

Does Your Soul Have A Refuge?

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Preacher: J.D. Edwards

- [0 : 00] It's been so refreshing for me to be in the Psalms this summer. I hope it's been that way for you as well. Lord willing, this will be our last sermon on the Psalms for this summer. And then, Lord willing, again, maybe next summer we'll pick up with Psalm 8, which is a wonderful place to start again in the Psalms.
- So Psalm 7. Well, as I read this, keep in mind, this is God's very own word.
- It's his inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear and sufficient word for you, for his people. Once I'm done with the reading, I'll say this is the word of the Lord, and you can respond, thanks be to God.
- Psalm 7. Shigion of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning the words of Cush, the Benjamite.
- Verse 3.
- [1 : 16] O Lord my God, if I have done this, if there be iniquity in my hands, if I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me, yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy, let the enemy persecute my soul and take it.
- Yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth and lay mine honor in the dust. Selah.
- Verse 6.
- Arise, O Lord, in thine anger. Lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.
- So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about. For their sakes, therefore, return thou on high. The Lord shall judge the people. Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and according to mine integrity that is in me.
- Verse 9. O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just, for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reigns. My defense is of God, which saveth the upright in heart.
- [2 : 30] God judges the righteous and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he wet his sword. He hath bent his bow and made it ready.
- He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death. He ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors. Behold, he travaileth with iniquity and hath conceived mischief and brought forth falsehood.
- He made a pit and digged it and has fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.
- Verse 17. I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High. This is the word of God.
- Thanks be to God indeed. You may be seated. Let's pray.
- [3 : 43] Let's pray. O Lord, you are our shelter.
- You are the rock of ages that was cut open so that we can hide ourselves in you. Our shelter, Jesus Christ, is alive.

Lord, draw us into your presence inside the house of your Father in heaven and speak to us, your children. May we take your truth from your word like children eating with their family dinner.

May it be a delight to our souls. May you satisfy us once again. Speak to us, Lord. You preach to us. May we pray that you will give us hearts to hear.

May every word of my mouth and may the meditations of our hearts be pleasing in your sight. For Christ's sake we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, does your soul have a refuge?

[5 : 07] Does your soul have a refuge? I want to draw your imagination to this real family in northern Brazil with a child that's too soon to be three, if my calculations are correct.

And her name is Cristina. Cristina's family is from Venezuela. And her family had to flee Venezuela as refugees before she was even born.

Venezuela was plagued by hyperinflation. All those with some education that could maybe keep the economy going had left the country. And now the lower middle class has no other options for survival but to run into a new nation, to cross a border and hope for a new start.

When her family first arrived in northern Brazil, they joined one of three camps, refugee camps set up on the parks of the town. And in these camps, they experienced hunger, they experienced physical harm, and many were tempted to even sell themselves just to get enough money to feed their family.

Over time, God provided for this little family a shared home, a very small apartment with two bedrooms for six families. And it was better than being out in the tents, but even there, their physical safety, theft, and a lack of medical care made those living conditions almost impossible.

[6 : 42] See, refugees, by definition, they know they're in danger. Refugees know they need to find refuge. Refugees know danger is so real that they live with a constant fear.

You could say they're crippled by fear on every side, a fear of sleep, sleeping at night because you could be attacked, a fear of not being able to have the medicine that your family needs, a fear of being rejected by those you're living with now in this foreign country, maybe a fear of being kicked out of that country by the government, and certainly fears about the future.

Will they ever feel safe? Refugees know that they need refuge. Well, the context of Psalm 7 is that David has been driven out of his nation, and he's living in the wilderness among the foreigners like a refugee.

And the Lord taught David in the wilderness his need. Look how David describes his need in verses 1 and 2. He feels danger, not only physical, but he's talking about danger for his soul.

See, in verse 2 he says, the enemy wants to take my soul and tear me to pieces. And so look at what David says in verse 1. What he says, it sets the tone for the whole psalm.

