

My Rock

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[0:00] Psalm we read, Psalm 71, Psalm 71, looking at verse 3. 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. I looked at this psalm once before, the whole psalm, one time, but I just want to home in on this particular verse. And although it doesn't tell us at the beginning that David composed it, virtually everybody has agreed that it is a Davidic psalm, because the style and the content and everything about it speaks to us that this is David.

And in fact, it's quite unique in many ways, because while it's got its own distinctive way, and some of it is completely original and unique, other parts of it seem to be almost like a direct quote from other psalms.

Like at the beginning here, the first three verses is very similar to the first three verses in Psalm 31. And again, we're going to verse 4, very similar to in Psalm 140, verses 6.

[1:20] And there seems to be bits and pieces that you'd say, well, this is from this psalm and that's from that psalm. But when David is a writer, he will often use the same expressions, the same thoughts, maybe in a slightly different way, because his experiences were different.

And again, as he's writing, we've got to remember that so much would be etched in his memory. Some of these experiences were so deep, so profound, that they were just, they were right, right deep within him.

Now, as was highly mentioned in the prayer, it's a psalm that runs through the whole age, the whole span of our age. And it is a psalm that deals with and mentions about old age.

And it's a thing that when we're younger, we put so far from us. It just seems to be just, well, that's not even something that I'm going to consider or think about. But it's quite frightening how life accelerates and we find ourselves moving through the years.

And we might find ourselves, we're saying, well, do you know, I'm coming now into probably into the last, the last. If we're looking at life in sort of stages, if we're talking of the 70 or the 80 years, we say to ourselves, we're reaching.

[2:40] Well, a lot of us have reached or into what we would term the last quarter, if we're talking of 80 years. And it just, it doesn't seem like any time. And one of the things that David is talking about, he says in verse 9, for instance, do not cast me off in the time of old age.

Forsake me not when my strength is spent. And old age for many people is a difficult time because we get weaker. The strength that we had begins to fail.

The speed that we had begins to slacken. The sharpness that we had begins to go. There are just so many different things. We're maybe more prone to illnesses. And life changes.

And we often know, not talking at a human level, but we often know that, particularly in a disposable age, that so many people discard old things. And they say, oh, this for ages, this kind of worn out will get something new.

And a lot of people, they throw out things once they're worn out. And there's this, it's almost like David is saying, what if God, as he looks at me in old age, and I'm no longer able to serve him in the way that I used to, I don't have the energy, I don't have the vigor, I don't have the enthusiasm, I don't have the zeal, I don't have the passion.

[4:00] What if the Lord says, oh, well, you know, I used you, but I have no place for you now. Imagine if the Lord was going to deal with us like that when we reached old age.

And there's almost this, like David is saying, do not cast me off in the time of old age. Forsake me not when my strength is spent. But again, David is persuasive when we go through to other writings.

We know that David is absolutely persuaded that the Lord will never do that. And we know that God will never cast us off. We are never in the disposable category to God.

He will never get rid of us because he loves us too much. And again, we find that David so often when he's writing, he writes about the rocks and the caves and the fortresses and all these sort of things.

And David, there's probably nobody who could write with the authority that David could about the formation of rocks and the hiding places that caves and rocks were.

[5 : 09] Because he spent seven years, think about it, imagine seven years hiding from Saul. Seven years being chased around the mountains. So if any person knew what it was like to live in the caves, to live in the solitude, although he had many people with him at different times, he was still a man on the run.

And like so much of what David does, he spiritualizes it. And these were things that would be etched in his memory. You and I remember things when we go back that are most, if you're like me, most of what has happened is gone.

So many of the experiences when you were young, they're gone. But there are some of them, they remain. When I was young, I used to do a lot of hiking and I'm all up and down the west coast with a rucksack on the back and tenting.

I used to love that. Most of it I've forgotten. But I can still remember particular instances. I remember spending a night in the coolants by Loch Kurushk.

Near there, there's this loch in the heart of the coolants. And the silence was definitely, there was not one sound. And you talk of the sound of silence, and it's actually very hard to find.

[6 : 34] And I'm sure all of you have had different places where you've been out in the completely remote. But at night, you could almost hear the silence. Well, David didn't have the privilege of being in a tent.

