

# Trusting in the Midst of Calamity

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well now we have you to God's blessing if you would turn back with me to the portion of Scripture which we read, the second psalm which we read, Psalm 57, taking your text this evening from! The first verse of this psalm.

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge. In the shadow of your wings I will take refuge till the storms of destruction pass by.

Well, the context of this psalm and the psalm previous to it is that David is fleeing from Saul. King Saul is persecuting him. He is seeking to kill him. And we're told at the beginning in the title of Psalm 56 that he wrote this psalm when the Philistines seized him in Gath and he pretended to be mad. And the king of Gath said, well, what need have I of madmen? And so he sent him away. We find that in 1 Samuel 21. We're told of this psalm that he is fleeing from Saul and that he is hiding in a cave. Now, some of you will know that we're told of two instances, at least, where David was hiding in a cave. The first is in the very next chapter, 1 Samuel 22, where he's hiding in the cave of Adullam. And we're told that lots of his friends go out to him there, those who are on his side, and that they meet with him. And there he is hiding. And then in 1 Samuel 24, we find him hiding again, this time in a cave in En Gedi. Now, it was this time that Saul, who was pursuing him with his own army, that Saul actually came into the cave in which he was.

And that David managed to cut off a bit of his robe without him noticing. And then Saul went back out again, and he held up the robe. And perhaps there's a reference to that at the end of verse 6 here. But David, obviously, this was a difficult time, a dangerous time. And he refers to it in this first verse at the end of it as the storms of destruction, the storms of destruction. Now, that's a word that's very difficult to translate. It's actually one word in the original language.

[ 2 : 3 5 ] It's often translated until the calamities pass by. But the word can mean destruction, it can mean troubles, it can mean evils, or even wickednesses. It tends to speak of these trials, that we have in life, that are caused by the sin of other people, by the evil of other people, the trials that other people bring upon us. And that was certainly the case here with David, wasn't it? And he goes on to expand upon these calamities, these storms that he's going through, where he says in verse 4, my soul is in the midst of lions. And he's not speaking of literal lions, he's speaking about his enemies, who are pursuing him, and slandering him, and trying to kill him.

I lie down amid fiery beasts, the children of man whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords, speaking of the deceit and the slander that they're speaking. He goes on to say in verse 6, they said a net for my steps, my soul was bowed down, speaking of his inner frame of mind.

They dug a pit in my way, but they have fallen into it themselves. So he's speaking here of the blazing wrath and malice of those who hate him, those who are trying to bring him down, those who are trying to catch him out, who are trying to ruin his reputation, who are trying to entrap him, who are trying to destroy him. That's what he's speaking about. And so he is here in this cave, either in Adullam or in En Gedi, dark cave, far from home, far from the comforts of home. The future is uncertain, his name, his reputation is in tatters, and his life is in danger. And the friends that he has, they are few. He is here in the midst of life's calamities, or in the midst of life's storms.

And you know, David's context being written 3,000 years ago, hiding in a cave somewhere near Palestine or in it, his context can seem so far removed from our own context. And yet the general principle remains that we are not strangers in this life to storms and to calamities as well.

And you notice that he speaks in the plural, the storms of destruction, or the calamities, or the troubles, or the evils. It's not just one, but there are many difficulties in this life. Life is full of trials, full of hardships, full of troubles, sickness of body, sickness of mind, for yourself, for those around you. Fears within and foes without. We might not have enemies chasing us into caves and wanting

to kill us. But that's not to say that we don't have enemies. Enemies who are trying to swallow us up. Spiritual enemies. The great enemy of sin and of Satan. The enemy of your heart, which is deceitful. The enemy of addiction. The enemy of discouragement. The enemy of disappointment. The enemy of the mind. These things are real to many of you. And you know, friends, these troubles can start young as well. We tend to think of those in older age facing many of these troubles and these trials.

