

Psalm 31-40 choral reading

CHARACTERS: David, All, Group A, Group B, Fearful, Voice of God, Asaph, Antagonist,

SETTING: bare stage

RUN TIME: 2 minutes/page

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: Psalm 31-40 (HCSB)

Psalm 31

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

In you, Lord, I have taken refuge;

ALL: let me never be put to shame;

DAVID: deliver me in your righteousness.

ALL: Turn your ear to me,

DAVID: come quickly to my rescue;

ALL: be my rock of refuge,

DAVID: a strong fortress to save me.

ALL: Since you are my rock and my fortress,

DAVID: for the sake of your name lead and guide me.

ALL: Keep me free from the trap that is set for me,

DAVID: for you are my refuge.

ALL: Into your hands I commit my spirit;

DAVID: deliver me, Lord, my faithful God.

ALL: hate those who cling to worthless idols;

DAVID: as for me, I trust in the Lord.

ALL: I will be glad and rejoice in your love,

DAVID: for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul.

ALL: You have not given me into the hands of the enemy

DAVID: but have set my feet in a spacious place.

ALL: Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in distress;

GROUP A: my eyes grow weak with sorrow,

GROUP B: my soul and body with grief.

GROUP A: My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning;

GROUP B: my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak.

DAVID: Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbors

GROUP A: and an object of dread to my closest friends—

GROUP B: those who see me on the street flee from me.

DAVID: I am forgotten as though I were dead;

ALL: I have become like broken pottery.

DAVID: For I hear many whispering,

FEARFUL: Terror on every side!

GROUP A: They conspire against me

GROUP B: and plot to take my life.

ALL: But I trust in you, Lord; I say,

DAVID: You are my God.

ALL: My times are in your hands;
 DAVID: deliver me from the hands of my enemies,
 ALL: from those who pursue me.
 GROUP A: Let your face shine on your servant;
 GROUP B: save me in your unfailing love.
 DAVID: Let me not be put to shame, Lord, for I have cried out to you;
 GROUP A: but let the wicked be put to shame
 GROUP B: and be silent in the realm of the dead.
 DAVID: Let their lying lips be silenced,
 ALL: for with pride and contempt they speak arrogantly against the righteous.
 DAVID: How abundant are the good things that you have stored up for those who fear you,
 GROUP A: that you bestow in the sight of all,
 GROUP B: on those who take refuge in you.
 ALL: In the shelter of your presence you hide them from all human intrigues;
 DAVID: you keep them safe in your dwelling from accusing tongues.
 ALL: Praise be to the Lord,
 DAVID: for he showed me the wonders of his love when I was in a city under siege.
 ALL: In my alarm I said,
 DAVID: (*alarmed*) I am cut off from your sight!
 ALL: Yet you heard my cry for mercy when I called to you for help.
 DAVID: Love the Lord, all his faithful people!
 ALL: The Lord preserves those who are true to him,
 DAVID: but the proud he pays back in full.
 ALL: Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.

Psalm 32

DAVID: Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven,
 ALL: whose sins are covered.
 DAVID: Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them
 ALL: and in whose spirit is no deceit.
 DAVID: When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.
 ALL: For day and night your hand was heavy on me;
 GROUP A: my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.
 GROUP B: Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.
 GROUP A: I said
 DAVID: I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.
 ALL: And you forgave the guilt of my sin.
 DAVID: Therefore, let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found;
 ALL: surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them.
 DAVID: You are my hiding place;
 GROUP A: you will protect me from trouble
 GROUP B: and surround me with songs of deliverance.
 GROUP A: I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
 GROUP B: I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.

