

My Times Are in Your Hands

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0 : 00] Please take your scriptures and turn to Psalm 31. We're going to read the entire psalm.

In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge. Let me never be put to shame. Deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me.

Come quickly to my rescue. Be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me. Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name, lead and guide me.

Free me from the trap that is set for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hands I commit my spirit. Redeem me, O Lord, the God of truth.

I hate those who cling to worthless idols. I trust in the Lord. I will be glad and rejoice in your love, for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul.

[1 : 04] You've not handed me over to the enemy, but have set my feet in a spacious place. Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I am in distress. My eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief.

My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning. My strength fails because of my affliction and my bones grow weak. Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbors.

I'm a dread to my friends. Those who see me on the street flee from me. I am forgotten by them as though I were dead. I become like broken pottery.

For I hear the slander of many. There's terror on every side. They conspire against me and plot to take my life. But I trust in you, O Lord.

I say you are my God. My times are in your hands. Deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant. Save me in your unfailing love.

[2 : 14] Let me not be put to shame, O Lord, for I have cried out to you. But let the wicked be put to shame and lie silent in the grave. Let their lying lips be silenced, for with pride and contempt, they speak arrogantly against the righteous.

How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men, on those who take refuge in you. In the shelter of your presence, you hide them from the intrigues of men.

In your dwelling, you keep them safe from accusing tongues. Praise be to the Lord, for he showed his wonderful love to me when I was in a besieged city.

In my alarm, I said, I am cut off from your sight. Yet you heard my cry for mercy when I called to you for help. Love the Lord, all his saints. The Lord preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full.

Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord. Well, Jesus was the master, and his disciples needed to know it.

[3 : 27] So, one day he told them to get into the boat. And he knew a storm was coming, and he knew it was going to be treacherous, and dangerous, and difficult.

But he told them, you get in the boat, go to the other side, I'll meet you over there, I'm going to stay behind and pray. And that's what it says.

It says, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat. And Jesus stayed behind and prayed. Eight or nine hours later, they're still out in the middle of the water.

Still out fighting the wind that's against them, the waves that are crashing on their boat, pushing them back constantly. And at the very last night, or the very last watch of the night, so now it's three, four, maybe five in the morning, Jesus walks out to them on the water.

You remember Peter and his incidents. But each of the Gospels say that when he climbed into the boat, they all bowed before him.

[4 : 40] And they said, truly, you are the Son of God. I think it's the first time that they as a group worshipped Jesus as the Son of God.

They saw that he was God. They saw that he was Master. That he was Sovereign. And that's what it means to be the Master. If you're Sovereign, we're talking about the sovereignty of God.

We're talking about God's attributes. And so tonight, we're going to talk about the sovereignty of God and how that helps us in difficult times, but just in living life as a foundation for our whole life.

So he's Sovereign, and that just means that wherever Jesus goes, wherever he turns up, wherever he is, he's Lord. There's no one higher than him.

He is telling everything what to do. He's Lord. Wherever he goes, whatever situation he involves himself in, he's the Master.

[5 : 53] He's the CEO of all things. Now, Jesus was the Master and his disciples needed to learn that. They needed to get that into their heads and into their hearts.

And it's the same lesson that we need to learn again and again, isn't it? It's the same lesson we need to learn. The loss of a job.

The rebellion of a child. Marital conflicts. Prolonged illness. Death of a spouse.

Divorce. Financial ruin. Overwhelming work responsibilities. Church strife. Cancer. Addiction. Depression.

All these wind and waves. But he is the Master. He's sovereign. And that is our comfort. Now, sometimes in this life there are storms that happen to us just because we're living in a fallen world.

[7 : 02] Where bad things happen. Where harmful, hurtful things happen. And sometimes that's just the case. Sometimes we face storms because there's actually dark, evil forces in high places attacking us.

Job shows us that. Sometimes we face storms because of our own sinful choices. That happens. We bring it upon ourselves, so to speak.

Or maybe it's just the sinful choices of those close to us. There is a price for loving people. And sometimes it means that their sin negatively harms us or affects us.

God is sovereign. And that means that ultimately everything we experience is either initiated by him or allowed by him.

It all is according to his own sovereign purpose. His own overarching purpose. And that's our comfort. And so, look at Psalm 31.

[8 : 19] And this is where I want you to see. This is where we meet God's sovereignty. Again, I hope I've been showing you this, that the Bible is meant to meet us in our troubles.

