

God Our Refuge

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Preacher: Terron Tuckett

- [0 : 00] Let me read Psalm 71 for us. Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man.
- For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth. Upon you I have leaned from before my birth. You are he who took me from my mother's womb.
- My praise is continually of you. I have been as important to me, but you are my strong refuge. My mouth is filled with your praise and with your glory all the day.
- Do not cast me off in the time of old age. Forsake me not when my strength is spent. For my enemies speak concerning me. Those who watch for my life consult together and say, God has forsaken him.
- Pursue and seize him, for there is none to deliver him. O God, be not far from me. O my God, make haste to help me.
- [1 : 27] May my accusers be put to shame and consumed. With scorn and disgrace may they be covered, who seek my hurt. But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more.
- My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day. For their number is part of my knowledge. With the mighty deeds of the Lord, Lord, I will come.
- I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone. O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me until I proclaim your might to another generation.
- Your power to all those to come. Your righteousness, O God, reaches the high heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who is like you?
- You who have made me see many troubles and calamities, will revive me again. From the depths of the earth, you will bring me up again. You will increase my greatness and comfort me again.
- [2 : 35] I will also praise you with the heart for your faithfulness, O my God. I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O holy one of Israel. My lips will shout for joy.
- When I sing praises to you, my soul also, which you have redeemed. And my tongue will talk of your righteousness held all the day long. For they have been put to shame and disappointed who sought to do me hurt.
- Let me pray for us, and then we'll look more closely into this psalm. God, we come before you this evening as a group.
- And God, we come and present ourselves before you. And we ask that you would speak to each of us. God, we ask that your spirit would speak directly to our hearts.
- And God, we ask as we look towards our time of praying together later, that your spirit would make us one, would unite us together.
- [3 : 40] And God, that we may come before you with great boldness. God, we may come before you with great honesty. God, and put ourselves before you and put ourselves at your mercy.

God, that we may receive the blessing that you have for us. God, that we may go about our time here together to see, giving glory and honor to you.

We ask all this in your name. Amen. Amen. So we're going to come back through and look at sections of the psalm. So what I'm going to do is reread portions of the psalm and then just talk a little bit about it.

What it ends up meaning is that by the end, I will have read the psalm twice. And so that's okay. We can get a little extra Bible reading in.

We can always get that part right. So let me read verses 1 through 3 for us. And what we're going to be looking at in this first section is the seeking of God's protection.

[4 : 43] And so we see the psalmist seeking God's protection. In you, O Lord, do I take refuge. Let me never be put to shame. In your righteousness, deliver me and rescue me.

Incline your ear to me and save me. Be to me a rock of refuge to which I may continually come. You have given the command to save me. For you are my rock and my fortress.

And so what we have here is the psalmist comes with a petition before God. Begins with a petition. So it's not an acknowledgment of who God is, but rather it's asking God to act.

And particularly what we see is the psalmist has God coming through and asking him twice to be a refuge. The psalmist says to God, deliver me. Like the psalmist says, rescue me.

The psalmist says, save me. The psalmist refers to God as a rock twice and as a fortress. We see this kind of idea of seeking God's protection.

[5 : 51] And God is this great strong thing that will not be moved. Coming in verse 3. It says, be to me a rock of refuge to which I may continually come.

You have given the command to save me. For you are my rock and my fortress. So we see the psalmist coming before God saying that you are my rock and my fortress.

You are my protection. As we think of seeking God as our source of protection. As our refuge from the storm.

The imagery that I have to mine is a gigantic building. And in this gigantic building it's hit by a massive earthquake. And so as this building begins to crumble.

Where would you take refuge in that moment? As we think of the moments of our life around us. When they begin to collapse in on us. Where do we seek refuge?

[6 : 55] The psalmist would say, seek refuge from God. And often the great advice around us isn't necessarily seek refuge from God.

But when life begins to collapse. And there's many suggestions of things that we might do. Of choices we might make. To somehow address the matter. But the psalmist says, seek refuge from God.

Let's look at verses 4 through 6. And we're going to find that there is a pursuer of the psalmist. And we're going to see that that pursuer is identified. I begin in verse 4.

Rescue me, oh my God, from the hand of the wicked. From the grasp of the unjust and cruel man. For you, oh Lord, are my hope.

My trust, oh Lord, from my youth. Upon you I have leaned from before my birth. You are he who took me from my mother's womb.

[7 : 57] My praise is continually of you. So we see that the psalmist is seeking refuge. Seeking protection from a pursuer.

There is someone who is after the psalmist. And this pursuer is identified there in verse 4 as a wicked, unjust, and cruel man.

And facing this person. And the psalmist declares in verse 5. It says, you, oh Lord, are my hope. And an interesting thing there of the word hope.

The passage says that you, oh Lord, are my hope. But the word hope that is found there is not the same word that is used in verse 14 where we also have the word hope used.

Rather, the word here in verse 5, the idea of hope here in verse 5, is a word that literally means cord. Like a strand, like a rope.

