

An Urgent Cry

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[0 : 00] Luke of Psalms and Psalm 61. Psalm 61. Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer.

From the end of the earth I call to you. When my heart is faint, lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy.

Let me dwell in your tent forever. Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings. Now I suppose if anybody popped their head in here tonight and looked around, they would say, well, this is a very peaceful place.

It would look so calm and peaceful. But, of course, we have no idea what might be going on personally in everybody's heart here.

Some people, it might be peaceful. Some people, they might be very contentious now because life is going very smoothly. But maybe for others it's anything but.

[1 : 10] We often don't display just what is going on within our own hearts. And there might be many personal conflicts and many personal troubles. We might feel overwhelmed.

Might be filled with doubts and fears and all sorts of things. And one of the things sometimes that distresses the Christian is that they think that they shouldn't be like that.

They think that it's because their faith must be lacking. That there's something wrong because they're thinking that as a Christian, we should have the faith to commit everything to the Lord.

That there should be a settled peace within us. We remember that Jesus says, My peace I give you, not as the world gives, give I unto you. And so there's this sense that there must be something wrong with my faith, something wrong with me as a Christian, if I feel troubled and anxious and overwhelmed.

Well, we've got to remember that the man who penned this psalm, David, was a man termed a man after God's own heart. And David was a man who enjoyed much fellowship with the Lord, a man who had great times, a man who was a man of great praise.

[2 : 28] But he was also somebody who knew what it was to be troubled. And when we go through the psalms, particularly the Davidic psalms, you will find that there is almost a constant theme.

There are some psalms that are so full of praise, but this psalm is so typical, it begins with the urgent cry, and yet it finishes with a sense of triumph and praise.

And that is often where we too will be led as we go through all the different experiences that we go through in life. And David knew what it was like to be troubled.

Sometimes he knew that trouble brought about by enemies. It had nothing to do with anything with himself, just as the enemies against God and against God's kingdom.

And he as a representative was at the forefront of that assault. But sometimes also the troubles were brought about by his own sin, by his own failings.

[3 : 27] So he knew what it was like on all different levels to be troubled. And so we find David here that he is in absolute distress. And he begins by saying, hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer.

And when he says that, you can see this, there's a real urgency in David's prayer here. Now, I know that you know, but I know a lot of people think that prayer is simply just going through a form of repetition.

People think that prayer is just mumbling a few words to God, that it is something that a Christian has to do, but it's just part of what they do.

And some people almost have the idea that if they just say a wee word, then that's fine. They say, well, I've spoken to God today. But you and I know that real prayer comes from the heart.

It is urgent. It is meaningful. It's wonderful. When we really need God, we really pray. And I'm sure we've all gone through different times where we've just gone through the process of prayer.

[4 : 41] Christians do that. There are times that we've maybe lost the edge and we just go through the motions. But there are other times when it's a real cry.

It's an urgent cry. You listen to a little baby cry. And whether they're crying for food or crying because they're uncomfortable or cry because they're needing change, they really cry. Well, that's the kind of cry that the Lord's people make. It is a real heartfelt cry. And so David is here praying and he's in desperation.

And he's saying, hear, Lord, listen. And the idea here, hear my cry, O Lord, listen to my prayer. It's got the idea of attend to it. Don't just hear my voice.

Listen to my voice in such a way that you will attend to the matter that I'm bringing before you. And if you and I attend to something, it means that if we're going to attend to something, we push other things aside and we say, well, I've got to attend to this right now.

[5 : 46] And so we're going to give all our attention to it. And that's like what David is saying. Lord, I want you to give all your attention to this right now. Now, I know we talk about how some people are able to multitask.

And I believe some people are. I haven't a clue how you multitask, but I know that some people are able. But even the best person who can multitask cannot give their full attention to everything at the same time.

There is only really one thing that you can really focus on. If you've got a few very important things to do, you cannot do them all together. But the Lord can. The Lord is able to attend to everybody's needs at the same time and to give full attention to everything that is being required.

So David is saying here, Lord, give all your attention. Please hear my cry. Listen to my prayer.

And then we find that David is here, that he's praying and he's saying that it's as if you're at the ends of the earth. From the end of the earth, I call to you.

[7 : 00] Now, of course, David was displaced at this time. We don't know the background to it.

There were two major times in David's life where he was away from home and away from his comforts, away from the throne, away from the sanctuary, from the tabernacle.

And we know one of them was when he was on a run from Saul. And he spent years barely escaping with his life. It could have come from this period. But people think more than likely it came from the time where there was Absalom's rebellion against him, where his own son rose up, turned the hearts of the people against David because he wanted to take over the throne.

And it was one of the most heartbreaking periods in David's life. And you cannot but read when Absalom was killed, the absolute heartbroken distress that David was in because he loved Absalom, his son.

