

INTRODUCTION:

1. [Image] The Grapes of Wrath is a story of the Oklahoma family the Joads seeking refuge during the dust bowl of the 1930's. The land is ruined and they are kicked off of their land. They read a pamphlet that promises work and refuge in California. Desperate they sell all they have for pennies and begin the slow journey all piled up in a converted truck. The book follows this poor families journey
2. [Need] We might not be like the Joad family, but all of us have been desperate refugees in need of help. Maybe you have been financially desperate and did not know how you would make ends meet. Maybe you have been emotionally desperate and lonely. You have watched as relationships, or even marriages crumbled around you. Maybe you have been desperate as you watched the ones you love die. You might not have ever described yourself as a refugee, but all us have been refugees. We have all been people desperate for help with nowhere else to turn.
3. [Subject] Our passage this morning is about how God sees the refugee. And He does not just see them, but He blesses them.
4. [Text] Psalms 34
5. [Preview] This morning we will look at how God has blessed refugees in the past, present, and future.

We begin by looking backward at the past. Our first point if you are taking notes is **God blessed refugees in the past. God blessed refugees in the past.**

Specifically, these first ten verses focus on God blessing King David.

We do not always get context for the Psalms and honestly don't need that much context to understand them.

But this Psalm actually tells us what was happening in David's life contextually when he wrote it.

The little note probably says **"Of David when he changed his behavior before Abimelech so that he drove him out and he went away."**

If you cannot remember the story or haven't heard it before then you can read about it further in 1 Samuel 21.

David had been anointed by the prophet Samuel and told by God that he would be king. Problem was there was another king named Saul. And Saul did not like David. Everyone seemed to know that David would be king soon, but Saul wouldn't submit to God's will.

Instead Saul was trying to kill David and so David fled the country and left. David eventually found himself in Gath, but was afraid. He wasn't sure if God could protect him so he pretended to be insane.

He drooled all over himself and starting drawing on doors. And his act was convincing because the foreign king believed David was mad and left him alone.

So it is after this moment. A moment of having been delivered from the hands of Saul and his enemies that David writes this Psalm.

And he begins in verse 1 **"I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth."**

He starts to praise God! That is probably not what I would do. David is in poverty. He has nothing and no one. He has left his land, left his position, and left his wealth. He just had to pretend to be a crazy person to be left alone.

I would be complaining and lamenting, but David is praising God. Verse 2 **"My soul makes it boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together."**

David is trying to lead a worship service. He looks around and says "let's praise God guys isn't he awesome?"

How and why could David do this?

He tells us in verse 4 **"I sought the LORD and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears."**

He is praising God because God answered his prayers.

He sought refuge in God's arms during his lowest moments and received deliverance and salvation.

At this moment David doesn't feel depressed, but blessed!

Verse 5 **"Those who look to Him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed."** David does not have any shame right now.

His face is not downcast, but radiant and filled with a big smile.

Verse 6 **"this poor man cried and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles."** David acknowledges that he is nothing but a poor refugee. But he is a refugee that God heard and saved.

Verse 7 **"the angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them."**

This is not a statement about us having individual guardian angels.

In fact most of the time that the angel of the LORD shows up in the OT it appears to be Jesus appearing before His incarnation and virgin birth.

So this is about the Divine protection that Jesus brings for those who seek refuge in God.

When you run to God for help, Jesus encamps around you.

Jesus figuratively sets up His tent to keep you safe.

While you sleep Jesus is keeping watch to protect and deliver you.

And David wants you and me to experience this kind of deliverance.

Verse 8 **"Oh taste and see that the LORD is Good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him."**

David says that the deliverance and blessing God has given to him is available to all. **"taste and see!"**

This is why we study how God has acted in the past because we can trust Him to do so again.

David invites us **"taste and see"** for ourselves.

Anyone who takes refuge in God will be given the same blessing. It is not just for anointed kings, but for any who want it.

Verse 9 **"Oh fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!"**

He mentions the fear and respect of the Lord. He must have told Solomon about it because it is mentioned repeatedly in the book of Proverbs.

The lesson is that we are to fear and respect God more than we fear any circumstance.

If we fear and run to God, then we will never need to be afraid.

Our fear should make us flee and run to God, just like my son runs and flees to my arms whenever he sees a dog.