DAVID: Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding
 ALL: but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.
 DAVID: Many are the woes of the wicked,
 ALL: but the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him.
 DAVID: Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous;
 ALL: sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Psalm 33

DAVID: Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous;
 ALL: it is fitting for the upright to praise him.
 DAVID: Praise the Lord with the harp;
 ALL: make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.
 GROUP A: Sing to him a new song;
 GROUP B: play skillfully, and shout for joy.
 DAVID: For the word of the Lord is right and true;
 ALL: he is faithful in all he does.
 DAVID: The Lord loves righteousness and justice;
 ALL: the earth is full of his unfailing love.
 GROUP A: By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,
 GROUP B: their starry host by the breath of his mouth.
 GROUP A: He gathers the waters of the sea into jars
 GROUP B: he puts the deep into storehouses.
 DAVID: Let all the earth fear the Lord;
 ALL: let all the people of the world revere him.
 DAVID: For he spoke, and it came to be;
 ALL: he commanded, and it stood firm.
 GROUP A: The Lord foils the plans of the nations;
 GROUP B: he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.
 DAVID: But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever,
 ALL: the purposes of his heart through all generations.
 GROUP A: Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,
 GROUP B: the people he chose for his inheritance.
 DAVID: From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind;
 ALL: From his dwelling place, he watches all who live on earth—
 GROUP A: he who forms the hearts of all,
 GROUP B: who considers everything they do.
 GROUP A: No king is saved by the size of his army;
 GROUP B: no warrior escapes by his great strength.
 ALL: A horse is a vain hope for deliverance;
 DAVID: Despite all its great strength, it cannot save.
 ALL: But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him,
 DAVID: on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,
 GROUP A: to deliver them from death
 GROUP B: and keep them alive in famine.
 ALL: We wait in hope for the Lord;

GROUP A: he is our help and our shield.

DAVID: In him our hearts rejoice,

GROUP B: for we trust in his holy name.

ALL: May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you.

Psalm 34 by David.

ASAPH: This Psalm was written when David pretended to be insane before Abimelek.

ALL: Abimelek drove him away, and David left.

DAVID: I will extol the Lord at all times;

ALL: his praise will always be on my lips.

DAVID: I will glory in the Lord;

ALL: let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

DAVID: Glorify the Lord with me;

ALL: let us exalt his name together.

DAVID: I sought the Lord, and he answered me;

ALL: he delivered me from all my fears.

DAVID: Those who look to him are radiant;

ALL: their faces are never covered with shame.

DAVID: This poor man called, and the Lord heard him;

ALL: he saved him out of all his troubles.

DAVID: The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him,

ALL: and he delivers them.

DAVID: Taste and see that the Lord is good;

ALL: blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

DAVID: Fear the Lord, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing.

GROUP A: The lions may grow weak and hungry,

GROUP B: but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

DAVID: Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

GROUP A: Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days,

GROUP B: keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies.

GROUP A: Turn from evil and do good;

GROUP B: seek peace and pursue it.

DAVID: The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,

ALL: and his ears are attentive to their cry;

DAVID: but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil,

ALL: to blot out their name from the earth.

DAVID: The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them;

ALL: he delivers them from all their troubles.

GROUP A: The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

GROUP B: The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all;

DAVID: he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.

ALL: Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned.

DAVID: The Lord will rescue his servants;

ALL: no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.

