



## Sermon Transcript

### January 31, 2021

## Psalms of Encouragement

### Finding A Good Place to Hide

#### Psalm 31

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on January 31, 2021 at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Dr. Scott W. Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio and video version of this sermon may also be found on the church website at [www.wethefc.com](http://www.wethefc.com)

## Sermon Text

### Psalm 31

<sup>1</sup>In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me! <sup>2</sup> Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me! <sup>3</sup> For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me; <sup>4</sup> you take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for you are my refuge. <sup>5</sup> Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

<sup>6</sup> I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols, but I trust in the LORD. <sup>7</sup> I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul, <sup>8</sup> and you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy; you have set my feet in a broad place.

<sup>9</sup> Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also. <sup>10</sup> For my life is spent with sorrow and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away.

<sup>11</sup> Because of all my adversaries I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors, and an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. <sup>12</sup> I have been forgotten like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel. <sup>13</sup> For I hear the whispering of many—terror on every side!—as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life.

<sup>14</sup> But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God.” <sup>15</sup> My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors! <sup>16</sup> Make your face shine on your servant; save me in your steadfast love! <sup>17</sup> O LORD, let me not be put to shame, for I call upon you; let the wicked be put to shame; let them go silently to Sheol. <sup>18</sup> Let the lying lips be mute, which speak insolently against the righteous in pride and contempt.

<sup>19</sup> Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge you, in the sight of the children of mankind! <sup>20</sup> In the cover of your presence you hide them from the plots of men; you store them in your shelter from the strife of tongues.

<sup>21</sup> Blessed be the LORD, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me when I was in a besieged city. <sup>22</sup> I had said in my alarm, “I am cut off from your sight.” But

you heard the voice of my pleas for mercy when I cried to you for help. <sup>23</sup> Love the LORD, all you his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride. <sup>24</sup> Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD!

## Introduction

My first job in ministry was as a Youth Pastor. One summer our youth group joined with several other youth groups for a one week retreat at a camp in some remote area of Pennsylvania. The week culminated on the final night of the retreat with a game that required the leaders of the various groups to hide. The students were divided into teams and they accumulated points based on how many leaders they found.

I was determined to find a good place to hide. When you are out in the middle of nowhere, it can get pretty dark at night. So my hiding spot was not behind some shed or bush. Instead, I was somewhat out in the open, on a slight hill. In fact, I could lift my head over the horizon and see all the activity around me. But no one saw me. They were close to me. They walked by me. I could hear them scheming and planning. But they never saw me. No one saw me the entire game. Naturally, when we met up after the game, I was quite proud of myself and the kids in my group couldn't believe that they walked right by me on several occasions, but never found me.

The next morning, as we were packing up to leave, I started feeling really itchy. By the time we arrived home from the retreat, I was covered in poison ivy from head to toe. At full bloom it was blistering and oozing—I had never had poison ivy this bad before or since. We left for vacation the week after the retreat. We were down at a beach in New Jersey. It was so bad that Bonnie made an oatmeal paste to put on the open sores, just to relieve the itching. The best relief I could find was the salt water of the ocean. But I had to walk from the house with oatmeal paste on my body just to make it to the water. I looked like “creature from the black lagoon.” I think I saw a few moms grab their children in fright as I made my way to the water for relief. If there is one thing I learned from this experience, it is this. When you need to hide, you need to find a “good” place to hide. That is what I want to talk about this morning. I want to talk about finding a good place to hide. That is exactly what Psalm 31 shows us. It shows us where we can find such a place.

Look at how the Psalm begins. *“In you, O LORD, do I take refuge.”* In verse 2 he ends by saying, *“Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!”* In verse 3 he adds,

*“For you are my rock and my fortress . . .”* and he ends verse 4 by saying, *“for you are my refuge.”* Clearly, David has found a good place to hide. God is David’s hiding place. But what is it that causes David to seek shelter? What is it that causes David to turn to God as his “hiding place?”

In Psalm 31, David is going through something that evokes deep emotional pain. He talks about *the distress of my soul* in verse 7 and in verses 9-10 he adds, *“for I am in distress, my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away.”* This is not a passing struggle, it is ongoing, it lasts for years. It is described as being lifelong. What makes this psalm difficult to outline is that in the middle of these intense emotions you can hear him reminding himself of God’s goodness and God’s promises. He moves in and out between these two realities playing about in his mind, just like we do when we are struggling with our own emotional pain, struggling between what we feel and what we know about God.

