

God's Faithful Care - Rev. Ewen Matheson

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[0:00] A few moments together, let's turn back to a reading in Psalm 31. Psalm 31, and we can read again verse 21.!

We know that the believer's great and greatest privilege and, of course, distinction is God's love and God's care.

We understand also that that is to be experienced within the context of our relationship, our relationship with God our Father through our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The believer is in a unique position, a unique position in all the world, a unique position amongst people. John Flavel, the Puritan, says that the Christian has God as his eternal friend.

Flavel speaks of this with respect to the context of God's love for his people and presenting this relationship and this position that belongs to the Christian.

[1:40] The Christian knows God as his friend, and the Christian knows God's fatherly care. A care that is consistent throughout the entirety of life.

A care that is ever-present and always remains steadfast. It doesn't stop. It doesn't end. It is not limited.

In all of life and in all the different experiences and circumstances of life, the believer is there with God as their eternal friend.

And the care and love of their Father in heaven. In the midst of all the challenges and difficulties and struggles, in all the different suffering, anguish, in all the different situations, and even in the chastisements that we face, we understand that God's care and love is there.

And we base this ourselves often on the great words of Paul in Romans chapter 8, when he tells us that all things work together for good for those who God loves.

[2:49] And so we see that in every situation we face in life, that we believe and are affirming that God is working whatever we're going through together for good.

And this has been established in every age of the church, and therefore every age of the world. That we are called to be trusting and believing in this care and this love and the reality of God's character.

What we are called to do is to live by faith. To believe and trust in the promises. To believe and trust in the very character of who God is.

And this psalm reflects something of this. And it's brought to us here as we take our text. We're going to look at different aspects of the psalm.

But for our text we have verse 21. That is David presenting the testimony and the summary of what this psalm is saying. Blessed be the Lord, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me when I was in a besieged city.

[3:56] David is reflecting and speaking of difficult times. How he has been through hard times and difficult struggles.

How he has met with anguish, suffering, sickness. How he has met with hostility, enmity. How he has met with a time of testing and anguish within his own soul and within his own heart.

How he has met with the reality that sometimes life isn't just hard. Sometimes life is very hard. And he presents his case.

And he brings in verse 23 his counsel. To tell people to rest in the care of God. And he engages himself in prayer and praise.

And he is encouraging others to do so likewise. Encouraging them to sing praise to God. To thank him for all that he has done.

[5:02] As we noted in our reading. The title is part of the Hebrew psalm. And here the title simply says, The Choir Master of Psalm of David.

And it only tells us two things. It tells us first of all, this is to be sung. It's to the choir master. And secondly, it's David's psalm.

There is no other information with regard to the title. Sometimes the titles of the psalms tell you some kind of historical information and mark. We don't know when David wrote this.

We don't know what particular trial he went through. But when we look and examine David's life, we see that there were many trials. And many difficulties for this great man of God.

Difficulties that were of their different extreme. And difficulties that he had to go through. And he engaged in. And it may be even so that there were many difficulties contained within this one psalm.

[6:06] But what we do recognize here is that what he is speaking of is to remind us of the faithful, fatherly care of our God.

To speak of God's love and companionship. To speak of the eternal friend of the believer. To speak of the one who brings comfort to us.

And this is a psalm of comfort, isn't it? In verse 5, Jesus uses these words to comfort himself on the cross. I want us just to consider briefly here this morning.

Just a couple of aspects as we thread through the experiences of the psalm. And first of all, the concern. The concern is the anguish that David speaks of.

It's a personal trial. And you know, faith speaks like this. Faith is honest. It doesn't hide. It doesn't pretend things are okay when they're not.

[7:07] Faith speaks in this way that is engaged in that emotive way as well. We don't follow some kind of stoic philosophy. Where we are hard to everything and unmoved.

We are moved. David is moved. And in fact, David often gives to us the spiritual vocabulary. To be able to describe the experiences and the struggles we go through throughout the psalms.

The psalms bring us comfort. Because they speak of the realities of what we ourselves go through. And here is David in his affliction. One trial.

Many trials. Certainly a crisis point. A point of extreme difficulty. Points in which he speaks of illness and hostility.

Points in which he is speaking of the anguish he is going through. In verse 4, they've let out a net.

They're trying to trap me. In verse 8, the hand of the enemy is there against me.

[8:11] And then in verse 11, he speaks of his adversaries. And then in verse 13, there's scheming on every side. There's terror all around me.

And then in verse 17, he speaks there of the wicked who are going to the place of the dead. And he is there bringing this picture to us of those who are hostile against him.

That they are plotting against him. They are pursuing him. He feels himself to be like a hunted animal. And so many think, is this the experience with Saul?

Where David had looked up to Saul. He was like a father to him and became a father-in-law to him. Somebody he respected as the Lord's anointed in the position of king.

Somebody he looked up to. Who came after him and hunted him. And hunted him and wanted to pursue him to death. Others think this is Absalom.

[9:12] When even David's closest counselor conspired with his son. And he fled Jerusalem. We don't actually know specifically what this is.