Psalm 35

DAVID: Contend, Lord, with those who contend with me;
ALL: fight against those who fight against me.
DAVID: Take up shield and armor; arise and come to my aid.
ALL: Brandish spear and javelin against those who pursue me.
DAVID: Say to me,
Voice of GOD: I am your salvation.
DAVID: May those who seek my life be disgraced and put to shame;
ALL: may those who plot my ruin be turned back in dismay.
DAVID: May they be like chaff before the wind,
ALL: with the angel of the Lord driving them away;
GROUP A: may their path be dark and slippery,
GROUP B: with the angel of the Lord pursuing them.
DAVID: Since they hid their net for me without cause and without cause dug a pit for me,
ALL: may ruin overtake them by surprise—
GROUP A: may the net they hid entangle them,
GROUP B: may they fall into the pit, to their ruin.
DAVID: Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord and delight in his salvation.
ALL: My whole being will exclaim,
DAVID: Who is like you, Lord? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them.
ALL: Ruthless witnesses come forward;
DAVID: they question me on things I know nothing about.
ALL: They repay me evil for good and leave me like one bereaved.
DAVID: Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting.
ALL: When my prayers returned to me unanswered,
DAVID: I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother.
ALL: I bowed my head in grief as though weeping for my mother.
DAVID: But when I stumbled, they gathered in glee;
ALL: assailants gathered against me without my knowledge.
DAVID: They slandered me without ceasing.
GROUP A: Like the ungodly they maliciously mocked;
GROUP B: they gnashed their teeth at me.
DAVID: (*desperate*) How long, Lord, will you look on? Rescue me from their ravages, my precious life from these lions.
GROUP A: I will give you thanks in the great assembly;
GROUP B: among the throngs I will praise you.
DAVID: Do not let those gloat over me who are my enemies without cause;
ALL: do not let those who hate me without reason maliciously wink the eye.
DAVID: They do not speak peaceably, but devise false accusations against those who live quietly in the land.
ALL: They sneer at me and say,
ANTAGONIST: (*gloating*) Aha! Aha! With our own eyes we have seen it.
DAVID: Lord, you have seen this; do not be silent.
ALL: Do not be far from me, Lord. Awake, and rise to my defense!

DAVID: Contend for me, my God and Lord.

ALL: Vindicate me in your righteousness, Lord my God;

DAVID: do not let them gloat over me.

ALL: Do not let them think,

ANTAGONIST: (*gloating*) Aha, just what we wanted! We have swallowed him up.

DAVID: May all who gloat over my distress be put to shame and confusion;

ALL: may all who exalt themselves over me be clothed with shame and disgrace.

DAVID: May those who delight in my vindication shout for joy and gladness;

ALL: may they always say,

DAVID: (gladly) The Lord be exalted, who delights in the well-being of his servant.

ALL: My tongue will proclaim your righteousness, your praises all day long.

Psalm 36 by David, the servant of the Lord.

DAVID: I have a message from God in my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked:

ALL: There is no fear of God before their eyes.

DAVID: In their own eyes they flatter themselves too much to detect or hate their sin.

GROUP A: The words of their mouths are wicked and deceitful;

GROUP B: they fail to act wisely or do good.

GROUP A: Even on their beds they plot evil;

GROUP B: they commit themselves to a sinful course and do not reject what is wrong.

DAVID: Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.

GROUP A: Your righteousness is like the highest mountains,

GROUP B: your justice like the great deep.

ALL: You, Lord, preserve both people and animals.

GROUP A: How priceless is your unfailing love, O God!

GROUP B: People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

DAVID: They feast on the abundance of your house;

ALL: you give them drink from your river of delights.

DAVID: For with you is the fountain of life;

ALL: in your light we see light.

GROUP A: Continue your love to those who know you,

GROUP B: your righteousness to the upright in heart.

DAVID: May the foot of the proud not come against me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.

ALL: See how the evildoers lie fallen— thrown down, not able to rise!

Psalm 37

DAVID: Do not fret because of those who are evil

ALL: or be envious of those who do wrong;

DAVID: for like the grass they will soon wither,

ALL: like green plants they will soon die away.

DAVID: Trust in the Lord and do good;