But what is causing all of this pain? The commentators say that we don’t know what the situation was in David’s life that caused him to write this psalm. But there is a clue to figuring out how to think about this psalm. Jesus quotes from this psalm while he is hanging from the cross. In fact, it is the very last word he says before he dies. In verse 5 we read, *“Into your hand I commit my spirit.”* Last words are weighty words. Ed Hartman describes it this way, “Now think about Jesus. When he hung on the cross, naked, literally naked—this is how Romans executed those whom they wanted to humiliate and to shame—he hangs on the cross, covered in all of our sin and guilt and shame, having become our guilt, our sin, and our shame, as he hangs there with his final breath before he dies, of all the Scripture he has memorized and has quoted, he quotes this psalm, verse 5, when he says, *“Into your hand I commit my spirit.”*<sup>1</sup>

Scholars will tell you that when Jesus quotes a verse like this, he is not just pulling a random phrase out of a passage to apply to his situation. Instead, it is giving us insight into the context of the psalm from which he quotes. This psalm gives us a sense of what is going on inside of Jesus who has become the “man of sorrows” while hanging naked from the cross. It speaks to what it was like for Jesus to become our shame. The issue of shame is the focus of the request of this psalm. Two times we hear David pray in this psalm, verses 1 and 17, *“let me never be put to shame.”* It is our shame that causes us to look for a place to hide. We are all hiding because of our shame. We either hide from God or under God. Our shame requires us to find a good place to hide.

## Shame: The Need to Hide

We all struggle with this thing called shame. It is a lifelong struggle. *“My LIFE is spent with sorrow, and my YEARS with sighing,”* David says. To be human is to struggle with shame. Because of this issue of shame, we have this constant sense of needing to hide.

To understand this, we need to go back to the beginning of the Bible. At the end of Genesis 2, we find this statement about Adam and Eve. *“And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”* Ed Welch suggests that there are two ways to take this verse.<sup>2</sup> One, he said, is to take it as an interesting, risqué bit of trivia. They were naked and it was no big deal. Interesting. But he likened the other way to take it to the way Steve Jobs, former CEO of Apple, would make his yearly presentations about the state of the company. He was somewhat legendary for these presentations. He would spend about forty-five minutes talking about operating systems and budgets etc . . . and then he would begin to walk off the stage. But then he would stop and say, “Oh, there is one more thing.” He would then whip out an I-Phone that was being introduced for the first time, or a new product that was revolutionary to the industry. And it was the most important thing he had to share that day. And so Ed Welch is saying that this verse is saying, “Oh, there is one more thing . . . there was a time when shame was not part of the human experience.” But in the next chapter we read how their eyes were opened and they knew they were naked. What was the first thing they did? They sought to hide from each other by covering themselves. And when God showed up, they hid from God.

This is the very first feature of the fall of man. And if this true, Ed Welch says, then we are being introduced “to THE human dilemma.” This “one more thing” is THE problem we struggle with and if we are onto it, we can anticipate that the Bible will speak to this issue of shame over and over again. And Welch said, the Bible will speak to this issue in a way that is shocking and jaw dropping and glorious and life-changing. So it should not surprise us to find the issue of shame as the central issue of Psalm 31.

In our western evangelical circles, when we talk about sin we tend to talk about guilt, which is appropriate. But guilt has a twin and that twin is shame, born in the garden just moments after guilt. What is the difference between the two? Guilt is objective and says to us, “You did something wrong.” Shame, on the other hand, is subjective and it is the voice we hear that says “That is why you need to hide. You’re no good.” Dan Dewitt says it this way. “Guilt is the wound. Shame is the scar. Guilt is isolated to the individual. Shame is contagious.”<sup>3</sup> Another way to put it is that guilt is about what you do and shame is about who you are.

Are you familiar with this voice of shame? When Ed Hartman was preaching on this passage, he wanted to illustrate what the voice of shame sounded like by using examples of other people he has known and their experiences with the voice of shame. But then he realized that the best illustration of shame he could offer are the voices of shame that are constantly speaking into his own life.<sup>4</sup> These are my struggles with shame. Voices that say to me, “You don’t measure up!” “You should be more.” It is the voice that says, “If you knew the truth about me, you wouldn’t love me.” “You love who you think I am but I can’t bear to let you know who I really am. If I did, you wouldn’t want anything to do with me.” And so, it is a voice that also wonders how God could possibly love me. This voice of shame says to us, “I should be so much better. I keep doing this thing over and over and over again. How is it that God still puts up with me?” It is the voice that speaks to you when you sit in the congregation on a given Sunday, and you look around thinking that everyone here has it all together and that you are the only one who is struggling with shame and so you are afraid of being truly known.

