

Introduction:

- We began a new sermon series last Sunday called *Our Refuge and Strength*.
 - Because God is our protector and helper during difficult times.
 - He's the shelter in our storm.
 - He's the one who gives us strength, when we are weak.
- And last week, we saw from Psalm 31, how God turned David's weeping into joy, and his mourning into dancing
 - David had sinned against God by putting his confidence in his kingdom and his army.
 - David's pride kept him from listening to others.
 - And so, God sent a plague.
 - And David thought his life was over.
 - He was in the bottom of a pit.
 - But he cried out to God.
 - And God showed mercy, and lifted him up.
 - And we saw how God lifts us up, when we're in the pit.
- As we continue our series, we'll see today how we can trust the Lord, even when help seems slow.
 - You can trust the Lord, even when his help seems slow.
- Someone might say, "It's great that God can turn my mourning into dancing."
 - "But that's not what I'm feeling right now."
 - "I'm really struggling, and I'm not sure God will help me."
- Have you ever felt forgotten by God, or doubted his love, when you face storms in life?

- If that is you, in Psalm 31, the Bible shows us, how we can hold on to faith.
 - We don't know the exact situation David was facing in Psalm 31.
 - But we know he was under a lot of pressure.
 - He was surrounded by enemies.
 - He felt hurt by his friends.
 - He tried everything in his power to change his situation, but nothing seemed to change.
 - And in verse 22, he says that he felt cut off from God's sight.
 - But through this Psalm, David shows us, how we can trust the Lord, when help seems slow, when God's timing doesn't seem to make sense.
- So, how can we find confidence to trust the Lord?

Point 1:

- First, we see from our passage, that we can trust God, because he always does what is right.
 - Just think about that.
 - He never, ever makes a wrong decision.
- Verse 1 states:
 - **“In you, O lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me!”** Psalm 31:1
 - David finds refuge and safety in God, because of God's righteousness.
 - The righteousness of God means that God acts with a pure heart.
 - And he never does, what is wrong.

- And this is what David appeals to in his desperate situation.
 - He makes his plea, according to God's righteous character, according to who God is.
 - **"In your righteousness, deliver me!"**
- Our minds can be swayed by the opinion of others and by our emotions.
 - And when someone is angry, or hurt, or fearful, even though they think they're doing right, it's easy for them to make a foolish decision.
 - Even mature and godly people can be clouded by emotion, and the opinion of others.
- Think about the spies in Numbers 13.
 - God commanded the people to take the land.
 - But the spies, the leaders of the land, stated how the people in the land were giants and too hard to defeat.
 - And it caused everyone, except for two men, to be swayed by fear.
 - The God who sent the 10 plagues, and parted the Red Sea, and defeated the Egyptian army, and shook Mount Sinai, spoke to them.
 - But this report, caused the people to fear and complain.
 - Instead of giving more faith to the people, these leaders made the people fear.
- Not only do emotions and opinions sway our decisions, even when people try to be as objective and clear-minded as they can, it's still possible to make the wrong decision.
 - According to The National Registry of Exonerations from Michigan State University, 147 people were exonerated in 2024, for wrongful convictions in the United States.

- Some people served for many years in prison, before their name was cleared.
- I'm sure many of the judges and juries tried their best to see the facts, and to be objective.
- Yet, they still got it wrong.
- But the good news we see in our passage is that our God is the perfect judge, and righteous redeemer.
 - He's never swayed by the opinion of others.
 - He's never clouded by emotions.
 - Every decree, every act, is just and right.
 - And when we feel help is delayed, we can find strength to wait on the Lord, because he's our righteous God.
 - If human lawyers will work tirelessly, to free those who can't defend themselves, don't you think our righteous God will work to help us?
 - If imperfect earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more will our righteous Heavenly Father, give good gifts to us.
 - God is our righteous Father, and he will help us.
- Furthermore, you can be confident that God will help you, for the sake of his name.
 - Your safety and protection, isn't just about you.
 - It's also about God.
 - In verses 3 and 4 David writes:
 - **“For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me; you take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for you are my refuge.”** Psalm 31:3-4
 - The Lord will lead you and guide you, not only for sake, but also for the sake of his name.
 - The Psalmist is tying your safety, to God's reputation.