[6:12] But you know, you can be here tonight and it's good to see so many young out. But perhaps you're not a stranger to these troubles either. Fallouts in school. Being slandered in a friend group. Anxiety about work, about grades, about your future. Anxiety even in the home perhaps. Just because you're young doesn't mean that you don't have enemies in your mind and in your heart. It doesn't mean that there aren't calamities and storms that you go through and that surround you. And you know, a godlier man than most of us, a man named Jacob, he even himself said at one time in his experience, all these things are against me. Everything appears to be going wrong. Everything that could have gone wrong has gone wrong. I've lost my son. I know I've lost another one. And I'm in danger of losing a third. My wife, I am bereaved of her as well. We're in the midst of a famine. Very few things seem to be right. And all these things appear to be against me. And God appears to be against me. Have you ever felt like that? You know, it's not a good thing to feel like that. And there's many respects in which

Jacob was wrong to think like that. But the fact that Jacob did think like that, it reminds us that Christians, true Christians, godly Christians, can entertain these kind of thoughts and think that everything is against us. And indeed that God himself is against us. Because life can be hard, friends. Did we not sing in the beginning of our worship tonight, what time my heart is overwhelmed and in perplexity. Perplexing situations in the home, perplexing situations in the community, in the workplace, in the church. What time my heart is overwhelmed and in perplexity. You know, if we go back to Psalm 55, the psalmist says in verse 5 that he says, fear and trembling, they came upon me. Horror, it overwhelms me. And how does he respond? He says, I said to myself, oh that I had wings like a dove. And then what would I do? I would fly away. I would get away from my situation. Fly away from these trials. Then I would be at rest. Yes, I should wonder.

I should lodge in the wilderness. I would hurry to find a shelter from the raging wind and the tempest. Have you ever felt like that? Well, this was David, the sweet psalmist of Israel.

The man who was a man after God's own heart. And he felt at one time in his experience that he just wanted to escape. To escape it all. To flee. But how does David respond to the storms of destruction in this psalm? And that's what I really want us to consider. In a word, he responds by trusting in the Lord. And in a word, that's how we are to respond to the storms and to the calamities of life.

By trusting in the Lord. He says, for in you my soul takes refuge. And that's a very literal way of translating it. That word takes refuge is often translated as trust. In you my soul trusts. In you my soul takes refuge. That's how he responds. But you know, it's easy to say it, isn't it? Things are going badly. Life is hard. What do I do? Well, just trust in the Lord. Yes, but what does that mean?

[10:02] What does it look like for you to trust in the Lord today in your old age? What does it look like for you as a teenager today in your own circumstances to trust in the Lord? Well, you know, this psalm goes a good way towards explaining to us what trust looks like or how trust acts. And I want us to consider maybe five things just briefly. And the first is that trust takes itself to prayer.

When you trust in the Lord, you pray to the Lord. And here we find, well, the whole psalm is a prayer. But we find a cry out to the Lord, be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me. Now, the situation is desperate. And the desperation of a situation is reflected in the ardency of his prayer. He prays desperately as well. He doesn't just say, have mercy upon me. He says, have mercy upon me, O God, have mercy upon me. It's not enough to say it once. He's, as it were, boiling over and with a sense of his need, a sense of his desperation. Verse two, I will cry out to God most high. You know, there's times when it's not enough to be casual and to speak in a calm voice or in a whisper to God. But we need to bow before him and to cry, or as it often is, to groan before him and to say, Lord, I am at my wits end. And to whom else can I go? To whom else? My situation is impossible and I need help. And that's what he's asking for here. When he says, have mercy upon me, he's saying, help me. Help me, Lord, because I cannot help myself and I cannot see help coming from any other quarter. Help me. Have you ever found yourself in that situation where you can't see a way out of the storm that you are going through, of the trial that is in your experience? You can't see

