

Surrendered: Fortress

Day 1 Refuge

Check out this devotional for some insights into God being our fortress and refuge:

<https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2023/10/06/knowning-god-as-our-refuge/>

Verses: Jeremiah 17:5-7, John 10:9, Psalm 27:5

Prayer Topics: Safety, Protection, Trust

Day 2

How can God be our fortress and refuge? Check out this devotion to learn more:

<https://harvest.org/resources/devotion/our-refuge-and-strength/>

We usually look at this story as God being with the Israelites in the furnace, but there is another perspective: Perhaps the Israelites were with God? Maybe God was to be found in the furnace, God was to be found in the place where a person finds themselves when refusing to bow down. God is our fortress, and we should not leave the protection of His presence. Because of that, we must go where God goes. We must be found in the place His presence dwells, so that He can be our refuge.

Verses: Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 13:5, James 4:8

Prayer Topics: God's presence, Submission, Joy

Day 3

A Place of Worship

Mount Zion is a place of worship because it is the place where the temple was located, it was sacred space. What makes something sacred space? This quote enumerates 4 aspects:

American phenomenologist Belden C. Lane offers four axioms to characterize sacred space. (Lane 19) First, sacred place is not chosen, it chooses.

Worshippers do not select the location where they will encounter the holy; the holy reveals itself on its own terms. Not every mountain and hill top in the ancient Near East was sacred. Second, sacred place is an ordinary place, ritually made extraordinary. The encounter with the holy leads the worshipper to ritual practice and regular return. Cultic habituation and reenactment solidify the sacred space and honor the encounter with the holy. Third, sacred place can be walked upon without being entered. Not all who come to the sacred place experience the noumena or encounter the holy. What is deemed sacred to some may be profane to others, or even unholy. Fourth, the impulse of a sacred place is both centripetal and centrifugal, local and universal. The holy draws the worshipper into the sacred place, calling them out from ordinary space. One is regularly called to return to sacred place to be reoriented, and just as regularly sent out from sacred place “with an awareness that God is never confined to a single locale.” (Lane 19) The sacred place becomes the worshipper’s axis mundi, the center of the world, which orders all reality.

Sacred place orients the worshipper and imbues the rest of the world with meaning and direction. – From:

<https://takenoteofthis.org/2022/12/10/where-god-dwells-understanding-temple-part-1/>

There are some important points made here. God chooses what will be sacred space, but in a sense, we can choose not to enter it because it is a spiritual designation. Second, the sacred space is made sacred or acknowledged as sacred through ritual. This means that our participation in the sacredness of the space is dependent on our attitudes and actions. How we think about a thing and therefore how we act in relation to it makes the difference. This is why temples were at the heart of cities. The city is just a collection of people without the temple giving the city its identity. This means that if your family life, your job, or your community seem dull, uninspiring, or without meaning and purpose to you, you may be treading on sacred space without realizing it. The difference between the life you have and the life you want may be as simple as accepting the invitation to the sacred.

Verses: Psalm 26:8, Exodus 15:17, Hebrews 9:24

Prayer Topics: Sanctuary, Peace, Praise

Day 4

The Center

Mount Zion is the center of creation, where God's presence dwells and where He is worshiped. This worship of God becomes the center of our community and it is our refuge when we hold on to it with every ounce of our strength. It is easy to fool ourselves when it comes to this, because it is easy to think that God is at the center when in reality he is just in the periphery. How do we know when God is at the center of our worship? When you happily pay the cost of sacrifice. As the Israelites went up to the temple to worship, they sang the Psalms of ascent from Psalm 120-134, and they were filled with joy. Check out this article that focuses us on making the heart of worship what it should be:

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/back-to-the-heart-of-worship>

Verses: John 4:24, John 15: 1-11, 1 Peter 1:8

Prayer Topics: Focus, Purpose, Devotion

Day 5

Thanks to Sylvester Warsaw, Jr for our devotional today

In Ephesians 6:12, Paul, writes these words of truth, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Unregenerative man fallen man mainly looks at the material physical world of man and not the spiritual makeup of the world. As a matter of fact Paul writes about this in Romans 1:18-23. Everything begins with the spiritual and not the physical and when you start with looking under the sun to try to understand reality a false sense of self becomes prominent which leads to ideological constructs that promote self and not God. Ideological constructs void of God create strongholds to demonstrate a false sense of preeminence. Strongholds have the appearance of protection of freedom, even peace while being oppressive because of domination with military presence. The word citadel means fortress, stronghold. In Charleston, South Carolina there's a university called The Citadel and The Citadel is a public university that trains soldiers just like Texas A & M and The Army College of War. The unfortunate reality of this world order meaning unregenerative man who thinks military power and presence is a sign of peace instead of war. The Preacher, Solomon, wrote in Ecclesiastes 4:1 these words, “Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: and look! The tears of the oppressed, but they have no comforter- on the side of their oppressors there is power, but they have no comforter.” In Zechariah 4:6 these words are recorded, “So he answered and said to me: This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.” When God fought Goliath through David he didn't use what Saul gave him he went out in

the name of the God of Israel 1 Samuel 17:37-58. When Jesus sent out His twelve disciples in Matthew 10, He gave them instructions on what to do and He even told them to fear no man but fear Him who has the power and authority to kill both body and soul. Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:3-9 tells us that the weapons of our warfare as Christ disciples aren't carnal but mighty in God for the pulling down of strongholds, casting down arguments and things that try to exalt itself against the knowledge of God. There's no entity or principality stronger and greater than God! Nahum 1:7 tells us this, "The LORD is good. A stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him." When we are His disciple we have this assurance that we're safe in His arms and no man can snatch us out of His hand, John 10:28. Also, in 1 John 4:4 the last sentence tells us, "because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." To live victoriously while we're on the journey home our hand must be in Christ Jesus's hand while we cleave to Him because our very life depends on Him alone.