

# Psalm 31

## Part 1

Speaker	J.S. Blackburn
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*Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.*

[00:00:00] Psalm 31. In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust. Let me never be ashamed. Deliver me in thy righteousness.

Bow down thine ear to me. Deliver me speedily. Be thou my strong rock, for an house of defense to save me. For thou art my rock and my fortress. Therefore for thy name's sake lead me and guide me. Pull me out of the net that they have led trivially for me, for thou art my strength.

Into thine hand I commit my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. I have hated them that regard lying vanities, but I trust in the Lord. I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy, for thou hast considered my trouble. Thou hast known my soul in adversities and hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy. [00:01:02] Thou hast set my feet in a large room. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble.

Thine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly. For my life is spent with grief and my ears with sighing. My strength faileth because of mine iniquity and my bones are consumed. I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbors, and a fear to mine acquaintance. There they did see me without fled from me. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind. I am like a broken vessel. For I have heard the slander of many. Fear was on every side. While they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in thee, O Lord. I said, Thou art my God. My times are in thy hand.

[00:02:05] Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies and from them that persecute me. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant. Save me for thy mercy's sake. Let me not be ashamed, O Lord, for I have called upon thee. Let the wicked be ashamed and be silent in the grave. Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. O, how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man. Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. Blessed be the Lord, for he has shown me his marvelous kindness in a strong city. [00:03:03] For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes. Nevertheless, thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee. O love the Lord, all ye his saints, for the Lord preserveth the faithful and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord. The hymn that we have just been singing contains a prayer to precede a session when we're looking to the Lord for ministry from himself, which I must say I've for many years ranked very high in the supplications of our hymn books. May God's illumination guide heart and hand aright.

[00:04:10] I have all my life known that hymn in a slightly different version, and what I saw I disliked. I've always reacted rather violently against the word Rome. What a great pity it happens to rhyme with home, because it makes our hymn book have a very inactive and directionless appearance sometimes. The version in which I knew the hymn said, We gladly while the hours till night shall pass away, just as though we had nothing to do, and were at a loss to fill our time. And so I rather disliked the hymn, and suddenly when it kept being given out by a brother who delighted in it, these lines came to me and revolutionized my outlook upon the hymn. I'm sure you'll agree with me that you couldn't have a better prayer for an occasion like this than this. May God's illumination guide heart and hand [00:05:10] aright. What we think in our hearts, what we do with our hands, that they may be guided by light from God. That's a very wonderful supplication, and it is certainly the supplication that I would make at our meeting today. May it be God's illumination guiding our action. God's illumination guiding heart and hand. I've read again from the Psalms this evening, and in my thoughts the connection is this. I'm thinking particularly in reading this Psalm of these two verses, verses 19 and 20, and that will deliver you from any apprehensive feeling that I have the intention of going through this Psalm word by word. I'm thinking really of verses 19 and 20. [00:06:06] Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast brought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man. Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. Now we were talking this afternoon about taking scraps of scripture for the basis of our meditations, and it would be difficult to find a couple of verses in which you had more fruitful phrases than these two verses that we've read. The great goodness of Jehovah, how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up a treasure store, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence, [00:07:03] the secret of thy presence from the pride of man. Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. There's a great deal that immediately appeals to our hearts in these expressions, the great goodness of Jehovah, the secret of his presence, and this is our guide from the strife of tongues. The only reason that I read the whole psalm is because it manifests that whereas in psalm one the psalmist is finding the strength to avoid the way of the ungodly that perishes, and to cleave to the way of the righteous, which is under the eye day and night of the Lord. He finds the strength for this in meditation in the law of the Lord. The secret of the outward result in verse one is seen in verse two. He delights in the law [00:08:07] of the Lord and in that law meditates day and night. Meditation in the presence of the Lord is the power by which he avoids the way of the ungodly and he cleaves to the way of the righteous. Now the words are very very different indeed, but they are joined together, this verse about meditating and the law of the Lord, and this verse 20, they are joined together by a concept in the psalms which never fails to fill me with delight, and that is the psalmist's joy in God. There's no worship of the Father there because the Father was not known, but the psalmist absolutely delights and rejoices and sings for joy at his knowledge of the Lord revealed. We have it again and again. One thing have I desired of the Lord, psalm 27, that I might dwell in the house of the Lord [00:09:02] and behold the beauty of the Lord and inquire in his temple. And we read more of them here and it's very plain that the experience of joy in God, which as you know I take from Romans chapter five, the experience of joy in God was a very real power for the psalmist. Now in this particular psalm, his joy in God was refuge from the most distressing griefs which he suffered.

