

SEPTEMBER 17, 2021

Psalm 31: 1-5

¹ In you, O LORD, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.

² Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily.
Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.

³ You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
for your name's sake lead me and guide me,
⁴ take me out of the net that is hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.

⁵ Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

This psalm beautifully expresses two strong currents of prayer that may seem contradictory. 1) There is: "In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame...", "You are... my rock and my fortress... lead me and guide me...", "Into your hands I commit my spirit..." These words speak of God grounding us, caring for us and protecting us from falling and from harm. 2) On the other hand, there is: "In your righteousness deliver me...", "Rescue me speedily...", "save me...", "take me out of the net that is hidden for me..." "you have redeemed me, O Lord..." These words speak of God rescuing, saving and redeeming us after we have fallen into trouble or harm. I find this same contradiction in the Lord's prayer as well: 1) and lead us not into temptation (basically, protect us from falling), 2) but deliver us from evil (presumably, after we have fallen).

But what if both forms of "petitionary" or "supplicatory" prayer to God are genuine and not contradictory? I do need to get myself grounded and rooted (the rock and fortress metaphors) so that I do not fall down as often or as easily or in ways I have fallen down before. I need to grow spiritual roots through personal practices, relationships, community, prayer, worship and meditation practices, and other means besides. But I also know that I am human and vulnerable and I cannot control the many factors and realities of life that may cause me to break down and fall down. I know I will need to be rescued, saved and redeemed, and this will also include building up my inner resources again and again each time I emerge from the pit, bruised and scarred, yet restored and re-created. I need to practice calling out to God and building the kind of connections, roots and practices that will be there for me when I need help to rise up from the pit of death again and again as life's challenges overwhelm me.

Does this make sense to you? May Armour Heights church become one of those core resources and core communities in your life, 1) helping build those spiritual roots for you to grow ever stronger and more grounded in who you are before the One who is the overflowing energy of love, and 2) helping you journey out of the pit when life's vicissitudes drain the faith and hope out of you and choke the love too.

PRAYER: O God, our rock and our refuge, the power of love flowing into us and rooting us on solid inner ground... May you be ever present and strong in us as the strong currents and high waves come crashing upon us. O God our savior and redeemer, the power of love resurrecting new life when we feel bruised and broken, emotionally exhausted and spiritually spent, overwhelmed by sadness or helplessness... May you always be among us and never leave us... May you reveal to us again and again that your power in us is alive, ready to ground us, ready to become activated in us... Thank you, also, for the power of your love to heal us, redeem us and ground us through other people and through spiritual community... Amen.