[8 : 05] He says, O Lord my God, in you I take refuge. And that's his call to the whole nation. O people of God, this is for you too, church.

You are the people of God. You need a refuge for your soul. That's the message of Psalm 7. I think that David wrote this psalm after he had been spared, after God preserved him and brought him back into Israel.

And he looks back on what God taught him through that time. So it's a theological reflection of one of the hardest moments in his life. And I've tried to cluster these verses into five theological reflections.

I'm going to give them to you in the form of questions. So listen for five questions as we move through these verses and one response at the end. So the first theological reflection is this.

Are you aware that your soul needs refuge from the enemy? Look at the superscription to this psalm. It's a psalm of David which he's saying to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjaminite.

[9 : 12] That means that this man who's bringing a lot of trouble on David is from a different tribe than David. He's from the tribe of Benjamin. And at the end of the book of Judges we see the wickedness of the tribe of Benjamin was so great that all the other tribes gang up against Benjamin and go to a civil war with Benjamin and nearly annihilate them because their wickedness was so evil in the land.

Well, the people wanted a king after their own heart and they chose Saul because he was tall and handsome. He would be a king that all the other nations would be impressed by and guess what tribe Saul is from? He's from the wicked tribe of Benjamin.

The Lord says you want to be like all the other nations? Have it your way. So Saul is surrounded now by the army that's most loyal to him. The closest you get to Saul is going to be the blood relation.

Those also from the tribe of Benjamin. So this would have been earlier in David's life before David ever became the king before he ever took on the throne and before David himself ever abused the power though he would.

This is at a different point in his life. So when David stood then before the nation and sang this psalm unto the Lord these are spirit-breathed reflections.

[10 : 27] Listen to verses 1 and 2. O Lord my God in you do I take refuge. Save me from all my pursuers. Save me from those that persecute me. Deliver me lest he tear my soul like a lion tearing my soul apart rending it in pieces with none to deliver.

Well David is picturing Saul like that lion. That lion chasing down a deer in the Middle East. When it catches that deer it's going to use its claws and its teeth to tear the flesh apart of that deer and to devour the insides of that deer.

That's what David is going through. Saul is coming after me and he wants to devour my soul. Let me try to describe for you why from 1 Samuel 22 it's a good comparison of Saul like this wicked lion preying on the innocent.

1 Samuel 22 says that Saul was there sitting on the top of a hill like a place from which he would rule he's sitting in the shade under a tree and he has a spear in his hand.

Can you picture him? And all of his servants were standing about him and then Saul speaks to the tribe of Benjamin he says hear now people of Benjamin will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards will he make you all commanders of thousands?

[11 : 53] Give your allegiance to me not to Jesse's son David that shepherd boy. So Saul is wooing the hearts of the people of Israel and especially those in the tribe of Benjamin.

So he goes to hunt down David drives him out of the land and in these these four chapters or so 1 Samuel 22 through 26 David describes himself as a dead dog.

That's what it's like to live in the wilderness being hunted by Saul. He describes himself as a flea. I'm a nobody Saul. These men around you are twisting it. They're trying to accuse me of things I've never said or done.

I'm being falsely accused. I'm a nobody. And he calls himself a hunted bird. See David knew he was a refugee. He was in danger and he needed to find a fortress.

He needed to know his soul would be safe. He needed a refuge. The first step for us is just like David it's to confess.

[12 : 53] We cannot save ourselves. Our souls are hunted. There is an enemy like Peter describes Satan like a lion seeking whom he may devour.

I think that we run the risk of being most vulnerable when we feel most comfortable. Isn't it easy for us to forget that there is a spiritual battle going on for our souls and there is an enemy who wants to devour your soul and destroy your life.

And if the enemy gets David's soul it will be torn apart torn to shreds. So God must be the one to save David.