These are the voices that are speaking in David’s head in Psalm 31. They are voices that come from everywhere. They come from his adversaries, his neighbors, his friends and even people out on the street. He says in verse 11, *“Because of all my adversaries I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors, and an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me.”* As I am describing this, my hunch is that we all know how crushing our shame can be; whether it is shame from our own sins and shortcomings, or the shame that spills out onto us from what others do to us or say about us. So how do we deal with our shame? We hide. But often we hide in the wrong place.

### **Shame: The Wrong Place to Hide**

What does it look like to hide in the wrong place because of our sin and shame? When you go back to the garden where Adam and Eve’s eyes were opened to their nakedness and for the first time they knew what it was like to experience shame, what did they do? When God confronted them, he asked them, *“Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”* Then what happened? The blame game came out in full force. The man blamed the woman and he blamed God. “The woman that YOU put here! We were just fine before YOU put her here!” You can just see her shoulders shrink in shame when Adam lays all the blame at her feet. But it doesn’t take long for her to shift the blame somewhere else, pointing to the serpent. They cover up. They blame. They shame. It leads to the aloneness that David expresses in this psalm, the sense of rejection. In verse 13, David is aware of these voices, *“For I*

*hear the whispering of many—terror on every side!—as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life.*” He adds in verse 18, *“Let the lying lips be mute, which speak insolently against the righteous in pride and contempt.”* And then he says in verse 20, *“You store them in the shelter from the strife of tongues.”* Voices! Words!

These powerful words we hear spoken inside of us and from outside of us give fuel to so much of the brokenness of our lives and this world. There is a saying that goes like this, “hurting people hurt people.” That is the way it is with shame. Our shame spills onto others and produces more shame. One person said, “shame is the swampland of the soul.” It is like hiding in poison that spreads from us to others. It is like hiding in poison that spreads to us from other people’s brokenness. And so we heap shame upon shame because we are trying to deal with our own shame by shaming others so that we can feel better about our own shame. It is one big “shameful” mess.

I would like to give you a picture of what the “swampland of the soul” looks like when shame is driving what you do by taking you to a story in the Old Testament that has always puzzled me. Noah is drunk and lying in his tent naked. He didn’t just “get buzzed.” He is blacked-out drunk. We know the verse that tells us this is wrong; *“Don’t be drunk with wine,”* Paul tells us. But that is not the sin that is emphasized in this passage. Instead, it is the sin of Noah’s son, Ham, who discovers his dad’s nakedness and finds it amusing and goes and tells his brothers of his father’s shame. Jared Wilson said that the sin of Ham was that “he had an opportunity to cover his dad’s shame, but instead he exposes him further.”<sup>5</sup> And so Jared Wilson adds, “We commit the sin of Ham whenever we hear of someone’s struggle, of sin, of failure, and instead of figuring out how to bring grace to them, we “run and tell.” We gossip. We pile on . . . He was heaping more shame on his dad’s shame and it was if he wanted his father’s shame exposed so that he could enjoy it.” It is the human dilemma. We shame.

But his brothers gave us a different picture. Instead of delighting in their dad’s shame, they put his garment on their shoulders and walked backward into the tent and covered the nakedness of their father. They didn’t treat his sin casually, but they treated it with mercy. And so Jared Wilson concludes, “This is what Christians do when confronted with the sins of others; they do what they would want done for them—not shaming, not ridiculing, not lording over—a demonstration of grace. It doesn’t mean you don’t confront sin—it just means doing so with reverence for God and with grace, not to demean or squash or humiliate, but to provide the shelter of God’s love.” And that is where David is looking to hide when dealing with his shame. Our shame requires us to hide. What does it look like for us to deal with our shame by hiding in God our refuge?

## Shame: The Good Place to Hide

David tells us where we can find a good place to hide when dealing with our shame. In verse one he says, *“In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness, deliver me.”* Before we look at how to find our good hiding place in dealing with shame, let me give you two preliminary thoughts.