a way out and all you can do is go to God and say, Lord, Lord, help me. But you know, the language is important. Although the sense of it is, Lord, help me. It's not what he says. He says, have mercy upon me. And that's interesting, isn't it? Because he's not saying, well, God, help me because you owe me a favor. And you know, I've been going to church all these years and saying my prayers and reading the Bible, and I'm a member in Kenneth Street. So, Lord, help me. That's not what he says. He doesn't say, I deserve your help. He prays for mercy. For mercy. Not that God would give him what he deserves. Because what does he deserve? He deserves to be given over to his enemies. The wages of sin is death. He deserves the calamity, the storm of destruction. But that's not what he prays for. He rather, he prays for the deliverance that he doesn't deserve. That's what he prays for. Have mercy upon me. I don't deserve anything, Lord. I don't deserve to be brought out of this situation that I'm in. I don't deserve life to be any better than it is. But Lord, take pity upon me. And have mercy upon me.

[13:20] We live in a generation where more and more we are trained to entitlement, to think that we are entitled to help, to think that we are entitled to support. And don't get me wrong, there are many respects in which we are entitled to that. But, you know, before God, we're not entitled to anything.

As sinners, we deserve nothing. Nothing at all. And as such, this must always be the basis of our prayers for help. Not that God would give us our due. Not that he would give us what we deserve. What do we deserve? What do you deserve from God? Nothing. What do I deserve? Nothing. But what we pray is that God would have mercy upon us. That he would take pity upon us. What we're doing is we're applying to the nature of God, to the character of God. We remind ourselves that he is a God who is full of compassion and gracious. That he is long-suffering and that he is plenteous in mercy and truth. We remind ourselves of that and we take ourselves to that God and we say to him, God, you are merciful. Have mercy upon me. God, you are full of pity. What a situation I find myself in.

Take pity upon me. Take pity upon me in this situation. And so, the soul that trusts in the Lord is a soul that prays to God. But secondly, the soul that trusts in God is also the soul that seeks protection from God. He says, for in you my soul takes refuge. Or takes shelter, you might translate it.

In the shadow of your wings I will take refuge. He's saying, have mercy upon me for in you I trust. In you my soul puts its trust. He's laying hold of God's promises. He's laying hold of God's word.

[15:25] And what God has said in his word. And the promises that he has made in his word to those who trust him. We were singing that, weren't we? Psalm 37. Set thou thy trust upon the Lord and be thou doing good.

And so, thou in the land shalt dwell and verily have food. And so, well, who's going to take you into that land? Who's going to feed you in that land? Well, God is because you trust in him. And he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. And so he says, in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge.

What's he referring to here? Well, it's actually very difficult to say. And there's two options. The first is that, you remember, the Ark of the Covenant was overshadowed by the wings of the cherubim. And God himself dwelt there in the presence of the Ark. And some say that that's what it's referring to. And that he's placing his trust in God's covenant. And in God's nature as a God who is holy. And in God's word. And in God's mercy.

But most commentators say that what he's actually referring to is the little chicken or the chick that takes shelter under the wings of the mother hen. And taking shelter under the wings of the mother hen, it's protected from the elements, the cold and the rain, the frost and the snow.

[16:52] And it's also protected from predators. Those who wouldn't dare attack a hen. But a wee chick, yeah. They would attack that. And so they go in and they hide under the wings of the mother hen.

And there they find refuge. There there is safety. There there is warmth. There there is protection. And it's quite a wonderful thing. It's a remarkable thing, isn't it? That this is the way in which the psalmist seems to refer to God as the mother hen.

Often he refers to him in what we would say are more manly terms. As a fortress. As a refuge and strength. As a high tower. But he is. As the mother hen as well. Providing protection for his own. Providing a sense of warmth and love and safety. And that's where David places himself in the midst of his calamities.

He doesn't seek refuge in the cave. Yes, he's gone to hide in a cave. He's not going to stand out in the open. He doesn't trust in the cave. Though he knows Saul can find him in the cave. Neither does he trust in the mighty men and mighty men they were.

Who are with him there in the cave. He knows that Saul's armies can destroy the mighty men as well. He trusts in God himself. He knows that God alone can deliver him from the hand of his enemies.

[18:16] That the only place of safety is in the hand of God. And so he entrusts himself into God's shelter. Into God's safekeeping.