- God was about to destroy the people after Numbers 13.
 - But Moses began to pray.
 - Listen to what Moses prays:
 - **“Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say, it is because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give to them that he has killed them in the wilderness. And now, please let the power of the Lord be great as you have promised, saying, the Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression...”**
Numbers 14:15-18
 - Moses pleads for the people, for the sake of God’s name.
 - And because of this prayer, the Lord relented, and saved the people.
 - He saved them to show mercy, but also for his name and glory.

- At times, it may seem the enemy is winning in your life.
 - When you need to find a job, when family life is difficult, when you feel overextended, when marriage life is tense, when your kids make poor decisions, when the future is uncertain.
 - You may feel the enemy has trapped you in a net.
 - But you can commit yourself to God, because the Lord will redeem you, for his glory.
 - His glory is connected to your safety.

- Think about all the promises that our connected to God’s glory.
 - God has promised to complete the good work he’s started in you.

- God has promised that he would provide for you, and to not worry.
- God has promised that he would never leave you, nor forsake you.
- And he will do all these things, because his name is on the line.
- And you can pray with the Psalmist:
- **“For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me; you take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.”** Psalm 31:4-5

Point 2:

- You can trust God, because he always makes the right decision, but second, you can trust God, because he knows exactly what you're feeling.
 - God knows everything you're facing.
 - The hardships others can't understand, the emotions others can't feel, God knows and he sees.
- In verse 6 and 7, or as my kids would say, 6, 7.
 - The Bible says:
 - **“I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols, but I trust in the Lord. I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul...”** Psalm 31:6-7
- In this verse, we see that God acts not only according to his righteousness, but also according to his love.

- David says, **“I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love...”**
- God’s love isn’t a fickle love.
- It’s not love based performance.
- It’s not based on our reputation.
- It’s not based on our background.
- Rather, it’s based on God’s steadfast character.
- He loves you with steadfast love.
- That means it’s everlasting, and never changing.
- When we face difficult times and help seems slow, we may be tempted to think that God doesn’t love us anymore.
 - Or that God’s favor isn’t with us.
 - Or that God hates us.
 - But we need to remember, God is for us, and not against us.
 - We need to remember that God’s love for us, will never change.
- And because God loves us, that means he also knows our affliction and sees our distress.
 - He’s not like an idol or robot, who acts with no feelings.
 - Rather, God knows your sorrows, and he carries your burdens.
 - He knows your tears.
 - The Psalmist writes:
 - **You have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul...”** Psalm 31:7
- Here’s what this means for you, it means that God knows your grief.
 - Verse 9 states:

- **“My eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also.”** Psalm 31:9
- When you lose someone you love, you’ll lose a part of who you are.
- You may cry, until you have no more tears to cry.
- Your soul and body may feel empty, because a part of you is now gone.
- But here, it says that God knows your grief.
- He sees your sorrow.
- He knows your loss.
- This also means God knows your lifelong struggles.
 - David says in verse 10:
 - **“For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing...”** Psalm 31:10
 - There are hardships that last a long time.
 - It could be physical pain, or the burden of caring for your family, or constant criticism from others, or financial burdens, or constant worry, or unfulfilled dreams, or the burden of extending yourself for others.
 - God knows, our long years of sorrow and sighing.
 - He knows our long years of giving and sacrifice that no other person may have seen.
- This also means he knows the pain of sin.
 - In verse 10, the Psalmist writes:
 - **“My strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away.”** Psalm 31:10.
 - Even though God is angry with sin, at the same time, he sees how destructive it is.
 - As you look back on your sin, you may feel your bones waste away, at how destructive sin has been.