He has none else to deliver him he says. Does your soul have a refuge? Are you still trying to build up a fortress of your own making to protect your own soul?

or are you aware that your soul needs shelter from God alone to preserve your soul your life from the enemy? I think that's the first reflection David brings to the people of God.

[14 : 03] Oh Lord my God in you I take refuge. The second question is this does your soul and does my soul deserve God's refuge?

By our own merit we know that it doesn't. But notice how carefully David examines himself in the next few verses.

Verses 3-5 David says Oh Lord my God if I have done this if there is iniquity if there is wrong in my hands if I have repaid my friend who was at peace with me with evil or plundered my enemy without cause let the enemy pursue and persecute my soul and let him overtake me and let him trample my life and tread me down to the ground into the earth let him lay my honor in the dust.

See David knows that if he's a hypocrite if he is a rebellious lawbreaker that does not fear God that's exactly what he deserves. So David is really he's under pressure from unjust law and he's appealing to the higher throne the higher king of God who is just.

Rebellious criminals don't deserve God's refuge and as long as David is proud and refusing to repent and running away from God he doesn't deserve to be spared.

[15 : 27] he does not deserve to find refuge in God. Now the good news is that David would be reflecting on the temple the sacraments the blood that would be spilled and those things would be counted to him as righteousness because he was putting his faith in the future work of Jesus Christ and now we can know from the full counsel of God's word that if your soul is clothed in Christ's righteousness that means he has washed you with his very own blood and you do stand before the throne of God not condemned any longer because you have repented you have run and found refuge in Jesus.

Now when God has washed you clean and he's put on you the garments that are white of his own righteousness clothing you scripture does tell us to keep your heart to not defile what God has made pure.

So do you see this glorious truth here? The Lord clothes you with his own righteousness you don't earn it because we can't we can never deserve his sanctification and his righteousness but when he does clothe you he does teach you through his spirit working in you to not defile yourself that's the whole message of the book of Revelation to the church do not defile yourselves in the world.

If you've acted unjustly then your soul deserves to be hunted down trampled and buried. There's no false sense of security if you're standing in your own righteousness.

Your soul needs a refuge that is not of your own making but if you have put your trust in Christ you need to keep your heart you need to do like David here and ask God to search all of you search your conscience and let him expose what it is you need to confess.

[17 : 21] Let me give you just three short verses from all of the Bible to confirm how important it is that we search our conscience and lay it before God just as David has done here. 2 Corinthians 1.12 Paul writes and he's writing to the church as a fellow Christian he says our boast is this the testimony of our conscience that we have behaved with godly sincerity by the grace of God.

1 John 3.21 Beloved if your heart does not condemn you have confidence before God you see how important it is for you to approach the throne of glory you don't want to be injuring your conscience you want to be able to approach God saying God search my heart and I will surrender I will repent of anything you show me and that's not a new message that's what God has told his people all along Proverbs 4.23 says keep your heart with all vigilance for from it flow the springs of life keep your heart John Flavel was an English Puritan who suffered much persecution he was exiled he was thrown in prison he was prohibited from preaching and during that time he wrote much of what we have today and he would have been tempted to seek revenge just like David had opportunities two different times to take Saul's life listen to how

John Flavel encourages the Christian now who has suffered injustice Flavel said by revenge you might destroy one enemy yet when Christ's love constrains you you conquer three enemies three enemies what are they number one you conquer your own lust number two you conquer Satan's temptation number three by God's grace you may conquer your enemies heart see when Christ has clothed you with his righteousness it's the love of Christ working in you that constrains you when your soul is found refuge in God you want to trust him from his mighty fortress to be the avenger you don't want to touch it you want to leave it to the Lord praise the Lord that by the work of Christ we can pray like David oh Lord in you do I take refuge the third reflection do you know that your soul also needs to find refuge from God's own justice so you need refuge from the enemy you need refuge in the fortress of God alone you don't deserve to be in that fortress except by his grace and you don't have a right to be in his refuge in his fortress unless the justice of

