

## 12. Psalms 30-32

### Praying Psalm 30 with Jesus





<sup>1</sup>I will praise you, O GOD,  
for you have raised me up.  
You have not let my foes gloat over me.

<sup>2</sup>I cried to you for help, O GOD,  
<sup>3</sup>I was dying and you restored me to life.

<sup>4</sup>Sing praises to GOD, O you faithful,  
give thanks as you shout aloud the holy name.

<sup>5</sup>GOD's favour lasts a lifetime.  
Weeping may linger for the night,  
but joy comes with the dawn.

<sup>6</sup>When all was going well,  
<sup>7</sup>I thought that, with God's powerful blessing,  
I could stand as secure as a mountain.  
Then you hid your face and I shook with fear.



<sup>8</sup>I cried out, 'O GOD! O GOD!' I begged. I pleaded:

<sup>9</sup>What good is there in my death, in my going down to the grave?

<sup>10</sup>GOD listened, was moved with pity, and came to my help.

<sup>11</sup>You turned my mourning into dancing.

You clothed me with joy.

<sup>12</sup>I witness to your glory. I praise you and will not be silent.

O GOD, I will never stop thanking you.



*Omitted*

*<sup>5</sup>God's anger lasts but for a moment .*

*<sup>9</sup>Will the dust praise you?*

*Will it tell of your faithfulness?*

1. The psalmist was facing death (verses 1-3). In keeping with the understanding of his times, he sees his sickness as an expression of 'God's anger' (verse 5), God's punishment for his sins. Jesus does not see illness as a punishment from God (see the reflection on 'God's anger' under Psalm 2).

2. In Ancient Israel it was assumed that physical death is the end of life, so the dead cannot praise God or tell of God's faithfulness (verse 9). He bargains with God: why not preserve his life? That way God can continue to receive his praise.



Jesus does not share the psalmist's understanding of death. When the Sadducees tried to make fun of the idea of life after death, Jesus responded: 'You are wrong. You know neither the scriptures nor the power of God' (Mark 12:24). He goes on to remind them of God's appearance to Moses in the burning bush, when God declared: 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' (Exodus 3:6). Jesus adds: 'He is the God not of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong' (Mark 12:27).



<sup>2</sup>I cried to you for help, O GOD,  
<sup>3</sup>I was dying and you restored me to life.  
<sup>4</sup>Sing praises to GOD, O you faithful,

The psalmist was facing death (verses 1-3). God has listened to his pleading and has restored his health (verse 2). He invites 'God's faithful ones' to join him in singing God's praises (verse 4).



As we pray this psalm with Jesus we hear him pleading with God, throughout his life, but especially in his agony and on the cross. Jesus knew what it is like to ‘shake with fear’ (verse 7). He is risen now and enjoying for all eternity the communion with God for which he longed. In the resurrection God ‘restored him to life when he was going down into the grave’ (verse 3). Joy came to him on the morning of the Resurrection (verse 5). God ‘turned his mourning into dancing, and clothed him with joy’ (verse 11), and Jesus ‘never ceases from thanking God’ (verse 12).

Paul writes: ‘We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him’ (Romans 6:9). The sequence sung in the Easter liturgy includes the following verse: ‘Death with life contended: combat strangely ended. Life’s own Champion slain, yet lives to reign.’



We, who hope to live with him in God's eternal embrace recall Jesus' promise: 'I am going to prepare a place for you, and I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also' (John 14:3).

'Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy ... you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you' (John 16:20-22).

Paul writes: 'As all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ' (1 Corinthians 15:22).