You've only got to cast your eye down, I suppose the psalms plainly divided into three parts from verse one to perhaps verse eight, when the psalmist, he calls upon God but expresses great confidence in God due to past experiences of his goodness. From verse nine to [00:10:04] verse nineteen, there is the most heart-rending description of his experience of grief and sorrow and disappointment. Just run your eyes down the verses from verse nine. Lord for I'm in trouble, mine eye

consumed with grief, my life is spent with grief, my years with sighing, my strength fearless, my bones are consumed, I'm a reproach. Verse 12, I'm forgotten as a dead man out of mind, the slander of many, verse 13, fear on every side, taking counsel against me and so on, hands of mine enemies in first verse 15 and then that persecute me. There are, verse 18, there are lying lips speaking grievous things proudly and contemptuously against [00:11:01] himself who is the righteous. In other words, it would be difficult to imagine a description of a more intense sadness and almost despair than these verses. Now it is in the knowledge and the experience of the goodness of the Lord as a hiding place from the strife of tongues that we have these verses brought in and it reminds us of how in how many ways the psalmist's joy in God, the joy in God which the righteous in all ages have been able to enjoy, is a matter of living power with him. Just to cast one's eye over one or two points of interest before we come to these verses, the use of the word trust in the English versions is as a matter of fact a very interesting study. My mind was first taken to it by Norton Schofield, whom I can of course unhesitatingly commend, [00:12:04] there's a very interesting note in Schofield at the beginning of the Psalms about this word trust and it is an interesting study because there are several different words in the original scriptures for which the translators couldn't find a better word than the English trust and we all know what trust means. It's not a strange word to us, it's a happy choice. Perhaps it's come to us from the Bible but certainly it's a very well-known word. A person whom we trust is a person whom we can rely on and that has very many practical ramifications if we feel like this. Now there are two words which are used for the four occasions of the word trust in Psalm 31. In the first verse, reminiscent of many others, it says in thee O Lord do I put my trust.

[00:13:05] Now the word trust there as well as in the my particular verses um verse um 20 verse 19 then the trust in thee, the word trust has a very very precise significance in these connections and that is it means take refuge. You see this is exactly what leads me to the idea that his experience of the goodness of the Lord is for him a refuge from these distressing sorrows and troubles that beset him on every side. In the book of Ruth when in chapter two um Ruth with Nomai returns with Nomai to her land and to her people and to her God and she gets her first contact with Boaz who is to be her husband, the whole story of the book. [00:14:04] Boaz says to her, speaks to her of the God, the Lord, the God of Israel under whose wings thou hast come to trust. Now this is the word she had from all that belonged to a heathen idolatry you see and all that was likely to happen when there was heathen idolatry she had come to take refuge under the wings of Jehovah the God of Israel. Now of course that applies to the Christian from the very beginning. We have fled for refuge to their hold on the hope that is laid before us. Our very first turning to God from our sins was an escape, a refuge from the consequences of those sins which stared us in the face. The idea of trust as taking refuge is a very important one but of course its meaning is not exhausted with our first conversion. It was a constant experience [00:15:06] with the Psalmist. In the end of Psalm 2, you'll remember the last sentence of the Psalm is blessed are all they that put their trust in him and that's the same shade of meaning to the word. Blessed are all they that take refuge in him. Yes, he's going to be God's anointed king in Zion.

