

Lead Me To The Rock!

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Date: 20 September 2017

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[0 : 0 0] well if we could with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this evening if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read the book of Psalms Psalm 61 and I'd like us just to walk through this psalm but we'll read again at the beginning Psalm 61 at the beginning where David says hear my cry oh God listen to my prayer from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint lead me to the rock that is higher than I for you have been my refuge a strong tower against the enemy now Augustus Toplady he is well known to us as an English hymn writer from the 18th century but Augustus Toplady his life's work was not spent writing hymns rather it was spent writing as a

Calvinist opponent to the Arminian John Wesley and Toplady he was a Calvinist by conviction and he wrote many books and many articles stressing the importance of Calvinism and for years the relationship between you could say Calvinist Toplady and the Arminian John Wesley it had been a pleasant relationship but as the exchanges over the doctrine of predestination as they continued the relationship between the two men it eventually broke down but the debate between Toplady and Wesley it's said to have reached its peak in 1774 when Toplady published this 700 page book on the historic proof of Calvinism in the Church of England and in the book there was a section that identified the five basic propositions of Calvinism which was arguably the first appearance in print of the summary of Calvinism which we know and which we call the five points of Calvinism or TULIP I'm sure you've heard the acronym TULIP total depravity unconditional election limited atonement irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints and maybe God willing we'll look at TULIP one day but Toplady he believed that these five points of Calvinism they attribute our salvation to God's sovereign election whereas

Arminian Wesley he stressed that we have a part to play in our election but you know it's said that at the height of this friction and this controversy within the Church of England Toplady wrote his most famous hymn Rock of Ages and it's said that he wrote it Toplady wrote this hymn when he was caught in a storm and he had to take shelter in the Burrington Coombs they are near to the village of Burrington in Somerset and the Burrington Coombs it said that they're like this steep-sided valley or this hollow in in the earth and it's got various caves along the way and it said that hiding in a cave and sheltering under a rock in the Burrington Coombs from the storm you could say outside and the storm within the church it was then that Augustus Toplady was inspired to write the words Rock of Ages cleft for me let me hide myself in thee let the water and the blood from thy ribbon side which float be of sin the double cure save me from its guilt and power and you know thinking about what Toplady wrote and where he wrote it when we come to the words of Psalm 61 we can see that David he's also in the midst of a storm there is a storm in David's life and that this storm has left him feeling very distant from the Lord and very very far away from the blessing he once knew because in the psalm David we can see from the very first verse he's crying to the Lord for help and David wants the Lord to assure him of the

Lord's presence and to assure him of the Lord's security and as I said I just want to walk through this beautiful psalm and see that when David cries to the Lord for help he makes three simple requests three requests he says Lord hear me Lord lead me and Lord keep me Lord hear me Lord lead me and Lord keep me and so let's look first of all at his first request he says Lord hear me what he says in verse one hear my cry oh God listen to my prayer from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint David cries to the Lord in prayer and he's longing for the Lord to hear him he's he's pleading with the Lord that the Lord would would listen to him because he says hear my cry oh God listen to my prayer and David's cry it's not just this shout for help and it's not even this silent prayer that just rises from his heart no the words here they express this this ringing cry it's a wailing cry it's a heart heartfelt cry with pain and with tears David he's he's longing for the Lord to

hear him and for the

Lord to listen to him in fact you could say that the words used here they're very similar to the words that we were looking at a few weeks ago in Psalm 130 where the psalmist he as we saw in Psalm 130 he's in he's in the depths of despair and he's crying to the Lord and he's saying Lord from the depths to thee I cried my voice Lord do thou hear unto my supplications voice give an attentive ear Lord hear my cry saying listen to my voice Lord hear me Lord hear me he wants an audience with the Lord but you know we have to see that the reason David is crying to the Lord is because he feels very very far away from the Lord as we said he's in there's a storm going going on in David's life and it has left him feeling distant from the Lord and far away from the Lord's blessing and this is why David says at the beginning of verse two he says from the end of the earth I will cry to you and David he's describing himself as someone who is at the the ends of the earth he's far away from the Lord far away from the Lord's people David feels far away from home and he feels all alone and you know David's description that he was at the ends of the earth it suggests that when he wrote this psalm he was on the run and we know that there were two occasions in David's life when David was on the run now the first occasion was when King Saul was trying to kill David because David had been anointed king of Israel instead of Saul and the second incident when the incident when David was on the run was when David's son Absalom rebelled against his father and threatened to kill him and on both occasions David he fled into the wilderness for safety