And you know this. There he believes himself to be safe. He believes himself safe there. There are people hounding him. They're searching the hills and the caves for him.

And he believes himself to be safe. Because he's taken refuge in the shadow of God's wings. And that in the midst of a calamity. Spurgeon wrote that When we can't see the sunshine of God's face. In other words, when things aren't going so well. It is best for us, he says, to cower down beneath the shadow of God's wings. Even when we can't see his face.

When we can't see his pleasant smile. It is best for us to cower down. To trust in him. To hide ourselves in him. And there will be many a day like that.

[19:17] There are glorious days in the Christian life. Days full of happiness. And rejoicing. But there are also days when the sunshine of God's face is hidden.

And many of you have had these kind of days. And many of you, if you haven't, one day you will. And you know the only thing for it. The only thing for the calamities of this life.

The only thing for the storms of destruction. Is to entrust ourselves in the midst of them. To the care and to the keeping of God himself. To believe that because he has loved you with an everlasting love.

Because you are his. That he will not expose you to anything that is not good for you. That the Lord shall keep thy soul.

He shall preserve thee from all ill. Henceforth thy going out and in. God keep forever will. And so the psalmist says here in the previous psalm.

[20:18] Psalm 56 verse 3. When I am afraid. What do I do? I put my trust in you. In God whose word I praise. In God I trust.

I shall not be afraid. He says. What can flesh do to me? What can men do to me? What can Saul do to me? What can armies do to me?

When I am putting my trust in God. When I am hiding myself in him. What can anyone do to you friends? What can the storms? What can the trials do to you?

When you are hiding yourself. And taking refuge and protection in him. And see that in the heart of the storm. That you do take the eternal God as your refuge.

And that you trust and that you believe that underneath you. Although you appear to be falling through the air. Underneath you are the everlasting arms.

[21:16] Even when you can't see the face of God. Even when all around you is dark and difficult. Take refuge in God himself. Trust him. And seek your protection in him.

But what if you are not a Christian tonight? I wonder what you are trusting in. Or who you are trusting in. What is your hope?

What is your hope for life? You go through the storms as well, don't you? What is your hope? Who are you hoping in? What is your hope for death? What is your hope for eternity?

You know there was a day when Jesus was walking. On his way to Jerusalem. And he saw the city afar off. And he said, Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem. You who kill the prophets.

And you who have stoned those who have been sent to you. What does he say? How often I would have gathered your children together. Even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.

[22:19] I would have gathered you. Had you but come. In other words, he is willing to gather all sinners. All people who will come to him. And to protect them.

But you would not. I was willing. But you were not willing. I called you to come. But you would not come. And you might find yourself this evening. Although near to the Lord's people.

Quite far from the Lord himself. And certainly far from taking refuge under the shadow of his wings. But know that you are invited to do just that. Know that Christ calls you to trust in him.

To take refuge in him. And to be safe not just for time. But for eternity. You know boys and girls. I heard a story once. And it was another minister I heard tell the story.

And he heard the story from a farmer. And this farmer had an awful catastrophe. He had a calamity of his own one day. His barn went on fire. Full of all his materials.

[ 23 : 19 ] Full of all sorts of tools. And full of animals as well. And they managed to put the fire out. But there was a great amount of damage. And he went in.

And he found there a hen. And the hen was black. And the hen sadly had died. But then he saw a bit of movement under the wings of the hen. And the hen had managed to protect its chicks from the fire.

And the chicks survived. Even though the hen himself died. And you know that gives us a flawed picture of what Jesus Christ himself has done for sinners like us.

He has died himself. He has taken the flames of the wrath of God into his experience. That we might be kept from that. That we might be saved from that.

The difference is of course that the hen died. And that was it. Christ rose again. And that was it. And that was it. And that was it. And that was it. So that he might not just be the savior of his people.

[ 24 : 21 ] But their Lord and their God. Oh friend, a day of destruction. A day of judgment is coming your way and my way as well. See that you have taken refuge under the shadow of the wings of Christ.