He's going to have the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. He's going to take the hostile nations and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. It is indeed true that if we know him as our loving saviour and lord happy indeed are those who have taken refuge with him.

Now in the troubles that the Psalmist experienced here he starts straight away by saying in thee [00:16:02] oh lord am i looking for refuge and it's not possible to have a small gathering of brothers and sisters together like this without being there being with us some who feel themselves at this moment to be in special grief in special distress in a special feeling of the intense vanity of this life under the sun apart from God well it's in experiences like this that the Psalmist shared with us and again and

again he describes them in ways which make us on the one hand realize that he's a man of like passions with ourselves but at the same time there is this wonderful trust in the lord in thee oh lord am i am i taking refuge the whole tendency and purpose of the Psalmist to give expression to the fact that he's finding refuge in the lord from these sorrows that beset him and when he says verse 15 [00:17:07] my times are in thy hand another hymn writer has made these words full of meaning for us but what a comfort they are what a refuge they are whatever the times may be through which we are passing whether they are pleasing or painful dark or bright as the hymn says it's a wonderful thing to know that our times are in the hands of one who loves us our times are in the hand of the lord and he will not give a needless pang to those for whom he has suffered and died and it is uh with the knowledge of the kind of outlook that we have in this verse 15 that he in the last section of the psalm beginning in verse 19 gives expression to these wonderful truths his wonderful experience [00:18:02] and he bursts out oh how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee now it's interesting to inquire who is the person addressed oh how great is thy goodness well i take you back to verse three where it says for thy name's sake lead me and guide me and i take you back to verse one in thee oh jehovah do i put my trust now we are so accustomed both from our manner of prayer and from psalm 23 we are so accustomed to the expression for his name's sake that we perhaps fail to realize what tremendous substance there is in this country concept of doing something or something's being done for his name's sake [00:19:02] in the psalms without the slightest doubt going back from verse two three for thy name's sake to verse one in thee or jehovah do i put my trust in thee in in the psalms without question then the name of jehovah was something absolutely tremendous on account of that name there arose his tremendous confidence for the present and for the future and his experience of the goodness of the lord in the past for thy name's sake lead me and guide me and all that jehovah had uh promised himself to be when first that name was revealed to mooses merciful and gracious slow to anger of loving kindness and tender mercy all these things were in jehovah as well as the righteousness of visiting sins and visiting iniquity all this was in jehovah it was a tremendous experience when mooses first understood that name and one of the things which [00:20:05] speaks very loudly to me when i think of the importance of this concept of the name is the number of times in the old testament that the experiences of god's people are turned into worship in the sense that altars are named you remember them don't you jehovah jireh the lord will provide it became the center of worship at that moment the worship arising to the name jehovah and the person by abraham there's the case of um mooses and his hands being upheld by aaron and her a most fascinating story we very very very often hear allusions to it we often speak about holding up each other's hands in prayer and i'm quite sure that the [00:21:04] concept is a good one but when you come to try to work out the story in excellence and detail it's by no means so easy who exactly does mooses represent in the fact that he was so weak they had to find a stone for him to sit upon and so weak that he couldn't hold up his hands and aaron and her had to hold them up from him but their prayer resulted in victory against the amalekites and therefore they made an altar it became a center of their worship jehovah missai the lord my banner their victory led them to worship and they found something new and so wonderful in the name jehovah that a new special altar was raised jehovah missai you remember the story of gideon and how he was amongst the people who were oppressed by the midianites strife [00:22:04] and they were helpless and they were starving but gideon was threshing corn in secret in the secret place hidden from the strife of tongues you see he was he was enjoying the goodness of the lord in the land of the living and an angel came and made a special revelation to gideon and he also turned this experience into worship he built an altar and called it in the face of million strife he called it jehovah shalom the lord is peace and it was a new experience of the meaning of the name jehovah and it led him to worship and the altar was jehovah missai is it any wonder that in the psalms it says the name of jehovah is a strong tower the righteous fleeth into it and is safe and if we see that that partial revelation of god [00:23:06] which meant so much stage by stage

