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Main idea: Do you ever feel overwhelmed, angry, and/or frustrated? Are you worried and anxious? Is life crashing down upon you as so many enemies converge and fight against you? Are people gossiping about you and conspiring against you saying *you can't do it*, that *you will fail*? So, what do you do? Give up? Or do you allow God to be your trust and focus, your shield of protection, and allow Him to rescue and save you?

God *is* with you! For He already is your shield and He will lift you up in Him. So, cry out to God, plead your case to Him; allow Him to take your burdens, for He *will* answer you. Rest in His arms; be safe in Him, for He is your Protector and purpose for living. He watches over you and loves you deeply and true, so trust in Him; allow Him to be your safety and Lord. In Him, you need not be afraid or worried, for whatever others may or may not do, you are safe—no matter what happens or what is lost or gained. Ask God to act and rescue you; allow your worries to be put away and discharged to His care by allowing Him to surround, impact, and sustain you. He will get your enemies and punish the wicked because true victory and contentment are found when we trust and obey Him. He will bless and keep you!

Contexts and Background:

This is a Psalm of David that he composed when his son Absalom started a “coup” to overthrow his father and take over the kingdom. Like most of the Psalms, there is a contrast. Here, it is one of lament, meaning *despair*, *anguish*, and *struggle* as well as *confident praise* and *peace*. A hope in the midst of fear and hopelessness can be had for us if our focus is in the right place. David is fleeing for his life, as his son Absalom, a young man of contempt and malevolence, seeks what is not his and seeks to take his own father's life. Yet, all David could do is pray that his son's life be saved anyway, and modeled for us trust in the Lord, even in times of dire stress and chaos.

The people once loyal to David had turned on him and were mocking God saying *even God cannot help you* to the point that his antagonists saw his faith in God as a waste. David turned to God anyway and did not listen to the mockers; he sought the One in whom trust can be placed without hesitation or worry. David was confident in his Lord and knew He could help—and He did help. God took David and rescued Him and restored his kingdom; when it was time, his son Solomon took over. David's enemies were put to shame and to death. His son Absalom was killed by his own vanity as his long, luscious hair was caught in a tree where he hung helplessly until a soldier, who was loyal to David, speared him. God proved to David, to his enemies, and to us today that He is the One who saves and blesses His people (2 Sam. 15-18).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

Verses 1-2: David the psalmist is exhausted, deeply distressed in his troubles, and surrounded by tragedy and distress; yet, he passionately prays and calls on God—and still trusts in Him. In so doing, he encourages us to move our thinking and focus to God. For Christians, that means having faith and confidence in Christ our Lord.

- **LORD.** Yahweh, LORD Almighty, with the inflection of “Abba Father.” David is in dire misery, so he prays confidently to the Lord. He knows and loves his God, and David is not naive to his situation. This is the heart of prayer, our hearts opened, our anguish, fears, hopes, and joys openly given and offered to God in Whom we trust. Honesty in prayer is essential! This is not about reason or logic or a form or format. It is the mysterious workings of God who condescends to us, hears us, and wants to commune with us. So, give Him your innermost fears; build yourselves up in Him.
- **Many are.** David faces numerous, contemptuous foes and threats from former loyalists, a misguided kingdom, and his own son. David's own people gave their pledges and loyalty to Absalom whose heart was prideful and his intentions skewed. This was betrayal of the king—one called and placed by God—and thus the betrayal was directed to God Himself (Psalm 22:7-8; 71:10-11).

- *There is no hope.* David quotes his malevolent oppressors and proves God does bring us hope. Their mocking is turned back on them by the retribution of God.
- *Selah.* Its true meaning may have been lost to us over the centuries. It is, perhaps, a liturgical or musical interlude or a brief pause for dramatic effect in worship, or perhaps a musical note, or the time or line at which the congregation responds.

Remember, the Psalms were a part of the Hebrew worship hymnal, and also of the Christian hymnal from the founding of the Early Church, certified during the Reformation. Our contemporary Hymns and praise music are reliantly new; most denominations did not use anything but the Psalms or mostly just the Psalm called the “Psalter” and a just few hymns sprinkled in such as Bach or Handel, until after 1900.

