

## The God The Troubled Can Trust.

Text: Psa 31:9, 15, 17, 1

Suggested Hymns:

485, 318, 616, 294, 511

1) The Troubled Must Recognise Their Trouble

2) The Troubled Must Know In Whom They Trust

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is based on the Introit, Psa 31:9a, 15b, 17a, & 1, <sup>9</sup> *Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in trouble; Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, And from those who persecute me.* <sup>17</sup> *Do not let me be ashamed, O LORD, for I have called upon You; In You, O LORD, I put my trust; Let me never be ashamed; Deliver me in Your righteousness.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Our age of specialisation forces us to analyse our troubles so that we can take them to the right place. A Baby — to the obstetrician. Children — to a paediatrician. A bad cough or flu — to the doctor. Death — to the undertaker. Cancer — to a radiologist. Neighbourhood troubles — to a sociologist. The mind — to the psychiatrist.

But from the Introit for today it is clear to Christians that our problem is not so much learning to analyse our troubles; it is rather that we must synthesise them. We need to understand that our troubles are really our trouble.

There is very little point in dividing our troubles into categories and arranging them according to genus and species; but it is urgently necessary that each one of us realise that all our troubles are really aspects of man's basic trouble, a trouble that affects him totally in all phases and areas of life.

We really have troubles — does anyone here need to be convinced of that? This Introit from Psalm 31 is as true for us as for its author. But the troubled people of our day — we, the troubled — need constantly to realise in the midst of “niggling needs” and catastrophes that our only accurate plea is to acknowledge, “*I am in trouble, O Lord, in trouble with Thee.*”

Well, what is the trouble? The correct answer will be no surprise to you. It would be surprising if a Christian did not know the right answer. But to realise the awful seriousness of the trouble, to admit the constant personal involvement in the trouble, to confess the trouble, to repent and so turn determinedly from the trouble, and ultimately to get out of the trouble, these are the “*something else again*” that make this Sunday’s message from God urgent for you.

Look in David’s mirror. David discovered that his troubles were really his trouble. But how long he resisted the realisation! The trouble. It took a long time and much anguish to make him acknowledge it. Let his story serve as a mirror for reflecting our own. While he went through his tragic experiences, he tried desperately to avoid seeing himself as he really was. As we look at him, we will struggle to avoid seeing ourselves.

It took an accusation from God Himself through His prophet Nathan to bring David to his knees and to turn him to God. Then he discovered that his God was the God the troubled can trust. Pray God that the word we have from Him today will bring us to see ourselves as we really are, and then to see Him as *The God the Troubled Can Trust*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. The Troubled Must Recognise Their Trouble**

*“In the spring of the year,”* so 2 Samuel 11 records it, *the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.*

#### **Trouble Seen In Duty-Dodging**

We can argue that armchair generals are necessary. David probably did. We can argue that kings are too easily seen, to be risked on the front line. We can argue that we should not be expected to lead the attack against the world’s idols, or to get into the front lines of the church’s spreading the Gospel to our community.

But when we discover ourselves dodging our duty, can it only be said of the result that we “*got into trouble,*” or must it not also be said that is what happens when we so called get “*out of trouble,*” that we bring upon ourselves the inevitable result of the basic trouble of our sin?

*Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful — Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. We say that "David got into trouble," but realistically we could say that "trouble came out" of David for "out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery ..."<sup>1</sup> Man's trouble, man's sin, is what is the big problem*

### **Trouble Stays Stubbornly On Our Own Doorstep**

It does no good to try to put your trouble at someone else's doorstep. David called Uriah back from the wars and *"When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. <sup>8</sup>And David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house ..."* But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house.<sup>2</sup>

Frantically, David tried urging and flattery and even alcohol — *Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.*

There was no repetition of what Adam said to God, *"The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."<sup>3</sup>* There was no protesting like that of Eve, *The serpent deceived me, and I ate.* No excuse can remove our trouble from our own doorstep. The lust of the eyes means our eyes, and the lust of the flesh means our *"too, too mortal flesh."*

What desperate measures can we take to avoid the recognition of the trouble that causes our troubles, and the awareness that sin is couching at our own doorstep? We read in Genesis 4:7, *And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."*

David murdered Uriah, Jezebel persecuted Elijah, and Herodias clutched the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Pontius Pilate washed his hands, and Judas flung the thirty pieces of silver down on the floor before those who bribed him. But still trouble troubled them all.