He was living in the caves. And all these kind of, like that is a memory that stays with me. David's life would be full of these memories. And as God worked in David, and as he was led by the Spirit, these tremendous experiences were used spiritually.

And David turned these things into the whole spiritual language. And David, of course, as we see here, he was seeing the Lord in everything.

And he was looking for this protection from the Lord. And David was seeing that even the very rocks and the caves and these places had become to him a spiritual sanctuary.

It wasn't just a place to hide. It was actually a place to meet with the Lord. Because David had a passion for meeting with the Lord.

[7 : 40] David loved the Lord like few did. And there's nobody that praised God quite like David. In fact, when you read about it, I don't know how we would think of David.

But David praised God in the dance. We find him when he was bringing the ark back. Can you imagine if we started dancing full out? But that was David. He was so passionate and exuberant. And he would lose almost like control of himself with his delight in God. That's the kind of man he was. And that's part of what makes the psalm so exciting.

But he also plummeted the depths as well. And that comes out in his writings. But there's this desire to meet with God and be with God. That's what we sang in Psalm 27.

One thing I of the Lord desired and will seek to obtain that all days of my life I may within God's house remain. Now, David couldn't get in these years to God's house.

[8 : 41] But in many ways, God's house came to him. Because he had fellowship with God. He delighted with the Lord. Some Christians, you know, as we know that we can sometimes lose our way.

And sometimes our devotions are very brief. And sometimes we hardly have time at all for them. That's wrong. It was one of the things that you could see in David's life.

He was a man who took his devotion seriously. And he spent so much time with the Lord. And so these very caves, these places, they became to him precious.

In fact, it's quite extraordinary. Saul, who hunted David for all these years, Saul was living in his palace. And David was living in the caves.

You know, David wouldn't have swapped places with Saul. Not for anything. Saul had all the wealth. He had all the power. He would have the best bed. With the best linen.

[9 : 46] The best of everything. Saul, David was lying in the cave. But David had what Saul didn't have. David had the presence. And the protection of God.

And David wouldn't have changed that. For all the world. And he would have said, how would you fancy being in the palace? But you'll be on your own. God won't be with you.

Or would you rather live in the caves? All the time, David would have chosen the cave. And so, the caves became very, very special to him. And David says here, be to me a rock of refuge to which I may continually come.

Now, the actual phraseology here, if we were to look at the AV, it's termed, it's translated as a habitation.

Now, a habitation is kind of your dwelling place. So, this kind of a rock of refuge, David is looking at as his home. This is the place where he's spending most of his time.

[10 : 53] This is the place where he's always going, where he's continually going to. And it's become a very special place to him. Now, you and I know there's nowhere we like. There's the best place in the whole world is our home.

And when we're not well or where there's trouble or anything, you just want to get home. I want to get home. Even since we were wee kids, when things would go wrong, want to get home. And home is a special place.

And for David, this very rock, this very place had become to him a special place. He was continually going to it. And like, you know how it says in Psalm 91, He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High.

That's the greatest place in the whole wide world. Dwelling in the secret place of the Most High. Because there's nowhere safer that you could come to.

In the shadow of the Almighty. Beautiful, beautiful language. You know how you go to shelter and get the, sometimes if the sun is really beating down, not that we have too much of that, but you know, sometimes it can be really, occasionally get really hot.

[12 : 02] And sometimes you're saying, oh, if I could get somewhere to shelter. Well, it's like this, the sense of the shadow, the sense of the security that God gives. So David knew all that, and he experienced all that.

And for the Christian, the wonderful thing is that we are hiding, as it were, in Christ.

Christ is our rock. He is our habitation. He is our dwelling place. He is our fortress. And as Paul says, our lives are hid in Christ.

It's not a great expression. Our life is hid. Can't, nobody can get you when you're hidden. You know, a lot of the Christian work is actually a really, it's a hidden work.

Maybe digressing very slightly here, but the work of the Holy Spirit is a hidden work. Because the Holy Spirit works in people, and you and I don't know. You know, when God works within a person's life, you could be sitting in church next to somebody, and that person, you have no idea, God's Spirit is working.

[13 : 14] That person has been convicted. That person is being drawn to the Lord. Because it's a hidden work. Indeed, a lot of the work that goes on within our own heart is a hidden work.