Why? Because he is scared of dogs and knows that I will keep him safe.

Seek refuge in God saints, he will keep you safe.

Verse 10 **"The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing."**

Does that remind you of another past saint who was protected?

I don't think this is just poetry and imagery.

I think that David is alluding to Daniel's deliverance even in the pit of lions.

We studied this story when we walked through the book of Daniel. If you missed that Sunday you can go back and listen to it.

Daniel refused to bow to unjust laws that outlawed prayer to anyone but the king.

But Daniel was obedient and prayed to God alone.

Daniel was thrown in a lion's den, but God delivered him and saved him.

The lions were starving and hungry, but God shut their mouths and they left Daniel alone.

David is inviting us to look back at God's resume.

To search the Scriptures and history and examine all the times that God has been faithful.

All of the times that He has saved those in need.

Our faith is not the story of people who were always rich and successful, but the story of refugees finding salvation.

Noah on the Ark,

Abraham saved from childlessness.

Joseph saved from prison and slavery

Naomi and Ruth saved from poverty,

Israel saved from slavery in Egypt.

Nehemiah saved from the oppressors.

Shadrach, Messach, and Abednego saved from the fire.

Paul saved from poisonous snakes, and

Stephen saved despite being stoned to death.

This crowd of witnesses stands before declaring that God has been faithful to refugees in the past.

If you read Hebrews 11 you can hear their voices and others telling you that God is faithful.

[transition] Our God blesses and saves refugees in the past, but what about today? **God is still blessing refugees today. God is still blessing refugees today.**

God has not hung up His boots.
He is not retired.
God still blesses those in need today.

Look at verse 15 **"The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry."**

Right now God is looking at the righteous.
He is watching over them.
He will notice when someone attacks them.
He will see when the demons begin to crowd around and hatch a plan.

"His ears towards their cry."

He is listening out for you.
He does not have headphones on so that He cannot hear your prayer.
When you cry your voice reaches the temple in heaven to God's ears.

He does more than just watch and listen.
After all what comfort would it be if He saw and never acted?
Or heard, but never spoke.

Verse 16 **"the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth."**

This phrase **"the face of the LORD"** refers to His disposition.
God opposes the wicked.
He stands in front of them to resist them.
And it is no empty threat.
He will cut off the memory of the wicked from the earth.

One day you will forget the name of Satan.
You will have to be reminded what a demon is.
It will be so long since you thought of the wicked you will have to look up what it means in the dictionary.
This is a great comfort.

Verse 17 **"When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles."**

In case you did not understand. God hears.

He hears and He acts.

When we cry out for help God comes to deliver.

He actually moves in history still today at this moment to help.

Verse 18 **"The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."**

Again this is current.

This is not about what God used to do.

This is not about what God will do.

This is what God does.

He is close to the brokenhearted.

If you are crushed,

If you are weak and depressed,

If you feel like you don't know how to go on.

If you feel like too much is depending on you.

"The LORD is near" to YOU.

But we notice that it says God only takes these actions to the righteous.

But who really is righteous?

We can go back to verses 11-14 to get our answer.

Because these verses describe the righteous person.

Verse 11 **"Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD"**

God is inviting us to come and listen.

He is going to teach us what it means to be righteous.

Part of righteousness is fearing the LORD.

It means that we listen when He speaks.

We do not treat His words as if they are cute advice.
We treat them as if He really the King of the Cosmos.
We have tremendous respect for Him as God.

Verse 12 **"What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see Good?"**

This verse is a little strange because it's rhetorical.

The answer is everyone.

Everyone wants to live and live a long time.

We all want lives filled with good.

No one wants to live a life of pain and suffering.

But we cannot attain this kind of life on our own.

The Psalmist is saying that the blessings of God can only come from God.

You cannot get it on your own.

Verse 13 gives us the answer and a further picture of righteousness

Verse 13 **"Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit."**

The righteous are those who control their tongues like James warns us.

The righteous do not lie.

The righteous do not spread falsehoods.

The righteous do not gossip and spread rumors about others for fun.

Why all this focus on the tongue?

Because as Jesus says in Luke 6:45 **"Out of the heart, the mouth speaks."**

Our tongues reveal what is inside our hearts.

He continues in verse 14

Verse 14 **"turn away from evil and go good; seek peace and pursue it."**

But the righteous do not just talk good.