God is accounted for because the wrath of God is on the evildoers so here David is drawing a line in the sand it reminds me of Psalm 1 which sets the tone for the Psalter there are two ways to live while he's he's talking about his need for refuge by the grace of God over here there's a stern warning for those who are opposing God over here the wrath of God is against those who do not repent look at verse 7 David says let the assembly of the peoples be gathered about you look at this assembly he says and return on high oh Lord another translation says so shall the congregation of the people compass thee about and for their sakes return thou on high saying Lord when the people are not trying to conquer by their might but when they're repenting when they're coming before your holy presence to your temple receiving your grace through the shed blood of the sacrifice may you then look at them may you dwell with them as they repent verse 8 he says the Lord judges the peoples judge me oh Lord according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me he said

I'm I'm with those who repent I'm with those who who take your gift of righteousness but here's the contrast the other side verse 9 oh let the evil another translation says let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end and but may you establish the righteous and the just you who test you who try the minds and hearts see David is saying that all people will be gathered before the Lord and his favor will be on those who God declares righteous but upon those who do not repent they will get his wrath and there's no one that can stand before the Lord and plead self-righteousness because the Lord knows the mind and the heart the King James uses a difficult word it says the heart and the reins but reins is spelled without the G so it really is maybe a closer to the Hebrew it's talking about the kidney the Lord knows the heart and he knows the part inside of you that's even deeper the kidneys so Hebrew poetry it's so rich you know the soul is what is in focus in all of

[22 : 39] Psalm 7 this is a spiritual insight here and the Bible teaches that you have an outer man and an inner man your inner man your soul is searched by God every part of the inside of you God knows thoughts hearts soul kidneys see God knows you through and through and David is saying Lord judge me search my motives look at my actions in this case I've been falsely accused I have nothing to hide from you because you see it all already search me through and through you show it and I will repent and may all those who gather around your holy gathering around the temple of the Lord the shed blood of sacrifices may they all be searched by you and may we all repent and confess our sin and trust once again to receive your grace this wonderful picture from the Old Testament it's also preparing us for the coming judgment of God God will search every soul the living and the dead all will be assembled before God nothing will be hidden

God will have it all in front of him and God will weigh your righteousness in the balance of his just scales he will search your mind your thoughts your hearts your motives and mine we will be laid bare so let's be like these repenting Israelites that turn to the Lord now and they say Lord search me I confess my sin to you now and it's so refreshing that we can do this as a gathered body at least every week we can do this privately as often as God by the spirit leads us to confess our sin see any that God finds righteous the promise is that he will establish them they will not be driven out of the land of his kingdom and all who are evil and wicked God himself will bring to an end there will be no apocalyptic fort that you can you know go into no bunkers where you can hide from the coming judgment of God when Jesus

Christ comes with the army of heaven he will judge the living and the dead so you must take your refuge in him now confess your sin and repent to him now and you will find refuge in him does your soul have a refuge the fourth theological reflection is this for those who refuse to repent now they are in rebellion and those in rebellion against God they are raging against God and it's futile it is futile to rage against this mighty fortress this refuge this shelter of God he uses language of war and battle here I skipped verse 6 on purpose because I want to show you how it's connected to what God does so look at verse 6 next verse 6

David says arise oh Lord in your anger lift yourself up against the fury of mine enemies because of their rage he says awake awake for me he said Lord you have appointed a judgment these people rebel against you and it feels to me that you're asleep that you're sitting down says Lord do you see my injustice I'm with those who repent please rise now in our defense and look at how this gets answered in the next verses starting at verse 10 David now beholds the fortress of God fighting back in this battle bringing his judgment in verse 10 he says my shield is with God my defense is with God who awakes for me he saves the upright in heart verse 11 God who judges the righteous is a righteous judge now here's a difficult phrase listen to what he says in verse 11 a God who feels indignation a God who feels anger every day says God is angry with the wicked every day verse 12 if a man does not turn does not repent then God wets his sword he sharpens the blade of his sword he says

