

Take Refuge in God

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- [0 : 00] Well, good evening and welcome to our service this Lord's Day evening.
- It's an honour and a privilege to be able to come before you and to share God's Word. And we'll seek his face this evening and seek his blessing upon this Word. So we'll begin our service this evening by singing to God's praise in Sing Psalms 18.
- So it's a Sing Psalms version of Psalm 18 and we're going to sing verses 1 to the end of verse 10. I love you, Lord, you are my strength. A fortress is the Lord to me, my rock and my deliverer.
- For refuge to my God I flee. And we'll sing down to the verses at the end of verse 10. The heavens parted, he came down beneath his feet. The dark clouds lay upon the cherubim he flew.
- On wings of wind he made his way. We'll sing these verses to God's praise. I love you, Lord, you are my strength. A fortress is the Lord to me, my rock and my deliverer.
- [1 : 40] For refuge to my God I flee.
- He is my stronghold and my shield.
- The Lord who saves me by his might. I'll call on him and give him praise.
- I'm saved, he puts my foes to flight.
- The cords of death entangled me. Destruction hit me like a wave.
- [2 : 52] Encircled by the snares of death. I faced the terror of the grave.
- In my distress I called on God. I cried out to the Lord for aid.
- He from his temple heard my voice. He listened to the prayer I made.
- The earth before God's anger quaked. The mountain's deep foundations shook.
- Consuming fire blazed from his mouth. And from his nostrils came forth smoke.
- [4 : 29] The heavens parted he came down. Beneath his feet the dark clouds lay.
- Upon the cherubim he flew. On wings of wind he made his way.
- Let's join our hearts together in prayer. Dear Heavenly Father Lord. We indeed come before you today in thanks of who you are Lord.
- We thank you that you are indeed a God of love. You are a just God. And you are a God that seeks to counsel with us Lord. You are a God that is near.
- You are a God that is never changing Lord. You are the same today and you are the same tomorrow Lord. We are so grateful for that Lord. Yet we are so undeserving of the wonderful mercies which you continue to bestow upon us Lord.
- [5 : 40] We indeed come before you Lord. And with a view to understanding more about who you are. As we seek to open up your word Lord. We ask that you would speak to us in that word.

That we would be able to meditate upon that word. And as we leave the service this evening. That we would be able to go and to look further into your word. To read around the chapters with which we read this evening Lord.

And that we would seek to find your face Lord. That we would seek to find refuge in you. As we read in these verses in this psalm Lord. We have a rock. And that we are able to take refuge in you Lord.

We know that that's the same from the beginning of time until now Lord. And that promise is still the same for us. And we are so thankful for it Lord. We pray indeed Lord for those that don't know that Lord.

And those that don't seek refuge in you Lord. We ask that you would reveal yourself to them. That you would make yourself known to them. That you would reveal your peace and your light to them.

[6 : 41] That they would be able to see the sin within themselves. That they would indeed repent of those sins. And that they would cry out for mercy to a God that has open arms. And a God that is willing to have them take refuge in him.

We pray for those that are unwell at the moment Lord. We pray for those possibly in hospital. Those who are struggling with health at the moment Lord. And ask that you would be with them.

We know that you are indeed the great physician. And that we would ask you to lay your healing hands upon them. If it is indeed your will Lord. We ask that you would be with those families that are grieving as well at this time Lord.

That you would comfort them. You would lay a comforting hand upon them. And that they would be filled with your presence Lord. That they would be fully aware that you are with them. And that they are there to be comforted by you Lord.

Again seeking refuge in a God that is near. Not a God that is distant. But a God that is near. We think of those in our homes in our own islands here Lord. We think of Harris House.

[7 : 40] And we think of Leverborough as well Lord. And ask that you would be with the residents. And that you would be with those working there Lord. We ask that you would equip them. And continue to strengthen them. And encourage them. Especially during difficult times at the moment Lord.