## Psalm 30

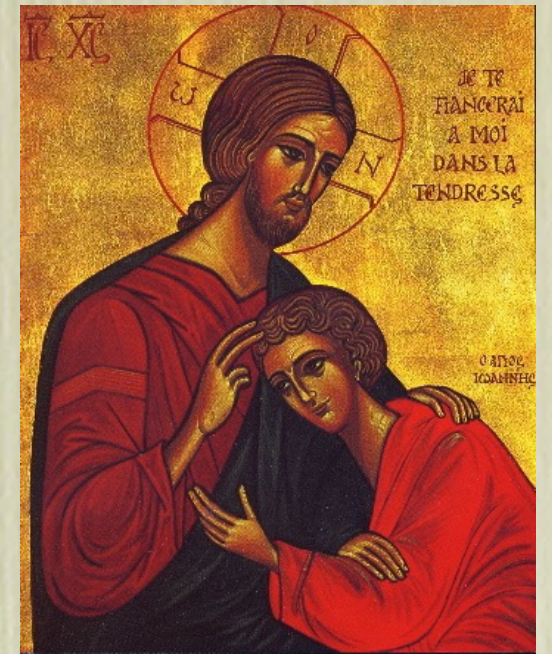
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# Praying Psalm 31 with Jesus





<sup>1</sup>In you, O GOD, I seek refuge.

Let me not suffer shame.

May your justice be my security.

<sup>2</sup>Come close to hear me!

Come quickly to rescue me!

Be my rock of refuge, my mighty stronghold.

<sup>3</sup>You are indeed my rock, my fortress.

Go before me; be my guide.

<sup>4</sup>The net tightens around me.

Release me, for you are my protector.

<sup>5</sup>Into your hands, O GOD, I commit my spirit.

You have redeemed me, faithful God.

<sup>6</sup>I place my trust in you.

<sup>7</sup>I exult and celebrate your kindness.



<sup>7</sup>You saw my affliction.

You watched over me while I was in danger.

<sup>8</sup>You did not leave me at the mercy of the enemy.

You set me on open ground.

<sup>9</sup>Be gracious to me, O GOD, for I am in distress.

My eyes are swollen from grief. I am racked with pain.

<sup>10</sup>Sorrow consumes my life. My days are filled with sighs.

[Guilt saps my strength.] My bones waste away.

<sup>11</sup>My enemies mock me. I am the butt of their jokes.

I am an object of dread to those who see me.

They turn and run the other way.



<sup>12</sup>No one thinks of me. It is as though I was dead.

I am of no use, like a discarded pot.

<sup>13</sup>I can hear the whispering of the crowd:

‘Attack from every side!’ They scheme to take my life.

<sup>14</sup>But I trust in you, O GOD. You are my God.

<sup>15</sup>My life is in your hands.

Rescue me from my enemies.

Ruthlessly they hunt me down.

<sup>16</sup>Show your servant your radiant face.

In your covenant love save me.

<sup>17</sup>Do not let me be put to shame, O GOD, for having called on you;



<sup>19</sup>How abundant is your goodness to those who revere you,  
to those who find in you their refuge.

Let everyone see how good you are.

<sup>20</sup>In the secret hiding place of your presence  
you protect us from their scheming.

In your tent you hold us safe  
from the tongues of the violent.

<sup>21</sup>Blessed be GOD, who has shown me wonderful love.

<sup>22</sup>I said in my alarm, 'I am excluded from your presence.'

But you heard my supplications when I cried to you for help.

<sup>23</sup>Love GOD, all you who are holy.

GOD preserves those who believe,  
but repays in full those who act in pride.

<sup>24</sup>Be strong, let your heart take courage,  
all you who hope in GOD.



## *Omitted*

*<sup>6</sup>You hate those who venerate worthless idols.*

*Verses 17-18 are omitted from the Church's liturgy.*

*<sup>17</sup>let the wicked be put to shame; let them go in silence to Sheol.*

*<sup>18</sup>Let the lying lips be stilled that speak insolently  
against the just with pride and contempt.*



The psalmist speaks of a ‘net tightening around him’ (verse 4). He speaks of his ‘affliction’ and of being in ‘danger’ (verse 7).

<sup>9</sup>I am in distress.

My eyes are swollen from grief. I am racked with pain.

<sup>10</sup>Sorrow consumes my life. My days are filled with sighs.

[Guilt saps my strength.] My bones waste away.

<sup>11</sup>My enemies mock me. I am the butt of their jokes.

