

What The King's Prayer Reveals

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[0:00] As I read Psalm 31 aloud, I invite you to follow along with your own eyes and then to keep this open in front of you as we work through so that you can see the word of God, the verses, and that the spirit can minister to all of us because we trust it's his inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear, powerful, and all sufficient word for you and me, his people.

Psalm 31. Psalm 31.

Psalm 31.

The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Let's pray.

[4:50] Oh, Lord, we thank you for your word that's living and active and sharp.

we pray that by the power of your Holy Spirit your word will pierce into us Lord that you'll divide the innermost part of us that by cutting us open with your word Lord the seed of the gospel of Jesus Christ will find good soil and that it will bear much fruit in our lives so that you will be glorified and your kind mercy will be made known to all through the lives of your people whom you've redeemed by your grace alone for your glory alone we ask Amen well prayer is a window into a person's soul when a person's praying we get to hear through their words the thoughts, the meditations the beliefs of their innermost being even after suffering through a day of conflict with a loved one after our frustrations may have reached a boiling point with one another isn't it true in our experience that if we can just hear one another pray the grace of God has a way of melting the ice prayer brings us around the foot of the cross of Jesus and we see our Lord Jesus Christ working like 360 degrees around his cross because prayer it reveals our views of God it reveals our views of ourselves and of one another in the light of God's glory in prayer we can confess our weakness in prayer we confess our struggles and our fears but also through prayer we find our hope we remind one another to trust in God prayer is a window into the soul

Psalm 31 is not only what some have called an exquisite masterpiece of Hebrew poetry it's that but it's more Psalm 31 is a prayer it's the prayer of a king and we get to listen in by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit these words that David prays to God are recorded and preserved for us and we get a window into the soul of this anointed man is really a shadow of the anointed king Jesus Christ as we walk through this Psalm verse by verse you'll get to hear one more time this king's fears and struggles the king's view of God and view of himself and you'll be encouraged by what his trust and his hope are anchored in so my encouragement is hear the prayer of this king and may God melt your heart my sermon title is what the king's prayer reveals what the king's prayer reveals and I'd like to point out four glorious truths in this psalm number one the king's prayer reveals the grounds that God has laid for our pleas to him this king's prayer reveals the grounds that God has laid down upon which he'll accept please request from us in this psalm 31

David's having to exercise faith he's trusting in what he cannot see look at verse 1 in you oh lord I put my trust God is spirit God is invisible but he puts his trust in the lord and he says let me never be ashamed there's a threat there's there's a very real threat that he will be ashamed according to what he can see that's his fear he's trapped and he's in need so he cries out in verse 1 deliver me and he says deliver me in your righteousness the basis for his faith his hope his trust it's in the character of the lord to put it another way he's praying lord because you are righteous deliver me this is the ground God has laid to hear our our pleas because God is righteous Psalm 31 teaches God's people to trust that God does care about you

God does draw near God does hear it when we cry out to him that's what he prays next in verse 2 look at it bow down your ear to me deliver me speedily in our bible study one of our our moms pointed out it's like a parent you know the child is crying the parent draws near and bows the ear down close to hear to show you I see you I hear you I care about you I'm near to you and his trust in God is pictured now next with with two images they're parallel one to another these are both

beautiful powerful encouraging pictures for us even though we don't live in the ancient near east and we don't have to deal with siege warfare which was brutal the two images next are these number one it's a rock of refuge a rock of refuge and number two what he calls a fortress of defense to picture rock of refuge you're visiting from Texas if you have time this afternoon you could get there