But there are different aspects of his case that he speaks about. And how many different kind of peoples are involved in verse 6. He speaks even of those who pay regard to worthless idols.

He speaks of the godless there too. All of those conspiring against him. Everything that he feels externally closing in upon him. In his affliction and anguish.

And he brings in this psalm how it takes its toll. It culminates here in a point of crisis. Of distress. David is exhausted. He's lonely. He's drained. He's broken.

[10:19] He says in verse 7. That his soul is in distress. In verse 8 he says. My eye is wasted from grief. He's talking about his weeping.

My soul and body. In verse 10. My life is spent with sorrow. My strength fails me. My bones they waste away.

Away. In verse 11. He's the object of dread. And then in verse 21. He says. This is a besieged city. I'm in this corner. I'm in this place where I can't go. Anywhere else. But I'm facing my affliction. And my anguish. And David even here.

Speaks of the reality of all that he has gone through. And he speaks also of confession. Where he is describing even the reality of his repentance.

[11 : 19] Even though the wicked is pursuing him. He knows he is not himself free from guilt. But he engages in that repentance.

And the trial here. Becomes a full and complete. And all consuming trial. It's begun outside him. The external circumstances of life.

But it becomes internal. And it sends him to look inward. And it's affecting his soul. And he's examining himself. And he is speaking of his distress.

And his anguish. And his pain. And he says in verse 22. That he was worried. That he was cut off from the sight of God.

Verses 1 and 17. Speak of the fear of shame. That his witness and testimony would be a shame. He is concerned. He is concerned. He is concerned.

[12 : 21] About his walk. About his relationship with the Lord. He is concerned because he is spiritually struggling. And he craves and longs for the assurance.

Of the care of God. That is the case of David here in the psalm. It is the concern he expresses. But then he moves on to speak of his confidence.

Because as the believer moves. To record their spiritual affliction. They are able to move onward. Engaging here in the recognition. That faith is producing this fruit.

That recognizes and rests and waits upon the Lord. And is able to identify that God is with him.

Verse 1. He is my refuge.

Verse 2. The rock of my refuge. My strong fortress. Verse 3. He speaks again in the same language. My rock. My fortress. He continues to go in this way.

[13 : 23] In verse 4. You are my refuge. And then towards the end of the psalm. Again he speaks in this way. In verse 19. All who take refuge in you. Here is the language of dependence.

The language of trust. The language that in the midst of anguish and affliction. Knows where to go. Knows where to turn.

And when we go through our own struggles. And our own anguishes. Where do we go. Who do we turn to.

David is saying. I can't turn to my neighbors. They've turned against me. My counselors are plotting against me. My friends from long ago. And I can't turn to myself.

I can't trust myself. There is only one. The one who is my refuge. And my rock. And that language of course.

[14 : 24] Is filled with meaning. We recognize it of course. When we come. Especially to Psalm 121. Where the psalmist says. I look to the hills.

To see where my help comes from. Are the hills going to help me? And again. As we sung together earlier. In one of the psalms. That God is that mighty fortress.

Speaking here. That God is our rock. Our strength. And our help. David himself knew. What it was. To be on a rock. That was a place of escape.

As Saul hunted him. He was on one side of the hill. And Saul on the other. And he escapes. And flees from Saul. And his life is kept. And he says of that hill.

That's a rock of escape. God was there. And the language of fortress. Or refuge. Is the language to speak of the old city. Or old walled cities.

[15 : 23] That safe place for the people. They were outside the walls. Working the land. But when the enemy would come in. They would all flee inside the city. All come in the city gates.

And the city gates would be shut. And the enemy could not get in. Could not harm. Could not get near them. And this is the language of faith.

God is our mighty fortress. He is our refuge. He is our rock. And this is what happens. As faith is exercised. As we go through this.

Spiritual exercise. And as we go through this. Reality. Of what we engage in. And endure ourselves. It's to draw us nearer to God. It's so we place our confidence in him.

So we rest in this mighty fortress. We find our escape in this rock of escape. We are resting in him. The challenges we face are everywhere.

[16 : 27] All around us. Externally. And especially internally. And sometimes we question ourselves.

Like David in verse 22. I said in my alarm. I'm cut off from your sight. But you heard the voice of my pleased mercy. When I cry to you for help. I'm crying for help. I'm weak. I'm vulnerable. I'm needy. Here is the child of God. In the midst of their suffering and anguish.

In the darkness. And faith cries out. And speaks to the child of God. And says. See what is unseen. Endure in the reality of resting.

In the security. And surety. Of the promises and person of God. Find your confidence in him. Your rest in him.

[17 : 31] Commit your way to him. In verse 5. Into your hand I commit my spirit. This verse of course is used by our Lord on the cross.

It's the best known verse of the entire psalm. One of the best known verses of the book of Psalms. And Jesus takes these words upon his own lips. And the cross to give him comfort.

After he had suffered. After he had been enduring in the darkness. After he had said. It is finished. He said.

Into your hands I commit my spirit. And that's what faith does. Much like Job. Who says.

Though you slay me. I will trust in you. Whatever I go through. However difficult life is. I will trust in you. That you are my friend.