I am an object of dread to those who see me.

They turn and run the other way.

<sup>12</sup>No one thinks of me. It is as though I was dead.

I am of no use, like a discarded pot.

<sup>13</sup>I can hear the whispering of the crowd:

‘Attack from every side!’ They scheme to take my life.

(And, worst of all) ‘I said in my alarm:

I am excluded from GOD’s presence’ (verse 22).



Praying this psalm with Jesus we can hear him echoing the painful words of the psalmist, even to feeling 'excluded from God's presence: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mark 15:34).

Perhaps Jesus could even say: 'My strength fails because of my guilt' (verse 10). We know that Jesus was sinless (see Psalm 6), but being sinless is not the same as feeling sinless. Jesus was always faithful in doing his Father's will, but does this mean that he did not experience doubt as he struggled? (see Mark 14:35-36).

When our experience mirrors that of the psalmist we can pray the psalm with Jesus, confident that he knows. He is with us, even when our suffering, unlike his, is the result of our sin.



The psalmist turns to God in his distress: ‘Come close to hear me; come quickly to rescue me’ (verse 2). He pleads with God: ‘lead me and guide me’ (verse 3). Only God can ‘disentangle me from the net that tightens around me’ (verse 4). He looks to God as his ‘refuge, a strong fortress to save me’ (verse 2). He trusts God (verses 6, 14).

As we pray with Jesus, he teaches us to turn to God when we are in distress, as he did: ‘In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death’ (Hebrews 5:7).



The psalmist invites those who are ‘faithful’ (verse 23), that is, those bonded to God by fidelity to the covenant (the ḥasidim), to join him in thanking God for hearing his pleading and for rescuing him.

<sup>7</sup>I exult and celebrate your kindness.

You saw my affliction. You watched over me while I was in danger.

<sup>8</sup>You did not put me at the mercy of the enemy.

You set me on open ground.

<sup>19</sup>How abundant is your goodness to those who revere you,  
to those who find in you their refuge.

Let everyone see your goodness.

<sup>22</sup>You heard my supplications when I cried to you for help.



<sup>16</sup>Show your servant your radiant face.

This is a frequent theme in the psalms and throughout the Scriptures: 'May GOD bless you and keep you; may GOD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; May GOD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace' (Numbers 6:24-26).

See the reflection on seeking GOD's face in Psalm 27.

Praying this with Jesus we think of the man who ran up to Jesus wanting to experience the life that he saw in Jesus and his companions. We are told that 'Jesus, looking at him, loved him' (Mark 10:21). We are left to imagine what passed between them in that gaze. All we know is that the man 'went away grieving'. He couldn't bring himself to leave behind what he saw as his wealth.



At the Last Supper ‘Philip said to Jesus: Lord, show us the Father and we will be satisfied’ (John 14:8). Like the psalmist he wanted to see God’s ‘**radiant face**’ (verse 16). Jesus responded: ‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father’ (John 14:9).

As we pray this psalm with Jesus, let him look upon us with love, and let us return Love’s gazing, knowing in faith that ‘It is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus, the Messiah’ (2 Corinthians 4:6).



<sup>19</sup>How abundant is your goodness to those who revere [fear] you.

We looked at 'Fear of GOD' in Psalm 2. We are not being told to be afraid of God. The psalmist is reminding us not to lose a sense of awe and wonder and reverence when God's Presence is revealed to us. This reverence is a gift from God and opens us to God's 'abundant goodness'.



<sup>20</sup>In the secret hiding place of your presence you protect us

The psalmist is referring to the 'temple'. As we pray this with Jesus we think of the community of Jesus' disciples, for we are sustained by the faith, hope and love that we find there. We think, too, of our own heart, remembering Jesus' words:

'I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever: the Spirit who abides with you, the Spirit who will be in you' (John 14:16-17). Jesus goes on to promise: 'I am coming to you ... You will see me, because I live and you will live' (John 14:18-19). 'My Father will love you and we will come to you and make our home in you' (John 14:23).



