of the only-begotten Son of God, Who became the atonement for their sins. Let not any yield to unbelief! When you are under discouraging circumstances, do not think that you are cut off from the sight of the Lord and left to the pride of men. The deliverance of Christ and the destruction of His enemies ought to strengthen and comfort the hearts of believers under all their afflictions here below; for after having suffered courageously with their Master, they shall triumphantly enter into His joy and glory! Here on this earth, the Church of Jesus is a congregation of afflicted, poor, and tried persons. The wicked men of the world – the despisers of all religion, the atheists, and the Epicureans – have their consolation here below. But at the same time, those who believe in Christ are exposed to the horrible hatred of the devil, and are distressed throughout all their life – inwardly with fears and terrors in their hearts; and outwardly by persecutions, blasphemies, and contempt. And yet from all these things, they are delivered; for as the Apostle Paul says, “Where afflictions abound, there consolations abound also!”

Thank You, Lord, for being faithful to Your promises to Your saints, and for not turning away from us, Your people! Amen.