First of all, the opposite of shame is not pride or honor. The real opposite of shame is what we find in verse one. It is *righteousness*. It is our status of being right with God. This tells us that there can be an upside to our shame. There is a certain mercy in shame. It is what drives us to find our refuge in Christ. Earlier I mentioned that guilt speaks to what you do and shame speaks to who you are. Shame is that voice that says, “you are no good.” But the response to my shame is not having someone come and put their arm around me to assure me that “It is not so bad. You are better than you think you are . . . You are definitely better than that person is.” No! The response to my shame is to fall on my knees and to ask for the mercy of God through what Jesus has done for me on the cross. And when Jesus forgives me, he gives me a new identity. *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”* So whenever legitimate shame rises up within me because of my sin, I run and hide in Jesus, who through his grace has made me a son of God, deeply loved by God.

The second thing I want you to notice about finding a good place to hide is that this is a lifelong battle. Notice the contrast between verse 2 and verse 24, the contrast between David’s prayer at the beginning of the psalm and the end of it. At the beginning, David is praying that God would *rescue him speedily*. It reminds me of when our oldest daughter, Abi, was about four years old. We lived about a mile from the church and Bonnie decided to take a walk to the church to drop in to say hello. Sarah was in the baby stroller and Abi was walking along side. It was a slow walk! When they got about half way there, Bonnie noticed some rain clouds forming and said out loud, “I hope it doesn’t rain before we get there.” And so Abi prayed, “Dear God, please don’t let it rain before we get there.” Then she added in her prayer, “I’ll tell you when!” I think we have all prayed this kind of prayer in our times of difficulty and when we feel shame. “Get me out of this quickly!” “I’ll tell you when! - How about right now!” But look at the change of his heart at the end of the prayer. *“Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD.”* The wrestling with shame has not left him. But he has found a good place to hide.

When it comes to shame, Dr. Thompson says in his book *The Soul of Shame*, “We want



to be rescued from shame but shame will never be conquered as with a guillotine blow. Rather, it must be starved to death, and that will take the rest of our lives.”<sup>6</sup> The voices of shame will continue. The question is, which voice will you listen to? And that is the key to dealing with our shame. You need to learn how to speak a new language? You need to become fluent in the language of the gospel. That is what David models for us. As he wrestles with the voices of shame, he is constantly speaking the language of the gospel to his heart to remind himself who he is in the grace that comes to us in Christ. This is a daily habit. Daily he hides himself in Jesus.

Daily I like to affirm who I am in Christ. I often begin my day by rehearsing our way of life which is anchored in the gospel. Here is what I affirm to be true. “By God’s grace and through faith in Jesus Christ I have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of the beloved Son in whom I have redemptions, the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, I am a son, deeply loved by God. I am servant, called to put the needs of others before myself. I am a steward, investing what I have been given for the work of the kingdom of God.” This is my identity. It is who I am. It is how I overcome the voice of shame. I speak the voice of the gospel to my heart and mind.

Let me give you two examples from our passage as to how this works. The subjective voice of shame causes you to feel unworthy of God’s love. It causes you to pull back from your faith. It robs you of joy because you get discouraged over your constant struggles and your sin. David felt this in verse 22. He says, “*I have said in my alarm, ‘I am cut off from your sight.’*” We know from verse 10 his strength fails because of his own struggle with sin. Have you ever felt that, *cut off from God’s sight*? What must God think of me. I wrestle with that quite often. What do you say to yourself at a moment like this to overcome the cloud of shame? Three times in this psalm, David praises God for his *steadfast love*. In verse 7 he says, “*I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love.*” In verse 16 he says, “*save me in your steadfast love.*” And in verse 21, it is as if he has come to rest in God’s love when he says, “*Blessed be the LORD, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me.*” Sally Lloyd Jones in her *Jesus Storybook Bible* translates this *steadfast love* like this: it is his “never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love.” Zephaniah 3:17 reminds us that God quiets our heart with his love. The antidote to the shame I feel—not feeling worthy—wanting to hide from God—is the love of God for me. It is a love that is most evident from that tree where Jesus cried out, *Into your hand I commit my spirit*. The love of God for us in Jesus is a good place to hide.