[7 : 32] David went to the ends of the earth in order to escape now we have to see that because of the references to the king in verse verses six and seven we have to see that well it seems most likely that psalm 61 was written when David was on the run from his son Absalom Absalom as we know he was the rebellious son who who drove his father into the Judean wilderness and as far away from Jerusalem as possible and now in hiding and feeling far away from the Lord David finds himself crying to the Lord for help and you know this explanation it makes sense of David's words here when he says that he was crying from the ends of the earth because you know for a Jew the center of the earth the center of their world the center of a Jew's world was and still is Jerusalem and as king David David's home was

Jerusalem Jerusalem was where his palace was Jerusalem was where his throne was situated but more than that Jerusalem was where the temple would be built that's where the tabernacle was Jerusalem was where the ark of the covenant was situated in the holy of holies and of course the ark of the covenant was the Lord's the symbol of the Lord's presence amongst his people the ark of the covenant was the confirmation to the Lord's people of his unending promise that I will be your God and you shall be my people and yet in psalm 61 David is saying that this in this storm of his life where his son is chasing him and hunting him down like a predator he's saying that he feels very very far away from the Lord and as David cries to the Lord in this wilderness and what seems to him to be the ends of the earth he pleads hear my cry oh God listen to my prayer from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint you know David he feels alone he feels far away from the Lord far away from the Lord's house and he's far away from the Lord's people and of course David knew that he was far away physically but in this psalm he's expressing the fact that he feels far away spiritually and he says that he feels distant he feels cold he feels that he's not where he should be and he's saying my heart is growing faint it's overwhelmed it's troubled it's in distress it's becoming vulnerable I'm in need of the Lord's help and David is asking the Lord Lord where are you in all this Lord hear me Lord listen to my prayer when I'm calling to you my friend have you ever been where David was have you ever been in the wilderness and what maybe seemed to you to be the ends of the earth have you ever felt far away from the Lord and far away from the Lord's house and far away from the Lord's people asking the Lord Lord where are you in this have you ever been where David was and I'm not just talking about at the point of our conversion although that is the point where we seem furthest from the Lord but in this psalm David is already one of the Lord's redeemed he's already following the Lord and yet he still feels distant from the Lord he feels cold in his heart and he knows that he's he's not where he should be with the Lord have you ever been where David was are you there just now are you distant in your relationship with the Lord are you only following Jesus at a distance and we know that it's not good for us as disciples to follow Jesus at a distance you'll remember Peter he was a disciple who followed Jesus at a distance he thought it was okay to to warm himself by the campfire of the world he thought that it would be okay following Jesus at a distance but it was following Jesus at a distance that led him to denying that he ever knew Jesus as someone once said never think that you're free is from danger when you're

furthest from Christ and you know we can feel so distant from the Lord because of well the sins that we commit we can feel that we're at the ends of the earth from the Lord because of our lack of fellowship with the Lord we can feel distant because we're away from the Lord's people we can feel that we're so far away because of maybe

trial or affliction but we should never think that we're free is from danger when we're furthest from Christ and these things should they should cause us to do as David is doing here they should cause us to seek the Lord with all our heart and cry out to the Lord for help because you know what David came to discover and what we all need to keep rediscovering in our Christian walk is that the only thing that will warm our heart and bring us close to the Lord and renew our fellowship with the Lord is when we cry to him in prayer when we pour out our heart before him and you know that's what we were singing about in Psalm 107 Psalm 107 it's the Psalm of the Lord's redeemed where the psalmist calls all of the Lord's people everywhere he says praise God for he is good for still his mercy's lasting be let God's redeemed say so whom he from the enemy's hand did free and he says and gathered them out of the lands he gathered them from the ends of the earth from north, south, east and west because they strayed in deserts pathless way with no city found to rest and the psalmist says for thirst and hunger in them faints their soul when straits them press and what did the Lord's redeemed do?

