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“Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief.” Psalm 31:9

Main Idea: Oh Lord, I need you, I will take shelter with you for protection and you are my hope. I will not let them humiliate or disappointment or lead me away. I need your deliverance and rescue from my hopeless situation. Please see me and lead me to a safe place. Protect me, for you have rescued me before and I need you ever so much again. Do not allow me to fall prey to evil people or be tempted beyond my ability to say no. I hate what takes people away from you, yet, I will trust you no matter what. I relish and rejoice in your goodness and love. You know my distress, hurts and weakness and are still giving me grace. Even though I am consumed with anguish and hurt, and so much is evil is against me, even people conspire against the godly, it is like more than I can handle; yet, I will trust in you! You are my God and my life is in your hands. Please bless and guide me as I serve you. Let those who hate you and come against your faithful fall to their own traps. Keep us safe from the deceptions and plans of the evil and shamefulness and let us experience your goodness and shelter. I praise you Lord! You heard my cry and I love you Lord. Help us be strong in you and preserve us for your glory.

Contexts and Background:

This Psalm shares its background with Psalm 30 and David's consequence of disobeying God by taking a census, and now he has a choice of punishment be handed out and its ramifications. This is the lament of extreme anguish and pain that turns into a thanksgiving of praise with extensive use of repetition to make his points. At this time, David became physically ill too, and in his suffering and lack of any medical knowledge or intervention, he was at God's mercy. Thus, he is personally suffering and sees his people in suffering, too.

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

Verses 1-8: This is the prayer attached to the faith of a man after God's heart who is in deep distress and danger, who instead of mere complaint and blame, goes to God with his pain and his deep trust and confidence. Prayer and faith must always be tied together to be effective,

- *In you, LORD.* Unequivocal trust no matter what. This is an expression of deep faith and confidence in God as Lord almighty, where one places not just life, but mindset and trust in God, no matter what (Ex. 3:15; 6:3; Psalm 20:1).
- *Refuge.* A safe place to flee to in times of war, like the Masada, outside of Jerusalem. This gives us the image of a God who cares for our wellbeing and thus leads and protects us (Duet. 33:29; Psalm 5:8-12; 18:1-3; 23; Prov. 30:5).
- *Put to shame.* This means to fall to reckless folly or a kind of fool who does immoral actions and does not feel anything they did was wrong, even contempt for God. David did this with Bathsheba and Nathan confronted him with. Such receive conviction and even moral judgment from others and then feel guilty (1 Sam. 12; 25; Ecc. 2:14; Psalm 10:4; 18: 1-7; 73:11; Rom. 1:22; 3:10).
- *Your righteousness.* This means the seeking of God's presence, compassion, and understanding. Because of the relationship of grace we have and that David had with God, we can go into His presence. It is the Lord's presence that guides us in our healthy relationship with Him. The more we know of Him and His principles, the better decisions and discernment we will make and have (Psalm 4:1; 5:8-12; 1 Cor. 1:30).
- *Turn your ear.* Meaning to listen and give attention. It is an expression to ask for rescue promptly and also with faith, not doubtful of God's ability (Psalm 38:22; 40:17; 70:1; 71:12).

- *Rescue.* God promises us He will come to our rescue, but it will not always be when and what we hoped for. His plan is best, even when we do not see it. Yet, we are to allow His rescue, receive His salvation and work in us (Psalm 25:4-5; Isa. 45:13; Jer. 23:6).
- *Rock of refuge.* A poetic symbol for God. A safe place to flee to in times of war like a walled city. This is a symbol of security and defense as well as a place of refuge. Like a well-built fort in the side of a mountain that the people of a village could flee to in an attack. Like the ancient Canaanite cities carved into cliffs. Here God is our security. This also denotes David hiding in a cave from Saul as God protected him (Duet. 32: 4,5-18, 31, 37; Judges 6:2; 2 Sam. 23:25-38; Psalm 18^o1-3; 27:5; 61:2; Isa. 44:8).
- *Lead and guide me.* This means to seek the will of God in our faith and life by God's lead and command. This is an appeal to God to hear us and have mercy and set us on the right path. His plan is best, not the world's or our own. We can have confidence in God. Even though it seems our prayers are not being heard or responded to, the Lord has set apart the godly for His purpose and plan, and He will answer us in His time (Psalm 25:4-7; Isa. 45:13; Jer. 23:6; John 14:26; 15:26; 2 Peter 1:21; Eph. 4:18; Rev. 1:19).
- *Trap.* David prays that those who are against him and God will be caught in their lies so he will be exonerated. Beware that unrepentant sins will be our own undoing, as we fall into the very trap we set up.
- *Into your hands / righteousness, I commit my spirit.* A lament, as in a desperate and passionate cry of anguish. Meaning to entrust oneself to God even to death, because He is righteous, and we are not. This is quoted by Jesus on the cross (Job. 10:12; 17:1; Luke 23:46).
- *Worthless idols.* Idols that people worshipped were lifeless and led the person to nothing at best, and a life of worthlessness and apostasy at worst; they are created by men and take us away from the real God (John 10:28-29; Rom. 8:28-30; Heb. 7:25; 10:13; 1 John 5:21).
- *Trust in the LORD.* A foundational confession of faith, along with *you are my God.* As it denotes, to place our faith in God so we have conviction and commitment to know Him, submit and rely on Him, and not our situation, because he is Truth (Ex. 14:32; Psalm 4:5-6; 37:3; Prov. 3:5; Jer. 39:18; Nahum 1:7; Acts 14:23).
- *Be glad and rejoice.* To rejoice in the anticipation that God will act. This is also an expression of honor, glory, and gratitude to God for who He is and what He has done. It expresses our praise and honor for His glory. This is a celebration of our salvation in Him (Matt. 5:12; Rev. 21:2).
- *Anguish of my soul.* The context is that God deeply and truly knows us. The physical and emotional distress caused by betrayal, lies and deceit. There is only one solution God.