The Bible is meant to help us in our difficulties. And it's not a theoretical theology. It is we get to know our God in the troubles of everyday life.

And so, here's Psalm 31. And David is sad. He says, anguish, that's painful, sadness is consuming my life.

What a picture. That bite by bite, sadness is now taking chunks of more and more of my life.

physically, his strength is failing. We read about that. His body and his soul is filled with grief. His eyes are weak with sorrow.

[9 : 22] Physically, his strength is failing. Socially, did you notice what is happening? His enemies are just making hay with him and now his friends don't even want to be around him.

The ones that he could trust in, now they can't relate to him. His friends ignore him. And all this is against him. And the wonderful thing is, is that David, despite how on the surface of things, how everything is going, he's not undone.

He's not totally ruined. He's not falling apart completely. He has the secret comfort, the secret help that the friends, the enemies, and everything can't touch.

all those arrows, even though they're dipped in fire of hell itself, all those arrows can't reach him.

His shield of faith is impervious. It's waterproof. It's fireproof. He has this comfort. And what is his comfort when all of this is going so wrong and it's so painful?

[10 : 33] Well, look at verse 14. Verse 14 and 15. But I trust in you, O Lord, and I say you are my God.

That harkens back to Psalm 95, 7, what we just memorized this week. David is saying you're my God, but it's the next verse I want to look at especially. My times are in your hands.

My times are in your hands. That's God's sovereignty being trusted, being counted on, being believed.

He's the master. David's saying he's the master of my life. He's the master of my times. And so what I want to do this evening is just pull that all apart and meditate upon it piece by piece and draw the comfort out for ourselves to just look at the small phrase.

My times are in his hands and to meditate upon it. Because it wasn't just David who could draw comfort from this. It is us. It is us and we need to do this.

[11:46] And so let's pull this honeycomb apart and get the honey out of it. So first, what does it mean my times? My times. Maybe the best commentary on this is the book of Ecclesiastes in chapter 3.

You remember that wonderful poem that the author has there. He says, there's a time for everything, a season for every activity under heaven.

So times are seasons of life. I think as a child you see life as just this one big monolithic single piece and maybe for years it is.

But when you have a broader perspective of an adult, you realize that there are times, there are seasons and what is now will not always be that way.

So times are seasons, seasons of life, times for activities. He says, there's a time to be born. So my time, my times are in his hands.

[12:48] There's a time to be born. So our conception, our gestation, our birth is all in God's hands. Now sometimes parents, they joke and say, oh she was a surprise or he was an accident.

But that's just from our perspective. God doesn't have any accidents. Our birth is no accident.

There's a time to be born. There's a time to die. We sing it from life's first cry to final destiny.

From life's first cry, what is it? To final breath, Jesus commands my destiny. So the exact season of birth is in his hands.

And that whole season of death, whether it's long or short, sudden or expected, it's in his hands. A time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill, a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh.

And on it goes. My times are in your hands. My times are in his hands.

[13:57] So my seasons, my circumstances, the things I do and the things that are done to me, all the different seasons of life.

Charles Spurgeon says, our times make up a kind of atmosphere of existence. we live in our time. I think Charles Dickens wrote, it was the best of times and it was the worst of times.

We live in our times. And God chooses the times and the places for each of us to live. So why weren't you born 500 years ago?

Well, God decided that you would be born and live in this time, in this place. So the whole atmosphere of your whole life was decided for you, was in his hands.

And so that's from a big perspective. So now we can think of what's sort of the big perspective of our whole life, of this whole atmosphere that we're living in. Well, we live after the cross.

[15:10] We live in this age when the United States is the great power on the world stage. It once, it wasn't, not so long ago, and it won't be someday.

Now is the time of the founding of the internet. Amazing changes, and smartphones, amazing things have happened. Now is the time of partisan politics, and Donald Trump.

Well, why do we live in this time? Well, God put us here. It's the atmosphere of our lives. And what does it say? My times, all of that is in God's hands.

So you might grieve, oh, that we live in these times. Well, this time is in God's hands. So from a big perspective, right down to a small perspective, so the whole culture, right down to what is going on in my family life, in my personal life.

So whether I'm a teenager, at school, with the situation that I'm facing, or an adult, an older person, whatever is going on in my personal life, all my times are in his hands.

[16:22] So all those different seasons are in his hands, my whole life. But then second notice, it's my times. My times.

God's sovereignty is personal. personal. It's personal. It's not just big perspective, it's personal. And I know you know that, but we can't hear this too much, because we need to remember this in the push and pull of our lives.