[18 : 38] My eternal friend. Even in the deepest darkness. That the commentator Dixon says here in his commentary on the psalm.

When the clouds hideth the Lord's favor. Faith knoweth it may shine again. When the clouds hideth the Lord's favor.

Faith knoweth it may shine again. This is what goes on in the trials of the believer. In our own spiritual struggling.

When we suffer. And when we go through anguish. And everything seems like a mystery to us. And maybe we are confused. And everything feels so dark.

And what faith is telling us is. To trust. To place our confidence in God. And to believe that his ways are better.

[19 : 38] To commit our spirit. To commit our entire life to him. And that confidence thoroughly brings commitment. Commitment and confession.

And we see this throughout the psalm. In verse 14. I trust in you. I say you are my God. My times are in your hands. Verse 19.

How abundance is your goodness. And again as we take in for our text. Verse 21. Blessed be the Lord. For he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me.

Here is a believer coming through the trial. Enabled to see the victory that is theirs. The victory that is ours. Through the victory of Christ.

That Paul says also that we are more than conquerors. Not just that he works all things together for good. But that we are more than conquerors. We are the people who have found God's help.

[20 : 38] Who have found the rock and refuge for our lives. And who come to return. Displaying our faith. By demonstrating our gratitude.

Coming to him in recognition. In thanksgiving. In praise. Displaying this living faith. That gives a testimony. That speaks of hope.

Blessed be the Lord. That's our commitment. He is our commitment. And what he is doing here is counseling us.

Isn't it? Faith seeks God's closeness. And the hardest thing in the midst of a trial. Is our concern.

As to whether the Lord is near us. If the Lord is still with us. And in the moment that the light shines. We see that he was always there. Our eternal friend.

[21 : 36] But faith is not something that remains private. And our trials here in this world. And in this life. They have a purpose. They have two purposes. The first purpose is for our holiness.

Or our sanctification. The second. Is for our witness. To witness. To witness the world. And to witness. To the people of God.

That there is. An opportunity for us. To encourage others. In verse 23. Love the Lord. All you. His saints. Be strong.

And let your heart take courage. All who wait on the Lord. He wants others. To know. What he finds. At the end. Of his affliction.

What he finds. Of who God is. As his faith. Has been exercised. He is encouraging others. To wait on the Lord. Encouraging them.

[22 : 35] To engage. In the exercise. Of faith. Not of our faith. That falls away. Not of our faith. That stagnates. Not of our faith.

That regresses. Not of our faith. That shipwrecks. But of faith. That thrusts. In God's. Greater. Our purpose. That in the midst of everything.

We are called to go through. We have found his fatherly care. And we have found his. His friendship. As the one.

We rest in. As our refuge. And our strength. We are resting. In his promises. And more.

We are resting in him. In who he is. Here is a reminder for us. That God really cares about us.

[23 : 32] And draws near to us. And when we go through our depths. We need to trust. That all will be well.

That he really cares for us. That he really cares for us. These are the things that we have to constantly remind and counsel. Our own soul.

And other people too. To speak a positive word of encouragement. To tell one another that God is good for us. That he loves us.

That he loves his people. Blessed be the Lord. For he has wondrously shown. His steadfast love. To me. Find encouragement here for yourself.

Find here for yourself. The confidence. That David finds. That if you. Are walking by faith. If you know the Lord.

[24 : 32] God. He is here as your eternal friend. He cares for you. He loves you. And if you don't know him.

What you're missing out on. Is all of these things we've just spoken of. And you'll have your own different trials. But would you really want to be alone in them?

And would you really want to face a darkness. That has no light. Where here there is a God. Who is inviting us in and through his son. To come.

And to know his love. And compassion. And mercy. And care. And for us to be able to sing. Blessed be the Lord. For he has wondrously shown his steadfast love.

To me. To me. Amen. And the Lord bless our thoughts together. Let's pray together. Gracious and most holy God.

[25 : 37] We give thanks to you. For the reminders we have of your care. We bless you. And praise you for your goodness. We pray that you'll be near to us. And help us to have that kind of faith.

And forgive us our sins. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. We'll turn then to sing these words. As we have them on page 37. That's verses 19 to 24 of Psalm 31.

On page 37. Your goodness Lord is very great.

Prepared for those who fear your name. You show your goodness openly. To all who your protection claim. And so on. To the end of the psalm. And we'll remain standing for the benediction afterwards too.

Your goodness, Lord, is very great.

[26 : 42] Faithful for those who fear your name, you show your goodness, O heaven, to all who your protection claim.

Your presence hides a shelter as there, from those who fought to take their life.

And in your death you keep them safe. From evil does that stare outside.

The Lord be praised because he showed the wonder of his love to be.

When in a city I was proud, surrounded by the enemy.

[28 : 33] In my alarm I rush this end.

The time was hidden from your eyes. But when I called to you for help, then grace you listened to my cries.

Oh, love the Lord, call you his saints.

The faithful will be kept by God. But he will give the promise you.

Be strong, take heart, come in the Lord.

[29 : 59] Amen. Now, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. And that's all. And that's all. Amen.

And that's all. Thank you.