And yet here's his son wanting to kill him. So David, remember how he had to run. He had to leave, as we say, leave his throne, leave his home, leave Jerusalem, leave the city of God, as it were, leave the sanctuary, the tent of meeting.

He had to leave all that. So although it is not geographically the ends of the earth, it is spiritually speaking, the ends of the earth.

[8 : 28] He's so displaced, as it were, so far away. And so David is crying here with all his heart that the Lord would hear him.

And we find that David is saying, from the end of the earth, I call to you when my heart is faint. And again, the idea here of the heart being faint is of being overwhelmed, of distressed, depressed.

All these words come into it. Areas of depression, areas of just despair, almost. And we've got to remember, Christians go there.

You know, sometimes people say, oh, Christians can't be depressed. Christians cannot be troubled with anxiety. Of course they can. David knew all about these things. David experienced the highest of highs, but he experienced the darkest of lows as well.

And that's part of what makes the Psalms, the book of Psalms, such a wonderful book. Because wherever you are tonight, you will find, if you go through the Psalms, you will find there your experience.

[9 : 39] You will find where you're at. Because sometimes when you go through the Psalms, you will find the Psalmists speaking with a boldness that you'd be frightened to speak with before God.

Sometimes there's an anger comes through. Sometimes there's a confusion comes through.

Sometimes great questions come through. Sometimes when you read them, you'd say, you know, I would be scared to speak like that.

But it's so encouraging for us to see this is a word of God. And this is a place where God's people sometimes are. That's where David was at this particular time.

And so David cries, Lord, he says, lead me to the rock that is higher than I. And you see in verse 3, he says, for you have been my refuge.

Now David is talking here about something he wants to happen and something that has happened before. And that's very much how David kind of goes in life.

[10:44] You remember when David went out to fight Goliath? He said to Saul, look, it's all right. God, in the past, I have fought the lion and I have fought the bear and I defeated both.

And because God helped me there, he will help me again. So David is always looking back on what God has done for him in the past, convinced that God will do for him in the future.

And we should do that as well. We should look back and remember because, you know, there are times if we're down and distressed, sometimes we can't lay hold upon what God has actually done for us.

And we need his help. We need sometimes to ask the Lord, Lord, refocus. Help me to look back and to see the blessings that you have actually blessed me with.

Because sometimes we lose sight of these things. And some of these blessings even come in the hard times, even the things that, the difficult times that we go through, we're able to identify the blessings that we have actually received in them.

[11:52] So David is here saying, lead me to the rock that is higher than I. Now a rock we always think of as a place of a stronghold and somewhere it's a good viewpoint.

Somewhere safe. Get up onto a rock. The first psalm that we sang, Psalm 40, talks about this rock. And you can never look on the rock or read about the rock without thinking of the great picture that the Bible so often gives of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in fact, we even see the symbolism of that in the Old Testament where Moses struck the rock and the water came out. And Jesus Christ, of course, is the ultimate rock who was, he was struck in order that we may live.

But in that psalm, Psalm 40, we have the picture there of in the fearful pit and miry clay and the cry and being taken from it with our feet put upon a rock and our way established.

Now, of course, that is a once and for all that happens when we're converted. And that will never, in a sense, be replicated again in our life.

[13:10] But the experiences will go on over and over and over again. We will constantly be crying to the Lord to deliver us from the different pits that we find ourselves in and to give us a sense again of our feet of being upon the rock that is Christ.

Because everything else in this life, it doesn't matter what philosophies or strategies, it doesn't matter what plans or people, it doesn't matter, everything ultimately will fail.

Everything else will give up or give in. except Christ. And so there's this great sense of the rock.

You know, sometimes at a human level, maybe when you go through a, you may be going through a particularly difficult time and you look back and you'll remember one or two or a few people and they stuck with you through thick and thin.

they didn't shift, they didn't flinch, they were there and so often you'll say, you know, he or she, he was a rock to me. She was a rock to me.

In that time where I was going through so much trouble, they were there for me just like a rock.

Well, that's a picture of the supreme rock who is Jesus Christ and he and he alone can give us what nobody else can and so he is this rock of defense and this rock of refuge.

[14:45] But when we see here, David says, lead me to the rock. In other words, he's asking for help. I can't, I can't get there myself and you and I know that.

We can't, we can't work that up ourselves. We are dependent upon his grace and his help. Then he says, for you have been my refuge and it's interesting, David is then starting to move as it were into a greater degree of personalness.

You have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy. He used this strong tower and gets the idea that not only is it a defense but that strength is being imparted as well.

That's what the Lord does to you and to me, isn't it? He gives us strength. His strength is made perfect in our weakness and many a time we've felt weak facing what we've had to face.

Every day there's a sense of our inability to walk the walk. There are times when we feel we're being overcome by temptation.

[15:57] Times we feel we're being overcome by sin. sometimes we think how am I going to make it on? But you know this, the Lord keeps us going. So they from strength and weary go, still forward

unto strength.

