



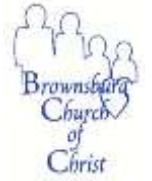
Kept by God

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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AM Assembly



Introduction:

In The Two Towers, the second installment of The Lord of the Rings movies, Rohan learns that the traitorous wizard Saruman is planning to overrun their kingdom with a massive army of Orcs. They have a choice. They can hang out in their wooden forts or flee for refuge to their stone-walled keep called Helm's Deep. I ask you, which of the following would you prefer if you were about to be attacked?



You would likely flee for refuge to the safest place possible where you have the greatest chance of survival and preservation. Here's the deal. We are under this kind of attack. **Ephesians 6:11-12** explains that we are in an eternal life and death fight with a vicious enemy. The enemy is too many for us, too much for us, too powerful for us. We can try to stake our claim by ourselves on the plains of battle, or we can seek refuge somewhere we can find preservation.

Psalm 16 is one of my favorite psalms. Each statement is packed with inspirational thought about what it means to be God Filled. We're going to spend the next two months looking at each section and the joy it gives the God Filled. The very first statement is a prayer: "Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge" (ESV). If we want to survive the enemy's attack, we must flee for refuge to God. He must be our keep.

Discussion:

I. God will preserve.

- A. There is only one real power for preservation: God. As **Psalm 11:1, 4** demonstrates, God is in heaven. That is, He is above all that happens here. He is not limited by what happens here. He is in control. He will preserve us. **Romans 8:31-39** teaches this as well.
- B. Notice **Psalm 52:5-7** in which the psalmist shows the contrast of those who do not choose God as a refuge. Understand that whatever else you try to take refuge in will fail you. It may seem to provide some escape for a short time, but in the end all other powers fail.
- C. This is not to say being kept by God is always easy. There are plenty of times when it feels like God's preservation is going to fail. Just consider **Psalm 18:1-5**. David talks about God as his great refuge, but notice how bad things were in **vss. 4-5**. However, God never fails. We may even die, but we will be resurrected by the grace and power of God. God promises this in **I Thessalonians 4:13-18**. This is what the book of **Revelation** is all about. Sometimes it looks like God is going to lose, but in the end, God always wins. He will preserve us.

II. But we must seek His refuge.

- A. **Psalm 16:2** places a condition on this preservation. Consider for a moment of an ancient farmer tending his fields away from the city when word comes of an attacking army marching their way. Then imagine as he sends a message to the city saying, "I know you'll preserve me as I stay out here on my open fields, unarmed, and unattended." That would be silly, wouldn't it? If this farmer wants to be preserved by his king, he needs to take refuge in the king's city. The God Filled understand this. We are not preserved as we dismiss God, His will, and His Word. We are preserved by God when we seek refuge in Him.
- B. This reminds me of the reciprocating relationship we have with God described in **I Peter 1:3-5**. He is reserving our inheritance and guarding us, but He does this by our faith. If we do not seek refuge in Him, He will not protect us. If we do not put our faith in Him, He will not preserve us.

III. What does that look like?

- A. *Call upon the Lord in your distress (Psalm 18:1-3, 6)*: What do you do when you are distressed and stressed? Who do you call? Sadly, this is the heart of our struggle. When stress and distress hits, we want to escape. We

are looking for a way out. Where do you turn for your way out? Too many turn to food, drink, sex, pornography, gambling, spending, enmeshed relationships, rage, television, video games, Facebook, etc. Whether we pursue any of these specifics, too often we simply turn inward. We want to prove that we can handle it. We want to prove that we are good enough. We are afraid to admit something is going on in our lives. It's like we think if we tell God what we are struggling with it makes it somehow more real or might make Him love us less. So, instead of calling on the Lord, we try to white knuckle our way through so we can let him know how great we handled the problem, struggle, temptation, stress, distress when it's over. Consider your past. How well has that ever actually worked for you? Those who take refuge in the Lord call on Him in their distress. Those who take refuge in the Lord hit their knees. When you find yourself stressed and distressed and turning to other powers to provide escape, say this prayer, "God, help me find in you, whatever it is I'm trying to find in _____." Call upon the Lord in your distress.

- B. *Hang on to God's promises even when it looks like they aren't coming true (Psalm 31:3-5, 9-13)*. As we said earlier, life is not always easy. Taking refuge assumes trauma and turmoil. The farmer or rancher out away from the city doesn't have to seek refuge when things are peaceful, but when things are dangerous and deadly. Seeking refuge assumes we are in frightening situations. Sadly, many of us think we are taking refuge in God because we go to church when things are good. Then we get sick, lose a job, lose a loved one, go through trouble, trauma, or tragedy and we wonder what on earth happened to God and decide to leave Him. It's only taking refuge with God when we are facing the hardships by hanging on to God and His promises. Jesus quoted **Psalm 31:5** while on the cross (**Luke 23:46**). Recognize that in that moment, things did not look good. Jesus was going to die. But even in that, He was going to trust God and take refuge in Him. To everyone else, it seems like a fool's dream. But to Jesus it was a reality, and on the third day it paid off as He was resurrected and later ascended to the throne of His Father. Let's allow that to be our model. We may feel like we are being crucified. We may even want to cry out, "My God, my God why have You forsaken me?" But God is with us and His promises always come true. Hang on to His promises.
- C. *Rely on God's people (Psalm 16:3)*: We'll talk more about **Psalm 16:3** in a later lesson, but for now, we simply need to note that relying on God doesn't mean locking yourself in a prayer closet or burying your head in the Biblical text. Some Christians have the idea that they are supposed to face life by the mantra, "Just me and God." The problem is usually when we are saying, "It's just me and God," what we are living is "Just me." The reason the church is called the "body of Christ" (cf. **Ephesians 1:22-23**) is because we are the hands and feet of God in this world. God works through His people. Taking refuge in God means taking refuge in His people. Let me ask you. Is there anyone among God's people that you are taking refuge in? Is there anyone you are taking the mask off with, opening your heart to, bringing the inside out with? Is there anyone among God's people who knows what you are dealing with? Those who take refuge in God take refuge in His saints.
- D. *Obey God without exception (Psalm 57:1)*: According to the header of **Psalm 57**, this psalm is connected to David's time when he fled from Saul in the cave. The psalm begins by saying, "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" (ESV). This could refer to his initial flight in the cave of Adullam (cf. **I Samuel 22:1-5**). Or it could refer to the time he actually met Saul in his cave of flight in **I Samuel 24:1-7**. You may already know the story. David was hiding in the cave with some of his men when Saul comes in to relieve himself. In the darkness of the cave, David's men encourage him to slay Saul. They even claim it is a sign from God that David is supposed to kill Saul. But David knows God's law against taking up a hand against God's anointed. David is in an extreme circumstance. It is easy to "read" the situation as if it is a sign from God. But David knows God's will. David knows that relying on God means doing things His way. It means trusting God so much that when Satan is putting a seemingly easier way before you, you will go God's way anyway even if it is harder. It is in the difficult situations that our refuge in God is tested. You see, taking refuge in God means believing His way works and believing that even in the face of Satan's assaults against God's way. Too often, when we get in extreme situations, we believe we have found exceptions to obeying God that He will understand. It is the extreme situations when we most need to take refuge in God. And we do that by obeying Him without exception.

Conclusion:

God will preserve you if you take refuge in Him. Where is your refuge? Where is your keep? Have you turned to the Lord? Please don't face eternity away from Him. If you haven't done so, run to the safety of Him as your fortress, your rock, your shield of salvation. Do so right now, and do not abandon the safety of His stronghold.