

I bought my son a shovel. Its about this big, made of wood and steel. Very manly. And Thursday I walk out and Cross is heaping black dirt all over the patio and in the lawn chairs. I said, “Son, what are you doing?!” And he says, (I quote) “Dad it wasn’t me, it was the shovel.” Which totally disarmed me.

But it reminded me how fragile our hearts are. We are so apt to deflect, to self-justify, to trust the wrong things, to love the wrong thing, to feel the wrong things. Our greatest threat and biggest enemy, is our heart. My problems, your problems, aren’t people or money or government or co-workers or bosses, mainly. Its our heart.

Last week I watched Dr. Phil (dont judge me). I was working out, it was on. It was fantastic. This couple was on there —crying of course—because their kids were going crazy. They were into drugs, alcohol, stealing, burning things, skipping school, lying, fighting. And they were ages 12, 10, 9. Crazy! And Dr. Phil had this chart with all the reasons and causes and what led to all this mess. He was spot on, and very entertaining.

Then he gave his solutions, and lost me. He never addressed the heart. He modified their behavior, their schedule, eating habits, and boundaries. The heart, the root, the core was neglected. You don’t Band Aid broken legs. The bone, the inner fracture must heal.

Your heart, my heart, is the problem. Woody Allen said the heart wants what it wants. It chases whatever it wants. And what it most wants and most desires and hunts down, is a refuge. The heart wants a refuge: safety, security, hope, confidence. It longs for that. We long to be safe and secure and comforted.

A refuge is required. You can’t live without one. You must have a refuge. This Psalm is about that.

Look at verse 1 Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

Thats the main point here. God is his refuge, his shelter, his security. Now let’s ask the why, the what, and the how questions. Look at your worship guide. I’ve changed the points. Just cross those out and put why, what, how.

Why?

Why is God his refuge? Why trust this God and run to Him and hope in Him and bank on Him? Verse 2 is the answer I say to the LORD, You are my Lord. So again, like Psalm 8, we have two Lords here. One is all caps. One is not. The first LORD (all caps) is YHWH, God's Name, IAM. The second Lord is a title, King, sovereign, master. So: "I say to YHWH, You are my King." Verse 2 I have no good apart from you. And that's the reason God is his refuge.

Nothing compares to God. Nothing offers or is, what God offers and is. There is no joy, no good, no hope, no life, no pleasure, no meaning in life without Him. David knows this. And David has options. David has connections. He's a king. Just pick something. Power. Wealth. Military. Politics. Friends. Pleasure. Education. Religion. Its all there. Its there in abundance!

But this King says, "Nothing matters without God." Nothing makes sense or seems to fit without God. There is no good. Its all warped without Him. Sin is simply: good without God. You try to find life and joy and goodness and meaning, without Him.

And his point is not: God's the best option. His point is: God's the ONLY option. There is no other who is this good, this great, this glorious to Him. Is He to you? Is that why you're here? Listen, a church can offer you a lot. Friends, community, things for kids, trips, encouragement, good moral teachings, Bible knowledge, music, business networking. But anyone can like that. You can have all of that, and not love and desire and treasure this God.

Let's be honest, church can be a hobby, just a game you play. But can you say "I have no good apart from this God. He is my refuge, He is my strength, He is my treasure"? Our goal here isn't to make church attenders or moral kids. Our goal here is to make Christ exalting, Gospel focused, God worshippers.

Now verses 3 and 4 are hard to translate from Hebrew to English. Look at verse 3 As for the saints in the land (meaning Israel) they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight. Now verse 4 seems to be addressing them, the saints in the land

(Israel). Look at verse 4 The sorrows of those (saints) who run after (acquire) another god shall multiply . . .

So the warning here is against idolatry. But he is not warning Assyria or Babylon or Egypt, He's warning Israel. He is warning God's chosen, elected, covenant people, against idol worship.

So what is idolatry?

David says, its running after other gods.