We pray that they would be able to wake up each day refreshed and renewed. Knowing that you are a God that is there for them Lord. And a God that they can turn to in every situation.

No matter where they are Lord. And we pray that indeed for all those that are working in care homes. Around this country. And indeed around the world Lord. We pray for those in the care homes.

Those in the hospitals. We think of those still on the front line Lord. And ask that you would be with them. And that you would continue to strengthen them and equip them. We ask Lord that you would be with those that are still in their homes.

Those that are isolated. Those that have been asked to remain in their homes Lord. We ask that you would be with them. And although many feel isolated. Many feel alone. We pray Lord that they would have a comfort knowing that you are indeed with them.

[8 : 40] We ask Lord that you would be with the young ones as well. As we've just entered into the school holidays Lord. We pray that you would be with them. That they would have a time of refreshment. And a time of renewal and relaxation.

As the remaining. As the final weeks of the school were much different to that which they were expecting Lord. So we pray that you would be with them. That you would be with the parents as well Lord. And be with all of the families now Lord.

As we have had lockdown restrictions lifted in recent days Lord. We ask that we would be wise in how we conduct ourselves Lord. And that we would be able to do it in a way that is pleasing to you Lord.

And that we would be able to stick to the rules Lord. Knowing that we are able to try and suppress this invisible enemy. Whilst knowing Lord. And we pray Lord that we do indeed know that there is indeed a greater invisible enemy before us Lord.

And that is indeed the evil one. So we pray that we would be mindful of that. And that we would be guarded of that. And that we would indeed take refuge in you. As the psalm asks us to do Lord. So go before us just now Lord.

[9 : 41] Be with us as we open up your word. And as we read into it Lord. We ask that you'll grant us a blessed time together. As we seek to find your face in the pages of your most holy word Lord. So go before us just now.

Forgive us for all of our sins. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. So we'll begin our reading this evening. In Psalm 18.

The psalm which we just sang. We'll read from Psalm 18. And we'll read the whole psalm. Just now. To God's praise Lord. I love you O Lord my strength.

The Lord is my rock and my fortress. And my deliverer. My God my rock in whom I take refuge. My shield and the horn of my salvation. My stronghold.

I call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised. And I am saved from my enemies. The cords of death encompassed me. The torrents of destruction assailed me.

[10 : 41] The cords of Sheol entangled me. The snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord. To my God I cried for help.

From his temple he heard my voice. And my cry to him reached his ears. Then the earth reeled and rocked. The foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked.

Because he was angry. Smoke went up from his nostrils. And devouring fire from his mouth. Glowing coals flamed forth from him. He bowed the heavens and came down.

Thick darkness was under his feet. He rode on a cherub and flew. He came swiftly on the wings of the wind. He made darkness his covering. His canopy around him.

Thick clouds dark with the water. Out of the brightness before him. Hailstones and coals of fire broke through his clouds. The Lord also thundered in the heavens.

[11 : 39] And the Most High uttered his voice. Hailstones and coals of fire. And he sent out his arrows and scattered them. He flashed forth lightnings and routed them.

Then the channels of the sea were seen. And the foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, O Lord. At the blast of the breath of your nostrils. He sent from him on high.

He took me. He drew me out of many waters. He rescued me from my strong enemy. And from those who hated me. For they were too mighty for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity.

But the Lord was my support. He brought me out into a broad place. He rescued me because he delighted in me. The Lord dealt with me according to my righteousness. According to the cleanness of my hands, he rewarded me.

For I have kept the ways of the Lord. And have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his rules were before me. And his statutes I did not put away from me. I was blameless before him.

[12 : 39] And I kept myself from my guilt. So the Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness. According to the cleanness of my hand in his sight. With the merciful, you show yourself merciful.

With the blameless man, you show yourself blameless. With the purified, you show yourself pure. And with the crooked, you make yourself seem torturous. For you save a humble people.