- But God sees, and he longs to show compassion and mercy.
- That's why God sent his Son, to die for you.
- Jesus bore our sin, and took our place.
- And even though he never sinned, he became sin for us.
- He cried out, **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.”** Matthew 27:46
- He knows and sees the pain of sin.

- This also means that God knows our rejection and loneliness.
 - Take a look at verse 11.
 - **“Because of all my adversaries I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors, and an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. I have been forgotten like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel.”** Psalm 31:11
 - There was a time when Absalom, David's son.
 - And Ahithophel, David's most trusted advisor betrayed David.
 - They teamed up against David.
 - These two men caused many people to turn against David.
 - And David felt hurt and abandoned by his friends.
 - We don't know if this situation is what David is talking about here, but because of betrayal, David felt like he was a broken vessel, a shattered pot.

- It can be painful for someone to turn their back on you.
 - A family member, or a close friend.
 - When they avoid you, or stop talking to you.
 - But again, the Bible shows how God knows what it means to feel rejection.

- The crowds wanted to make Jesus, king.
 - But later on, they turned against him.
 - They even cried out to crucify him.
 - Judas, his own disciple, betrayed him.
 - And Jesus felt alone, and abandoned on the cross.
 - The Lord knows and he sees, our rejection and loneliness.
- When you face difficulty, there are many reasons God may delay his answer.
 - But you can trust that God will deliver you, because he loves you.
 - And because he loves you, he knows your affliction, and he sees your distress.
- I was listening to a sermon some time ago, and the pastor shared how he was watching a drama about parents with a troubled son.
 - The parents tried to help their son go down the right path.
 - But instead of listening to his parents, this son rebelled against his parents and moved out.
 - After some time, the mother ended up getting sick with a terminal disease.
 - She didn't have much time left.
 - The son found out and went to go see his mom in the hospital.
 - And seeing his mom, he wanted to apologize.
 - But he couldn't get the words out.
 - "Mom, I just want to say."
 - "Mom, what I mean is."
 - Finally, his dad put his arm on his son's shoulder, and said to him, "It's okay son, she knows. She knows."

- The grief we have over the one we lost.
 - The pain of sin.
 - The burden you're carrying to care for your family.
 - The rejection and loneliness you feel.
 - He knows.
 - And you can trust that God will help you, because he knows exactly what you're feeling.
 - **I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul..."**

Point 3:

- Third, you can trust in God, because his timing is always perfect.
 - Listen to what David writes in verses 14 and 15.
 - **"But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hand..."** Psalm 31:14-15
- There are many times in our lives, where there's nothing more we can do, except to leave it up to God.
 - That's what it means to trust the Lord.
 - It means, that sometimes, all we can do is pray.
 - And that's exactly what David is doing here in this Psalm.
 - When you read through verses 15 to 18, there's not a single time David says, "God, help me to accomplish this, or help me to do this work, or help me to fight my battles."
 - He entrusts everything to God.
 - He asks God to rescue him from his enemies.
 - He asks God to protect his reputation.
 - He asks God to judge the wicked.
 - David releases his situation to God.

- He doesn't pray about what he can do.
 - He prays for God's help.
- Christian author, Ron Hutchcraft wrote book called *Hope When Your Heart is Breaking*.
 - It's a book about finding hope in God.
 - And in the book, he shares a story about a woman who was trapped on the second floor of a burning building.
 - She was holding on to her infant baby.
 - Down below were some men who told her to release the baby, so they could catch her and save her.
 - At first, she said no.
 - But as the flames were getting hotter, she had no choice but to release her baby.
 - Thankfully the men were able to catch the baby, and later, firefighters were able to save this lady from dying as well.
 - Later on, this woman described the difficult decision she had to make:
 - "I knew I'd have to let go of him if I was going to save him."
- When your son or daughter is in open rebellion, or your marriage is breaking down, or your business isn't going well, or your relationship looks like it's going to end, or your finances aren't looking good, the temptation is to control, to worry, to hang on tighter, to make something happen, but that only makes things worse.
 - Abraham slept with Sarah's servant, to gain a son.
 - But it only made things worse.
 - Rebekah tried to control Jacob's blessing, by tricking Isaac.
 - And it made everything worse.