Sometimes shame is something that spills onto us from the lives of other people. And

you wonder where God's hand is in all of this. The shame Jesus bore was a shame that was put on him when he took upon himself our sin. There are four times this psalm uses the word "hand." Two times it speaks of what we experience at the "hand of an enemy." In verse 8 he talks about being delivered from the hand of the enemy and in verse 15 there is the cry of being set free from the hand of the enemy. Peter Krol describes this kind of shame: "This is the shame of abuse. Do you replay the memories and wonder if you're a horrible person? Perhaps your best friend lied to you or betrayed your confidence. Perhaps you were the ridiculed outcast. Perhaps your dream date or honeymoon became a nightmare when your lover lost control. Perhaps you felt manipulated into getting an abortion. Or someone touched you where you didn't want to be touched. Maybe you even trusted that person—everybody trusted that person. When you told people about it, they didn't believe you."<sup>7</sup>

But where is God when the hand of the enemy impacts our life and adds to the shame of it all? He is right there. In verse 15 he says, "*My times are in your hand.*" And then there is that cry Jesus makes from the cross, "*Into your hand I commit my spirit.*" That is speaking the language of the gospel to the shame that spills out into your life from the brokenness of others. It is a word of hope that enables us to say with David in this psalm, *But I trust in you, O LORD: I say, 'You are my God.'*" The shame that someone else may put on us because we lack their approval or are a victim of their abuse and it marks us—can find comfort in the gospel that reminds us that our lives and our times are in God's hands. It is not easy. It is not a "one and done" kind of thing. It is a daily hiding ourselves under God. Let him take the shame and find shelter in his love.

## Conclusion

Have you found a good place to hide? The only place where we can be delivered from our shame and experience healing is to run to Jesus. When we repent of our sin and turn in faith to Jesus who atoned for our sin, we are delivered immediately from the guilt of our sin—that is justification. But the rest of our lives, in this broken world—of which we are a part—we still wrestle with the shame we experience. But there is a place where we can safely hide. Jesus is your refuge and hiding place.

Jesus is tenderhearted and merciful toward you. Jesus is your friend. When he touches you, you are no longer identified by your shame. Instead, he joyously welcomes you into his presence. He calls you a saint and a beloved child. He rejoices over you, and you rejoice in him. That is what David said, "*I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love.*" Can you imagine anything grander for a person who struggles profoundly with

feeling shameful and unacceptable?<sup>8</sup>

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in thee  
Let the water and the blood  
from thy wounded side which flowed  
Be of sin the double cure  
Save from wrath and make me pure

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<sup>1</sup>Ed Hartman, Sermon: “Let Me Not Be Put To Shame” First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS, [www.fpcjackson.org](http://www.fpcjackson.org) July 17, 2016

<sup>2</sup>Ed Welch “Uncovering Shame and Guilt Curriculum” [ccef.org](http://ccef.org)

<sup>3</sup>Dan Dewitt “The Difference Between Guilt and Shame” [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org) February 19, 2019

<sup>4</sup>Hartman

<sup>5</sup>Jared Wilson “Love Covers Shame” [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org) August 27, 2014

<sup>6</sup>Curt Thompson *The Soul of Shame* (Downers Grove: IVP) 2015

<sup>7</sup>Peter Krol “Three Kinds of Shame” [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org) April 18, 2014

<sup>8</sup>Welch

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COMMUNITY  
**GROUPS**



## Getting To Know Me Questions

1. Thinking about the topic of shame, what “voices” do you wrestle with the most? Are they voices coming from within you or are they voices coming from others?
2. What is one thing you learned about shame from this sermon?



## Diving Into The Word

3. Read Genesis 2:25 and 3:8-13. Can you imagine a time in human history when there was no shame? What do you think that would be like?
4. Are you familiar with shame? Is it something you can identify with in your own life? How do we all struggle with shame?
5. Read Genesis 9:18-27. This example of from Noah’s life illustrates how we are prone to shame others. Ham sought to add shame to Noah’s shame while Shem and Japheth sought to bring mercy to their father’s sin and shame. How do we “add shame to shame” when dealing with others?
6. Read Psalm 31 one section at a time: 31:1-5, 6-10, 11-18, 19-24. What are the “gospel promises” in each section that you can speak to yourself when shame causes you to forget who you are in Jesus.



## Taking It Home

7. What is one “voice of shame” you can identify in your life that is causing you to forget who you are in Christ?
8. What is one “gospel promise” you want to cling to this week to help you overcome your shame?