[11:08] I think it's in under 90 minutes down in El Paso County paint mines regional park it's a regional park and you can go down and you can see where the erosion maybe some of it ancient from the flood it's left these deep caves and tunnels and created all these beautiful layers in the rock and you can just picture an army trying to chase down a man or his army scurrying away and finding shelter hiding in these rocks of refuge remember how David had to call these caves he had to call them home in Psalm 4 he laid down his head to sleep at night while he's on the run and he's in hiding from King Saul remember he had that fortress it was a natural fortress that God provided him called En Gedi down in southern part of Israel and that's where the Lord preserved him so a rock of refuge for David brings all these very real images of survival and finding a place to hide himself when the blistering sun is out there and it's scorching everything you can get in the shade you can find protection that's a rock of refuge the second one is the fortress of defense we're so blessed we live in Colorado all these images of Israel in ancient Israel we have them right here the best one for me thinking of this fortress of defense would be like when you hike up to see a fire lookout you know you'll go up a trail you'll switch back and forth some of them are above the tree line so it's just up there in the middle of nowhere and here's this little in our case it's just a little wooden cabin but the kingdoms in the ancient world had these fortresses these garrisons put up on the high points where they can see in a long ways away so if one of the enemies bring in all their troops and trying to flank us or set up an attack we can get word back quickly and we can mobilize so you can picture this man-made fortress these stones piled up up up on top of a hill and if the enemy were to try to get you there you have the high ground you can shoot arrows back down them and you can protect yourself from this fortress of defense but the order in which David praised this it's different than what we would expect there's a unique repetition here in verses 2 and 3 seems to be backwards first he says in verse 2 be my rock of refuge be a fortress of defense for me so it sounds like he's asking

God to become something new but notice the very next verse part of this poetic parallelism in verse 3 he says be those things for you are my rock and my fortress why ask God to become something that you just claimed that God is I learned that when a weaker party is in a covenant relationship in a treaty the vassal servant in relationship to a more powerful sovereign lord you're appealing for protection you're appealing on this covenant this treaty that you have and you do it by reminding the powerful lord of their name reminding them of who they said they are in this covenant relationship to you so this is a covenantal prayer in verses 2 and 3 isn't that beautiful the poet is saying here act like who you already promised to be god this appeal to god's covenant promises is reinforced in the rest of verse 3 therefore for your name's sake lead me and guide me we can pray this way too these are the grounds god has laid for our pleas god has told us here's who i am as your lord this is my name i am your rock of refuge i am your fortress of defense pray to me trusting that's who i am and that's who i will be for you now think of the other people all around israel they're building up their own fortresses they're stacking up stone walls they're taking over the garrisons of other nations and david now is calling the people chief musician get all the congregation to sing this truth yahweh is the true rock and the true fortress all these other things that the world put their hope in they can be penetrated they can be destroyed you can dig under those walls the lord is the only one that we can count on for safety in him alone do we find our security the only true unbreachable fortress is the invisible covenant keeping god the basis of our faith the basis of our hope our trust it's the character of the lord himself this psalm teaches us to remind god of his covenant promises to us and to lift up our needs our troubles our cares and our fears in light of who he is we can pray like david lord because you are righteous deliver us lord you are caring you do draw near you do listen we can ask you in that same way father bow your ear down to me deliver me quickly brothers and sisters reflect this week maybe even this morning in the weakness of your flesh what do you want to put your hope in instead of god if god leaves us to ourselves we are so frail aren't we what do we want to put our security in besides the lord remember the psalm we sing this this hymn that echoes the truth of this wonderful verse here that my hope can be built on nothing less than jesus blood and righteousness anything other than christ himself

is less I dare not trust the sweetest frame no matter how good it looks but wholly lean on Jesus name his oath his covenant his blood are what support you and me in the whelming flood when all around my soul gives way he then is all my hope and stay the king's prayer here reveals the grounds God has laid for our pleas to him his oath his covenant his blood we remind God of what he's promised and we trust that he will be true to his word the second glorious truth we can learn is that the king's prayer he reveals the fierceness of the battle this is a song of lament a song of trouble and the king's prayer it reveals that how fierce the battle is that this king has to endure in psalm 31

David fears for his life but who is he afraid of you're going to have to jump around with me for a few verses here because I want to try to make this clear I think it's very important who are these enemies of David that are threatening his life look at verse 11 he says I am a reproach among all my enemies well think of Israel surrounded you've got the Phoenicians on the north you've got the Philistines on the south you've got Egypt Amalekites just seeming to be everywhere in the shadows his enemies these other nations are all around and they worship idols but that's not really the emphasis on verse 11 let's keep reading he also says I am a reproach notice the emphasis I may reproach especially among my neighbors within the visible domain of God's kingdom on earth within

Israel I am repulsive to my acquaintances those who see me outside the word for word is those who see me on the streets the streets of Jerusalem the streets of Israel they flee from me he says but I know why look at verse six here's the reason I have hated those who regard useless idols the king has denounced the worship of false gods no not within the domain of God this cannot happen he's denounced it he's hated those who have brought idolatry into the kingdom of God the phrase here is idol keepers I have hated idol keepers and then the contrast comes with the rest of verse six but he says