ALL: dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

DAVID: Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

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ALL: Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this:
 DAVID: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn,
 ALL: your vindication like the noonday sun.
 DAVID: Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;
 ALL: Do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.
 DAVID: Refrain from anger and turn from wrath;
 ALL: do not fret—it leads only to evil.
 GROUP A: For those who are evil will be destroyed,
 GROUP B: but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land.
 GROUP A: A little while, and the wicked will be no more;
 GROUP B: though you look for them, they will not be found.
 DAVID: But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity.
 ALL: The wicked plot against the righteous and gnash their teeth at them;
 DAVID: but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming.
 GROUP A: The wicked draw the sword and bend the bow to bring down the poor and needy,
 GROUP B: to slay those whose ways are upright.
 DAVID: But their swords will pierce their own hearts,
 ALL: and their bows will be broken.
 DAVID: Better the little that the righteous have than the wealth of many wicked;
 ALL: for the power of the wicked will be broken,
 DAVID: but the Lord upholds the righteous.
 ALL: The blameless spend their days under the Lord's care, and their inheritance will endure forever.
 GROUP A: In times of disaster they will not wither;
 GROUP B: in days of famine they will enjoy plenty.
 ALL: But the wicked will perish:
 DAVID: Though the Lord's enemies are like the flowers of the field,
 ALL: they will be consumed, they will go up in smoke.
 GROUP A: The wicked borrow and do not repay,
 GROUP B: but the righteous give generously;
 GROUP A: those the Lord blesses will inherit the land,
 GROUP B: but those he curses will be destroyed.
 DAVID: The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him;
 ALL: though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand.
 DAVID: I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.
 GROUP A: They are always generous and lend freely;
 GROUP B: their children will be a blessing.
 DAVID: Turn from evil and do good; then you will dwell in the land forever.
 ALL: For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones.
 GROUP A: Wrongdoers will be completely destroyed
 GROUP B: the offspring of the wicked will perish.
 DAVID: The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever.
 GROUP A: The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom,
 GROUP B: and their tongues speak what is just.
 DAVID: The law of their God is in their hearts; their feet do not slip.

ALL: The wicked lie in wait for the righteous, intent on putting them to death;
 GROUP A: but the Lord will not leave them in the power of the wicked
 GROUP B: or let them be condemned when brought to trial.
 DAVID: Hope in the Lord and keep his way.
 GROUP A: He will exalt you to inherit the land;
 GROUP B: when the wicked are destroyed, you will see it.
 DAVID: I have seen a wicked and ruthless man flourishing like a luxuriant native tree,
 GROUP A: but he soon passed away and was no more;
 DAVID: though I looked for him, he could not be found.
 GROUP B: Consider the blameless, observe the upright;
 ALL: a future awaits those who seek peace.
 GROUP A: But all sinners will be destroyed;
 GROUP B: there will be no future for the wicked.
 DAVID: The salvation of the righteous comes from the Lord;
 ALL: he is their stronghold in time of trouble.
 DAVID: The Lord helps them and delivers them;
 ALL: he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

Psalm 38

All lines are spoken with pain, sadness or weariness

DAVID: Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath.
 ALL: Your arrows have pierced me, and your hand has come down on me.
 GROUP A: Because of your wrath, there is no health in my body;
 GROUP B: there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin.
 DAVID: My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.
 ALL: My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly.
 GROUP A: I am bowed down and brought very low;
 GROUP B: all day long I go about mourning.
 GROUP A: My back is filled with searing pain;
 GROUP B: there is no health in my body.
 DAVID: I am feeble and utterly crushed;
 ALL: I groan in anguish of heart.
 GROUP A: All my longings lie open before you, Lord;
 GROUP B: my sighing is not hidden from you.
 DAVID: My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes.
 ALL: My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds;
 DAVID: my neighbors stay far away.
 GROUP A: Those who want to kill me set their traps,
 GROUP B: those who would harm me talk of my ruin;
 ALL: all day long they scheme and lie.
 DAVID: I am like the deaf, who cannot hear,
 ALL: like the mute, who cannot speak;
 DAVID: I have become like one who does not hear, whose mouth can offer no reply.
 ALL: Lord, I wait for you; you will answer, Lord my God. For I said,

DAVID: Do not let them gloat or exalt themselves over me when my feet slip.

ALL: For I am about to fall, and my pain is ever with me.

DAVID: I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.

GROUP A: Many have become my enemies without cause

GROUP B: those who hate me without reason are numerous.

GROUP A: Those who repay my good with evil

GROUP B: and lodge accusations against me, though I seek only to do what is good.

DAVID: Lord, do not forsake me; do not be far from me, my God.

ALL: Come quickly to help me, my Lord and my Savior.

Psalm 39

DAVID: I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth while in the presence of the wicked.

ASAPH: So David remained utterly silent, not even saying anything good.

