

"When Your Life Is Like A Magic Eye® Illusion"

Psalm 31:14-24

14 August 2022

In 1993, there was a monumental moment in history: *the world was introduced to Magic Eye® Illusions.*

* INSERT MAGIC EYE BOOK COVER

Known formally as "autostereograms," Magic Eye® Illusions are a swirl of colored and textured dots or pictures that hide a 3D image. This image can only be observed when the viewer un-focuses their vision.

Do y'all remember these? They look like this:

* INSERT MAGIC EYE PIC

By the way, your worship bulletin cover today is a Magic Eye® illusion. You can turn it sideways and see the image...*or maybe you can't see the image!* I'll tell you at the end of the sermon what the image is. And that's what makes the Magic Eye® equal parts amazing and frustrating. When viewed properly, the 2D image reveals a hidden image that appears to be floating in 3D. But, if you can't see the image, well, it's very easy to feel like you're going insane staring at this illusion and not seeing what everyone else is seeing.

To find the secret image, people often adopted a signature Magic Eye® stance: bent forward, hands-on-hips, staring—*dumbfounded*—at the visual static and chaos in front of them. The other people who crowded around—*there were always others who could see it!*—they passed along tips like, "*Cross your eyes. No, squint. Try relaxing your eyes.*"

And, if you were lucky...*Click!* You'd see it! Suddenly the image would appear.

The life of a disciple is kinda like a Magic Eye® illusion. Our lives often look like a chaotic mess of troubles, sorrows, sufferings, etc. We're like David in Psalm 31. Our hearts are like a dryer. Thoughts, feelings, and emotions tumbling on high heat. Meanwhile, we're desperately trying to see what God is up to. We stare at the Magic Eye® illusion that is our life, and we try to see what God is doing.

David is just like us. He's all over the place in Psalm 31. And, what he'd say to us today is something like this—**YOU CAN TRUST GOD FURTHER THAN YOU CAN SEE HIM.**

That's actually a phrase that comes from Matthew Henry's commentary, where he said this—

The better God is known the more he is trusted. Those who know him to be a God of infinite wisdom will trust him further than they can see him (Job. 35:14); those who know him to be a God of almighty power will trust him when creature-confidences fail and they have nothing else to trust to (2 Chr. 20:12); and those who know him to be a God of infinite grace and goodness will trust him though he slay them, Job. 13:15. Those who know him to be a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness will rejoice in his word of promise, and rest upon that, though the performance be deferred and intermediate providences seem to contradict it. Those who know him to be the Father of spirits, and an everlasting Father, will trust him with their souls as their main care and trust in him at all times, even to the end.

And, that's what David does in Psalm 31. Turn there in your Bibles now. David's creature confidences have failed. His enemies mock him on social media. Even his friends think he's starting to lose it. In fact, David feels like he's lost everything. But, even though David's heart is all over the place, he still trusts the Lord. And, that's all he really needs. Trust- in Yahweh.

LOOK AT VERSE 14...

But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors! Make your face shine on your servant; save me in your steadfast love! 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. Let the lying lips be mute, which speak insolently against the righteous in pride and contempt.

David now begins to recalibrate his heart. Recall what we saw last week. David told us in verses 1-13 all that was happening in his life. His life was a mess. There were people in Israel who were worshipping idols. On top of that, David is afflicted. He's distressed. He's been crying an ocean. And his eyes are bloodshot from all the weeping. His nose is raw from using so many Kleenex.

And his soul is tired. Have you been there before, where your soul is tired? Where, not only your body aches- *like David in Psalm 31*- but where your soul actually hurts. Your soul, your spirit aches. As, we saw last week, David

feels his suffering *in years*. Have you ever felt your suffering *in years*? He says his entire life is spent in sorrow. For years he has just been sighing.

And his body was breaking down. He was weak. Exhausted. David had enemies on the outside giving him grief. He was getting death threats. His enemies were slandering him on *Facebook*. And, then, as if that wasn't bad enough, even some of his friends were like, "*Have you seen David lately? Yikes! He's a hot mess.*"

David feels lost. And, he's lost all joy. It's as if he has lost everything. But, now, in verse 14, he starts to unfold all that he has in Christ, all that God is for him. In fact, it's emphatic in Hebrew:

But I, on you, I trust...