But the haughty eyes you bring down. For it is you who light my lamp. The Lord my God lightens my darkness. For by you I can run against a troop. And by my God I can leap over a wall.

This God, his way is perfect. The word of the Lord proves true. He is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. For who is God but the Lord? And who is a rock except our God?

The God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless. He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. He trains my hands of war so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.

[13 : 41] You have given me the shield of your salvation. And your right hand supported me. And your gentleness made me great. You gave me a wide place for my steps under me. And my feet did not slip.

I pursued my enemy and overtook them. And did not turn back till they were consumed. I thrust them through so that they were not able to rise. They fell under my feet. For you equipped me with strength for the battle.

You made those who rise against me sink under me. You made my enemies turn their backs to me. And those who hated me I destroyed. They cried for help but there was none to save.

They cried to the Lord but he did not answer them. I beat them fine as dust before the wind. I cast them out like the mire of the streets. You delivered me from strife with the people.

You made me the head of the nations. People whom I had not known served me. As soon as they heard of me they obeyed me. Foreigners came cringing to me.

[14 : 38] Foreigners lost heart and came trembling out of their fortresses. The Lord lives and blessed be my rock. And exalted be the God of my salvation. The God who gave me vengeance and subdued peoples under me.

Who rescued me from my enemies. Yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me. You delivered me from the man of violence. For this I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations and sing to your name.

Great salvation he brings to his king and shows steadfast love to his anointed. To David and his offspring forever. Amen and may the Lord bless the reading of his own holy word to us just now.

Well, let us turn back to God's word which we read. And we'll seek to look into this text just now. But before we do, we'll just say a very short word of prayer as we seek God's guidance in looking into this word.

Heavenly Father, Lord, we thank you indeed for this word that you have before us, Lord. We thank you that we can look to you as our refuge, Lord. And the words of the psalm are so encouraging to us, especially that first verse. I love you, O Lord, my strength, Lord.

[15 : 42] We ask that we would indeed see you as our strength. And that we would indeed see you as our strength as we seek to open up your word just now, Lord. We pray that you'll be with us, that you'll give me the words to say, Lord.

And that we'll be able to understand more of who you are as we seek to explore this text just now, Lord. So go before us now. Forgive us for all of our sins. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. But as I say, we're going to look at this.

We're not going to look at the whole chapter in Psalm 18 here. But we're really going to focus primarily on verse two. But we'll look at the first couple of verses. So I'll just read verses one and two just now.

I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer. My God, my rock in whom I take refuge. My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Now, over the last few months, we found ourselves in a pretty unique situation globally, never mind locally. And I think it's fair to say that the vast majority of us are pretty exhausted and tired of this pandemic.

[16 : 46] We're tired of social distancing. We're tired of staying at home and particularly tired of not being able to come into God's house to hear his word and to worship him in his house.

We've been confined to our homes for many weeks. And although that is beginning to lessen now, there are still restrictions all around us. You just have to go into the shops and you're able to see that.

Just look at those in particular that have been asked to stay at home. There were a group of people that were called people that were shielding and they've all received letters to shield at home and to not leave their homes.

And now, as we enter into July, it's gone over to gone over 100 days now that these individuals have been asked to remain at home and to shield from an invisible enemy.

We are mentally and physically depleted yet need to still be on guard, particularly when it comes to our spiritual health. Even in this last week, I've specifically been thinking about those people that have been shielding and I've been advised to seek refuge in their homes.

[17 : 49] In light of that invisible enemy that we spoke of, this enemy seeks to infect and to destroy lives. Not only that, but it seeks to spread around to those around you and seeks to spread out to as many people as it can in order to see that infection continue, continue to spread.

And I suppose the question I really want to ask is, does that sound familiar? Well, it should to us, it should to us, as we've prayed already, the work of the devil and the sin that entangles our lives is the true invisible enemy that we need to guard against.

In our text today, we're going to look at the psalm written by David, who found himself under attack and fleeing his enemies on a regular basis. He was met with many challenges and trials, yet God's loving hand was in this and he recognised that.

