

My Refuge and Portion

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Date: 27 January 2021

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[0 : 00] And this psalm was written either at the time of or in thinking back to the time when David was in the cave fleeing from Saul. So 1 Samuel 24, 1-3 describes that time.

It's not the only time he's fleeing from Saul in a cave, but it is a time. And when he was in the wilderness of En-Gedi and Saul was literally hunting him down.

But if you read the psalm, though, without that subtitle in mind, the description of the trouble that David is in is actually pretty generic. And I think that's helpful because the generic descriptions make this psalm applicable to a whole variety of situations that we might find ourselves in.

Whether it's physical trouble, emotional trouble, vocational trouble, relational trouble, or spiritual trouble. And it teaches us how we should cry out to God.

It says in our troubles that we should cry out to the Lord who is our refuge and portion. Verse 3 describes David's plight this way. When my spirit faints within me, you know my way.

[1 : 06] In the path where I walk, they have hidden a trap for me. So here the psalmist is depleted. He feels like he's fainting. He has no strength left. And the metaphor of a trap being hunted down suggests panic and fear and feeling like you're being pursued by an adversary.

And what makes all of this worse is that David's going through it alone. He says in verse 4, Look to the right and see. There is none who takes notice of me. No refuge remains to me.

No one cares for my soul. Similarly to the way we use the expression right-hand man, because right side is the dominant side for most people in the world, right side is where people expected help to come from.

So it's a metaphor for where help comes from. And also when you stand in court, you can see this in Psalm 109 verse 31. The witness for the defendant stood on the right side.

And so this is someone that is supposed to help you, be there for you, have your back, come to deliver you. But when David looks to his right, there's no one there.

[2 : 15] And so he is all alone. He has no refuge, he says, which is a way of escape. And his soul is in jeopardy. His life, his very life is in jeopardy.

And so he cries out to the only person who is still there, who is still for him, and that's the Lord. The word cry out and other similar verbs are repeated throughout the Psalm.

Verses 1 to 2 says, With my voice I cry out to the Lord. With my voice I plead for mercy to the Lord. I pour out my complaint before him. I tell my trouble before him.

Verses 5 to 6 also says this, I cry to you, O Lord. I say you are my refuge. My portion in the land of the living. Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low.

Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me. The word refuge repeated from verse 4 and verse 5 are not the same words in Hebrew, but they're synonyms.

[3 : 14] And so you can see kind of how the psalmist goes from recognizing that he has no refuge, humanly speaking. No place to turn to. And yet in God he has a refuge, a place he can go to.

And so he cries out to him. And I love that expression because I think in English it's very emotive, right? To say you're crying out for someone.

It has that kind of visceral desperation, that feel. And the Hebrew words used here has this similar sense. They're very emotive terms.

And it reminds me of like an infant who cries out because she's completely disposed to the will of others.

Completely helpless to do anything for him or herself. There's nothing the infant can do but to cry out. Whenever she needs food, whenever she needs diaper change, whenever she needs anything, that's all she can do is cry out.

[4 : 14] And really that's the kind of dependence that David is in here. And that we are called to be in with the Lord, to cry out to him, saying, I have no other helper. I have no other refuge but you, O Lord.

So I cling to you. I turn to you. And that idea of God being our unique refuge is further emphasized with the word that he uses in verse 5 when he says, You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.

If you look at Numbers 18, 20, God tells Aaron and his descendants that basically, You shall have no inheritance in the land, neither shall you have any portion among them.

I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel. So that language of calling God our portion comes from the priests, basically, who had no land in the promised land in Israel.

They had no earthly portion. Nothing they can call their own. But they were completely dependent on God to provide for them. And they could only say that God is our portion. And that's really, I guess, the spirituality and the dependence that should characterize every Christian.

[5 : 35] That we don't have anything. We don't have a portion in this life. We don't have a portion in this world. All my portion is the Lord. He is my inheritance. He is my refuge.

And to him, I will cry out. And that's the way we relate to our Lord Jesus, who fulfills this psalm.

When he enters the synagogue in Luke chapter 4, 18 to 19, he reads from Isaiah 61 and says that that prophecy is fulfilled in him.

And among the things that it says, it says that he came, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the ear of the Lord's favor.

That's what Jesus came to do. And this is what David anticipates God will do for him in verse 7.

Bring me out of prison that I may give thanks to your name.

The righteous will surround me for you will deal bountifully with me. The language is metaphorical there as is the case with our redemption in Christ. That we are imprisoned.

[6 : 45] We are prisoners enslaved to sin. But because Jesus dies for us, our sins on the cross, he breaks the bondage of the evil ones and the spiritual rulers, the hold that they had on our lives.

And in doing that, he redeems us. He frees us from our prison and sets us at liberty. And because of that, like David who says, the righteous will surround me for you will deal bountifully with me.

Hebrews 12 also says that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. All these people that God has redeemed who are waiting for us now and watching us as we run this race to finish this race to get to the Lord.

And so whatever situation you might be in, whatever troubles you might be facing, I just want to encourage you to cry out to the Lord who is our only refuge, our only portion in this life.

And with that, let's turn to...