They actually live out lives of righteousness.

They repent and turn away from evil.

Their face is against it.

And they do out and do good.
They actions are good and righteous.
They talk the talk and walk the walk.

They **"seek peace and pursue it"**

They do not seek to win.
They are not trying to fight against others.
They pursue peaceful righteousness even when it's unpopular.
Even when others abandon peace and gentleness
They pursue peace.

This is a picture of the righteous.
But I don't want you to get the wrong impression.
There is not a standard that says "you must be this holy to get rescued by God."
Although in another sense there is.
But the problem is you will never reach it.
You can never be righteous enough on your own.

However, If you put your faith in Jesus and believe the gospel.
If you believe that Christ is the Son of God who died and was resurrected
for your sins,
then Christ's righteousness is credited to your account.
Because of Christ's blood and forgiveness you can be righteous.

And for the righteous God is active.
He is here right now in this place.
He is active in your life.
He hears your cry.
You are not alone.

[transition]Our God blessed refugees in the past and He still does so today AND Point 3 is that **God will bless all who take refuge in Jesus. God will bless all who take refuge in Jesus.**

If are desperate for help.
If you have no where else to turn,
then there is a place of refuge.
It is in the person of Jesus.

And anyone and everyone who turns to Jesus will be blessed.

But notice that this blessing does not mean no suffering.
Blessing does not always mean success.
Blessing does not mean long happy marriages.
Blessing does not mean a great house with lots of money in the bank.
Sometimes blessing means afflictions and suffering.

The Bible never promises that Christians will not suffer.
Most of the time Jesus told His disciples to prepare for suffering.

Verse 19 **"Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
The righteous will not just have some afflictions, but many!
but the LORD delivers him out of them all."**

We will have suffering in this life,
but God will deliver us.
Our afflictions are not the end of the story.

All we need to do is look to Jesus.
In fact, this Psalm intentionally prophesies and foreshadows Jesus.
He Himself suffered many afflictions.
Physical and spiritual afflictions.

He suffered being rejected by the crowds He fed and worked miracles for
He suffered being ignored even by some of the people He healed.

He suffered from His disciples' continual lack of faith.
He suffered being betrayed by Judas someone who had been with him
daily

He suffered physically.
He the indignity of being slapped by an official in His shame of a trial.
He suffered being stripped naked in front of a crowd.
He was flogged till He could no longer stand.
Nails and metal ripped His back to shreds.
He was blindfolded and beaten while men joked.
A crown of thorns was hammered on his head.
He then was forced to carry His own cross uphill as far as He could go.
They nailed Him to a piece of wood.
Pierced through His wrists so He wouldn't slide down.
Pierced through His feet to keep Him in place.
And He hung there for hours struggling to breathe.
Forced to pull Himself up for each breath.
Every second was a battle.

And when He was thirsty and dehydrated they gave Him vinegar.
Something that would have dripped over Him

I think it is fair to say that Jesus knows what affliction is.
He has felt it on His very skin.
His body has the scars to prove it.

Look at verse 20

Verse 20 **"He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken."**

This was prophetically fulfilled in Jesus.
On the cross you eventually die from asphyxiation.
You struggle to breathe and have to pull yourself up over and over.
When it got too long the Romans would break your legs so that you died
quicker.

But when they went to break Jesus' legs He was already dead.

I don't think this verse was just given by God to be fulfilled prophetically.
I think it has a point.

The point is that even in the midst of suffering God was in control.
Even though He suffered more than we can imagine, God protected Him.
He did not suffer one iota more than God planned.
Not a single drop of blood was spilled that Jesus did not want to.
He did not spend a moment alive more than He wanted.

Jesus' bones were protected.

How does this apply to us?

I don't think this means that God will keep us from breaking our literal
physical bones.

But I do think this means that God will keep us safe.

Think about your spiritual bones.

Through faith even though every bone in your body may break, God will
sustain you.

Take refuge in Jesus and God will sustain you in the suffering.

You can persevere and survive.

But what is amazing about taking refuge in God is that He does not only
protect us from suffering.

He does not simply help us withstand attack and then leave.

Look at verse 21 to see what else God will do.

Verse 21 **"Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the
righteous will be condemned."**

God will slay the wicked.

Those who attack Christ's bride will be punished.

The oppressor and the wicked will die.

They will face justice.