to god's earthly period experience and all that they found to be in him for them that the name of jehovah was something so wonderful for thy name's sake guide me and lead me and how much greater how infinitely greater how inexpressibly greater is the fund of what's available to us in the prayer of the lord jesus christ keep through thy name those whom thou hast given me we are able to rejoice in the last secrets of the nature of god a relationship of eternal love and purpose and counsel revealed in the name the father no one but the son could reveal that name i have declared thy name unto my brethren and in fulfillment of psalm 22 he declared that name unto his brethren in the midst of the church [00:24:03] he sings praise to god it was because of the name of jehovah for the sake of the name of jehovah that the psalmist was able to have this confidence and it speaks so so loudly to us of the tremendous importance of something practically ignored in christendom except insofar as it belongs to a creedal repetition but the counsels of the father for the son and the church and the love of christ for the church in eternity absolutely unknown these are the things in which we should be able to rejoice because the the content the meaning of the content of god's name the one true god the father for us who are his people of these new testament days well it was therefore in verse 19 oh how great is thy goodness it means the goodness of jehovah [00:25:06] all the experience available to a king of israel up to this present time had led david to say oh how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up as it were in store for them that fear thee for them that fear thee and how absolutely limitless whatever may be our present distress whatever may be the nature of the things which cause us sorrow and trouble then we can indeed say oh how great is the store the treasure house of goodness that there is in god our god the father for all of us who are his children in our prayer meeting the other day in the local prayer meeting there was one brother very very burdened about the state of the world and the poor creatures [00:26:03] who don't know god and are in darkness and are about to participate in an absolutely hopeless election choosing between two evils with nothing good about any of them and he was praying for god's mercy upon the world through the gospel and he was reflecting in his prayer upon the absolute certainty of disaster that lies ahead for this world while he was praying there creeps in a sister from seeing her husband for her life absolutely shattered her husband and herself both so sick that not too late in life they had to give up business and now the husband has just had his second stroke and she's living alone and he can't speak and he can't move and he can't look after himself and it's extremely difficult to fit him into a niche in the medical service at all [00:27:01] and at the end of that meeting we sang the hymn through the love of god our savior all will be well you see whether it's the world in which we live or whether it's the terrible distresses that are liable to descend upon us so immediately and so terribly we can say it's not wishful thinking there's nothing pie in the sky about it it's a simple verity through the love of god our savior all will be well oh how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee there'll be no searching it there'll be no limiting it there'll be no plumbing the depths of it neither now when we need it so greatly or when unhindered when joy to its fullness oh how great is the goodness of our god the father revealed in jesus christ the son now it seems to [00:28:02] me i mustn't spend any more time um in this position but it seems to me that i would like also to leave very strongly with you this expression in verse 20 thou shalt hide them that is those who trust in thee i've explained that those who have taken refuge in thee and those who still now moment by moment and hour by hour take their refuge in thee thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man and from the strife of tongues now that seems to me to be a very very close relative indeed uh to the activity which we had this afternoon in his law doth he meditate day and night it seemed to me that there came out this afternoon our brother john brought it up and i could one could almost feel the murmur of of um [00:29:04] um of concurrence one could almost feel a murmur of agreement and desire that we might have some help about this tremendously important matter of meditation and how we can derive the sweetness from all that is in the name of the father and the son from us and how we can derive the warmth of the heart that made the disciples hearts burn within them by the way