### **Trouble Remains Even Under A Show Of Right**

Nor is trouble untroubled by a show of right. *When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.* <sup>27</sup> *And when her mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.*<sup>4</sup>

Some people may call slander “admonition” and defend bitterness and anger by pointing to the book “Robert’s Rules of Order,” but sin remains sin; and any one of us may try to save face by arguing that no one has been able to see on the outside, what dry bones rattle on the inside, but still sin is the trouble.

Any one of us may try to legitimise our unholy union with the old man,<sup>5</sup> the evil that has been joined to us since birth, which clings to us so closely that fearfully we realise that in this we have indeed become one flesh.

But although we plead license privileges — “*It can’t be helped. It’s just human nature.*” “*Everybody does things like that.*” “*Nobody’s perfect.*” “*That’s the way I’m made,*” nevertheless the things we do displease the Lord.

And even now the word of the Lord comes to us as it came to David through Nathan the prophet, “*You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ...<sup>9</sup> Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight?*”<sup>6</sup> Then *David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.”*<sup>7</sup>

What are you saying to the Lord? The recollections of what you have done over the past days, are they only stories about one little ewe lamb? Do you pass them off as rather unimportant compared with the flocks of sins in the folds of other people? Or are you indignant that others have been selfish and cruel and murderous?

Do you say: “*As the Lord lives, the man who has done those things deserves to die*”? Then hear God’s word to you, “*You are the man. Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I anointed you a king and a priest in the New Israel, and I delivered you out of the hands of a worse enemy than Saul — Satan himself.*

*I sacrificed My dearly beloved Son for your redemption from sin and death. I gave you a new life by the washing of water and made with you an everlasting covenant in Holy Baptism. I gave you My very Holy Spirit to be your Comforter*

*and your Helper, to be God making His abode in you. Why have you despised the Word of the Lord, to do what is evil in His sight?"*

As David said to Nathan — will you say to God? — *"I have sinned against the Lord."* *"Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble."*

## **2. The Troubled Must Know In Whom They Trust**

But to know what is the trouble, is of little help if you do not know the way out.

### **The Way Out Is Not in Ourselves**

Our text says, <sup>9</sup> *Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in trouble.* What kind of reason is that to support a man's plea for mercy? When the police siren slows you down and the officer's gesture moves you over to the curb, when the sensation in your stomach reinforces your realisation: *"Now I am in trouble,"* is it useful to open the conversation by saying, *"Officer, have mercy upon me, for I am in trouble"?*

If our trouble were no more serious than a ticket and a fine, it could be endured; but what is the antidote when trouble's dose is a combination of life's many poisonous ingredients — sickness, hatred, lust, betrayal of friendships, boredom, suffering, or death itself, the certain end of all things?

With the warning of the today's Gospel that great tribulation will rip at the world and its people in the last days, with the Epistle's reminder of death and judgement, will this Sunday show us a way of mercy, or offer us ground for hope? Where can the troubled place their trust?

Our text continues, <sup>17</sup> *Do not let me be ashamed, O LORD, for I have called upon You.* The Introit makes that plea. We said the Introit as our Worship Service began. Can we not then make the same claim to God out of the depths of our trouble? <sup>17</sup> *Do not let me be ashamed, O LORD, for I have called upon You.*

But, again, is that a reason for the hope we would have? Not everyone who calls on the Prime Minister can claim that action as a basis for guaranteed help. We read in Matthew 7:21, <sup>21</sup> *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.* Calling on God is not enough in itself.