This verse often gets translated as "in you" I trust, and that's fine, but it's the Hebrew preposition *al*, which means "on, upon." *On you, I trust*. In other words, David is saying, "*I'm leaning on you, Yahweh! I've collapsed on You! I'm trusting 'on' You, Lord!*" So, there's a sense of resting here. Collapsing on the Lord. Just collapsing into His arms. *On you, I trust*. I like that! Do you trust "on" Jesus? Not just trust in Jesus (for salvation), but do you trust "on" Him, lean *on Him* as you suffer, lean on Him as your heart is spinning and tumbling like a dryer? Do you collapse, do you trust "on" Him?

And, notice it's personal for David, too. This is not an academic exercise. This is real. This is personal.: "You are *my* God." I love how clunky the Hebrew is in verse 14:

I say, God of me, You!

I like that too. It's like caveman talk. God of me, You! David doesn't drag out his thoughts in a long-winded, elegant manner like what Paul does in the New Testament, with sentences that just go on and on. David keeps it short and sweet: *God of me, You*. That's all he needs. Just a short and sweet reminder that Yahweh is *his* God.

And if Yahweh is your God, Christian, then you can go through a lot and still say you trust in Him. You can go through a lot and still be standing on your feet in a wide-open place when you can say, "*God of me, You.*" It's just 2 words in Hebrew, 4 in English, and kinda caveman-ish, but it just might be the most important thing you can say out loud, at any time in your life. God of me, You.

Commenting on this phrase, Charles Spurgeon said, "*Thou art my God' has more sweetness in it than any other utterance which human speech can frame.*" "God of me, You" may sound like caveman talk, but it's the sweetest phrase one can utter! Can you say that today? Is Jesus your God? Do you *know* Him? Not just know about Him, but do you *know* Him? Have you tasted the sweetness of those words, *God of me, You*?

So, David's life feels like a *Magic Eye® Illusion*- he can't see all that God is doing, but he trusts in Yahweh. He knows that his life, his times are in Yahweh's hand. When David says in verse 15, "*My times are in your hand,*" that's just the Old Testament way of saying God is in control. David is just speaking of God's *providence*. What is God's providence? Here are a few quotes that I think David would agree with:

Augustus Hopkins Strong
"Providence is God's attention concentrated everywhere."

Charles Spurgeon
"You want always to see through Providence, do you not? You never will, I assure you... Honor God by trusting Him."

We want to know what God is doing in our lives, don't we? We want to see through providence, don't we? We want to know all that God is up to in our lives. But guess what? We never will! We might get glimpses. But, we'll never be able to see through all of God's providence...*in this life*. So, we might as well do the one thing that will bring us the peace that we are looking for: *Honor God by trusting Him*. That's where David is now. David is trusting in Yahweh's providence.

I love how Ralph Davis describes Providence:

"Providence" is God's way of providing for the needs of his people. That's not all of it, but some of it. When I use "providence" here I mean that wonderful, strange, mysterious, un-guessable way Yahweh has of ruling his world and sustaining his people, and his doing it, frequently, over, under, around, through, or in spite of the most common stuff of our lives or even the bias of our wills.

God's providence is wonderful. Strange. Mysterious. Un-guessable. And that means that there will be many times in your life when you can't see what God is doing, when you can't see what God is up to, and you'll have to say, "*My times are in your hand.*" David knows that his life is in the hand of a wonderful, strange, mysterious, and un-

guessable God. Is that how you would describe Jesus? Wonderful, strange, mysterious, and un-guessable God? You can. You should.

And because David's times are in this kind of God's hand, David prays that God would deliver from the hands of his enemies: *"My times are in your hand, but deliver me from their hands!"* You see! There's something about coming to grips with God's sovereignty, coming to grips with God's providence that should cause you to pray. This is David's robust theology of providence leading him to pray.