But thirdly, when we trust in the Lord, we place our confidence in him. Not just for the moment, but for the future. We read in verse 2. To God who fulfills his purpose for me.

He will send from heaven and save me. He will put to shame whom who tramples on me. God will send out his steadfast love and faithfulness. Because of who God is, he believes that God will do certain things.

That God will fulfill his purposes. And not just will he fulfill them. He will fulfill them for me. He will perform all things for me.

That word perform or fulfill means he will bring them to completion. Or in some cases, he will bring them to an end. These hard things, they will be brought to an end.

[ 25 : 25 ] He will send forth mercy and truth as it were as messengers, as soldiers. To deliver his precious people. Perhaps they are a picture of the merciful and faithful high priest.

Who came to deliver his people from their sins. He will save me from my foes, he says. They will fall into the pit that they had made. He believes all that.

The man is in a cave. It's dark. The people are hounding him outside trying to find him. And this is what he says. This is what he believes.

He will save me. He will deliver me. He will send from heaven. He will perform all things for me. It's hard to see that. When you're hiding in a cave. When the world is against you.

When there is an order out for your arrest. When the future is bleak. You know. You can understand why David like Jacob would say all these things are against me.

[ 26 : 27 ] That God himself is against me. And yet that's not what he says. He says he is fulfilling his purposes for me. He performs all things for me. You know where there is trust in your heart, Christian.

It produces confidence that life isn't against you. And that God isn't against you. Although it and he may appear to be. But that God is for you.

That God is always for his people. Psalm 56 verse 9. We read that, don't we? Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call. This I know, he says.

I know this. There are many things that I don't know. And many things that I don't understand. And perhaps never will. But this I know. That God is for me. I know it.

But God is for me. And if he is for me. Then he is working all things together for my good. And friends, you need faith to believe that.

[ 27 : 26 ] Because your eyes won't show it to you. Your eyes won't show you that all things are working together for your good. When you can hardly see because of the storm. And yet for the Christian it is true.

And it is a very wonderful reality. That God is for you. And as Paul said, if God be for us. Who can be against us?

Who indeed can? What can flesh do to me? What can man do to me? What can trials do to me? What can disappointments and discouragements do to me? If God is for me.

If God be for us. Who can be against us? He that spared not his own son. As we thought in the morning. But delivered him up for us all. How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

If he has given his son. What will he not give? What an encouragement to you friend. Tonight in your cave. In your darkness. In your calamity. In your calamity. That although it may not appear to be so.

[ 28 : 26 ] That God is for you. But fourthly. And time is going. But fourthly. Trust leads to praise. When we trust God.

We will also praise him. And really the second half of this. Psalm is given to praise. Verse 5. Be exalted O God above the heavens. Let your glory be over all the earth. Verse 9.

I will give thanks to you O Lord among the peoples. I will sing praise to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is great to the heavens. Your faithfulness to the clouds.

Even in the storm. David lifts up his heart. And his voice. In worship. He says in verse 7. My heart is steadfast O God.

My heart is steadfast. I will sing and make melody. My heart is fixed. In other words it is fixed upon you. I am here. But my thoughts are upon you. Upon your steadfast love.

[ 29 : 23 ] Upon your faithfulness. Upon your covenant. Upon your promises. Upon your Messiah. That is what I am thinking of. What is he doing?

He is taking the oil of joy for mourning. Isn't he? And the garment of praise. For the spirit of heaviness. He must have a spirit of heaviness. But he is praising the Lord.

And so this psalm of desperation. As he fixes his heart upon the Lord. In the place in which he is. Turns into a psalm of praise. In this dark cave.

As he thinks upon the Lord. And meditates upon his character. And upon his promises. God is making his darkness to be light. It reminds us of Paul and Silas.

Doesn't it? In the New Testament. In the jail in Philippi at midnight. Praying and singing psalms to the Lord. And singing praise. Their voices echoing.

