

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

“In You O Lord, I put my trust; Let me never be ashamed; Deliver me in Your righteousness.” That is the prayer of David, son of Jesse, father of Solomon, King of Israel. It is recorded in the 31st Psalm. He is pressed by opposition so fierce that all his friends flee. They don’t want to be near him when the enemy exacts violence upon him.

The Psalm doesn’t identify the specific trial that David suffers. Perhaps it was written when David’s banished son Absalom crafted a devious plan. By gossip and sinful manipulation, by lies, Absalom ruined the reputation of his father. And then he slyly usurped his father’s kingdom. The result of Absalom’s traitorous actions was that David had to flee Jerusalem in shame. He had been betrayed by one closest to him, even by one to whom he had shown mercy.

The Psalmist writes “Lying lips speak insolent things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.” So his life is spent in grief, his years with sighing. He is oppressed and afflicted. And it seems there is no hope. The Christian in the world often feels the same. It is not just the secular schools and an anti-Christian government.

Christians are portrayed in society and in the media as being less intelligent, medieval in their worldview, superstitious, and bigoted. Men openly teach that we are the spawn of apes, and ridicule the Truth that we are wonderfully created by a loving God. But that the world hates us should come as no surprise. The Lord warned his disciples that would be the case.

But like David, sometimes the sharpest cuts come from those we love. Those closest to us can hurt us in ways that the world cannot. Husbands and wives become enemies, and the battles are bitter. Disagreements between parents and children split families. Betrayal and jealousy, anger and hatred mark our fallen relationships. And truth be told, we are not innocent bystanders. Each of us has retaliated in kind. Each of us has uttered hurtful words. Each of us has gossiped, damaging the reputation of others. In that, each of us has been like Absalom.

And so it is that the original usurper has worked in your life. He wanted to usurp the throne of God. And he was willing to take other angels, and all mankind with him in his fall. The atrocities of human behavior find their source in him. He, like Absalom, flatters and tries to convince you that God is mean, that He won’t give you what your flesh wants, and that if you follow him into his dark kingdom you will be truly happy.

But consider how it went for Absalom. His great pride, sinful pride, was in his handsomeness and his thick, beautiful hair. And it was exactly by that – his hair – that he was caught up defenseless, and David’s general ran three spears through his heart. The devil used him, and then threw him away.

That’s how it is with pride, with temptation, with betrayal. The Psalmist writes “...the Lord... fully repays the proud person.” So repent. Repent of your pride, your gossip, your attacks on the reputations of others, lest you be fully repaid for your sins.

But do not despair. Harken to the Words of Psalm 31. The Psalmist places his trust in God: “In you, O Lord, I put my trust; Let me never be ashamed; Deliver me in Your righteousness.” He does not write that we should trust in men. He confesses trust, that is faith, in God. Even in his

suffering, he is bold to pray God that he not be ashamed, that his end be one of salvation, not condemnation, regardless of what he's earned. And that is God's Promise to you.

David knows that his righteousness is insufficient. So he prays "Deliver me in Your righteousness." He places his hope not in his own, but God's righteousness, God's deliverance. And that is where David's suffering meets you. For you too need a righteousness that is perfect, a righteousness that is holy, a righteousness from outside yourself. And God is wont to give you exactly that – that for which David prayed, that for which you pray – His righteousness.

But the road to giving you His righteousness was the Way of Suffering. It was the road of taking on your sins. Consider the Words of the Psalm on the lips of the Christ: "I am a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbors, and am repulsive to my acquaintances.

Marred by the scourge, naked, crucified, He too, perhaps He alone could pray "Those who see me outside flee from me. I hear the slander of many, fear is on every side; while they take counsel together against me, they scheme to take away my life. My eye wastes away with grief, yes, My soul and My body."

Having suffered a greater betrayal than David, the betrayal of one close to Him, even one with whom He ate. On the cross, as He breathed His last, the Righteous One spoke the Words of Psalm 31 – "Into Your hand I commit my Spirit." Even at the darkest hour, even in death, He trusted in God the Father. He hung on that tree like a traitorous Absalom, rejected, forsaken, cast out of the city, His silent heart pierced by spear.

Dead and buried, the Psalmists Words describe Christ entombed: "I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind; I am like a broken vessel." But so too does the Psalmist write "Pull me out of the net they have laid privily for me, for you are my strength." And by His own strength did the same Lord leave the net of death, and rise to new life. So you can pray with David "...as for me, I trust in You, O Lord, I say 'You are my God!'"

In Him, in Christ crucified and risen, is your hope. His righteousness is perfect. So as you pray "deliver me in Your righteousness", you ask only what He is glad to do, what He has Promised to do – take what you deserved, and give you what He earned. He is your Deliverer, He is your Rock of Refuge, He is your Fortress of Defense, a Mighty Fortress to save you.

So the Words of the Psalm are Divine Words for you to pray back to the God who gives them: "Make Your face shine upon Your servant; Save me for your mercies sake. Oh how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, Which You have prepared for those who trust in You." When you pray God's Word back to Him, you can be confident that you pray according to His will.

God delivered David, in spite of his many transgressions. His kingdom was restored. And God delivers you. And what no man or angel could usurp, He freely gives to you - He gives you His Kingdom, the Kingdom of righteousness and peace, the Kingdom of Heaven. He washes you into it, He bespeaks you sinless, and the True King makes Himself your Meal. By His Means of Grace He fulfills the Promise of Psalm 31: "The Lord preserves the faithful... Blessed be the Lord, for He has shown me His marvelous kindness..."

Redeemed in Christ, trusting in God, by the leading of His Spirit, you can pray to the God who loves you, the God who has redeemed you: “Bow down Your ear to me, Deliver me speedily; Be my Rock of Refuge, A fortress of defense to save me. You are my Rock and my Fortress, therefore for Your Name’s sake lead me and guide me.”

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