Dale Folsom, one of our elders said, "Idolatry is making something more important than God." That's it. I think I said that. Dale stole it! But it's making something, someone, some idea, experience, acquisition, more important than God.

Its the sin beneath the sin, said Tim Keller. In fact, idols is what you sin to get or sin if you don't get. You take something, often good things and make them God things. You say, "If I keep this, acquire this, maintain this, I'll be happy and meaningful and whole."

Its your functional savior, your refuge.

And ll of us have idols. We all gravitate toward something and it hijacks us. Idols could be: approval, power, success, beauty, pleasure, possessions, hobby, money, a spouse, a child, reputation. There can be sexual, political, theological, racial, religious idols. Also things like fear, guilt, bitterness, envy, jealousy can become idols. Really anything can.

Now if you're not religious or not sure about God, you have idols. You have a god. Something defines your worth and value. You live for something.

But how do you find them? Verse 4 shows us 3 ways: our sorrows, our sacrifices, and our speech. That's how.

Sorrows

David says your sorrows multiply. If you have idols, you'll have sorrows. The more gods; the more sorrows. The word sorrows in verse 4 is a wound, pain.

What what wounds you? What hurts your ego? Your marriage? Your integrity?
What depresses you when it fails? What makes you the most angry? What brings
panic to your life? Whose disapproval deflates you? What depresses you?

Maybe its being depressed. Being depressed depresses you! You are better, you
think, than that!

Your sorrows show your idols. They grab your throat and choke the life and joy
and hope out of you.

Hope deferred, makes the heart sick (Pr. 13:12).

We have two sons, one on the way. And I feel pressure to make them athletes. The
words trainer, sports psychologists, creatine, shouldn't come to mind. He's 4. And
like that's a real man. But have you watched sports? Some of the most childish,
selfish, idiotic men, are pro-athletes. That's not manhood. Anyway. I feel pressure
though.

So if Cross throws or swings awkwardly, I get embarrassed. Im like, Get in the
yard! That is idolatry. My own fear, fear of looking bad, losing face, chokes me.

So men, raise men, not athletes. Don't equate those two. Stop forcing their way.

Sacrifices

Idols make you sacrifice something. Something dies for your idols to live. Look at
verse 4 their drink offerings of blood I will not pore out. . . What does that mean?
Sacrifice. Blood was spilled, something died, to appease the god's. Idols require
death. You have to kill, compromise, neglect something.

For example:

If you idol is approval of people, you'll sacrifice the truth, your time, other people,
so they'll like you.

If you idol is power, you'll sacrifice people, policies, cut corners, just to get power.

If its comfort, you'll sacrifice quality work, rewarding risks, big opportunities, prayer.

If its pleasure, you sacrifice integrity, truth, holiness, a clear conscience, your marriage, just for a surge of pleasure.

Idols need death, to live. They need appeasing.

Speech

or take their names on my lips. . .He means here praise, adoration, verbal assent to another god. What you speak about the most, praise the most, lead out with is likely an idol. So what do you speak about the most? What conversation lights you up? What debates do you love? What topic fires you up? What stays in your mind and comes out in words? You may find your idols. Good things and bad things. Right things and wrong things. But something has your heart.

John Calvin said Our heart is a perpetual forge of idols. Now how do you combat idols? Knowing them is half the battle. And we must guard the idol of idol hunting. But the best is this, you compare them to God.

Verse 5 The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. 6 The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

This is land boundary language. When God gave Israel the land, he marked off certain areas or portions certain tribes. David is saying, God is inheritance and portion. Not the land, but the Lord. David has God, this beautiful, majestic, holy God. God's gift to us is God. His greatest gift and blessing and grace to us, is Himself. He has no higher gift.

And no idol compares Him. See, idols are horrible gods. They are enslaving task masters. They won't forgive you and can't save you. So if success is your idol, and you fail, blow it, it won't forgive you. You'll beat yourself down! If approval is your idol and you lose face, rumors go out, it will make you crazy! Idols cannot save and will not forgive.