God's bow and arrow are ready to be released he has readied and bent his bow verse 13 he has also prepared for him his deadly weapons instruments of death he has ordained his arrows with fiery shafts against his persecutors that's the fortress of God that's how David describes God going to war against the unrepentant now the the difficulty here is what does it say about the nature of God God is angry every day is God fighting an offensive aggressive war or is God defensive is God is God the one from his fortress defending his people I think this is answered in verse 6 would you look there with me see David appeals to

[28 : 20] God to rise up because of the rage of the wicked he says rise up against the fury of mine enemies so the enemies are the ones that are aggressing and he's calling on God to defend we found refuge in you and your fortress mount those walls fire back at the enemy who's raging against you this reminds me of Psalm 2 remember it's the nations that rage against the Lord and his anointed and the king sits on his heavenly kingdom and he laughs what about that difficult phrases says every day God's anger is against the wicked every day that man rages against God God's justice takes up arms to defend his kingdom so it's the foolish nations raging against God and it's God protecting those inside of his fortress it's a defensive battle and every day that man rebels and rages against

God on high God's wrath goes back against them because God is just do you remember last week I mentioned how John Calvin prayed how long oh Lord so often sometimes that was all he could pray this verse also gives comfort that how long oh Lord well every day God is defending you every day God is firing back at the enemy God is your strong fortress and it's futile to rage against his kingdom Calvin commented every day it may be asked why God frequently delays his punishment of evil but the scripture certainly celebrates God's patience this is not to say that a day passes when God relaxes his bow against man's sin Christ never ceases to execute his office of judge so Calvin wrote never think of the patience of God as his approval of evil in verse 11

David says God is the righteous judge and in verse 12 he says if rebellious men do not repent then God sharpens his sword why rage against the kingdom of God on heaven his bow is bent against evil his blade is being sharpened it's like God's spiritual forces have dipped the tip of the arrow and kerosene and touched it to the torch and that bow is bent back it's ready to be released in defense of his people who take refuge in him if you do not take refuge in Christ you are joining those ranks of demons who rage against the high king of heaven and it's futile and that's why we can do what we're told in 1st Thessalonians 4 3 things do not remain proud in our pride we're raging against

God instead we need to run inside his unshakable fortress we need to trust that he has all the weapons needed to protect us and it is futile for the enemy to try to touch even a single soul that is hidden in Jesus Christ your soul needs a refuge and you need to find that refuge in Christ well here's our fifth theological insight you also need refuge from yourself David says in verses 14 through 16 that there is so much evil remaining inside of us that no one can really dispute that the fact that you need refuge from the own evil that remains inside of you the devil is bent on tempting and flaming up the remaining sin of the flesh while we're in this world you need God's protection even from yourself he says in verse 14 behold the wicked man conceives evil inside of him and is pregnant with that mischief and he gives birth to lies he brings forth falsehood verse 15 the wicked man makes a pit digging it out and falls into the hole that he has made for someone else his own wickedness shall return upon his own head on his own skull his own violent plots will crush he's describing something going on on the inside of the wicked he says it's like a pregnant mother who's quivering with labor pains what's making her quiver is her desire to do evil travailing to conceive wickedness that's what's inside of the wicked that's what's inside of everyone who comes after

Adam and our view is that in Adam you have no hope of turning around so much corruption for yourself you are totally depraved not as bad as you could be but every part of us is tainted by sin now the good news is under Christ we do get a new nature but the battle against the remaining flesh will persist until the last day that we're on this earth but it's not a losing battle but see how desperate is this condition if you do not have that new nature put into you by the spirit of God himself he says David says that the inner being it's like carrying an and when you give birth to that addiction to sin it only brings forth lies and falsehoods the wicked man is digging his own grave David says the violent malice that this wicked man plots to crush others it falls on himself and smashes his own head isn't it true that in the addiction to sin the sinner becomes his own worst enemy you destroy yourself if you're left to your own devices you need saving from yourself you need refuge in