So we're really going to look at two things today. The first one is the context of this psalm. And the second thing that we're going to look at are the aspects of God that David describes to us in this psalm.

So looking to the psalm, the first thing I want us to consider indeed is that context. So with God's help, let's seek to understand the context and we'll look into the psalm just now.

[19 : 01] Even the way David starts this psalm, he doesn't focus on his own trials and where God was with him in those trials. No, he starts with praise of God and is encouraging us to do so as well.

Just look at verse one. I love you, O Lord, my strength. This psalm celebrates the way that God has shown his love to his people by preserving David through many dangers in his life.

Interestingly, and one which I discovered during my studies and preparations of this, the psalm is almost identical to 2 Samuel chapter 22.

You don't need to turn to it just now, but maybe later on this evening, it might be an idea to have a read through the psalm and the surrounding, to read through that chapter and the surrounding chapters as well, just to gain an understanding of where David was when he wrote this.

The words here in Psalm 18 are effectively a carbon copy of the words in 2 Samuel chapter 22. The two songs, however, differ in slightly ways and primarily in their context.

[20 : 05] 2 Samuel 22 is a personal expression of David's gratitude to his Lord. While Psalm 18 here has been slightly adapted for the whole people to sing, even for us to sing today as we've done so already this evening.

It's David's intention that this would be a song for all to sing and sees us look to God, praising him and recognising the love that he has for us. So I suppose we can ask the question, what was David showing his gratitude for?

Why was he so grateful for what God had done? So I hope you'll forgive me if we just take a couple of minutes or so, but I think it's very worthwhile to have a very quick whistle-stop tour of David's life.

And it will allow us to understand what he has gone through right up to the point of writing this psalm. So we go back right to the beginning. David as a young boy, he tends his father's flock.

We then find Samuel comes to hit the house of his father, Jesse, and anoints David as king. David then defeats Goliath, the Philistine. Saul fears David and doesn't like how popular David is becoming and wants to kill David, so pursues him.

[21 : 15] David then has to run for his life. David then, even though he's being pursued by Saul, spares Saul's life not only once, but twice. At the end of 1 Samuel, we then see the death of Saul.

David then becomes king at Hebron and then becomes king over all Israel and conquers Jerusalem. David's kingdom at this point is established. God then makes a covenant with David, promising descendants on his throne.

David sins with Bathsheba and has Uriah killed on the front line of battle. David's son Absalom then rebels against his father and David has to flee from his son's forces.

Then, after David's men pursue Absalom, he gets his head caught in a tree and is then suspended between heaven and earth and he subsequently dies himself. Then, Sheba then rebels against David and it's at this point that David's life that he decides to write this psalm in gratitude and praise of God.

So, you can see that David has had to deal with a lot in his life. However, as he looked back on those years of danger and difficulty, David did not see the hardness of the life that he had.

[22 : 29] Not the hardness of life that he had to endure or the difficulties that he faced. No, he saw the gentle hand of God. Even in the psalm which we've just read, if we can maybe just go to verse 36 of that psalm.

Verse 36 of Psalm 18 tells us, You gave a wide place for my steps under me and my feet did not slip. He sees God in his situation and sees how he deals with him in such a gentle and loving way.

Maybe you find yourself today looking back on your own life. Maybe going back years like David has done as well. But maybe even looking back over the last few months, you might be looking back on a life that's been difficult, full of dangers, full of trials and full of perils.

But be encouraged to obey and trust in God knowing that one day he will see you victorious. Psalm 18 here is a picture of God's faithfulness in his saving, strengthening and protecting of David when many were out to kill him.

I just love this picture in verse 2 that God is our refuge. He is our safe place. He is our shield in which we can find refuge and security. He was certainly David's shield, but he's also yours and also mine.