People talk down about God's judgement.
They speak about it as if it is mean or archaic.
But to those who have suffered long for it.
Those who have fled oppressive governments,
Or had their loved ones murdered,
Or had their livelihood stolen from them,
Or any other kind of injustice long for someone to make it right.

And one day God will.
God will bring justice.

But those who take refuge in Christ will be saved from God's wrath.
Verse 22 **"the LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned."**

None.

Not a single person who takes refuge in God will be punished.
They will escape the fires of hell and be redeemed.

And we will not be condemned.
You will be able to stand before the judgement seat of God without fear.
Not because of your own goodness,
but because of the righteousness of Jesus.

I haven't mentioned it before, but this Psalm is actually an acrostic.
You can't tell in English because we often lose the poetry when we translate from Hebrew to English.
But what that means is that every line of the psalm begins with a different letter of the alphabet.
So the first line begins with A,
the second line begins with B,
until it get to Z at the end.

So lyrically and poetically David is trying to communicate something.

Even in the way that he has structured this Psalm he wants us to see that God has been faithful to refugees from A-Z and everything in between.

We can be confident that He will continue to bless those who take refuge in Jesus in the future.

This deliverance only comes from one source.
It comes from the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.
We can only be saved because of Him.

Our sin and wickedness from our first breath leaves us broken.
Our choices throughout life leave us all condemned and short of God's standard of holiness.
Fairness and justice is our condemnation and suffering.

But Jesus the son of God took our punishment on His own shoulders.
He died in our place.
And then He came back to life to prove that His sacrifice was accepted.
To prove that our sins have been atoned for.

And now everyone who seeks refuge in the bosom of Christ will be saved.
We can experience salvation and eternal life right now.

And one day Christ will return.
He will ride across the sky and save everyone who has taken refuge in Him.

And listen there is no other place you can go for refuge.
Our world would have you believe that Christianity is simply an option.
As if faith in Jesus is just one storm shelter you could choose from,
But there are plenty of other valid options that would keep you just as safe

Beloved this is not so.
Picture the tornado sirens blaring over town.

And you look out in the distance and can see the massive tornado heading towards your home.

You need to seek refuge somewhere that can hold you safe.

Don't sit on the ground and begin to meditate.

Don't try and find nirvana and pretend that suffering is all imagined and the tornado is not real.

Don't pick up a self help book to make yourself good enough that the tornado will miss you.

Don't believe that your exercise in silver sneakers class, or other means will make you strong enough to just hold onto a belt and keep you safe.

There is only one shelter that will hold you.

The storm shelter of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Run into that shelter and find your salvation and refuge.

Because everyone who runs to Jesus will be saved.

CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] God has blessed refuges in the past, present, and will do so again in the future.
2. [Closing image] While attending seminary in Dallas I spent some time serving refugees from all over the world. And during that time I learned a lot about what it means to be a politically considered a refugee.

As you can imagine it is a government process and it is cumbersome. Most of the refugees I met spent years before they were allowed in the country. Most spent around 7 and some as much as 20.

In order to be considered a refugee you cannot just flee your country, You have to actually prove to the government in order to be saved and given shelter.

Which can be difficult.

Imagine that you fled your country because men showed up with guns and murdered your family. And they started killing anyone who voted like you, or was in the wrong tribe, or wrong kind of muslim, or was a Christian.

So you have fled and find yourself at a government office who now wants documentation and proof that your family was killed because they were Christians.

Which is hard to prove because you didn't stop to document things while fleeing for your life.

Ever gone to the DMV and forgot the wrong form?

That's frustrating to have to come back right?

Now imagine not being able to go home and get what you need.

Then you have interviews and plenty of other processes.

And assuming you go through all of that now you have to wait in a long line.

Because countries have a limit.

The U.S. took 11,000 last year and takes a max of 62k.

Why do I mention all of this?

Because God is not like that.

There is no long list of requirements to be saved by God.

You do not have to prove to God why you need His help.

You do not have to argue with Jesus to get Him to save you.

There is no limit to God's mercy.

God will never say "let me see if I have room."

There is no limit to how many refugees that God will save.

All that you must do is take refuge in God.

It does not even need be a complicated prayer.

You could simply whisper "help me, Jesus."

Any prayer of refuge said in faith will be heard.

And our God blesses those who take refuge in Him.

Then, now, Forever.