But this God holds your lot, He promises good and beauty and hope and life and grace.

Psalm 121:1 I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Why take refuge? He's the only option. No other god can is or offers what He is and offers. This is our problem. You came here going "Whats wrong with me?" Some did. This is it. Beneath the surface, deep down, an idol is choking and squeezing the life out of you. You are looking to a lifestyle, someone's approval, successful kids, to save you.

What?

In other words, when God is refuge, what does it look like? What does trust, refuge in God in real time, look like? Verses 7, 8, 9 tell us. You bless, you set, and you rejoice. You'll see these.

Look at verse 7 I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. So that's one thing. When you are secure in God, you bless Him. Bless means to do good, you want to please the one who delights in you, who knows you, who is always directing good toward you.

See, to bless God, you must know that He accepts you. You must know that He likes you. Do you know that, that God likes you? He delights in you. But NOT because you're likable or delightful. But because He's good. David said in

Psalm 18:19 He brought me out to a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me.

And blessing Him says, "I am so safe in Him, He's so good, I just want to please Him."

Then verse 8 I have set the LORD always before me;. What does this mean? It means that David is always gazing at God. When he looks out, He sees God. He's always living before God. In all of life, every pocket, every corner, nook, you see Him. You are under his gaze at all times. So all that comes your way, you view it, with God.

David says, because (8) he is at my right hand (near), I shall not be shaken. When you see God, when He's refuge and strength, nothing shakes you. Rather, verse 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure.

The way to measure your trust in God is by your joy. Joy is the measure, not how long you pray, not how much you know, how much you read, how much you do for God. But is there joy in your life? And I don't mean temperament. Some of you are naturally joyful and laid back. Others, you're angry or asleep, naturally. We all

If you are secure in God, you know He accepts you, delights in you, you can endure anything!

So work on this. Bless the Lord, sing to Him. Come here and sing your hearts out. Bless Him. Set Him before you. Carve out time to sync up with Him. Fill your mind with His Word.

Find what stirs you up for God. It could be reading, painting, working outside, singing, wood working, golf (if you don't sin). What makes you most appreciate and desire and hope in God, do it. That's why I love Lewis and Tolkien and Rowling. My affections for the Gospel, the True Myth, are stirred.

How?

How do you take refuge in God? How do you get in? Look at 10 and 11.

For you will not abandon, my soul to Sheol (place of dead), or let your holy one see corruption (death). 11 You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

This language is too strong for David, during his lifetime. This language is future language. David died. David's body saw corruption. Path of life, fullness of joy, and pleasures forevermore, is eternal language. So what does David see here? The Greater David. See, God swore to David, his line wouldn't end. A king from his line would always reign.

Acts 2, Peter quotes Psalm 16:8-11.

Then Peter says in Acts 2:29 “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Being therefore a prophet, he foresaw and spoke about (Ps 16) the resurrection of the Christ, that he (Jesus) was not abandoned to Hades (Sheol), nor did his flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. 33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God. . .

David foresaw Jesus. In some mysterious, dimly lit way, He saw the greater David, the Ultimate King. He didn't see corruption. He died, he was buried, but God raised Him up and all the power of death and hell and satan and sin were undone.

Back to our question: how do you make God your refuge? Do what David did: Look to the Greater David. The True King. The One who died and Rose for you. Look at Jesus.

The one who says: Come to me, all who are weary and carry burdens, I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28).

The one who says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand (John 10:28-29).

He is your refuge. Look to Him.

This week in The Atlantic, there was an article called Listening To Young Atheists. It was about why young adults leave the church and become atheists. It was very good. And one reason was: no one preached Christ to them. They just heard good morales, good values, social issues. But not Christ! He wasn't the main thing.

Is He to you? Philippians 3 Paul said, I count everything as loss (all gains are loss to Paul) because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

So what has your heart? What is your refuge? Is it Christ? If not, when the storm comes, it will not sustain you.