[23 : 49] If you place your trust in him, what a wonderful thought it is to know that we have a place to go to when we feel in danger. Now David didn't have lots of time to consider where to go.

It was quick. He was being pursued and he had to find refuge quickly knowing that the danger was all around him. But he knew he needed God to intervene in that situation. And it's something that we need to remember as well.

Now I don't know each of your hearts and equally you don't know my heart today. And I've no idea what struggles you find yourself in today. But whatever it is, wherever you find yourself, you can hide yourself in God and seek refuge in him.

He will protect you. Why you might ask? Because he is a loving, heavenly father. Even in these last few days at our prayer meeting on Wednesday, Reverend Thomas Davis from St. Columbus in Edinburgh, he was explaining to us that love that God has for us.

And the reason and the only reason that we are able to love God is because he first loved us. At his very core, at God's very core and in his divine workings, he has shown a love for us greater than we can even imagine.

[24 : 59] And that's something for us to continue to pray about and be grateful for as David clearly is here. And so the question I want to ask is when you feel burdened or fearful, where do you go?

Where do you turn in situations like that? Do you turn to the things of the world? Maybe you turn to your career and the status that you have within your career. Maybe you turn to the number of followers that you have on social media.

Many seek security in their jobs, whether that's for money, whether that's for promotion, but many people seek that security in the roles that they have.

And I was reflecting in my preparations and security in jobs is something in recent months that we've found so fragile. There are countless stories in our world, nation and even on our islands today where jobs may be at risk due to this pandemic.

And we pray for each person affected by this in our own community and indeed beyond. You may have carefully engineered a career from school to where you are today.

[26 : 02] But a small invisible virus can see that security crumble in a heartbeat. You may indeed seek security in your bank balance. It may even be in your hobbies.

You might even take refuge in the fact that you come to church on a regular basis. You're here every Sunday morning, every Sunday evening, and you're here on a Wednesday evening. But that in and of itself will not provide satisfactory refuge or security.

In this day and age, we see people trusting in their own strengths and their own wisdom. People think they can look after themselves and don't need help from anyone. No matter where you seek to find strength, and no matter what in your own life you take refuge in, each one of these will be met with a stronger enemy.

There's always a more powerful enemy. Always one more wise and more wily to break down your defenses. The great Puritan Thomas Watson says, Satan never sets a dish before men that they do not love.

I'll maybe say that one again. Satan never sets a dish before men that they do not love. Don't trust in the strength and wisdom of man, or indeed of the things of this world to protect you.

[27 : 23] You can never be sufficient in yourself. He created us like that so that we would find a sufficient refuge and security in Him and in Him alone.

We are all in search of security. Myself included, each and every one of us listening today is in search of security. None of us are immune from that.

We differ, however, by those that seek refuge in God and those who seek refuge in the things of this world, or indeed of themselves. When in danger or under attack, you run to a refuge that you have in your life.

And my hope and my prayer is that for each and every one of us listening this evening, that that is indeed God and it's in God alone. And I ask that of myself as well. This psalm here is clear that God is the all-sufficient protector of those who trust in Him.

His desire is to see us come into His presence and shelter from harm. What a wonderful thought that is to consider. It is His desire. He wishes for us to come into Him for refuge and to seek protection from harm.

[28 : 32] What a wonderful thought that is. What I'll do now is I'll look on to the aspects of God. That's our second point, really. We've looked at the context where David was. And we're now going to look at the aspects of God that are described here, particularly in verse 2.

So we'll consider particularly the words that are chosen here by David, very carefully chosen words. And I want to broadly look at some of them, but I'll focus a little bit on the shield in a wee bit more detail this evening.

Firstly, though, let's look at the use of the word rock. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge. Now, this is not a rock that can be held in one's hand.

It's not that type of rock, even as David once did in the defeat of Goliath. No, this is a rock in which David is able to find refuge. His whole self is able to find refuge.

The rock is big enough for him to hide in the midst of an onslaught from his enemies. He is able to go there, hide and find comfort and safety under this rock's protection.