- The more we try to control and manipulate, the worse things get.
- I'm not saying that we shouldn't be faithful in obeying God's word.
- Of course, we need to do our best, with what God has given to us.
- But even when we work, we need to release the results to God.
- We need to remember, it's the Lord who fights for us, and what we need to do, is to wait and be silent.
- Is there something or someone you need to release today?
 - A person or situation you're trying to control, when you need to give it up to the Lord?
 - Ask the Lord to fight for you.
 - Ask the Lord to help you.
 - Ask the Lord to protect you.
 - And trust that he will help you, because your times are in his hands.
- And let's not waste our waiting.
 - God's waiting room is probably one of the hardest rooms in God's house.
 - But it's a necessary part of our growth.
 - That's where he builds our faith.
 - He grows us from trusting in an outcome, to trusting in him.
 - That's where he gets us ready to live, when the answer comes.
- When storms come, most birds will take shelter and hide.
 - But eagles will actually fly into wind created by the storm, to fly higher.

- They face storms differently than most birds.
- They use them, instead of running away.
- And so, let's not waste our waiting.
- Wait on the Lord, because he is using it, to help you fly higher.
- He's using it to make you stronger.
- **"They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."** Isaiah 40:31
- Trust in the Lord, because your times are in his hands.

Point 4:

- Fourth and finally, you can trust the Lord, because in all things he is working for your good.
 - Look at verses 19 to 20
 - **"Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind! In the cover of your presence you hide them from the plots of men; you store them in your shelter from the strife of tongues."** Psalm 31:19-20
 - In these verses, God says how he's stored up goodness for us.
 - And how he's working goodness for those who take refuge in him.
 - Imagine a big storage center, and God storing up good for us.
 - That's what these verses are saying.
 - And no one is able to take this goodness from you.
 - God hides them from the plots of men.

- Not only that, the good God has for you, isn't just something you get in heaven.
- You can experience it, here on this earth, in the sight of the children of mankind.
- God has good stored up for you.
- God has worked good for you.
- And nothing can take this goodness away from you.
- If you're in a storm today, it may be hard to see the good that God has prepared for you.
 - But remember that God always does what is right.
 - Remember that God knows exactly what you're feeling.
 - Remember that God has perfect timing.
 - And when the time is right, you'll see the goodness that he has stored up for you.
 - You'll see all the goodness he worked out for you.
- And we can know that God is working for our good, because of his Son, Jesus Christ.
 - Because God is just and righteous, he had to send his Son to take our place, and to die for us.
 - God always does what is right.
 - And the right judgment for us was eternal punishment.
 - And so, to fulfill his righteousness.
 - Jesus had to come to this earth, to suffer for us.
 - To take our place.
 - And on the cross, he gave himself to the Father.
 - And he quoted this very Psalm, Psalm 31.
 - When the crowds turned their back on him, when his friends betrayed him, he cried out, **"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."** Luke 23:46
 - He took our sin, and took our suffering.
 - Why?

- So that he could forgive our sin.
- And work good in us.
- And protect us from judgement.
- To show his everlasting love.

- And so, as the application, whatever you're facing today.
 - Let's keep faithfully serving the Lord with love.
 - Keep working for him.
 - Don't give up, but continue to serve him.
 - I know it's hard, but keep going, because you can trust the Lord.

- And let's be strong, and take courage, and wait for the Lord.
 - I don't know when God may change your circumstances.
 - I don't know when God will answer your prayers.
 - I don't know when the storm will pass, but let's wait for the Lord.
 - Because he will make you stronger, and you will soar higher than you've ever soared before.