Because God is working every day. He's conforming us to the image of Christ. We don't get up in the morning and say, well, you know, you look at yourself, you know, I'm more Christ-like today. I can see it.

We can't. But the Lord is working. It's a hidden work. But it's a hidden work in that we are hidden in Christ. You see, God cannot but accept his Son, Jesus Christ.

And if we are in Jesus Christ, God cannot but accept us. You see, we're bound in him. We're hidden in him. And that means that no enemy, no enemy, even in hell, can get to us to do any permanent damage at all.

And so David is feeling so safe and so secure there with the Lord. And David is so aware that he is under the hand of the covenant keeping God.

[14 : 25] Because notice the language. You have given the command to save me. Now, I love that. That means that irrespective of how David's outward situation may appear to him and how desperately dangerous it may become, he's still going to be safe because God has given the command.

God has given the command to save him. Isn't that wonderful? Saul had 3,000 men. We read about that. And Samuel. We read about how Saul was scouring the hillsides, the mountains, the caves,

and he had 3,000 soldiers searching for Saul.

Searching for David. He hadn't had a chance of getting him because God had given the command to save David. Saul could have taken 300,000 soldiers. David would still be safe because God had given the command.

And you know, he's given the command to save you as well. because you can be hounded and you can be chased by Satan and by his legions of angels.

And you can be harassed in the same way as David was harassed by Saul. But God has given his command to save you because he is a covenant keeping God.

[15 : 50] And that's part of the wonder of it. And that's just what I was just talking about, the Psalms. It's wonderful some of the things that the Psalms throw up and show us that God has given this command because you see, God has entered into a covenant with his Son.

It's not with us. He didn't enter into a covenant with us. If he did, it would be a very shaky covenant. Not from his side but from our side because we couldn't keep it.

but he has made a covenant with his Son. And his Son will keep what we can't keep. His Son will fulfill and do for us what we can't.

And God has given the command that everybody that is within that covenant, in other words, every single believer is to be safe for time and for eternity.

You have given the command to save me for you are my rock and my fortress. Underneath security. Round about me protection.

[16 : 58] And you know, that is why the Christian in this world has a certain sense of tranquility and peace about them that many others don't. Because you can see as you look at the news and you look around in the world, there's a growing agitation amongst people.

People are saying, what's going to happen? Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not saying we shouldn't be concerned about the planet, of course we should. But people are saying, what's going to happen? We're going to run out, there's going to be this, there's going to be that, there's an incredible level of anxiety about what's going to happen.

But you know, the Bible tells us actually that this world is going to end, the Lord is going to return, and the world is going to burn up with fervent heat. Bible tells us all that.

But it gives us this sense of in this troubled world where there's terrorism, where there's so much uncertainty and insecurity compared to when you were maybe growing up, when I was growing up, the world seemed, not to me, it seemed so safe, and maybe, maybe that's just when you're wee.

But it's just such a different world we're in today. But it hasn't changed for us because underneath there is a rock. He set my feet upon a rock.

[18 : 20] And round about us is all the security of the fortress. And there's nobody safer in the whole wide world than those who are joined to Christ.

Let us pray. O Lord, we give thanks for the wonderful security that you give to us and you promise us. And in this world of so many uncertainties and insecurities, we give thanks for the security that we have in Jesus.

Help us, Lord, not to look within ourselves to base our security on how we feel, but to look to your word and realize that it is in there that we see just what that security is.

We pray that you will bless us. Bless us as a gathering here. Bless all whom we love. Bless our families. We ask, Lord, that you will work within each one.

We pray for those in our families who may not know you, those who may struggle. We pray, Lord, that you will bless them. We ask, Lord, that you will be with those, as we were hearing, those who are sick.

[19 : 26] There's so much illness and there's been so much death. And we ask, Lord, in all the different circumstances and experiences that people are going through just now, in all the hurts, all the anxieties, all the sorrows, all the pains, that you will deal as a great physician, a great comforter.

Take us to our home safely, we pray. We pray a grain for the late Alistair Crichton's family. We ask, Lord, that you will bless them in the days that are ahead.

Watch over us and forgive us our sin in Jesus' name. Amen.