[ 30 : 17 ] Through the caves in which they are in themselves. The prisoners hearing them. The Philippian jailer coming trembling. Things were so bleak. And yet they lifted up their voices in praise.

And you know friend. In the calamity. In the trouble. That will inevitably come into your experience. Praise. Can be the last thing that you feel like doing. And church.

Can be the last place that you feel like going. And yet there is no better medicine. There is no better cure. As it were. There is no better help.

And support. Than worshipping the Lord in your trial. Counting your blessings. Meditating upon his character. And upon his promises. And praising his name.

For who he is. For what he has done. And for what he promises to do yet. You know you might be in the midst of your own storms. And calamities tonight. And you are here.

[ 31 : 18 ] And you are here. And you are in the best place of all to be. Maybe it wasn't easy to come out. But you are here. And where else could you be? To whom else can you go?

Whom have I in the heavens high? The psalmist said. But thee O Lord alone. And in the earth whom I desire. Besides thee there is none. When we trust in the Lord.

We praise the Lord. And finally. And quickly. When we trust in the Lord. We are enabled to be patient. Before the Lord. Let us come back to the very beginning of the psalm.

Be merciful to me O God. Be merciful to me. For in you my soul takes refuge. In the shadow of your wings. I will take refuge.

Till the storms of destruction pass by. Until they pass by. You remember how the psalter puts it. Until these sad calamities.

[ 32 : 14 ] Be wholly overpassed. And when we trust in the Lord. We understand that the trials of life. Will shortly pass.

That the troubles that afflict the just. Though a number. They many be. Yet at length out of them all. The Lord of set him free.

Or as the paraphrase puts it. A few short years of evil past. We reach the happy shore. And the Christian believes that. You who trust in the Lord.

You believe that. That the storms will pass. These sad calamities. Will wholly pass over. That our light affliction. Is but for a moment.

And that it is working for us. And in us. A far more exceeding. An eternal weight of glory. That the sufferings of this present time. And sufferings there are. And sufferings there will be.

[ 33 : 11 ] That they are working for us. That they are not worthy. To be compared. To the glory. That shall be revealed. In us. That the cave.

Of your calamities. Will soon be replaced. With the resplendent glory. Of the father's house. That light will follow darkness.

That sunshine will follow storm. And that although weeping may endure for an evening. That joy comes with the morning. In midst of the calamities of life friend.

See that you trust in the Lord. He is utterly trustworthy. He will not leave you. Nor forsake you. So see that you take your refuge in him.

Amen. Let us pray. A gracious and ever blessed God. We give thanks that. In the midst of the storms of life. That we can take ourselves.

[ 34 : 11 ] To such a God. And to such a savior. Help us we pray. Have mercy upon us we ask. As we seek to day by day. Take refuge under the shadow of your wings.

Go before us we ask then. And do us good. And forgive all our trespasses and sins. For Christ's sake. Amen. Let us conclude by singing to God's praise.

In Psalm 91. Page 351. He that.

The tune is Arlington. He that doth in the secret place. Of the most high reside. Under the shade of him that is the almighty shall abide. I of the Lord my God will say.

He is my refuge still. He is my fortress and my God. And in him trust I will. Assuredly he shall thee save. And give deliverance. From subtle fowler's snare.

[ 35 : 19 ] And from the noise and pestilence. His feathers shall thee hide. Thy trust under his wings shall be. His faithfulness shall be a shield and buckler unto thee.

Psalm 91 verses 1 to 4. To God's praise. He that doth in the secret place. Of the most high reside. God.

The ship of heaven that is Your mighty shall apply I, O the Lord, my God will say He is my refuge, He is my fortress

And my God, He is my fortress And my God, I am in Him trust I will, I surely be The ship of the ship And the air in the air From start to start The ship of heaven From such a fall And still and from The noise of pestilence

His path shall be high Thy light, thy glass His wind shall be His faithfulness shall be a shield His faithfulness shall be a shield And offer unto thee The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all. Amen.

[ 38 : 38 ] Amen. Thank you.