Verses 3-4: This Psalm had a rich tradition of being used by ancient and contemporary Israeli soldiers in battle to express their trust in God. Here, it is a song of praise and a prayer of peace against all odds.

- *But you O Lord.* David utters his total confidence in God! David knows that God will answer his prayer.
- *Shield.* This is the wooden, handheld protector, inlaid with bronze or leather, used for surviving a sword attack and was normally used in battle. Shields are also displayed in the king’s palace as a show of might and honor for those who have fallen in battle. This gives us the image of a God who protects us (Duet. 33:29; Prov. 30:5).
- *My glory.* This is a term to greatly honor and rejoice in God because God is our provider and King (Psalm 34:7; 91:11).
- *Lift up my head.* This is a metaphor for encouragement; it refers to God as our protector, for He gives us victory over our enemies. He is greater than anything or any power that we could ever conceive of or face, and He is our God (1 Sam. 2:7-9; Psalm 103:7-9; 110:7).
- *Holy hill.* Meaning God’s dwelling place and earthly home where people may approach, worship, and sacrifice, also called Zion. It refers to the Lord’s heavenly throne, His innermost sanctuary, represented by the Temple in Jerusalem, which sits on a hill (Psalm 2:6).

David knew his troubles were self-inflicted. He sinned against God and his loyal friend by an affair with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11-12); in addition, he did not bring up his sons to love and fear God as he did. Thus, he reaped the consequences he brought upon himself and yet, still cried out to God—and, our God of grace listened and gave hope and then peace.

Verses 5-6: David had a secret for success early on as a child that carried him from slaying giants and wild animals to becoming king and handling extreme adversity. It was simply confidence and assurance that God is in charge and that He will care for His righteous.

- *Slept.* Meaning God protects and sustains us; thus, we can trust Him. This is the image of being totally vulnerable, that even though enemies attacked him, assurance and security surrounded David and were held safe by his faith in the Lord who preserved him (Psalm 91).
- *I will not be afraid.* David’s confidence is in our Lord because of His care and His watching over us. We can trust and relax in our Lord even in suffering and defeat (Psalm 4:8).

What gets us through our rough patches and dry spells is simple yet deep beyond measure: trust in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior! We have no need to be afraid or worry when we are in Christ!

Verses 7-8: David’s prayer is peace in the midst of a civil war. Abraham Lincoln used this Psalm as a prayer, and so can we.

- *Arise.* This is a Jewish battle cry and an expression of a call to action that means to urgently engage, to “GET UP NOW!” Grammatically, it is an imperative, seeking quick and decisive action. It is OK to ask God to help you—He wants that. Just make sure your call is just and right, and not out of petty retribution or for selfish gain (Ex. 12:31, Num. 10:35; Duet. 2:13; Judg. 7:9; Psalm 68:1).

- *Save me/deliver me.* The image is that God fights on our behalf and will punish those better than we, so let Him do so. Also, this is an imperative; in the Hebrew, this rhymes and is poetic.
- *Oh my God.* God is personal and approachable. Wow! What a comfort for anyone, especially those in need! The tragedy is that today, this phrase is more of a swearword or an exclamation to something surprising, when it is meant to be an open door to God's heart!
- *On the jaw.* This is an expression of humiliation. This is giving our right to get even over to God. Personal vengeance has no place in the lives of those who are Christians (1 Kings 22:24; Isa. 50:06; Matt. 5:39; Rom. 12:17-21).
- *Broken the teeth.* This is referring to stopping a wild animal, as in taking its strength, power, and threat away. When we act wickedly, we become like a wild animal attacking, but that must be stopped (Psalm 7:2; 58:6).
- *Wicked.* Meaning those who are "spiritually dead," or so prideful that there is no room left for God. Such mindsets have no constraints or scruples and thus they do as they please. In the process, they sin, hurt and betray others (Gen. 6:5; Psalm 10:4; Rom. 1:18-f).
- *Belongs to the Lord/from the Lord.* This refers to victory and the deliverance of God—here and now, and in eternity. God is our vindicator. Therefore, we cannot be dishonored or defeated as long as we are His children! Our ultimate reputation is whom we are in Christ, not what others may or may not think or say or do! His undeserved salvation is given to us (Psalm 7:10-17; 10:16-18; 12:7; Rom. 8:28-31; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; 2 Thess. 1:5-10).
- *Deliverance/salvation.* What Christ does now is to purchase our soul through His blood, which gives us redemption. Our salvation comes to us free without strings or merit; however, what it cost God is immeasurable!
- *Blessing.* Meaning to return to God and the hope we have by the promise of Jesus. God's favor usually goes on those who fear and trust in Him. Blessings are never mere monetary or physical comfort; they are the realization that our commitment and security are in Christ.

