

We Bear Our Crosses Under His Cross Alone

As we read this Psalm, we see that David twice uses the word “selah.” Since I’ve spoken about this word in sermons before and quite a lot in Bible studies and the online and email devotions, I will just point out that this word seems to indicate an interlude and therefore a pause to consider the words just spoken. When you read or hear “selah,” you might say in your head, “Let’s think about that.”

62 *For the director of music. For Jeduthun. A psalm of David.*

My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. ²He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken. ³How long will you assault a man? Would all of you throw him down-- this leaning wall, this tottering fence? ⁴They fully intend to topple him from his lofty place; they take delight in lies. With their mouths they bless, but in their hearts they curse. *Selah*

⁵Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. ⁶He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. ⁷My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. ⁸Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. *Selah*

Who is David talking to? He says, “Find rest, O my soul, in God alone.” He’s talking to his own soul. What is the human soul? The soul is the spirit of each human being. It is created when we are conceived, and like the sinful flesh, it is a sinful human spirit, inherited from sinful parents. The soul is as much in need of a Savior as the body, for together they make up the whole person. This is why as we study the Fifth Commandment, the command not to murder, we also teach our children that the body and soul of a baby, even still in the womb of the mother, is in need of a Savior, and should not be discarded, but treated with love and compassion and concern for that child’s eternal soul.

The soul is as much a part of you as your voice or your heart. It has your personality, your memories, your desires—even your sinful desires—and your faith. When we die, the soul separates from the body because the soul cannot die and cannot be destroyed. The soul of a believer is taken by angels to heaven, according to Luke 16, and the soul of an unbeliever is damned to hell, to be joined by the body after the resurrection.

David’s soul was restless. Troubles and enemies surrounded him, and temptations crowded in close. David was better than any other man in history at avoiding certain temptations, and he was just as weak as every other man on earth when it came to certain others.

But consider for a moment David's special grasp, a deep, spiritual, philosophical and theological grasp of the Fourth Commandment. No matter how cruel and evil King Saul was, David never raised a hand against his king. The King wanted to kill David, and David didn't decide the storm the palace or take the army—which was utterly loyal to David their Captain and General—to attack Saul. Instead, David dodged every spear the King threw at him. If Saul came at him with an army, David hid. If Saul entered a cave where David was hiding, David held his breath and waited. He scolded and rebuked his soldiers when they suggested that he should do something else. "How can I raise my hand," he said, "against the Lord's anointed?" King Saul's hatred and attacks were a cross David had to bear. David bore that cross because he loved his Savior Jesus who was going to bear another cross in his place.

But Saul wasn't the only enemy hammering away at David. He compares himself to a leaning wall that's about to fall over. When he says, "this tottering fence," he means the low stone walls that separated a plowed field from a road or a lane, the kind of wall we see playing a part in the account Balaam's donkey in Numbers chapter 22. David feels like a worn out and leaning wall that's being hammered on by someone who wants to knock it down. He's getting beat up from every side. This, too, is a cross David carried, because his Savior Jesus was going to carry another cross in his place.

"But I will not be shaken," he says. Early in the Psalm, David's Hebrew really says, "I will not be shaken very much." The NIV takes that as an understatement that should mean "I will never be shaken at all." But Satan does move us a little bit. He pushes and shoves us into sin. But under the cross of Christ, knowing full well that our Savior has forgiven us, David can also say later: "I will never be shaken." That's because faith in Jesus doesn't depend on how well I'm standing, or how many times I slip into temptation, but in how completely forgiven you and I are in Jesus.

The Holy Spirit preaches the law to us in the Psalm through David's insightful repetition: "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone." We don't usually repeat things for no reason. David knows himself and knows human weakness. A man with a genius like David's might be tempted to trust in his own brilliance over everything else. A man with a military record like David's might be tempted to start relying on his own skill and prowess. A man as handsome and as charismatic as David might think he could get by on his looks and his charm and a flash of his irresistible smile. A man blessed as thoroughly as God blessed David might think that he was special in some way, or that he deserved God's blessings.

David's knew that none of that was true. None of that was a path he should take. Those things are the shopping mall stores of temptation, they are the web sites of idolatry. As David holds out the gospel in this Psalm in verse after verse, we do well to pay attention to who he's talking to: Himself. Who needs to hear the gospel that I preach? Me. Who needs to hear about the

forgiveness of sins and the protection God offers against temptation and every evil? We all do, every day.

When one of us starts to run ahead and say, "We talk about sins and forgiveness too much," that has to be a huge red light, a gigantic flashing stop sign with horns blaring and barricades dropping down in front of him or her. You see, that usually comes from someone who wants to carry on with advice for everyday living, and yes, we need advice about everyday living, but our motive for living a life to God's glory is a life of thanks-- thanks for what? Thanks for the cross of Jesus Christ, for the penalty he paid for the debt of our sins. Every day we drown the old Adam and praise God for the blood of Christ that ran red down the front, back and sides of the cross. If I want to take baby steps in service to Jesus, let them begin every day at the cross and nowhere else.

I might carry one cross of special burdens, and you might carry another, our two crosses as different as one person is from another, as different as a day in winter is from a night in summer. And our private, personal crosses include griefs as well as temptations, memories of sins and the quicksand for the next one that's coming, coming soon.

Don't try to handle it on your own. God has given you a church filled with other sinners who are forgiven and who are also trying to figure out how to bear their own burdens-- and sometimes we can offer a little help to each other. But more than that, God has given you a Savior in Jesus, a Savior who bore the guilt of our straying sin, who snatched you out of the quicksand of your sinfulness, whose helping hand is only one that truly rescues us from the guilt of our lives and of our mistakes. Our many mistakes.

And it is from him alone, Christ alone, that our help comes from. Think of the Lord's Supper we are about to receive. It isn't a potluck. It isn't a smorgasbord. We don't tear off the ark of Christ and the nose of Mary and the thumb of Peter and pop them into our mouth for the forgiveness of sins. It is Christ alone. And it isn't some of Christ that you and I consume, as if his cells and molecules have been mixed into the batter of the bread for two thousand years. It is all of Christ, and everything he did for us, that we consume in the one wafer of bread, you take all, and the person after you takes all, and the person after, and then I do, too.

And Christ doesn't only help us with a single moment of his time, with a glance or a twitch of his finger. The whole Christ with everything he did in obedience to the Father and every twinge of pain, each throbbing surge of agony and every drop of blood, that atoned for all of your sin and mine.

Your soul finds rest in God alone, in Christ alone-- all of him, for all of you. You and I bear our daily crosses under his cross, and under his cross alone. And he will not let you down.