My times. So God cares for us, and he is master over our life individually. It's not just big perspective, it's the smallest perspective.

No accident in my life. My time to be born. My time to die. My time to mourn. My time to dance. God's care and sovereignty is individual.

Oh Lord, you have searched me, and you know me. You know when I sit, and when I rise. You perceive my thoughts from afar.

[17 : 30] You discern my going out, and my lying down. You are familiar with all my ways. What is David saying?

What is David taking great hope in? That God's care, that God's control, is extremely, utterly personal.

It's personal. He's saying, oh, how many thoughts of me you've had. You're thinking about me. you can see where my line of thinking is going from afar.

You know my thoughts. Before a word is on my tongue, you already know it. So personally, like, David was the only one.

Like, there was no one else to think about. That's how many thoughts God had of him. And that's what is true of us. So we talked about those different trials, that loss of job, and rebellion of a child, and marital strife, and et cetera.

[18 : 35] But David is saying, Lord, my loss of a job, that season is in your hands.

The rebellion of my child is in your hands. My marital difficulties, my illness, my church problems, my loss of a spouse, my cancer, my time, times, my times, are in your hands.

So take what you're going through and put it into God's hands, because that's where it already is. We're going to sing at the end, my times are in thy hand, my God, I wish them there, my life, my friends, my soul, I leave them entirely in thy care.

That's what I'm saying. Just like when we say, David said, I put the Lord at my right hand. David didn't literally move the Lord to his right hand.

He merely recognized and by faith counted it as so that the Lord is at my right hand and I'm going to live on the basis of that. And that's kind of what I'm saying.

[20 : 00] You're merely recognizing and nailing down in your own mind that that is where my times are. That's where all these things are.

They're in his hands and so that's where I want them to be. So personally nail that down in your own mind. Confess it back to God.

He says your time is in my hands and then I say in return Lord my time is in your hands. That's where I want them to be. And you worship and you trust him.

So that's second my times. Third well where are they? Where are they? Let's meditate on that. They're in his hands.

Now what does that mean? It means they are in his power. In his control. Under his dominion. He has complete control over them.

[20 : 59] That's what it means when the Bible says when someone or somebody is in someone's hands. You see it in verse 8. You have not handed me over to the enemy.

You've not given me over to them. And so remember that time that David sinned in counting the troops and the Lord gave him three options.

And it was famine, enemies invading, or a three-day plague. And David says let us fall into the hands of the Lord.

Not, for his mercy is great, but do not let me fall into the hands of men. Let us be at your complete disposal.

Don't give us into the hands of these men. There's mercy with you. There's no mercy with these men. So perhaps the Lord will have mercy upon us. Or Hebrews 10.

[21 : 56] 31, it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. It is a terrible and terrifying thing to have to be in God's hands at his complete disposal and he is angry at you.

Now he has total dominion. He always does, but now he's going to display it. You're at his complete disposal. There's nothing you can do. You're powerless. He has all the power.

And that's what David is saying here. My times are in your hands. There's something of power and control and undisputable domination.

All these times are at your mercy. There's not a stray, rogue, rebel time that isn't under God's hand and his power.

power. So no matter what comes, he's sitting serenely, supremely, securely on his throne over your life.

[23 : 03] Nothing comes into your life without his say. Nothing leaves your life without his say. He is Lord. My times. And so he lifts up one season and he puts it down.

so all my circumstances are under his domination. But in your hand means more than power and authority and rule.

It means care. It means care. We talked about this this morning. The Lord is responsible for us.

It means care. So if I were to put a baby in your hands, I just want you to really imagine this, I put a baby in your hands, what now is the most important thing in your whole world?

That baby. Seriously. The most pressing, the most urgent, the thing that needs to be taken care of above everything else, or at least first of all, is that baby.

[24 : 07] So if Janelle hands me little baby Mathis, instantly baby Mathis is now the most pressing urgent thing in my care, and I'm not going to drop him for anything. No matter what happens in my whole life, big, small, I'm going to have to take care of this baby first.

Right? He's in my care. I won't drop him for a million dollars. I won't drop him if my child is in danger, or my wife is in trouble, or the house is on fire, or the church is falling around upon my head, or the nation is under nuclear attack.

No matter what, right? I'm going to take care of the baby. I'm going to give him to his mother. I'm going to gently, I'm going to do something to make sure the baby is okay.