Theology should do that, you know? Theology, doctrine should lead us to pray. Providence should not make you think that you don't need to pray. Instead, you should pray...*because God is sovereign!* If we have a robust understanding of providence, and it does not lead us to pray, then something is off. Something is broken. If our theology does not lead us to pray, we're doing theology wrong! Providence should lead us to pray, *"My times are in Your hand, now deliver me from their hands! Do some of that wonderful, strange, mysterious, un-guessable ways that You have of ruling Your world and sustaining me. And do it, Jesus, over, under, around, through, and in spite of the most common stuff of my life, and even the bias of my will."*

But, please understand who this God of Providence is, that we and David, pray to. He's gracious. He's kind. He extends favor to sinners. That's what David means in verse 16 when he speaks of Yahweh's face shining on him. The face was the organ of *favor* in the ancient Near East. If someone's face was turned toward you, they were being gracious to you. But, a face turned away was rejection. That's why the priestly benediction in Numbers 6 says-

Numbers 6:24-26

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

David probably has this Numbers 6 blessing in mind here. He wants to experience Yahweh's favor and His steadfast love in the middle of all that he is suffering. And, he wants Yahweh to shut up his enemies! In vv. 17-18, David wants God to tape their mouths shut because they are slandering him all over *Facebook*. In fact, he wants them dead! David wants Yahweh to buy his enemies one-way tickets to Sheol, one-way tickets to the grave. Why? Because that'll shut them up! There's something about being dead that kinda makes you shut up! And, that's what David wants for his enemies: 1) dead, and 2) shut up.

And, with his enemies gone, David can now focus on his future. Of course, David can't see too far into the future, but he does know what awaits him in the future: *loads and loads and loads of God's goodness*. And isn't that what you expect from Jesus? Loads and loads and loads of God's goodness? You should.

LOOK AT VERSE 19...

Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind! 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. Blessed be the LORD, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me when I was in a besieged city. 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.

With his eyes off his enemies, David now turns to the goodness of God. He says that Yahweh has stored up these treasure houses of His goodness. But notice that His goodness doesn't stay there. David says that Yahweh *works it out* for those who take refuge in Him. Verse 19, then, is like an Old Testament version of Romans 8:28. Perhaps Paul had verse 19 in mind when he told the Roman church this-

Romans 8:28

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

David is telling us that Jesus has stockpiles of goodness just waiting to pour into our lives. He has goodness stored up. Treasures of His goodness that He can surprise us with whenever He wants! And, doesn't He do that? Doesn't Jesus surprise you with some this goodness? Sometimes, you're just going about your day, maybe not even thinking about Jesus, and like a water balloon that you didn't see coming, Jesus just *Splats!* you with some of His goodness. I love that about Him!

And, that's why, when your life feels like a Magic Eye® Illusion-
YOU CAN TRUST GOD FURTHER THAN YOU CAN SEE HIM.

The God you trust has abundant goodness stored up for you. And, He works it out in your Magic Eye® Illusion life, even when you can't see what He's doing! When all you see is the chaos and the visual static of your life, Jesus is busy working out His goodness for you. Why? Because He's *good*. He *really* is good.

Understand this: Jesus oozes goodness. Jesus oozes kindness. Jesus oozes grace. And, some Christians think Jesus is this uptight miser. Always frowning. Never happy. Stingy. Tight-fisted with His grace. Always frustrated because His children are always acting up. Nope. That's not Jesus. Not according to Psalm 31. Jesus, according to Psalm 31, has storehouses of *goodness* that He can dump out on His children, and that He can work out in their lives, Romans-8:28-style.

But, that's not how Jesus is usually preached. Typically, Jesus is presented as this uptight, stingy miser who never smiles. All He knows is frowns and frustrations. That's sad, y'all. That's not Jesus. Steve Brown said, "*The Christian faith says that the sovereign Creator, Ruler, and Sustainer of all that is loves His creatures with such passion that He can't have a party if they aren't there...Heaven knows we have enough sour Christians...Genuine Christians ought to laugh a lot...One of the sure signs of God's presence in the midst of His people is the laughter of His people.*"

Is that how you picture Jesus? That He loves us with such passion that He can't have a party if we aren't there? You're supposed to read vv. 19-22 and smile! You're supposed to read vv.19-22 and laugh! You're supposed to read vv.19-22 and lose all your sourpuss attitude! How is that possible? How is that possible even when you suffer like David?