Verses 9-24: David realizes his lament can do nothing in and of itself and turns it into trust. This is a prayer that we can go to God at all times, good and bad. God will do right for the innocent, for those who suffer and are needy, and will act in His perfect time. We can drop to our knees and still commune in passion and seek His mercy. Even when our enemies are ruthless, we can and must trust and praise Him throughout it all.

- *Spacious place / large room.* There is plenty of space for God to work; whereas our lack of faith and pride will be what confines and hinder us.
- *Merciful.* An appeal for God to have "space or room for me (Psalm 4:1-2)."
- *Affliction / iniquity.* The stress and grief from outside forces, not just from one's bad choices.
- *Contempt / reproach.* The loss of reputation. When we are scorned and even worse, betrayed or lose our reputation, it hurts deep (Psalm 22:6; Jer. 20:10).

- *Broken pottery / vessel.* A metaphor for one's frailty and in context being with a serious illness (Ecc. 12:6).
- *Conspire / scheme / counsel together, against me.* This means to plot evil against someone. Refers to *revolt* as the haters of God scheme and rebel against God; it is a showcase of our sinful nature and depravity! They further display their disloyalty by rebelling against one another. The only unity they have is their rebellion against God and their hatred of those who are godly and upright. This culminates in the persecuting of those who are righteous, something which God detests! This happened with David, in the Early Church and still does today (Psalm 2:1-3; 38:12; Prov. 24:2; Isa. 59:3-13; Acts 4:25-28).
- *In your hands.* A statement that God is Sovereign and in control. Our lives and destiny is in God's righteous, loving and sovereign plan and will. This is what should give the faithful one great comfort.
- *Face shine.* Meaning God's loving presence and giver of salvation. God is the source of true blessing. This is in the form of a priestly blessing that shows us God who reveals Himself by His goodness and blessings as well as favor (Num. 6:24-25; Psalm 4:6; 67:1).
- *Unfailing / steadfast love.* Love in a covenant, as in God and His elected one or called. David is reminding God, who does not need it.
- *Silenced.* To be completely stopped and or removed from the situation and even the earth.
- *Praise be / blessed be the LORD.* A form of thanksgiving. God is Holy, majestic and glorious and excellent throughout the universe and He is to be honored and glorified by our devotion, praise and worship through all times and places (Job. 38:4; Jer. 51:48; Psalm 113:2; 104:34; Rom. 15:8-12).
- *Under siege / besieged city.* Perhaps meaning a difficult time like being under attack.
- *Love the LORD.* Like the Shema, with all our heart, mind and strength. This is the application of God's true Truth working in us causing a response from our gratitude. Because of what God has done for me, I will respond (Deut. 6:4-9).
- *Take heart.* We can take comfort that when we are in a relationship with God, we have His loving kindness, as nothing we face will be more difficult than we can put up with.
- *Hope in the LORD.* Our contentment in life is predicated on our faith and in responding with trust and confidence in God, as He is in control.

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

David is consumed by anguish, and he asks for deliverance and in so doing trusts in God as LORD. He had a choice, the same one we all have, how will I handle the disappointments and the frustrations of life. When I do my best and believe wholeheartedly in Chris as Lord, yet my life is falling apart. I did what is right, and I lost. A loss of a loved one, a loss of a job, a personal setback, a betrayal from someone we trusted, or major attacks from those of ill character or even dark spiritual forces. What do I do? What choice will I make?

We need to place our lives all of our will, trust and happening into the most caring, effective, loving hands that could ever be, Christ as Lord. We even have the incredible gift and privilege to commune with God and He hears us! He knows us, and He listens, we can let Him know what we are in, and of course He already knows, then like David, we must come to the place we wholeheartedly trust and rely on Him and even praise Him in the midst of our calamity. To allow our perceived needs, interests and ideas be placed aside when that contradicts or usurp God's ways and plans. When the world is against us, we dig even further in Him, as our Protector.

Christian Life Principle: Happiness is predicated on our situation, whereas joy, as in contentment is based on our trust in our Lord. We will all face disappointments and frustrations in life. What we want or expect will collide with our experiences of reality or sin or attack. We must get to a place where we take

our choice of how we handle them, and move away from the why, our self-pity, discouragement and resentment and adhere to trusting in Christ as LORD.

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. Have you ever been in a hopeless situation? What did you do?
2. How have you rejoiced in God's goodness and love in difficult times?
3. How do complaint and blame do nothing for one's situation and even hinders it?
4. What did it take for you to have confidence in God? How does this help you see God's presence, compassion, and give you understanding?
5. The more we know of God and His principles, the better decisions and discernment we will make. How have you experienced this? Why would some Christians reject this notion?
6. How do unrepentant sins become our own undoing?
7. How does a confession of faith give one conviction and commitment to know God more, submit and rely on Him?
8. Our lives and destiny is in God's righteous, loving and sovereign plan So, how will this give you great comfort?
9. Our contentment in life is based on our growing faith. How will this grow your responding trust and confidence in God?
10. What do you need to realize more that God is in control?
11. What are some idols that people worship today? What is the appeal? How do they take us away from the real God? What can the church do?
12. What does unequivocal trust in God, no matter what look like? How do you do this no matter what?