[8 : 59] And figuratively, it's used for the idea of hope. And a story where you see this word cord used that has this great connection to this idea of hope comes from Rahab.

And so during the time of Joshua, as he was coming upon the city of Jericho and sent spies in. The spies make their way to Rahab. And here in this most powerful of cities, she believes that the God that Joshua represents will be able to destroy the city.

And so she leaves a cord, a crimson cord, out her window to mark her residence. So that when the destruction of Jericho takes place, that her and her family will be spared.

And that word cord is the same word that's used here. So that idea of cord and hope, how that works together. In verse 6, we find the psalm saying, Upon you I have leaned from before my birth.

And this is the first reference of a few references that reflects upon a full lifespan devoted to God.

[10 : 21] As we'll see as the psalm unfolds, the person writing appears to be towards the latter end of a longer life.

And reflecting upon their faithfulness to God and how God has been working through them. From the moment even before birth until the very end. But this idea of this lifetime, this full lifespan devoted to God, comes through again in verse 9, verse 17, and 18.

We'll talk a little bit more about those as they come up. We see the psalmist being pursued. And there in verses 7 through 11, this attack seems imminent.

The pursuer is upon the psalmist. And the attack seems imminent. Let me read verses 7 through 11 for us. I have been as important to many, but you are my strong refuge.

My mouth is filled with your praise and with your glory all the day. Do not cast me off in the time of old age. Forsake me not when my strength is spent.

[11 : 28] For my enemies speak concerning me. Those who watch for my life consult together and say, God has forsaken him. Pursue and seize him. For there is none to deliver him.

So the psalmist speaks here in this. It seemed to be in the latter stages of life. And the psalmist also hints at this time of life of this waning power and waning influence.

And it seems that those who, in the earlier stages of this person's life, who have suffered defeat perhaps or humiliation at this psalmist at the earlier stages, now seem ready to exact revenge.

Now that there once the one who was so strong and the one who prevailed upon them, now seems weak and vulnerable.

And we see there in verse 9 this idea of being saved here in this vulnerable time. It says, Do not cast me off in the time of old age. Forsake me not when my strength is spent.

[12 : 45] And we see then that the pursuers have waited for this moment of vulnerability. We see it in verses 10 through 11. Let me read that for us. For my enemies speak concerning me.

Those who watch for my life consult together and say, God has forsaken him. Pursue and seize him. For there is none to deliver him.

I think of a predator. And if you've ever watched those nature shows, and there's the large cat that's lurking upon this herd of animals.

And what is that large cat going to look for in the herd of animals? It's going to look for the one that gets separated from the group. It's looking for the weak, the young, the vulnerable.

The psalmist now in this stage of life feels like that one who has wandered from the group. It feels like that one who is vulnerable to attack.

[13 : 44] We see then in verses 12 through 16 that we are going to see that this is the God who can, the God who can intervene, the God who has the power. Let me read verses 12 through 16 for us.

O God, be not far from me. O my God, make haste to help me. May my accusers be put to shame and consumed.

With scorn and disgrace may they be covered, who seek my hurt. But I will hope continually, and I will praise you yet more and more.

My mouth will tell of your righteousness and your deeds of salvation all the day. For their number has passed my knowledge. With the mighty deeds of the Lord, Lord, I will come.

I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone. We see the petition being put before God there in verse 12. O my God, make haste to help me.

[14 : 47] The psalmist recognizes that God can bring deliverance from the pursuers who are seeking upon him. And we see that these pursuers, the psalmist has put before God, that they may be brought to shame and scorn and disgrace.

And then we see the psalmist there in verses 14 through 16, offering much praise to God. There in verse 14, the psalmist says, I will praise you yet more and more.

And then the acknowledgement that God has performed righteous acts and mighty deeds. You can feel the psalmist proclaiming to God.

The psalmist saying, I have seen your great power. I know you can deliver me from the pursuers. You have done it before. And you can do it again.

And the psalmist, despite being an aged and vulnerable target, is relying upon his strengths. And his primary strength is this overwhelming belief in God's ability to deliver him.

[16 : 03] The psalmist's remembering of God's deliverance in previous acts and realizing God's ability to make a deliverance again this time.

And then giving God praise. So while by human standards, the psalmist may seem fallible, the psalmist is truly relying upon the great strength that will not be moved. The psalmist is turning to God.

We see there in the next section, verses 17 through 21, we see the psalmist going through this idea of recalling what God has done, requesting, and then in a sense almost with the request, receiving.

So it's a bit of a, something we'll pause in and look at a little bit more as we see the psalmist literally requests and, in the process of requesting, recognize that they will be receiving from God.

Let me read this for us. Begin in verse 17. O God, from my youth, you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.

[17 : 17] Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who is like you? You have made me see many troubles and calamities, will revive me again.