Well, you're supposed to read vv.19-22 and be reminded that:

*Jesus has stored up goodness
Jesus works out that goodness
Jesus is your refuge
Jesus hides you in the cover of His presence
Jesus stores you in His shelter
Jesus wondrously shows His love for you
Jesus hears your pleas for mercy when you're in a pickle
Jesus helps you*

That's why there shouldn't be any sour Christians! That's why you should laugh more! Because Jesus does all of that Psalm 31:19-22 goodness for you, all the time! All week long, even if you didn't see it, even if your life feels like chaos and visual static, Jesus was doing all of that for you, in ways that you can't even imagine! Wonderful ways. Mysterious ways. Strange ways. Un-guessable ways. Many times, that's how Jesus works out His stored-up goodness in our lives- in strange, mysterious, un-guessable ways.

And, that's why David will say what he says next. If Jesus is this good to His people, if He can't have a party unless we are there, then how should we respond? How do you respond to a God who stores up goodness and then works in out in every nook and cranny of our lives? David tells you.

LOOK AT VERSE 23...

Love the LORD, all you his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride. Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD!

How do you respond to a God like Jesus? You love Him! And you love him because you are one of His saints! I shared this a few weeks ago, but the ESV translates this Hebrew word as "saints." But this is the Hebrew word for *beloved*- those people that Yahweh loves. It's actually a plural form of the Hebrew word *hesed*, which is God's covenant, loyal love. His steadfast love. The "beloved" of God are those who are on the receiving end of His never-stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love.

So, here's what it means to be God's beloved: the love and affection that God the Father has for His son Jesus, He has for us. Because we are in union with Christ, credited with His righteousness, adopted into His family, God loves us just as much as He loves Jesus!

To be called "beloved" means that God loves you as if you were His only child! Let that sink in. That's how God loves you, Christian! Because we have been united with Christ by the Spirit, God loves us just as much as He loves Jesus!

And, when you rub that truth into your pores, it should cause you to love Him back. To be in awe of His grace, and to be empowered by His grace to live for Him and His glory. To honor Him.

And, we love Him because He preserves us, David tells us in verse 23. Listen, if any of us ever make it out of any kind of trial and hardship, it's all due to God, not us. We're soft. We really are. We're soft. Little sufferings come our way, little inconveniences invade our lives, and we unravel. We're undone. We crumble. Why? Because we really are soft.

It's only due to His grace that any of us make it through suffering- even the smaller sufferings that really aren't that big. He preserves us. When's the last time you thanked God for preserving you? If it wasn't for Him, we'd be done. That's how weak we are. That's how incapable we are of holding it together.

I love what Ray Ortlund said-

If we are distracted from real-time connection with the mercies of God, so that our hearts grow cold and our mouths become reckless and our eyes wayward and our feet wandering, we are only one misstep away from life-shattering catastrophe. We do not have to give ourselves to raw evil to end up there; we only have to un-guard our hearts, we only have to stop being vigilant. Every one of us is always five minutes away from total disaster. But if we are receiving by faith the outpouring of Christ's love in constant supply from his Throne of Grace, we cannot lose our way.

We're all just 5 minutes away from total disaster! That's the stark reality. We're one click away from ruining our lives. One text away. One phone call away. One word away. One kiss away. We are sinners. That's who we are. Yes, we are in Christ, we are redeemed, we are righteous and blameless in God's eyes, but we are still sinners. We sin, and we can seriously mess up our lives by our sin. If we disconnect from real-time connection with Jesus, and we let our hearts grow cold and our mouths become reckless and our eyes get wayward and our feet start wandering, then we are one misstep away from life-shattering catastrophe. That's sobering.

Jacob Smith says, "*We are all three bad days in a row away from becoming a tabloid headline, and most of us are already on day two.*"

For some of us here today, we're three days away from becoming a tabloid headline, and some of us are already on day two. That's sobering. So, let me say to you today, don't let your heart drift. You're one click away. I'm one click away. You're one text away. One kiss away. One look away. So, look to Jesus! Keep your eyes on Jesus! Rehearse the Gospel. Preach the Gospel to yourself. See the beauty of Jesus as He lives and dies for you. Don't lose your awe. Just pray, "*God, don't let me lose my awe. Don't let me wreck my life. Preserve me!*"

Why pray like that? Because we are just 5 minutes away from total disaster. Three bad days in a row from becoming a tabloid headline, and maybe already on day two. That's David in Psalm 31. And, that's why he ends it with these words. Look at verse 23 again-

Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD!