It might just be gently putting him on the ground, but I have to think, this baby is in my hands. I have to take care of the baby. baby. I'm looking after him.

My times are in God's hands. My circumstances, my life, are in his hands. He's watching over them.

[25 : 24] He's protecting and keeping them. Let's go to something a little less dramatic than a baby. If I was at the fair and I wanted to go on a ride, but I didn't want to take my phone and you wanted to stay on the ground, and so I handed you my phone and I said, here, can you hold this until I get back?

And I went on the ride and I had a great time and I come off the ride and I asked for my phone back and you said, I just dropped it, I don't know where it went. And you don't care.

I don't know where it went. like, how would I feel? This is just my phone. It's not that important. It's not that expensive. It's not that special.

But how would I feel? I'd be absolutely flabbergasted. Like, I gave you that just to take care of. You had it in your hand and what? Now you just drop it? You lose it?

Well, what's wrong with you? Well, my times are in God's hands. He's taken it to himself and he said, I'm going to care for this.

[26 : 30] I'm going to rule over this. I'm going to watch over this. What a comfort. He's not only in charge, he's on duty. He's paying attention to what he has to do.

That's what it means to be in his hands. Fourth, he's ruling and he's caring for all my times.

It's plural. It's plural. Because we have different seasons of life and he rules over them all. My past, those times are in his hands.

Some of you have regrets about your past, about wasted days or wasted years or wrong tracks you were following. Maybe sinful, maybe not.

And you look back and you say, that was a real dead end. Just a real dead end. It didn't go where I wanted to go. It was such a waste. But take heart.

[27 : 45] Take heart. God doesn't take pointless roads.

He doesn't meander without purpose. He knows what he's doing. There's more than you. And your choice is happening.

God was working all of his secret, mysterious will. And though you don't see it all right now, someday you will. You'll see the purposes that he had.

there aren't any regrets in heaven. Well, not only my, just my past, my dead end past, but my days of lostness, my days of blindness were in his hands.

And some of you say, oh, I wasted so much of my life and I squandered those years and I was such a fool and you have such a hard time with that. well, I just want you to take heart too because that time was in his hands.

[29 : 11] He didn't make a mistake. He didn't make a mistake. If he wanted to save you before then, he could have saved you before then. I don't say that as an excuse for, if you're lost, don't take that as an excuse to stay away and say, well, God's going to save me in his own time.

That's not what I'm saying. But what I do want to say, for the sake of those who are troubled over this, take heart. God knows what he was doing in the time that he was doing it.

It wasn't out of his control. He is this author and he's writing his own book. My wife and I are trying to read War and Peace together.

It's this long and don't break into my house or I'll beat you over the head with my War and the Peace novel. It's really very good. It's funny. It's insightful.

The characters are really good. There's action. But the first 100 pages is introducing all the characters and their situations. And you don't get it.

[30 : 20] It's not a sixth grade book where he's going to blandly tell you about the characters. He displays their whole life before you. And so just like you get to know people over time and in different settings, you get to know these characters.

But it's 100 pages. It takes a while. And I guess what I'm trying to say is God is writing your story and if it feels like your introduction to the Christian life had 100 pages of introductory material, and it seems like it's taking forever for the story to get started and you regret that, I just want you to realize God is writing that story.

He's writing your piece of music and you are going to find a place in that salvation choir where your song is heard. all your lostness, your regrets were in his hands.

All the bad things that happened to you were in his hands. Some of you were raised in wonderful Christians' homes, and some of you weren't.

Some of you feel like they started the Christian life with a head start, and I started the Christian life with a ton of chains around me, around my neck, and people hurt me, or abused me, or neglected me, or ignored me, and it's hard, and it hurts.

[32 : 02] And so to you, if that is you, if you can relate to that, I want to say with all gentleness that those days were in his hands.

we don't have enough time to go into some sort of great exploration of that, but let that simple truth comfort you. The Lord was on duty.

He knew what he was doing. And brothers and sisters, that's why we shouldn't look down on our struggling brothers and sisters, because maybe they have hurts that we don't know about, maybe only Jesus knows about, and if you were in their place, you would be in their place.

But if that's you, those days were in his hands. And all that bad hasn't disqualified you, or ruined you, or made you unfit to help, to serve, to bring glory.

God brings glory out of shame. Never forget his son, hung naked on a cross, and that was the greatest, and God pulled the greatest glory out of that great shame.

[33 : 15] So all my past was in his hands. All my days of affliction are in his hands. Each sad day in particular. There are days that are sadder than others.