The human heart is ‘**the secret hiding place of God’s presence**’ (verse 20). In the human heart Jesus is in communion with God, the communion of love we call the Holy Spirit. We are invited to join him there. Jesus instructed his disciples: ‘Whenever you pray, go into your room, and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret’ (Matthew 6:6).



5Into your hands, O GOD, I commit my spirit.  
You have redeemed me, faithful God.

Perhaps this is the most profound prayer in this psalm.

The psalmist is suffering intensely. He chooses to believe in God's faithfulness, and so knows-in-faith that, however things may seem, God has redeemed him.

Luke places these words on the lips of the dying Jesus: 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit' (Luke 23:46).

Compare the dying words of Stephen: 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit' (Acts 7:59).



<sup>24</sup>Be strong, let your heart take courage,  
all you who hope in GOD.

‘Keep alert, stand firm in your faith,  
be courageous, be strong.

Let all that you do be done in love’ (1 Corinthians 16:13-14).



## Psalm 31

<sup>1</sup>In you, O GOD, I seek refuge.

Let me not suffer shame.

May your justice be my security.

<sup>2</sup>Come close to hear me!

Come quickly to rescue me!

Be my rock of refuge, my mighty stronghold.

<sup>3</sup>You are indeed my rock, my fortress.

Go before me; be my guide.

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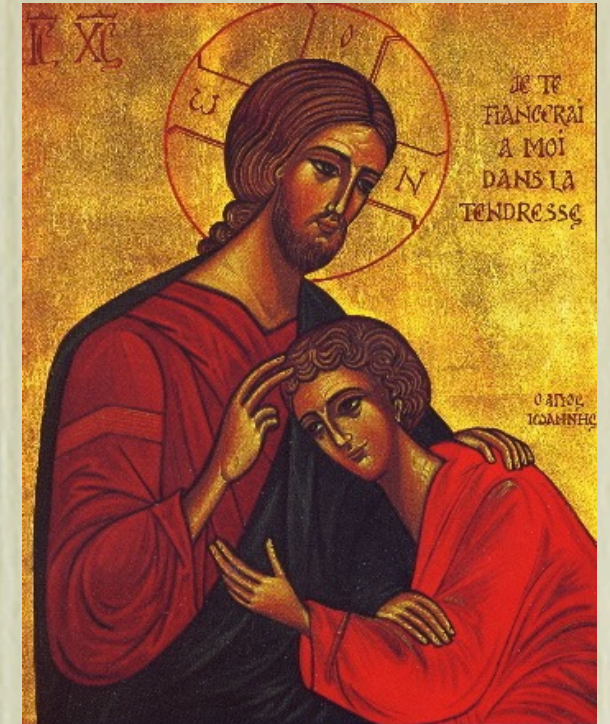
Release me, for you are my protector.

<sup>5</sup>Into your hands, O GOD, I commit my spirit.

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all you who hope in GOD.



# Praying Psalm 32 with Jesus





<sup>1</sup>Blessed and happy are they  
whose sins are forgiven.

<sup>2</sup>Blessed and happy are they  
to whom GOD imputes no guilt,  
whose spirit is no longer darkened by sin.

<sup>3</sup>If you remain silent, you will waste away,  
<sup>4</sup>weighed down by sin day and night,  
your strength dried up as in a summer drought.

<sup>5</sup>If you acknowledge your sin and stop hiding your guilt,  
if you confess your transgressions ,  
you God will forgive your sin and remove your guilt.

<sup>6</sup>This is why the faithful pray to GOD in danger.  
Even the rush of a mighty flood will not touch them.



<sup>7</sup>You, O God, are my hiding place; you free me from danger.  
When I cry for help you encircle me with love.

<sup>8</sup>I will instruct you and show you the road you must follow.  
I will watch over you and give you counsel:

<sup>9</sup>‘Do not be a horse or mule, without understanding,  
needing bridle and bit before anyone can approach you.’

<sup>10</sup>Many are the torments of the wicked,  
but kindness surrounds those who trust in GOD.