they cry unto the Lord and he them frees from their distress my friend, prayer is what renews our fellowship with the Lord we must never forget that we must always be renewing our fellowship with the Lord day by day and that's what David is reminding us here as he cries to the Lord for help he's saying Lord hear me Lord hear me but then he says Lord lead me Lord lead me listen to what he says hear my cry oh God listen to my prayer from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint lead me to the rock that is higher than I for you have been my refuge a strong tower against the enemy let me dwell in your tent forever let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings Selah you know what a prayer lead me to the rock that is higher than I as we said

David he's he's feeling distant from the Lord and very far away from the blessing that he once knew and he's crying to the Lord for the Lord to hear his prayer so that he can enjoy this renewed fellowship with the Lord and be reminded of the assurance and the security he has in his salvation and so David says lead me to the rock that is higher than I and of course we know that this theme of the Lord being the rock of his people it's a theme which is found throughout the book of Psalms we sang that in Psalm 95 where the psalmist he calls all of the Lord's people to come and sing to the Lord and make a joyful noise to him because he is the rock of our salvation we see it also in Psalm 18 where David says at various points throughout Psalm 18 he says the Lord is my rock my God is my rock who is the rock except our God praise be to my rock and you know we see this the rock metaphor even in Psalm 62 the following psalm the psalmist says that well known verse he only my salvation is and my strong rock is he he only is my sure defence much moved

[16:22] I shall not be but the most well known psalm which describes the Lord as a rock is of course Psalm 40 I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear at length to me he did incline my voice and cry to hear he took me from a fearful pit and from the miry clay and on a rock he set my feet establishing my way and is that not our testimony tonight that it was this rock who delivered us it was the rock of our salvation it was our strong rock he's the one who plucked us as brands from the burning and he's the one who pulled us out of the mire he's the one who put a new song in our mouth in order that we would magnify him as our saviour and you know it's no wonder David is saying here lead me to the rock that is higher than I lead me to the rock that is higher than I because David knows and all of the Lord's people know that there is no one worth looking to for help and there's no one worth seeking guidance from there's no one worth crying out to other than the rock of our salvation but you know what we must notice from David's plea here is that he describes the Lord as an exalted rock that's what's so beautiful about what he says because he says lead me to the rock that is higher than I but literally he's saying lead me to the rock that has been highly exalted lead me to the rock that has been highly exalted and whether David fully realised what he was saying or not we as

New Testament believers with the full revelation of God's word we know that there is only one rock which has been highly exalted and that rock is Jesus Christ and as the Apostle Paul he reminds us that in order for the rock to be highly exalted he first of all had to be completely humiliated because as Paul says to us in Philippians chapter 2 he speaks about the humiliation and the exaltation of Jesus Christ and he says that the rock of our salvation he was in the form of God yet he thought it

not robbery to be equal with God but he made himself of no reputation took upon him the form of a servant was made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man Paul says he humbled himself and he became obedient unto death even the death of the cross my friend that's how low the rock of our salvation went for us he experienced complete humiliation from the crown of glory down down down to the cross of Calvary he made himself nothing and he was obedient unto death but says Paul and this is what I love

God has also highly exalted him highly exalted him he raised Jesus from the dead and gave to him a name that is above every other name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father my friend the rock of our salvation has been highly exalted he has been raised from the dead he has put all his enemies under his feet he has been given a name that is above all names he's been crowned with the crown of purest gold he has sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high and my friend he ever lives to make intercession for us and you know looking at David's experience in all his coldness and his distance from the Lord and feeling far away and crying to God David is saying lead me there lead me there that's where I want to go lead me to the rock that is higher than I lead me to the rock who has been highly exalted lead me there and of course well we have to ask why why does David want to be led to this rock why is David seeking the highly exalted rock of his salvation that seems like a silly question to ask but then he explains why in verse 3

David David wants to be led to his exalted rock because he knows that the Lord has been his refuge he has always been his refuge and in order to highlight the refuge that the Lord has been for David David he uses three illustrations which emphasize safety security and shelter because David he describes the rock of his salvation in verse 3 as a strong tower against the enemy and a strong tower was a place as you know it's a place where you could run for safety and in this case David needed safety from his son Absalom and he found that safety when he sought the rock of his salvation but David says that he not only found safety he also found security when he asks to the Lord in verse 4 let me dwell in your tent forever