David encourages all the saints, all God's beloved children to be strong and take heart. Why? Because of all that God is for His children! We can be strong, we can take heart when we look to Him. When we know Him. And, the more we know Him, the more we trust Him. And, that's what will enable you to *wait* for Him.

Why does David tell us to be strong and take heart? Because waiting is hard! Waiting might be the hardest thing for a Christian to do. Let me say that again: *Waiting might be the hardest thing for a Christian to do.* Waiting is the hardest part of suffering and undergoing difficult seasons in life. And it's hard because it's located in the dimension of time: it's located within minutes and hours and days and weeks and months and years. Suffering and sorrow live in *time*. Suffering and hardship and heartache live in clocks and calendars. And Scripture's one word answer to suffering is always "Wait." We would love instant relief from suffering and pain and heartache, or at least that's how I always react to suffering. I want instant relief and instant answers and instant restoration and instant reconciliation, but that's not how this thing works. The answer is often, "Wait."

But, the more we know Him, the more we trust Him, the more we are empowered to wait for Him. So, get to know Him! And, when you get to know Him more and more, you'll trust Him more and more.

Remember-

YOU CAN TRUST GOD FURTHER THAN YOU CAN SEE HIM.

So that means that we can trust Jesus *right now*, in this moment, all the way to the end of our lives- even though we can't see that far into the future, even though we don't have a picture of what our future holds, even though we don't know what's going to happen to us next week! So, what is our part? What do we do? You can strip it down to two very simple words: *Trust Jesus*. That's it! That's our part: *Trust Jesus*.

That's the Christian life right there. That's discipleship. Learning anew to trust Jesus. As Matthew Henry said, you can trust God when creature-confidences fail. You can trust His word even though the performance is deferred and intermediate providences seem to contradict it. Even if everything around you contradicts God's word, you can trust God's word.

You can trust God because He gave His Son up for you. To die, for your sins. You can trust a God who does something like that, don'tcha think?

Oh, by the way, the Magic Eye® Illusion on the worship bulletin is a pair of glasses. I hope you can see it.

“When Your Life Is Like A Magic Eye® Illusion”

Psalm 31:14-24

Sermon Study Questions

1. READ Psalm 31:14-16. Discuss the big idea of the sermon: *You trust God further than you can see Him*. Where do you need to trust God while it’s hard to see Him?

2. Discuss what Matthew Henry said:

The better God is known the more he is trusted. Those who know him to be a God of infinite wisdom will trust him further than they can see him (Job. 35:14); those who know him to be a God of almighty power will trust him when creature-confidences fail and they have nothing else to trust to (2 Chr. 20:12); and those who know him to be a God of infinite grace and goodness will trust him though he slay them, Job. 13:15. Those who know him to be a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness will rejoice in his word of promise, and rest upon that, though the performance be deferred and intermediate providences seem to contradict it. Those who know him to be the Father of spirits, and an everlasting Father, will trust him with their souls as their main care and trust in him at all times, even to the end.

3. Discuss this thought from the sermon:

There’s something about coming to grips with God’s sovereignty, coming to grips with God’s providence that should cause you to pray. This is David’s robust theology of providence leading him to pray. Theology should do that, you know? Theology, doctrine should lead us to pray. Providence should not make you think that you don’t need to pray. Instead, you should pray...because God is sovereign! If we have a robust understanding of providence, and it does not lead us to pray, then something is off. Something is broken. If our theology does not lead us to pray, we’re doing theology wrong!

4. READ Psalm 31:19-22. What is David telling us about Yahweh?

5. Discuss these 2 quotes:

Ray Ortlund

“If we are distracted from real-time connection with the mercies of God, so that our hearts grow cold and our mouths become reckless and our eyes wayward and our feet wandering, we are only one misstep away from life-shattering catastrophe. We do not have to give ourselves to raw evil to end up there; we only have to un-guard our hearts, we only have to stop being vigilant. Every one of us is always five minutes away from total disaster. But if we are receiving by faith the outpouring of Christ’s love in constant supply from his Throne of Grace, we cannot lose our way.”

Jacob Smith

“We are all three bad days in a row away from becoming a tabloid headline, and most of us are already on day two.”

6. READ Psalm 31:24. Discuss what Pastor Benji said in the sermon about waiting: *“Waiting might be the hardest thing for a Christian to do.”*