DAVID: But my anguish increased; my heart grew hot within me. While I meditated, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue:

ALL: Show me, Lord, my life's end and the number of my days;

DAVID: let me know how fleeting my life is.

ALL: You have made my days a mere handbreadth;

DAVID: the span of my years is as nothing before you.

ALL: Everyone is but a breath, even those who seem secure.

DAVID: Surely everyone goes around like a mere phantom;

ASAPH: in vain they rush about, heaping up wealth without knowing whose it will finally be.

DAVID: But now, Lord, what do I look for?

ALL: My hope is in you.

DAVID: Save me from all my transgressions;

ALL: do not make me the scorn of fools.

DAVID: I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for you are the one who has done this.

ALL: Remove your scourge from me; I am overcome by the blow of your hand.

DAVID: When you rebuke and discipline anyone for their sin,

ALL: you consume their wealth like a moth—

ASAPH: surely everyone is but a breath.

DAVID: Hear my prayer, Lord, listen to my cry for help;

ALL: do not be deaf to my weeping.

DAVID: I dwell with you as a foreigner, a stranger, as all my ancestors were.

ALL: Look away from me, that I may enjoy life again before I depart and am no more.

Psalm 40

DAVID: I waited patiently for the Lord;

ALL: he turned to me and heard my cry.

DAVID: He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire;

ALL: he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.

DAVID: He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.

ALL: Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him.

DAVID: Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,

ALL: who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods.

DAVID: Many, Lord my God, are the wonders you have done,

ALL: the things you planned for us.

DAVID: None can compare with you;

ALL: were I to speak and tell of your deeds, they would be too many to declare.

GROUP A: Sacrifice and offering you did not desire—

GROUP B: but my ears you have opened—

GROUP A: burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.

GROUP B: Then I said,

DAVID: Here I am, I have come— it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, my God;

ALL: your law is within my heart.

DAVID: I proclaim your saving acts in the great assembly;

ALL: I do not seal my lips, Lord, as you know.

GROUP A: I do not hide your righteousness in my heart;

GROUP B: I speak of your faithfulness and your saving help.

ALL: I do not conceal your love and your faithfulness from the great assembly.

DAVID: Do not withhold your mercy from me, Lord;

ALL: may your love and faithfulness always protect me.

DAVID: For troubles without number surround me;

ALL: my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see.

DAVID: They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me.

GROUP A: Be pleased to save me, Lord;

GROUP B: come quickly, Lord, to help me.

GROUP A: May all who want to take my life be put to shame and confusion;

GROUP B: may all who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace.

DAVID: May those who say to me,

ANTAGONIST: Aha! Aha!

DAVID: be appalled at their own shame.

ALL: But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you;

DAVID: may those who long for your saving help always say,

ALL: The Lord is great!

DAVID: But as for me, I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me.

ALL: You are my help and my deliverer; you are my God, do not delay.

Psalm 41

DAVID: Blessed are those who have regard for the weak;

ALL: the Lord delivers them in times of trouble.

DAVID: The Lord protects and preserves them—

ALL: they are counted among the blessed in the land—

DAVID: he does not give them over to the desire of their foes.

ALL: The Lord sustains them on their sickbed and restores them from their bed of illness.

DAVID: Have mercy on me, Lord; heal me, for I have sinned against you.

ALL: My enemies say of me in malice,

ANTAGONIST: When will he die and his name perish?

DAVID: When one of them comes to see me, he speaks falsely, while his heart gathers slander;

AL: then he goes out and spreads it around.

DAVID: All my enemies whisper together against me; they imagine the worst for me, saying,

ANTAGONIST: A vile disease has afflicted him; he will never get up from the place where he lies.

DAVID: Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me.

ALL: May you have mercy on me, Lord;

DAVID: raise me up, that I may repay them. I know that you are pleased with me,

ALL: for my enemy does not triumph over me.

DAVID: Because of my integrity, you uphold me

ALL: and set me in your presence forever.

DAVID: Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,

ALL: from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.