



## My Times are in Your Hand

**Sermon Text:** Psalm 31

**Study Texts:** Romans 12:9-21

**Sermon Recap:** Main idea: “Even in the face of difficulty and uncertainty, the faithful take refuge in the LORD.” Psalm 31, like many that come before, is a heart’s cry from David in the midst of difficulty. David uses such language as *“in distress,” “sorrow,” “a reproach,” “an object of dread,” “forgotten,”* and *“failing strength”* to refer to his situation. However, in the midst of this tribulation, David declares ultimate trust in the LORD. David points us to the LORD as his (and our) *“rock of refuge”* and *“strong fortress.”* David cries to the LORD for deliverance as he professes, *“My times are in your hand.”*

**Sermon Connection:** Chapter 12 of Romans is highly practical. Paul is instructing the believers on the true marks of a Christian’s life. Specifically, in verses 9-21, Paul teaches them how to live in a God-honoring way in the midst of difficulty and uncertainty. Paul makes a number of assumptions, namely, that evil exists (vv. 9, 21); tribulation is ever-present (v. 12); the saints have needs (v. 13); persecution comes (v. 14); weeping is a reality (v. 15); discord is present (vv.16-18); spiteful revenge is a temptation (vv. 17,19); and Christians have enemies (v. 20). So, in the face of these realities, the faithful must take refuge in the LORD.

### Lesson Plan

**Lesson Goal:** To live in such a way, both individually and collectively, so as to honor the LORD, the unmoving Rock of Refuge, in the midst of an uncertain and fallen world

#### **Lesson Points:**

**Point 1: Love is a Distinguishing Mark of Christians in the Face of Tribulation.** (vv. 9-13)

**Point 2: Humility is a Distinguishing Mark of Christians During Uncertainty.** (vv. 10b, 13-15,16b)

**Point 3: Unity is a Distinguishing Mark of Christians During Disorder.** (vv. 14-21)

**The Context:** The book of Romans was written by the Apostle Paul toward the end of his third missionary journey (around 56 A.D.) as he prepared to travel to Jerusalem to provide assistance to the saints there (Rom. 1:1; 15:22-33). The purpose of the letter, which is rich in doctrine, is to teach the powerful truths of the gospel of grace to the believers in Rome, and provide practical instruction for living out a faithful life. (Rom. 1: 11,13, 15). Although the church in Rome did not know Paul personally, he had heard of their strong faith and therefore, desired to instruct them both doctrinally and practically. (1:8-15)

**Opening Question:** Why is the way a Christian lives important?

**Transition Statement:** 2 Corinthians 5:20 teaches us that we, as followers of Christ, are His ambassadors. Galatians 4:4-7 calls us children of God. This means that the way we live represents God in the same way an ambassador represents a country, or a child (or children) represents his or her parents. In Romans 12:9-21, Paul provides practical instruction to help us live in such a way so as to honor God in the face of difficulty and uncertainty.

**Point 1: Love is a Distinguishing Mark of Christians in the Face of Tribulation.** (vv. 9-13)  
There are 13 exhortations in these 5 verses (vv. 9-13). As a group, list them and briefly discuss each exhortation. In parentheses, you'll find some additional information to guide your discussion.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_ (“Genuine” means “without hypocrisy.”)
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ (Paul is indicating a choice, i.e. “Choose to hate evil.”)
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_ (“Hold fast” is used for sexual intimacy in 1 Cor. 6:16.)
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_ (“One another” refers to fellow believers in the Church.)
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_ (How do we do this...“Outdo honoring one another”?) )
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_ (Cross reference verse 8 in Rom. 12...“Zeal” in ESV.)
- 7) \_\_\_\_\_ (“Fervent” means the opposite of “slothful.”)
- 8) \_\_\_\_\_ (Cross reference Rom. 16:17-18.)
- 9) \_\_\_\_\_ (“In” carries the idea of “being rooted in.”)
- 10) \_\_\_\_\_ (Tribulation is the context for all of verse 12.)
- 11) \_\_\_\_\_ (“Be constant” can also be translated “Persevere.”)
- 12) \_\_\_\_\_ (Cross reference Lev. 19:33-34.)
- 13) \_\_\_\_\_ (“Practice” implies continuous action.)

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Which of the 13 exhortations do you (individually) find the easiest or most natural?
- 2) Do we as a growth group treat any of these exhortations as optional?
- 3) Are there any of these exhortations that we outright ignore or neglect?
- 4) How are you encouraged by seeing any of these exhortations in others in your growth group? Take time now to publicly commend them.

**Transition Statement:** The overarching focus of verses 9-13 is “let love be genuine.” Each of the exhortations (hating what is evil, loving what is good, rejoicing, being devoted to one another, showing hospitality, etc.) is essential to love. Followers of Christ must seek to do these things at all times, but especially in times of affliction...

**Point 2: Humility is a Distinguishing Mark of Christians During Uncertainty.** (vv. 10b, 13-15,16b)

How does showing hospitality take humility? Or what is the connection between hospitality and humility? (v. 13)

What is our natural response toward those who persecute us? How does Paul teach us to react? (v. 14)

At the end of v. 16, Paul tells us to “*associate with the lowly.*” Literally it means, “to be carried away with the lowly (things and people).” What does Paul mean? How does this help us to be humble?

**Transition statement:** Pride is a dangerous sin that Satan can use to keep us from showing hospitality, from empathizing with our brothers and sisters, even from evangelizing. Christians (both individually and collectively) must be marked with humility.

**Point 3: Unity is a Distinguishing Mark of Christians During Disorder.** (vv. 14-21)

What is another way to translate “*Never be wise in your own sight*” from verse 16b? How does this help foster unity?

Why does Paul add, “*...so far as it depends on you...*?” in verse 18?

Verses 19-21 offer some sobering language such as “*...leave it to the wrath of God...*,” and “*Vengeance is mine, I will repay,*” says the Lord.” Where is the Gospel found in these verses?

### **The Big Picture**

The way you live your life matters. Your actions matter, your words matter, the way you spend your time matters. The way your church or growth group conducts itself matters. When people know you are a Christian, or know that you are a member of a church or growth group, then everything you do reflects on God, either positively or negatively, especially in times of difficulty. Do we only live right when things are going well? That is a form of hypocrisy.

The reason Paul can exhort us to do all of these things is because they are rooted in the character of God. God is just, loving, and good. He hates evil and loves good. He humbled Himself at the incarnation and on the cross. He is all of these things and more. Only through a relationship with Jesus can we be restored to a right relationship with God and obtain true peace and restoration. The gospel is the peace that God offers. If this peace is rejected, one will be left to the wrath of God. It is in this God, the strong Fortress, that we take refuge in times of tribulation, uncertainty, and disorder.

### **Application Questions**

- 1) Hypocrisy among religious people is one of the most listed reasons for people in Gaston County not attending church. Why do you think “religious people” have such a problem with hypocrisy? How can we work to overcome this?
- 2) Discuss how hospitality can be a bridge for us to get to the gospel with lost people. Discuss how you as a growth group can be more hospitable. How might you be more hospitable personally?
- 3) If your family was the star of a reality show called, “The Christian Family,” would people be drawn to Christ or turned away from Him after watching? What kind of ambassador is your family for Christ? Your growth group?