



Daily Devotional
Reflections on the Psalms

Psalm 31

In you, O LORD, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me. Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me. You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me, take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God. . . . Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away. 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. I have passed out of mind like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel. For I hear the whispering of many—terror all around!— as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life. But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, 'You are my God.' My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors. Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.

It is the lament of one whose life has fallen apart and whose future is, at best, bleak. Whatever emotional, physical, and mental resources he may have had are long spent. *My eyes waste away from grief, my soul and body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing and my strength fails because of my misery and my bones waste away.* He has nothing left to offer in his own defense. His enemies' assaults and pleasure in his suffering are unceasing. He has reached the end of his rope, tied a knot, and now holds on with all of his might. *Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily,* he implores God. *Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me.* His only hope is in God; without him all is lost. Even allowing for some measure of hyperbole, the psalmist's circumstances are dire. *My times are in your hands,* he confesses.

Perhaps you have been there yourself or know someone who has been there, on the edge of despair, within a hair's breadth of death, or wrongly accused of something with little you can do to defend yourself. When you have done all that you can do, what is there left to do? I've heard it said that when you are flat on your back, the only way to look is up, and that is precisely what the psalmist did. What enabled him to endure was his trust that God cared for him and would come to his aid. Sometimes *all* you can do is trust. "Lord, I have done all that I can do. I need your help." In the meantime the psalmist poured out his concern, his anguish, his soul to God. You can trust God and at the same time give vent to your deepest frustrations, anger, fear, and anxiety to God. That's only a matter of being honest, and you may as well for God already knows what you are thinking and feeling. Giving expression to it, though, "puts it out there" where you can see it more clearly and oftentimes that helps you to see even more clearly that whatever it is, it is something that you and God can handle together.