[29 : 40] And it's the same for you and it's the same for me if indeed we go to God as our refuge. The second word we'll briefly look at is the word fortress. And looking at the translation of the word in my studies, it was described as a person or thing not susceptible to outside influence.

Is that true of the place that you find refuge this evening? Is it a place that is unbreakable and resolute? As we looked at before, there is always an enemy wiser and more powerful than the fortresses we put up around ourselves in this world.

So be mindful and be encouraged to seek refuge in God and not the fragile and fleeting things of this world that we may be doing this evening.

The third word which I want to look at just now is that of God as a shield. This is a word I want us to delve a little bit deeper into. It's far from an uncommon word.

Many of you will know that the shield is used quite a lot in God's word. You just have to glance even at verse 30 of our chapter here this evening. This God, his way is perfect.

[30 : 50] The word of the Lord proves true. He is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. And there's many other Psalms. We've got Psalm 28 verse 7, Psalm 119 verse 114.

The word shield is used a lot. Even in the Old Testament in Genesis 15 verse 1, we see the shield being used. And we all hopefully know of the words in Ephesians 6 where the armour of God is explained and the shield is the shield of faith.

So the shield is an image that is not uncommon with God's word. Yet despite its regularity in scripture, it is no less powerful an image when used. In fact, maybe if we just go to one of those verses, we'll go to Genesis chapter 15.

If you go to Genesis chapter 15 in your Bibles. Genesis chapter 15. And what we'll do is we'll just read verse 1. And this goes back to the time of God's covenant with Abram.

So Genesis chapter 15 in verse 1. After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision. Fear not, Abram. I am your shield.

[31 : 56] Your reward shall be very great. This evening in Harris, or wherever you're listening to this service, this promise to Abram applies to you.

You may be feeling vulnerable and open to attack, but know that the Lord is more powerful and will protect you from each attack. No matter where it comes from. If you place your trust in him.

Will you do that this evening? It's my prayer that you would this evening. Give your life over. For those of you that have not, give your life over to God and seek refuge in him. For the upcoming attacks that may be coming in your own life.

Or the ones that are maybe going through at the moment. So maybe just going back to the word shield. Remember what a shield is used for. It's not an offensive weapon, but it's a defensive one. You get behind it and you're shielded from incoming attacks.

What our loving God is telling us here is that if an attack comes from the left, I'll be there. If an attack comes from the right, I'll be there. Even if attack comes from behind you and you're unable to see it, I'll be there as your shield to protect you.

[33 : 05] Just like those that are shielding in their homes at the moment, the four walls around them provide a protection from the attacks of this virus. God himself will do the same for those seeking refuge in him.

The shield is normally utilised out in the open in the middle of a battle. You're anticipating an attack, but you are confident in the strength and that that shield will indeed defend you.

This verse clearly says that if we have allowed God into our lives and trust him, then we can hide ourselves in him. I suppose this reminds me of even just this past week of Emily sometimes if we're watching a movie and a scary moment comes along in the movie.

So quite often bury her head into the side of you. And that's in order that she'll seek refuge from something which scares her. And as a father, it's quite a powerful moment being able to feel that, being able to feel that you are indeed that refuge.

And it's the same for God. We are God's children and he is there for us to seek refuge in and he desires us to seek refuge in. Finally, David describes God in these verses as a stronghold.

[34 : 14] This is the other word I want to look at, a stronghold, which is much similar to that of the fortress. But it helps to emphasize the security and safety in which he finds God's refuge to be.

We should not look on this verse as a verse that only applies to David and his situation. No, it applies to ours and it applies to mine and it applies to yours. And it's the reason that we find it in the Psalms.

That's why David's put it in the Psalms and not just in 2 Samuel chapter 22. This is for us to read and for us to take that promise on. David's desire is that it would indeed be our song too, as it was his.

I want us to go back again just to verse 2 here and look at the description of God and notice the words preceding them. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer.