<sup>11</sup>Be glad and rejoice in GOD, O you just.  
Shout for joy, all you upright of heart.



<sup>1</sup>Blessed and happy are they whose sins are forgiven.

<sup>2</sup>Blessed and happy are they to whom GOD imputes no guilt,  
whose spirit is no longer darkened by sin.

The psalmist was profoundly depressed until he acknowledged his sin and pleaded with God for forgiveness. The experience of forgiveness brought profound joy and a sense of deep gratitude. He is advising others to follow his example. Paul quotes these verses in his Letter to the Romans (4:7-8).



The psalmist's spirit, the life-breath that has its source in God is 'no longer darkened by sin' (verse 2). Now he enjoys the purity that comes with communion with God.

We might reflect on the following from the New Testament:

'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:8-9).

'Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective' (James 5:16).



Sin has its effects in our lives. The psalmist describes what was happening to him while he refused to face up to what he was doing. When he finally admitted his sin, he experienced God's forgiveness and release.

John has the same message: 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:8-9).



The psalmist came to know that when he cried for help God ‘encircled him with love’ (verse 7), ‘kindness surrounded him’ (verse 10).

We recall Jesus’ words: ‘There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance’ (Luke 15:7).



<sup>8</sup>I will instruct you and show you the road you must follow.  
I will watch over you and give you counsel:  
<sup>9</sup>‘Do not be a horse or mule, without understanding,  
needing bridle and bit before anyone can approach you.’

It is not clear whether it is the psalmist offering advice, or God. Either way, we still have work to do in making sure we do not fall back into sin.

We remember Jesus’ words to the woman caught in adultery:  
‘I do not condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again’ (John 8:11).

Ultimately we will experience relief from tribulation caused by sin only if we humbly listen to God, who is ‘**watching over us and giving us counsel**’ (verse 8).



The message of this psalm is a simple one. We would do well to ponder it, and, to do so in the presence of Jesus, for he came to call sinners to repentance (Mark 2:17). While he is without sin himself and so cannot pray verses 3-5 as in the psalm, he knew the consequences of those who did not seek forgiveness. With some adjustment of the text, instead of listening to the psalmist speaking from his experience - an experience that Jesus does not share - we can hear Jesus speaking to us, and pleading with us to acknowledge our sin.



We can say to God: 'You are my hiding place' (verse 7).

As we cry for help God 'encircles us with love' (verse 7).

God is 'watching over us and giving us counsel' (verse 8).

God is assuring us that 'kindness surrounds those who trust in God' (verse 10).



## Psalm 32

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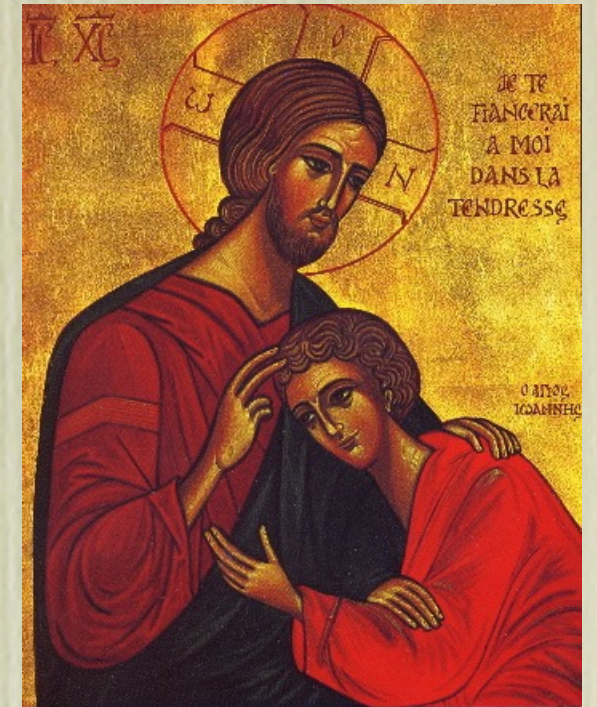
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