

## Let It Shine

**Psalm 31:14,15 – “I trust in You, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my God’. My times are in Your hands.”**

The start of a new year is a time when almost everybody is thinking about the same thing... “*What’s in stall for the coming year?*” Notice, the psalmist declared, “**My times are in Your hands.**” If our trust is in God, and we have made Him Lord of 2010, we too will have the same confession of **faith**. And as a result, we shall be confident in the knowledge that our times (every moment of every day) are in God’s capable hands.

Who remembers New Year’s Eve? There was something quite dramatic about watching 2009 slip away – counting the hours left in it, then the minutes, and finally, the seconds. Next, mid-night arrived and the old year had suddenly passed into history, never to come again. Time is a lot like a river and it’s carrying all of us downstream. But where is it taking us? What are we going to do while we’re on the journey? In today’s busy society people have trouble with ‘time management’, with putting *first things first*. Someone might explain it this way:

- It is the age of the half-read page;
- The quick hash and the mad dash;
- The lamp tan in a short span;
- The brain strain and the stress pain;
- The quick fix with a bag of tricks.
- It is the age of speed dialling and speed dating;
- When a short line in a text is fine;
- When plastic money is as sweet as honey.

If there is anything we all need in this New Year, it is to get closer to God, to grow in the love of our Saviour, and to carry out His will for our lives. That will surely carry us through no matter what the river of time may bring our way. Psalm 31 is almost entirely a prayer, but you can tell that it’s not the kind of prayer that one prays out loud or one that is prayed with folded hands. No, it appears to be the kind of prayer Paul had in mind when he told us to “pray constantly.” It is the kind of prayer that you pray while working or driving or when you’re under a lot of stress (as David was here). Prayer gets you closer to God - more than any other activity.

**Prayer** will help you to have that “Happy New Year” you’ve been wishing for. But a good confession ought to be combined with fervent prayer *...I trust in you, O Lord; I say, “You are my God.” My times are in your hands.* After all, it isn’t what happens to us that determines whether we will be sad, mad, or glad. No, it is what we tell ourselves (what we confess about what happens to us) that creates our emotional state. And, what we tell ourselves as Christians is largely shaped by how familiar we are with God’s word. After all, the word of God tells us that it is “*a lamp to our feet and a light for our path*”. Jesus Himself used *Psalm 31* for His comfort in the last thing He said on the cross: “*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.*” He set the example for us to pray fervently and to commit everything into God’s capable hands. The psalm goes on to say:

**“Let Your face shine on Your servant; save me in Your unfailing love. Let me not be put to shame, O**

**Lord. 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. 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. Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord"** (vs. 16-24).

There may be times in 2010 when you too will feel cut off from God's sight. You may wonder if God has forgotten you. But there is good news for you! Good news that you hear at the end of many church services. *The Lord make His face shine upon you.* The Psalm says: **"Let your face shine upon Your servant; rescue me in Your unfailing love."** When God's face is **shining** upon His people, it means that He is **smiling** upon them. What more could you ask from the New Year than that? Think of the grim-faced idols that you see on a totem pole and the frowns they present to those who worship these gods. We have a loving God who came here personally to **smile** upon us – while He walked and talked with us. He endured the Father's 'dread-frown' over our sins so that we could see God's face smiling upon us forever. Jesus was forsaken by God so that we would not have to dread the time when our lives shall pass in review before a Holy God.

That's not all! Not only do we have the goodness of God to experience each day, but there is more where that came from. The Psalm says: **"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."** This is the God who is able to do so much more than we can ask, think or imagine. How can you not trust Him for your future? The Greyhound Bus Company used to have a slogan that every Christian should apply to our Lord. Greyhound told their customers: "Leave the driving to us." The God who is smiling on you says: **"Leave the driving to me. Just trust me and I'll get you where you need to go."**

Jesus said: *"In this world, you will have trouble, but **don't be afraid**, I have overcome the world."* This doesn't apply only to the major struggles of life – this has everyday written all over it! That's the kind of victory we have to guide us through the New Year. One we can **trust**. One in which we can have confidence for the future, no matter what 2010 may bring. A French writer describes our frustrations with this life as coming from the fact that we "have one foot in the finite and the other in the infinite." Translation: We live in two worlds, one bound by time, with all of its limitations, and the other eternal, unlimited, full of hope. "We are torn between two worlds," he writes.

The writer goes on to say: "Jesus had the ability to relate one with the other. As a carpenter, the making of a plough had within it the remaking of the world, so he would make that plough well, and worthy of the world's Redeemer. *If you do a small thing as though it were a great thing, God will let you do the great thing as though it were a small thing.* And while you're at it, learn not to nurture your fears. It's not for nothing that 81 times people are told in the Bible to "fear not." That doesn't mean that you can't have normal fear - the kind that makes you move out of danger's way. Someone said that normal fear is a fear that makes you jump back on the curb when a car is coming. Abnormal fear however, is fear of life (the future), a persistent almost indefinable dread. Abnormal lingering fear is ignited by the fires of hell, and the smoke of its torment ascends upwards and fills your life. The only antidote is the perfect love of Jesus that casts out all fear.

This new year, face your fears with the help of Another – **the Comforter**. One famous preacher says: "Don't settle down to live permanently with your fears. Don't partner with them! For if you do, you will never be

happy or effective.” Fears are not removed by saying, “Cut it out! Swallow your fear!” No, the steps to take begin with facing your fears realistically. Then to replace fear with **faith**. So repeat to yourself again and again the words of today's text: ***“I trust in You, O Lord; I say You are my God; my times are in Your hands.”***

The only known cure for fear, one Psychologist says, is **faith**. David said: ***“I earnestly sought the Lord and He heard me; He delivered me from all my fears.”*** Deal with your fears in faith, and then ‘externalise’ them by verbalising your fears in prayer. And get to work for Jesus - using your **time** wisely throughout this year. Here are some suggestions:

- Take time to work – it is the price of success.
- Take time to think – it is the source of power
- Take time to read – it is the fountain of wisdom
- Take time to worship – it is the highway to reverence
- Take time to be friendly – it is the road to happiness
- Take time to laugh – it helps to lift life's load
- Take time for God's Word – it brings Christ near, and it washes the dust of earth from your eyes.
- Take time for God – it is life's only truly lasting investment.

And may His face shine upon you – In Jesus name, Amen.