

Psalm 31: our God when things are hard

Introduction

‘For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.’
(Romans 15:4)

Group discussion

1. How do you typically relate to God in hard times?
2. Ideally, what would your relationship with God look like when life is tough?

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

31 In you, O Lord, do I take refuge;
let me never 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 For you are my rock and my fortress;
and for your name's sake you lead me
and guide me;
⁴ you take me out of the net they have
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 I hate those who pay regard to
worthless idols,
but I trust in the Lord.
⁷ I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast
love,
because you have seen my affliction;

you have known the distress of my soul,
⁸ and you 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 is wasted from grief;
my soul and my body also.
¹⁰ For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my iniquity,
and my bones waste away.
¹¹ Because of all my adversaries I have
become a reproach,
especially to my neighbours,
and an object of dread to my
acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from
me.
¹² I have been forgotten like one who is
dead;
I have become like a broken vessel.
¹³ For I hear the whispering of many—
terror on every side!—

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;
rescue me from the hand of my enemies
and from my persecutors!
¹⁶ Make your face shine on your servant;
save me in your steadfast love!
¹⁷ O Lord, let me not be put to shame,
for I call upon you;
let the wicked be put to shame;
let them go silently to Sheol.
¹⁸ Let the lying lips be mute,
which speak insolently against the
righteous
in pride and contempt.
¹⁹ Oh, how abundant is your goodness,
which you have stored up for those who
fear you
and worked for those who take refuge in
you,

in the sight of the children of mankind!
²⁰ In the cover of your presence you hide
them
from the plots of men;
you store them in your shelter
from the strife of tongues.
²¹ Blessed be the Lord,
for he has wondrously shown his
steadfast love to me
when I was in a besieged city.
²² I had said in my alarm,
"I am cut off from your sight."
But you heard the voice of my pleas for
mercy
when I cried to you for help.
²³ Love the Lord, all you his saints!
The Lord preserves the faithful
but abundantly repays the one who acts
in pride.
²⁴ Be strong, and let your heart take
courage,
all you who wait for the Lord!

Group discussion

1. Look at v1-8, v9-18 and v19-24 respectively. How does David relate to God in each of these sections?
2. What language/images does David use to express himself in each of these sections?
3. How does David's approach to God change over the course of the psalm?

Relating to God in hard times: 3 movements

1. Confidence in calamity (v1-8)
2. Lamenting in trust (v9-18)
3. Contentment in God...despite ongoing hardship (v19-24)

Group discussion

1. How does David's approach to God in Psalm 31 compare with how you typically relate to God in hard times?
2. What excites you about David's relationship with God here? Does anything about it make you feel uncomfortable?

➤ Pray in light of these things

Relating to God in hard times: 3 areas of application

Use Psalm 31 to...

1. Go confidently **to God** when life is hard
2. **Actually** tell God what is hard and why
3. Remember God is enough in suffering

Group discussion

1. What reasons do you have to approach God confidently when life is hard?
2. Do you find it difficult to tell God what is wrong? Why/why not?
3. What prevents you from saying 'God is enough' in suffering?

➤ Pray in light of these things