That's how the Lord takes us. His strength being made perfect in our weakness. But then the psalmist moves in verse 4 and he says he's moving now into the place of fellowship.

Let me dwell in your tent forever. And again that's so often the prayer of David. You think of Psalm 27 and it's just this delight to be in God's house.

This is the place. And you know that's one of the wonderful things. It's wonderful like in a midweek meeting because as I say maybe some of you came in here tonight and you were distressed in heart.

Nobody else could see it. And you know sometimes when we're sometimes when we're distressed and when we're almost our thinking is all kind of displaced it's hard to pray because we're kind of we're all over the place.

[17:12] But you know there's something wonderful when we come to God's house because God has a way of dealing with us when we come together like this. If Asaph who wrote Psalm 73 was here with us tonight he would say you know there's no place like God's house.

I was all over the place Asaph would say. I was in a terrible state. My mind was turning cartwheels. I was envying the godless. I was here there and everywhere until I went to God's house.

And when he went there the Lord restored his focus. and he began to see that the very people that he was envying he actually should be pitting them.

That they were on a slippery slope heading to destruction. And that's why he goes on to say whom have I in the heavens high but thee O Lord alone and in the earth whom I desire besides thee there is none.

There's the therapy of God's house. God is a great work of restoration in his house. And so you can understand why David is saying here I am I'm crying as it were from the end to the earth.

[18:24] Oh I long to get back to dwell in your tent. And then he goes then it's even more it's closer still let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings.

It's that picture that we often find in the Bible as the Lord speaks to us in the beautiful imagery in different ways of just like the mother bird sheltering the chicks.

We sang about it in Psalm 91 about his feathers and it's a place of warmth the place of protection the place of nearness the place of love that's what the Lord does with us.

He shelters us and keeps us close to himself. And so as David is working his way through by the time he's come to this stage you can see that he's moved from the desperation.

Yes he's still in desperation but you know this is what happens when we're in touch with God really praying to the Lord. The Lord is lifting us up little by little by little along the way.

[19:35] And so we find that David is you can almost feel the different spirit within him as he's becoming more convinced of God's goodness and God's faithfulness and of God's love towards him.

And then we find that as it moves on in the focusing upon Christ because nobody else.

Now we know that from a human point of view when we follow the genealogy the human genealogy Christ came through the Davidic line and so this prayer of David's is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

But then we see him finishing so will I ever sing praises to your name what a difference to the start. And you know it will be the same for you and for me as well.

Even if tonight we're in the depth when we start out the Lord will take us on and he'll take us up so that that's how we will finish that we will so will I ever sing praises to your name.

[21:11] And you know that's how it's going to be for the Christian at the end of the day because us we're all moving on that journey to where we will forever sing praises to his name.

This world is it is a veil of tears. We have our good times and we have our sad times but we're moving on to this world of eternal praise and how wonderful that that is the end of our journey.

So we pray that tonight we will have this sense of God's goodness, God's ear open to us, of God's willingness to answer, of his faithfulness to us and his abundant love in all the different situations.

Let us pray. Lord our God we give thanks for your word to us. We give thanks for your unfailing love. We give thanks oh Lord that you are the God who hears our cry, that you attend to our need.

And yet Lord we have to confess that we're not worthy of the least of your mercies. And so often as we begin to pray and as we get a greater awareness of who you are we begin to feel less within ourselves and we feel that we are nothing but poor creatures.

[22 : 32] But Lord we pray that like the psalmist said when I am poor and needy yet the Lord will think upon me. and how wonderful that the Lord would think upon us realizing that his thoughts are beyond numbering his thoughts of good to his people.

So we pray to bless us tonight. Pray for those who are struggling, those who are going through difficult times, those maybe who have anxieties and worries that they haven't been able to share with anybody else.

Give them the faith to pour out their hearts to you that they might be able to share with you and do them good we pray. Lord we pray for those who are nursing broken hearts.

Pray Lord for those who are recovering from illness. We pray for those who are ill. We pray for all in hospital, those who are in need. Tonight we remember again your servants Reverend Duncan MacLeod and Moraghan.

We think of the funeral of their daughter Katie and Tuesday. Lord be near to them. There are so many mysteries in life, so many harrowing pains and sorrows.

[23 : 42] So many can follow and understand where they are. Many cannot. We pray then that you will help them, grant them a great sense of your peace.

Watch over us tonight then we pray. We give thanks for the prayers offered, for the words sung, for your word that has been read. And we pray that you will bless us, taking every single one of us home safely.

Lord we give thanks for this congregation. We give thanks for the witness and testimony. Lord we give thanks for everybody who does. So much is done here for you.

And we pray Lord that you will indeed as we heard open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing upon us. Not because of our deserving, but Lord that we might be an ever growing witness in this community to your power, to your grace, and to your love.

Take away then from us our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to conclude singing.