[34 : 50] Christ continually even if you're a believer think about how God does that for us if we go a period of time many of us travel this summer don't you just feel your soul you're needing God's shelter again and it's so refreshing to be able to hide in the congregation of God's people again to be reminding ourselves again of his gospel and how Christ alone shelters us and his spirit applies that truth over and over again and God preserves us he preserves us until the last day but beware of that remaining sin in the flesh and give no opportunity for the devil let Christ be your refuge every day especially when you're tired and weak James 1 verses 14 and 15 warns Christians like us that each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death you pick up on that similar language of it being inside of you it's like a like a pregnancy that's going to give birth so beware of the sin that remains because that remaining sin destroys lives isn't this true not only of

Saul but it was true of the Pharaoh he intended all the boys be thrown into the Nile River and drown be devoured by the crocodiles and the story ends with his own army being buried under the waters of the Red Sea God's waters of judgment remember Naaman and the story with Esther he prepared the gallows for Mordecai and on those young and now here is Saul trying to raise up these 3,000 Benjamites to go hunt down David like a bird in the wilderness and Saul dies not only by the arrow but by his own sword we need refuge in Christ even from our own remaining sin well verse 17 is our response to those five biblical truths here's the response if your soul has a refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ your righteousness the only thing you can do is to praise his holy name praise the name of the most high

God look at verse 17 I'll give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness I will sing praise to his name the name of the Lord most high I started off by making you think of refugees and how refugees are so aware of their danger refugees know they need to find refuge you know once a refugee experiences that new start in a new country a new kingdom they are some of the most grateful people you will ever talk to have you gotten to visit with a refugee who's got a new start in a new country they overflow with gratitude the reason I shared that specific story of this little girl named Christina is because her family did find their way by God's providence into Baptist church in northern Brazil and this church loves them takes care of them helps connect them with opportunities for work gives them rides to medical appointments and other things that are needed just to make a life and to get a job they are so grateful for this church and for those in that church that showed them that love as refugees this little girl was named after one of the members of that church in

Brazil an expression of gratitude and I just can't help but think of that glory that we share you know in taking on the name of God you're baptized into the name of the Father the Son and the Spirit not only does he bring you into his country he brings you into his family he doesn't just give you a new start he gives you a new nature and he puts you inside of his new kingdom the new creation verse 17 David highlights three things he says give to the Lord the thanks number one due to his righteousness 2nd Corinthians 5:21 said for our sake God made Christ to be sin who knew no sin that in him we might become the righteousness of God we can give thanks that Jesus Christ is our righteousness our

Lord Jesus Christ he became a refugee you could say so that your soul could have refuge in him Jesus was rejected he was despised he was hunted down and he was killed so that you could have life and you could belong now to him the shelter for your soul David also says I will sing praise to the name of the Lord the word Lord is Jehovah this is God's covenant keeping name in 1st Corinthians 1:7 through 9 we read that God is faithful because he has called you into fellowship through his son Jesus Christ and he who called you will sustain you to the end guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ and the third reason to give the thanks do to God is because he is Lord most high he is the most high king revelation 7:15 describes our Lord Jesus

[40 : 41] Christ this way it is he who sits on the throne listen to this he will shelter you with his presence our king lives our shelter is alive run to Christ for refuge it's his presence that is your shelter and give thanks to the Lord with your life live like a grateful refugee who's been brought into the kingdom of heaven sing praise to his name live your life in gratitude to the one who has been the refuge for your soul and always will be let's pray Lord we thank you we give you the praise do your name because you are our righteousness and every true

Christian can sing yes there is one who lived for me his life my only victory his death forever sealed in time that I am his and he is mine praise to the king his throne transcends his crown and kingdom never end now and throughout eternity I will praise the one who died for me our shelter our shield our fortress the God of heaven the most high king our Lord Jesus Christ amen