And a terrible dimension is added to our dilemma when the question is raised, “*Did we really call on God when the words of the Introit were sounded in today’s Service?*” When we do not adequately invest ourselves, our mind and heart and soul and strength, in the words of our Worship, can we claim to be loving God at all?

And under such a limitation, can we place our trust in any of our actions — “*I have called upon Thee*”? “*He who does the will of My Father*” — when we fail even in word, who has courage to discuss deeds and actions?

And things grow worse, as we read in Matthew 24:21, <sup>21</sup> ***For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.*** When men cry out to the mountains, “***Fall on us, and to the hills, “Cover us,”***<sup>8</sup> they will mean it. But so often we call on the name of the Lord, but our hearts are far from Him.

And when we say in the words of our text, ***Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, And from those who persecute me,*** are we constantly shifting the blame? It is their fault, the fault of our enemies, the fault of the neighbours, the boss, the teacher, or the group we hang out with. We fail to admit we are our own worst enemy, and that it is from the sinfulness of our own hands that we need deliverance.

If we are troubled, we need to look for a place to ground our trust, but it will have to be something other than our own words or deeds.

### **The Trustworthy God**

What then? Take heed of the words of our text, ***I have called upon You; In You, O LORD, I put my trust; Let me never be ashamed.*** It is a matter of reputation — but it is not our reputation.

Our plea is not grounded on the fear that we will be ashamed — we are that already. We are in trouble. This plea is based on God’s reputation. It is His reputation that is at stake. And, thank God, He is willing to have it so!

For the sake of the elect, God promises that the days of tribulation will be shortened. “***Call upon Me in the day of trouble,***” God promises us in Psalm 50:15 and “***I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.***”

David found God to be trustworthy. We read in 2 Samuel 12:13, <sup>13</sup> *Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.”*

God’s trustworthiness did not seem worth trusting for a time in David’s life. When Absalom, his son, turned traitor and seemed successfully to have lured almost all of Israel with him in rebellion, David’s very life seemed in danger.

But when Absalom rode *“under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree, and his head caught in the terebinth; so he was left hanging between heaven and earth,”*<sup>9</sup> and when Joab, David’s general, *“took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom’s heart, while he was still alive in the midst of the terebinth tree.”*<sup>10</sup> Then David knew that God is the God the troubled person can trust.

But what a terrible proof! David felt that way. *“Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: “O my son Absalom — my son, my son Absalom — if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!”*<sup>11</sup>

What a terrible proof indeed, the proof that God gives us that He is the God that we, the troubled, can trust. For He said of you, of me, *“O My son, My daughter, I, your God, will die instead of you. O troubled ones, My daughter, My son!”*

What a terrible proof! God’s Son was left hanging between heaven and earth on the thick crossbeams of the tree. And God Himself, as it were, took the three spears of divine justice, wrath against all evil, and the eternal agony of sin’s separation from the God of love, and thrust them into the heart of the Only-begotten One.

And when there on Calvary another soldier thrust a spear into the heart of Jesus Christ, it was finished — Christ’s resurrection was God’s proof that He is the God whom the troubled can trust, and that His promise is ‘yes’ and ‘Amen.’

Yes, Scripture says in John 3:16, <sup>16</sup> *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

And since “*we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus*”<sup>12</sup> and will save to the uttermost all who are troubled by sin, the great trouble sin.

Therefore as our text says, let this be our confession also, ***In You, O LORD, I put my trust.***

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,<sup>13</sup>

I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus,  
Trusting only Thee;  
Trusting Thee for full salvation,  
Great and free. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. 15:19

<sup>2</sup> 2 Samuel 11:7-9

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 3:12

<sup>4</sup> 2 Samuel 11:26-27

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 4:23

<sup>6</sup> 2 Samuel 12:7-9

<sup>7</sup> 2 Samuel 12:13

<sup>8</sup> Luke 23:30

<sup>9</sup> 2 Sam. 18:9

<sup>10</sup> 2 Sam. 18:14

<sup>11</sup> 2 Sam. 18:33

<sup>12</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:14

<sup>13</sup> Hymn 616