My God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. The word my has been clearly put here for a reason and Spurgeon himself beautifully puts it that what a blessing it is that we can look upon God under so many aspects and in every aspect feel him to be ours.

[35 : 30] My God, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my shield, my salvation, my stronghold. This verse ought to encourage you to reflect on David and his story, knowing that despite the troubles endured and trials faced, he saw God's love and protection in it.

Calvin also added in his own commentary regarding this, that the saint is armed from head to foot and even above his head, for he has given him the horn of salvation to lift on high.

God is everything to us, beloved. We want nothing outside of him. If we think we do want it, it is better to want than to have.

And that applies to the careers, to your hobbies, to your bank balances. If you want these things, if you want these things, if you want a promotion or if you want more money or if you want to be better at something that you're doing as a hobby, it's better to want than to have because our refuge should be in God and in God alone.

So I ask the question, is God your rock in whom you take refuge? And I ask myself the same question as we all go through struggles each and every day.

[36 : 45] Do we first of all go to God to seek refuge in that? If he's not your refuge, then what is that saying? What are you saying to God if he is not your refuge? Are you saying that God is not quite trustworthy enough?

Do you not trust him enough to be your refuge? Are you saying that he does not deserve your allegiance? It may be that. Or are you saying that he's not strong enough to protect you? Whether he's that shield or he is that rock, are you saying he's not strong enough to protect you from the incoming attacks?

I just want us to consider some of our brothers and sisters in the persecuted church and see whether or not they think God is trustworthy. Many of us, wherever you're listening today, many of us are in comfortable places where the persecuted church seems so distant to us.

We're able to come to church, we're able to preach and we're able to read God's word without any persecution. But there are many in this world that don't have that privilege. And over the last few weeks, June actually, I was gifted a subscription to evangelical times.

And often in that, I share stories from around the world and from Christians around the world, particularly the persecuted church. And there was a story of a group of Christians where their country's government had become far too intrusive, which is not uncommon amongst many countries.

[37 : 58] The government was telling them to do that which was against the word of God in which they trusted. This led them to organising underground meetings and services, knowing that in spite of the dangers and possible attacks, they were not hiding in a place that was absent from God.

But they were hiding in a place where he was very much present. The Lord was that hiding place. In spite of the external dangers, they still sought to seek God's face. And I pray that's what we would do as well.

So finally, I want to just bring some of the words that I think are the most important in this verse in verse 2. Yes, he is my rock. Yes, he is your shield. He's your fortress. But God here is also our deliverer.

Just look at the end of the first line in verse 2. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer. Not only did God protect David in the trials he faced, but he delivered him out of them.

God is good and he is righteous. He has given us a promise of deliverance that was manifested beautifully in Jesus Christ, his son and his works.

[39 : 01] We have stories like this of David and of Abraham, which we read in Genesis chapter 15. As we read earlier, day after day, year after year, he protected them.

Even many years later, even thousands of years later, where we are today, that can be the same for you and it can be the same for me. We are told God does not change and this promise will not go away for those who trust in him.

As we read in 1 Samuel 7 verse 12. Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. He is a gracious God and a merciful God.

And he has a desire to protect you as his children. He sees the attacks coming your way. He knows every scheme and every design of the devil. So why would you not want to seek refuge in him?

The same God who rescued David can rescue you. God saves through the death of his son, Jesus Christ. He bore the pain and the suffering that we each deserve.

[40 : 03] He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brings those of us that are Christians a peace and a hope was on him. He is the one that conquered death and conquered Satan.

To the Christian, continue to be on guard and continually remind yourself to seek refuge in God. And not in the things of this world.

As Thomas Watson says, we can be so tempted and the devil will never put something before you that he knows you will not want. So we need to be guarded and we need to be mindful of that as Christians. For those of us listening that are maybe not Christians this evening.