From the depths of the earth, you will bring me up again. You will increase my greatness and comfort me again. The psalmist is beginning with a recalling of the things that God has done, and then a request receiving of the things God has done.

So I made up a new word, because that's how I do things sometimes. A new word for what the psalmist is doing here. The psalmist is request-receiving. I just combined the words request and receive into a word request-receiving, which I may not say that many more times, because it's a little hard to say.

But these elements of recall, request, and receiving are all being mixed together. Let's look at verses 20 and 21.

And I'll pause as I'm reading this, and you can see how this idea of recall, request, and receive are all being mixed together. Beginning there in verse 20, You have made me see many troubles and calamities.

[18 : 39] And so that is a recall. And then the psalmist continues, that you will revive me again.

So in that midst of saying you've seen many troubles, but you will revive me again. And in that, there is this idea that God will revive. So there's this receiving.

There's also this implied request that takes place. When the psalmist says, God, here's what you're going to do for me. You're going to revive me again. There's a request, and then there's receive, all mixed together.

Continues on. From the depths of the earth, you will bring me up again. And so this idea that the psalmist will be brought up from the depths of the earth, again, that is a recalling.

You've done it before. You've brought me up from the depths of the earth before. And then the idea, you'll bring me up again. So not only is that again, you've done it before, but it's this implied idea that you're going to do it again.

[19 : 44] God, this is what you're going to do for me. And then it continues. You will increase my greatness. So it's, once again, that idea of receiving what God is going to do with that implied request, that you, that God will increase his greatness, and that God will comfort me again, which, once again, remembers what God has done.

And we see this idea of recalling, requesting, and receiving all mixed together. As the psalmist comes before God, communicating with great confidence, and great understanding, in full expectation, of God's deliverance of him.

So how do we get to that point? How do we get to that point where we can come before God with such boldness, with such confidence, to almost be saying, God, here's what you're going to do for me.

And when we find the psalmist saying that, we don't find that, it's not presented in this arrogant fashion, that somehow, the psalmist has authority to tell God what to do.

By no means at all. It's presented with such humility, and such recognition of God's character, that the psalmist knows what God is going to do for him. So how do we get to that point?

[21 : 06] I think we may have a hint of that coming just before this. And that, it comes from verse 17, and then into verse 18. And that verse 17 says, Oh God, from my youth you have taught me.

We see then going into verse 18. So even to old age and gray hairs, the psalmist has been doing this a long time. From the time of youth to the time of old age and gray hairs, the psalmist has been doing this a long time.

And there's something to be said with walking for God and following God for a long time. And there's things that we can learn and understand about God's character that only comes through a lifetime of serving him.

And so we may not be there yet, but it is certainly something to which we can strive and achieve, this lifespan of serving God. Now at verse 22 through 24, we find the psalmist giving praise to God.

And as I read this, I want you to think of the auditory references that you hear for giving praise. Things that you would hear. Let me read that for us.

[22 : 27] I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God. I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O holy one of Israel. My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to you.

My soul also, which you have redeemed. And my tongue will talk of your righteous health all the day long. For they have been put to shame and disappoint who sought to do me hurt.

So I encourage you to listen for the auditory references, the things that we could hear. Here are the things that I pulled out. There's the harp. There's singing, which is mentioned twice.

There's the lyre. There's shouting. And there's talking. And we see that when the psalmist comes to give praise to God, the psalmist makes it heard.

I think that's an important point for us to remember. That when we come to give praise to God, that it should be heard. There's something about giving praise to God so they can be heard, so others can hear it.

[23 : 34] As we think of this idea of the psalm, this idea of deliverance that takes place here with the psalmist, we find this idea all coming together in the work of Jesus.

Jesus. And in Jesus, we find that Jesus is our ultimate refuge. He is the refuge from our great pursuer.

And our great pursuer is sin. Above all things, that is which seeks to overcome us and seeks to consume us. But Jesus is the one who provides the refuge from that.

And Jesus is the one who comes and provides victory over this enemy of ours, this enemy of sin. And when we think of Jesus and this great victory that he has provided over sin through his work upon the cross, by going to the cross on our behalf and taking our sin there, and then dying and dying with our sin there, we know that the grave could not hold him because Jesus was without sin.

And in his process of coming out of the grave, he defeats death, leaving our sin behind. And we have the opportunity, through Jesus, to have victory over our great pursuer, victory over sin.

[24 : 58] Let me read verse 3 for us. I want you to think of Jesus as I do. Be to me a rock of refuge to which I may continually come.

For you have given the command to save me. You are my rock and my fortress. Indeed, Jesus is our rock and our fortress.

Not only now, but through all eternity. Let me pray for us. And then for that, we can sing our first song.

We can offer up our praise to God through a song. God, we do come before you. God, we are thankful for the work of Jesus.

We are thankful that you indeed are our rock and our refuge, and that you are the source of great victory. God, let us consistently and constantly turn to you and put ourselves before you and seek your mercy and seek your power.

[25 : 58] We ask this in your name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.