and how we can find the power to live the life of the righteous here in the world and how we can be fruitful with fruit for god we all believe that it's to be found that power is to be found in meditation in the presence of the lord now i personally over the years have derived a great deal of help from two writers they're both very strange people um i uh might incur a good deal of audience from you for even [00:30:07] mentioning their names but mixed up with the most extraordinary error mixed up with a lot of nonsense about the mass and the invocation of the saints that is nevertheless in the writings of one of the medieval catholics a very striking section he is what was called in those days spiritual director to a wealthy lady and she's really anxious you see uh to savor the uh the preciousness of the lord jesus christ and she's looking to him for guidance and he advises her in these letters as to what time of the day is best for a busy housewife to set apart for this business of meditation some might find one time better and some another time but for the busy housewife do [00:31:01] you know what he says this this uh i don't know how you say his name as a matter of fact i suppose in medieval french if we have any experts here i'll get put right about this but i think it would be francois de salas but we could say perhaps francis of sail he was the bishop of geneva just about the time of the reformation such a wicked man he was to be that but in his chapters about meditation he tells this wealthy lady that the best time for a busy housewife to take for meditation is after they've all gone out after breakfast in the morning then is the time to make quite sure that you have the time set apart then he says you'll be able to do it and perhaps at no other time well of course the the man who has to go to business and the teacher has to go to teacher school couldn't do that but we certainly must there's the lesson there we certainly must find the time there's absolutely no escape from the fact from the dilemma put to us by [00:32:06] mr flett this afternoon there's no escape from the dilemma that time must be found to set aside for the secret of his presence and in the chapters which speak about meditation he gives very plain directions as to how to set about and of course the first great thing is uh to uh make certain that you get the time and then he recommends what were uh what we didn't say this afternoon but seems to me to be so far as my experience is concerned a very very very helpful thing indeed and that is to uh endeavor by prayer and the realization of the access that we have by the blood of christ to realize the presence of the lord jesus christ this is what it makes it seem [00:33:03] to me that uh the upper room discourse when we can think of the lord jesus so he's so absolutely close touch with his father and with his friends within outside the brutal tramp of the legions and the roman world and all the hatred there is of himself and his own but inside there is the calm and the peace and there's the secret of his presence from the strife of tongues and from the pride of men and the first great thing to do is to seek by prayer that we might realize just as those disciples sat there and they hadn't any attention but for what he was doing and for what he was saying and for how he was moving their attention was upon him and what he did and what he said and by thinking of that occasion it certainly helps me to realize the [00:34:03] presence of the lord jesus christ and then this man recommends that we take a small portion of holy scripture you'll find he uses something like an expression something like one of the mysteries and you've got to translate all this into sensible english before you can get any good from it but he takes taking he recommends taking a fragment of scripture and in the presence of the lord and seeking that he might speak to us we wait on him and he recommends making a series of propositions which arrive which appear to arise from the expression that we might be thinking about for example over tea we were taking the possibility of simply using the phrase the father's house well immediately a proposition comes to mind about the father's house and we can stop and reflect upon this and that leads us to another proposition that arises [00:35:01] from the thought of the father's house and we can stop and think about this and indeed by using some such where we can with the help of the lord concentrate mind and heart upon the real fount of all that's good in god through his word for us and by that means we can be kept in the secret of his presence from the stripe of tongues and that can be our refuge well it seems to me very plain that the lord has spoken to us today a little bit already and maybe that he will still do so

again about these two expressions which have come to us straight from holy scripture today and they've certainly spoken to my heart and i feel certain that they've spoken to you also this is the man upon whom we've been thinking we've been thinking praying that for his name's sake we may take this path in his word doth he meditate day and night he's like a tree [00:36:05] planted you don't easily shift a tree that's planted i've tried it's no joke trying to shift a tree that's planted he's like a tree planted by the rivers of water he brings forth his fruit in his season and whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper and then there is this man who hidden in the secret of his presence from the strife of tongues on the pride of man he finds his experience never fails of the wonderful treasure of the great goodness of the lord towards those who trust in him