If the Lord cares for us in our tough times—and He does—does our attitude reflect it? David's did. He was faithful and sustained the righteous at all times and all situations. When our trust is in Him, we can have confidence (and a good attitude, too.)

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Do you have so much worry in your life that you try to count sheep? Instead of counting sheep, count on the Shepherd! David was king at the apex of his career and call when suddenly, his son betrayed him and he fled for his life. David's beloved son and nation had not only turned on him, they mocked him and God. He was old and was not the man of war as he was before, yet he did not get angry with God. He did not seek revenge on his son; he did not sit and do nothing. He took action! David's world was crumbling all around him, yet He put his trust in the Lord, his Shepherd, his Hope, and His Redeemer. We, today, need to realize our hope is in Jesus Christ, not in our circumstances or worries. David refused to let worry and anxiety overtake him. He slept as a baby in his mother's arms because he knew His God was there. His Comfort came from knowing God surrounded him. Even if his life was to be taken, God's purpose and sovereignty was at hand and was perfect. When your confidence is in Christ and you know for certain He is on your side (giving that you are operating justly and in His character precepts), you are already victorious! When friends betray or discourage you, your self-esteem and comfort can be in Christ. When the world seems to hate you, they also hate righteousness. Take comfort; you are in good company. We can rest in Him, for He never sleeps; He always cares for us and He will keep you steady and triumphant (Psalm 12:1-3). God is the One who is here and lifts us up!

Christian Life Principle: The secret to eliminating worry is to know where our help comes from, Christ our Lord. Our simple confidence and assurance that God is in charge and that He will care for you, His child (Matt. 6:25-34).

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What causes you to stress or lose sleep? How does this Psalm give you hope and/or comfort?
2. What do you do when you feel overwhelmed, angry, or frustrated? What should you do? Why, as Christians, do we need not be afraid or worried? Why are some of us stressed? What can we do?
3. Have you ever cried out to God? If you get in a jam, how would you plead your case to Him?
4. If Christ solved our greatest problem, sin, and gives us an eternity of hope, why then are we, as Christians, so worried and anxious?
5. Have you made God your trust and focus? If so, how so? If not, why not? What would it mean to allow Christ to be your shield of protection? Consider that He has already rescued you and saved you and He is with you.
6. How do you feel that our God, who loves and cares for you, also watches over you? How can this help you trust Him more?
7. What would your life look like if you released to Our Lord's care all of your fears and worries?
8. David was living in the mistakes and bad decisions he had made and yet, he still prayed, and our God of grace listened and gave him hope and peace. How does this give you confidence when you have setbacks?
9. What gets in your way of thinking and focusing upon God? How would a better focus help you with your faith and confidence in Christ?
10. What would happen if you felt God surround, impact, and sustain you? So what needs to happen in your life for your hope to be in Jesus Christ, and not your circumstances or worries?
11. What does it mean to rest in God's arms? How is Christ your Protector and purpose for living? What can you do to feel safer in Him? What can you do to allow Him to take your burdens?
12. What renews your confidence when things go awry? What gets in the way of your confidence? What can you do to have more confidence in Christ the Lord?