[20 : 47] I trust in the Lord those are the only two options you either trust in a demon idol you're an idol keeper putting your trust in that creaturely invention or you're putting your trust in the creator there's no two alternatives there's no other alternatives besides those two because the king God's anointed servant here he trusts the Lord instead of idols he's hated by those who are keeping those idols both inside the kingdom and outside the kingdom the ones inside the borders of Israel are supposed to trust in the Lord but yet they're harboring these pet idols and worshiping them in their hearts instead his neighbors within the same walls are secretly worshiping demons rather than the holy God and how is it that these idol keepers attack

God's anointed king look at verse 13 I hear the slander of many what's that like fear is on every side while they take counsel against me they scheme to take my life away those who keep demons hate God's servants can you put yourself there scheming to end your life slander fear on every side like their walls are closing in on him so David's confession later on is understandable take your eyes down to verse 22 I have said in my haste I am cut off from before your eyes

David's miserable he feels so trapped he says look at verse 12 he says I am forgotten like a dead man out of mind it's like I don't even exist anymore I'm like a broken vessel everything I thought was my life like this clay jar up here has been smashed down on the rocks I have no life and in that moment the Lord ministers to him look at verse 22 again nevertheless you heard the voice of my supplication when I cried to you he felt like God had cut him off he felt like God didn't see him anymore and by the end of the psalm he bears witness you heard me when I cried

I ask Lord bend your ear down and you did hear my prayer part of his cry is for justice look at verse 17 Lord this evil these idol worshipers it's horrible how long are you going to let it keep going like this in verse 17 he says do not let me be ashamed oh Lord for I have called upon you let the wicked be ashamed let them be silent in the grave let the lying lips be put to silence which speak insolent things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous father deal with it I can't defend myself anymore a wise pastor this was this was a while back but I remember his words he was going through something difficult in their church I didn't even know the details exactly of the situation and he reflected back on 25 years of ministry he says what happens in churches and in Christian relationships is that you open up the word of God you read the word of God the Holy Spirit communicates a spiritual truth and the spirit uses his word to topple down an idol that's what God does he says even if you communicate God's truth in the most loving way when that truth threatens another person's idol the demon behind that idol will cause that person to want to kill you verse Psalm 20 Psalm 31 teaches us the intensity the fierceness of the battle it's matters of life and death

and some of you have loved ones God's put you in their life to speak a word of truth in a loving way but behind that truth behind that simple

[26:04] Bible verse there is a spiritual battle going on and it's fierce and there will be casualties we will feel it we will suffer we will also be weak like David and confess oh Lord I feel like you don't even see me like I'm cut off the battle is ferocious I learned that this was a common prayer at bedtime.

When you're going to bed in ancient Israel, to say those words or something similar in verse 5. You know, we have Psalm 4a. Lay me down to sleep in peace, for thou, Lord, only will make me dwell in safety.

And in verse 5 of Psalm 31, into your hands I commend my spirit as I go to sleep. I'm vulnerable. I'm resting. You know the number of my days.

My spirit is in your hands, not my own. And I can fall asleep. Into your hands I commit my spirit. The verb here is to entrust my spirit to the hands of God.

I give you charge over my innermost being. Lord, I'm placing my soul in your care. To you, I send my spirit and I rest in faith.

[28:15] What he says, the rest of verse 5. You have redeemed me, O Lord, God of truth. The source of my confidence is the word of God.

God is the God of truth. He has spoken the promise of redemption. And I commend my spirit. I rest myself in him, even in the fierceness of the battle.

Even if by laying down to sleep, I'm most vulnerable. I could never wake up. In David's case, a spear could pierce him in the night. And we learn to trust the Lord in the fierceness of the battle as well.

When all around my soul gives way, we can testify. He then is all my hope and stay. On Christ, the solid ground, I stand.

And on Christ, the solid ground, I can rest. The King's Prayer reveals the fierceness of the battle.

The third glorious truth is that the King's Prayer reveals the great cost of his victory.

[29:20] The King's Prayer reveals next the great cost of his victory. David is not the hero of Psalm 31.

He confesses in verse 9. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in trouble. My eye wastes away with grief. Yes, my soul and my body.

For my life is spent with grief. My years with sighing. My strength fails because of my iniquity. And my bones waste away.