All our loving God asks of you is that you take this gift. Acknowledge the sin in your life. Repent of them and put your trust in God. For he will be your perfect rock.

Your perfect fortress. Your shield and above all he will be your perfect deliverer. As you will one day spend a promised eternity in glory with him. If not, if it's your choice not to take refuge in him.

[41 : 10] Then you will spend an eternity apart from God. Meaning this life and all its trials and all its perils will be the best that things get for you.

However, if you trust in him and make him your refuge. Then the trials, dangers and problems that we have in this life will be the worst that things get for you. As you will then see an eternity in God's presence glorifying him.

Now it's my prayer that we would all praise God as David does here in Psalm 18. And that this praise would be grounded by our deep, deep love for God.

Knowing that we can only do that because he first loved us. As we spoke earlier of those that had shielding letters from our government.

I pray one day that our nation's leaders would send letters. Maybe put adverts on telly as we've been seeing. Maybe having press conferences every day. And they're telling us about our need to shield against the real enemy.

[42 : 11] And that we would once again become a nation well acquainted with God and well acquainted with his word. So be on guard. Take refuge in God this evening. For I'm an enemy far greater than the one present in this current pandemic.

Amen. And may the Lord bless his very short thoughts to us just now. We say a word of prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, we indeed thank you for this psalm.

We thank you for David as he wrote this psalm to us. And he makes it available to us that we are able to make this our song. That we are able to turn to you and make you our refuge, Lord.

That we have a God that desires for us to seek refuge in him. We pray, Lord, that each person listening to this service this evening, Lord, would be able to take their refuge in you, Lord.

Knowing that you are perfect and that you are unchanging, Lord. And that the promises that were promised to Abram and the promises that were promised even before Abram are true to us today as well, Lord.

[43 : 10] So we ask that we would be able to seek refuge in you. And those of us that are not yet Christians, Lord, that we would be, they would be indeed reminded of how perfect and powerful you are, Lord.

That no enemy can defeat you. Your son who was sent to die for us, who was pierced for our transgressions, Lord. We know that he died for us. The blood that was shed was for each and every one of us.

Although we may be undeserving of it, it was a gift from a merciful and gracious God, Lord. So we pray that those that have not already done so would put their hand out and seek to grab onto that gift, Lord, with a view to coming to know you, Lord, and being able to place their trust in you and to have an eternity where they will continue to be in your presence, Lord, and not an eternity that is lost, Lord.

So be with us now, Lord. Allow us to go away and to read into that word further, to be able to study it more and to understand more of who you are and what you've done as we see your salvation plan from the beginning of the book, the beginning of the book to the end of the book.

In Jesus' name we pray all of these things. Amen. Now we're going to sing the well-known hymn, Rock of Ages, just now. Rock of Ages, and we particularly want us to focus on the words, Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.

[44 : 31] And if we go further down, what does God expect of you? Nothing. Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. So we'll sing these words of the hymn, Rock of Ages, to God's praise.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.

Let the water and the blood from thy riven side which flowed, be of sin the double cure.

Cleanse me from its guilt and power. Not the labour of my hands can fulfil thy law's demands.

Could my zeal nor respite know? Could my tears forever flow?

[45 : 48] All for sin could not atone. Thou must save, and thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.

Naked come to thee for dress, helpless look to thee for grace.

Foul I to the fountain fly, wash me, Savior, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath, when mine eyelids close in death, When I saw to worlds unknown, see thee on thy judgment throne.

[47 : 06] Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.

Well, I'll leave you this evening with the words from Dale Ralph Davis, as he concluded a sermon in 2016.

May the Lord hide you in his shelter in the day of trouble, conceal you under the cover of his tent. May he set you high upon a rock. Amen. May the Lord spells és espelf for thee for the newen day of doors.

May the poem be upon me for half times. Am precious, ez c compliment you to take me to invite you. The tip is a place ■■■■ and through the■ of laser ■■■■.

May the sampai gang■os hampathed, pearsi tr verbal...