Each of those particular days are in his hands. And maybe the whole season of affliction is in his hands. So he begins it and he will end it.

He has the whole sum of them in his hand. Listen again to Spurgeon. Brethren, is it not a delightful thing for us to know that though we are on a stormy voyage, the Lord himself is at the helm.

We don't know the course. We don't know where we're going. We don't not even our present latitude and longitude. We don't even know where we are.

But the pilot knows all about us and all about the sea. He's taking us where he wants us to go. So you don't know where you're going.

[34 : 18] You don't even know where you're at. But take heart. Take heart. You're hurting and you're saying I just want to steer clean out of this pain but I can't.

I just want to get out of here. I want to make it past this. But I don't know how and I don't think I can. Well the pilot knows all about you.

He knows all about the wind and the waves. He knows exactly what's going on. He knows exactly where he's going. So he can with a word say hush. Be still and it will be all over.

All those days of affliction particular or the whole length of them. They're in his hands. my day of death is in his hand.

And I bring this one out in particular because Jesus was thinking of this psalm on the cross. I don't know how much of it he was thinking.

[35 : 18] Maybe the whole thing. Maybe some of it. But the very last thing he said was Psalm 31 5. Father into your hands I commit my spirit.

What is he saying? Saying all that I am Lord. For whatever is to come it's in your hand. Take care of it. So in death our spirit. Our soul. And remember a man can gain the whole world and it's not worth it if you lose your soul in the process.

Our soul is in the hands of God. And he lifts that soul straight up to glory. You're a believer. You know perhaps we don't know what it's like.

None of us here do. But even if all the devils in hell are taking one last ditch effort to keep us from God.

[36 : 33] We need to remember that our husband is the king. And our soul is in his hand. And we're safe there. And he has disarmed all the principalities and powers.

That means all the ranks of demons. And so in his hand we rise to visit Zion's king. We rise to glory. So our dying souls are in his hands.

And that's what we're going to sing. Where else would we want them to be? They're in his power. They're in his care. So from life's first cry to final breath.

And then we could say the whole rest of the story is in his hand. Well a few points of quick application. One, don't miss the comfort here.

This is for you in particular. I hope you can take this away, this little short verse, and start stamping it on the moments and the days and the times of your life.

[37 : 39] You know, you see the stamp and you stamp a box or you stamp something. Well stamp my times are in his hands of those circumstances. Don't let it bounce off of you. Here is comfort and grab a hold of it and don't let go.

Don't miss it. Number two, be anxious for nothing. Don't be anxious for anything. Then if this is true, doesn't this just drive worry completely out?

Everything about me and mine are in his hands, under his control, under his care. I might drop a baby someday, but he'll never drop me, so I don't have anything to worry about.

And then third and last, I want to go back to Hebrews 10 31. It's a terrible thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. Are you lost?

I want you to think how frightening that is. Because you're not in the hands of a loving father or a friend. You're in the hands of an angry God.

[38 : 52] God. There's no comfort at all in Psalm 31 15 if you're lost. There's only this fearful expectation of judgment.

Because I'm going to build this life up and God is just going to tear it down. There's no comfort here if I'm an enemy of God.

So you have to make peace. surrender. You have to surrender. You surrender by bowing your life and throwing away any expectation of my righteousness and my goodness and you simply cling to Christ.

You trust him. So God's sovereignty is the Christian's greatest comfort. But if you're lost and you're thinking straight, it should be your greatest dread, your greatest fear.

And you need to wake up. You need to wake up and you need to come to Jesus. Don't let God be your enemy anymore.

[40 : 11] Let's pray. Lord, thank you that we are in your hands. And for us who you've washed and cleansed us from our sins, oh, what comfort is here, what peace.

We don't want to forfeit any of this peace. We want to own it all. And we want to claim all the hope and peace that is in this verse and in your loving care for us.

So please begin to help us. Holy Spirit, help us more to be stamping this truth on our own hearts and in our own minds and our eyes so that as we look around at what is happening to us and around us that we could say, oh, but my times are in your hands and to bow and to trust you for that.

And for those who are lost, wake them up to see how terrifying their position is. And frighten them to Jesus if that is what it needs to take.

Woo them and win them for yourself, Lord Jesus. Pray that you would help us to go out with the truths of today ringing in our hearts. Holy Spirit, bring these things back to us.

[41 : 39] tonight and tomorrow and every day of this week until we meet again. Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.