David's describing his inner man and his outer man. Thin. Wasting away. He needs the Lord to show him mercy.

He's run out. His tank is totally dry. I'm in trouble, he says. And my eyes are full of tears and grief.

[30:25] The Lord humbled me again this week. And it hit me heavy yesterday working through this psalm. The Lord convicted me that my heart is bent on keeping idols.

I have idols. I have idols I thought would no longer tempt me. But God is a loving, gracious father. Scared me. In a good way.

It's like I'm sensing this truth from my loving father. Jason. Jason. If I stop holding you near me for one moment.

You will covet things of this world until you drown in them. You are weak. You're an idol keeper. Naturally.

And you deserve my justice and my wrath. Without me, you are wicked. And if you love any idol more than me.

[31:26] Or try to bring an idol alongside me. Your guilt and your filth will be exposed. You deserve to be put to shame.

As I read Psalm 31. I realized I am one of those idol keepers. And that's what I deserve. It's the wrath of the righteous king.

The wrath of the righteous king. Poured out on me. So the response for idol keepers like me and like you. It's in verse 10.

We need to confess to the Lord God. My strength fails because of my iniquity. Have mercy on me, Lord.

My own strength fails because of my iniquity. Because we're idol keepers. Ones who would hate God's servants if we are left to ourselves.

[32 : 23] We can't pray Psalm 31 perfectly for ourselves. There's only one person who could pray Psalm 31 in innocence.

In righteousness. Who is it alone who trusts in God with all his heart, all his soul, all his mind, and his strength. Who has no iniquity that he needs to confess.

No mercy he needs to receive. It's only our Lord Jesus Christ who is righteous. Think of Psalm 31 from the lips of King Jesus.

It's our Lord Jesus Christ who stands against idols by his own strength. Only Jesus Christ has the power to demolish the idols of our hearts.

Only Jesus Christ could endure the fear of demons on every side. Taking counsel together through evil men. Romans and Greeks and Jews alike.

[33 : 28] Inside and outside of Israel. Only Jesus Christ was strong enough to have the vessel of his body broken like a clay pot. To feel cut off from before God's eyes.

Forgotten like a dead man. Only Jesus Christ could lay down his life willingly in order to take it up again. Only Jesus Christ could trust God in the fullness of faith.

And recite these very promises from Psalm 31. It's the prayer of the true King. Revealing the great cost of his victory.

We read in Luke 23, 46. How our Lord Jesus Christ cried out in a loud voice. Verse 5 of Psalm 31. O Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit. And then he breathed his last. Do you see what this reveals?

[34 : 31] The King Jesus was meditating on the words in Psalm 31 as he hung from the cross. A song of lament. Of anguish.

Of suffering. Directing his prayers to God. Trusting in God's character with perfect faith according to his human nature. Our Lord Jesus Christ could pray Psalm 31 from the cross.

Trusting. Trusting. It has happened. It is being accomplished. It is God's decree. You have redeemed me. O Lord God of truth.

I trust in you. Your word is truth. Your covenant promises. You will keep. Our Lord Jesus Christ could trust the promise in verse 7.

Look at that. Picture Jesus hanging. The words didn't make it out of his mouth, but in his mind, in his heart. Verse 7. And I will be glad and will rejoice in your mercy.

[35 : 35] For you have considered my troubles. You have known my soul in adversities. The Father knows the Son in his suffering. You have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy.

You have set my feet in a wide place. But as for me, look at verse 14. In the words of Jesus from the cross.

As for me, I trust in you, O Lord. I say, you are my God. My times are in your hand. I will die, but my death will be a great victory.

Even through my death, you will still deliver me from the hands of my enemies who persecute me. Think of our Lord Jesus trusting the promise of verse 16.

Lord, now the sky has turned dark. My body is covered in blood. I'm bearing the sin of my people.

[36 : 43] And I'm receiving your wrath on my body. But verse 16 is the hope. Make your face shine upon your servant.

Save me for your mercy's sake. Our Lord Jesus does not need the Father's mercy. But those he's redeeming need the Father's mercy.

And that's the promise God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit accomplish. Securing the mercy of God through his servant, Jesus Christ.

So that his face will shine on God's people. Who are found in Jesus. The victory belongs to the Lord. Our redemption has been secured.

When darkness veils his loving face, we can rest on his same unchanging grace. The king's prayer reveals the great cost of his victory.

[37 : 52] The fourth and final glorious truth for today is that the king's prayer reveals the great reward of his suffering. The king's prayer reveals the great reward of his sufferings.

Well, if these were the thoughts on the mind of our Lord on the cross, did it happen? Did he experience going from fear on every side, closing in, suffocating him, the crushing weight of the wrath of God, and go from there to having his feet now put in a wide place, set firm, not hanging by the nails, but standing victorious?

Did God's face shine upon our Lord Jesus, the only worthy servant? Think of how our Lord Jesus could proclaim the rest of the verses of this psalm, bearing witness to us from heaven for all his army on earth to hear and believe and be encouraged.

Think of verse 19 from the lips of Jesus. Oh, how great is your goodness, God, which you have laid up for those who fear you.

He's gone before us. He's the front runner of our faith. And he turns back around and praises God. How great is God's goodness, which he has stored up for all who will follow in my path and fear the Lord, which you have prepared for those who trust in you in the presence of the sons of men.

[39:33] From heaven, he's saying you who are in the presence of men on earth. The Lord is good and he has prepared great rewards for you.

And how will they know on earth until he returns for his own? How will we trust this witness from Christ? In verse 20, we have this promise that I believe it's for the church.

Look at verse 20. God shall hide them. These are the ones who fear God who are in the presence of men on earth. God shall hide them in the secret place of your presence from the plots of man. God shall keep them secretly in a shelter from strife of tongues. The Lord will give his people shelter from this world.

He will he will protect his soldiers on earth with his very own presence. He describes this shelter, this pavilion as a spiritual mystery.

[40:39] It's hidden to the eyes of the world. They can't see it. It's not visible. It's disguised and the world will overlook it. This reminded me of 2 Corinthians 4.

Paul writes that we commended ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And our gospel was proclaimed as an open statement of the truth.

The gospel is preached clearly for all to hear. But listen to what Paul writes next. 2 Corinthians 4. 3. Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

In their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God.

This is that secret pavilion, that hidden shelter. How is it that the Lord disguises his presence among his people in this world?

[41:42] It's disguised in the simplicity of our worship. As his people, we meet up in a rented school gym. We sing simple songs that visitors who don't know the Lord think are foolish.

We proclaim a gospel that this world thinks is ridiculous. They'll mock it. We read from the Bible. We preach.

We pray together. We baptize. We share in the Lord's Supper. And in these simple ordinances that the Lord has given us, we are this meeting place, this tent where God protects us with his very own presence in the presence of our enemies.

One day, we have this glorious promise in verse 21. The strong city of heaven will be revealed.

Blessed be the Lord. He has shown me his marvelous kindness in a strong city. You hear how this king started off hiding in the rocks of refuge and these outposts on the mountaintops.

[43:01] But now he's in a strong city. It's heavenly Zion, the new Jerusalem that will soon come to earth. We trust by faith.

Now, soon it will be by sight. We behold, our king has gone before us. He keeps us secure still. And how do we respond?

He tells us how to respond in the last two verses. This king has been praying throughout this whole psalm. Now he's not directing his words to the Lord.

He's speaking to the congregation. He's speaking to the army. Oh, love the Lord, all you his saints. For the Lord preserves the faithful and fully repays the proud person.

Be of good courage and he shall strengthen your heart. All you who hope in the Lord. Our king's prayer reveals that the Lord is our only refuge.

[44:10] And this prayer reveals that the reward of his suffering is to rule with his people, with you and me forevermore. And this is our strength. The king calls you and me.

Put your hope in the Lord. Be of good courage. And the promise is that God will strengthen your heart. Let's thank the Lord for being our rock, our refuge.

And ask him to help us as we trust in him. Oh, Lord, we praise you. We thank you that Jesus Christ won the victory that we could never win.

He secured the reward that we don't deserve. We thank you that we can run to Jesus Christ. He is our mighty fortress. He is our solid rock of refuge.

Help us to hide in him, Lord. We pray that you will preserve us in the fierce spiritual battle. We pray that you will protect us, Lord. Keep our feet from stumbling.

[45 : 10] We are weak. We are thin. We pray that you will continue to be our strength. Continue to supply us, Lord, our needs as we walk with you. For your glory we ask.

Amen. Amen. Amen.