David sought security in the dwelling place of God in the tabernacle of God that's where the Lord dwelt amongst his people in the wilderness he dwelt in the tabernacle and that's what assured and secured the Lord's people of their salvation that the Lord desired to dwell amongst his people but you know what's fascinating is that David's request for the Lord it's not only for safety and security he also speaks of shelter let me dwell in your tent forever let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings and we know that this language that David's using here it's common it's used throughout the Bible that was the promise that was given to Ruth was it not by Boaz when he said a full reward shall be given you by the Lord the God of Israel under whose wings you have come to take refuge the Psalms are full of the imagery of sheltering under the wings of God

[23 : 18] Psalm 91 assures us that the Lord will cover us with his feathers and it's under his wings that we will find refuge in Psalm 63 just two Psalms later the Psalmist says that he will find joy in the shadow of the Lord's wings and so we can see that this imagery of sheltering under the wings of God it gives to us the imagery of closeness and intimacy and that's what David is seeking all the time he's longing to be closer to the Lord he's longing to walk with the Lord closer and closer because as we said he feels distant he feels cold he feels far away from the Lord he feels like he's at the other end of the earth from the Lord but what we have to see is that with these illustrations of safety and security and shelter he's describing his longing and it seems that with every illustration he says he's moving closer and closer to the Lord because David's longing is to be led to the rock the highly exalted rock of his salvation the rock who provides for him safety security and shelter and my friend that should be out there lead me there lead me to the rock that is higher than I lead me to my highly exalted rock because in him

I know that there is safety security and shelter but you know David he doesn't end there he doesn't conclude with Lord hear me and Lord lead me no he concludes his prayer with the words Lord keep me Lord keep me he says in verse 5 for you O God have heard my vows you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name prolong the life of the king may his years endure to all generations may he be enthroned forever before God appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him so will I ever sing praises to your name as I perform my vows day after day so when David is led to the highly exalted rock of his salvation he confirms his commitment to the Lord he

says you have heard my vows and then in verse 8 at the end of the psalm he says I will perform my vows day after day and you know with this emphasis upon vows we have to see that David is talking about a renewed commitment to the Lord he's talking about rededicating himself to the Lord and recommitting himself to serving the Lord wholeheartedly and you know I was thinking that that's what we have to do after a communion season because well during our communion season we you could say that we drew near to the Lord and we enjoyed fellowship with the Lord and we enjoyed fellowship with the Lord's people we had the privilege of hearing God's word and sitting at the Lord's table and in doing so we were echoing the words of Psalm 116 I'll of salvation take the cup on God's name will I call I'll pay my vows now to the Lord before his people all and you know prior to the communion season we may have been like

David we may have felt distant from the Lord distant from the Lord's house distant from the Lord's people far away at the ends of the earth but now having been led by both word and sacrament having been led to the rock that is highly exalted having been assured assured of his safety his security and his shelter having been told of the Lord's love for us and his commitment to us and his faithfulness towards us we now have to respond like David does here and perform our vows day after day because our vows are to love the Lord more deeply to walk with the Lord more closely to live for the Lord more obediently and to serve the Lord more faithfully they are our vows to love the Lord your God with all your heart mind soul and strength and your neighbour as yourself and you know we are to perform these vows as

David says he will do day after day and we are to perform them not only because we have been led to the rock of our salvation but as David says we are to perform our vows because you have given me the inheritance of those who fear your name you have given me the inheritance of those who fear your name that's what he says in verse 5 my friend as the Lord's people we have received an inheritance that is exceedingly abundant above all more than we could ask or even think as the apostle Peter says we have received an inheritance that is incorruptible undefiled that fadeth not away but is reserved in heaven for us and don't you just love what Peter says about our inheritance he says that our inheritance is being kept for us it's been kept for us and that we are being kept for that inheritance he says we have received an inheritance that is incorruptible undefiled that fadeth not away it's been reserved or kept in heaven for us and then Peter says and we are being kept kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time our inheritance is being kept for us and we are being kept for our inheritance and you know that's something of what David is saying here because he says in verse 6 prolong the life of the king may his years endure to all generations now of course when David asks to prolong the life of the king to all generations he's not speaking about himself or any earthly king because no king could endure to all generations except one king the king who is highly exalted and so the imagery which David is portraying to us is of a rock who has not only been highly exalted but it's also a rock that has been enthroned

[29 : 58] David is describing the rock of his salvation as one who has been exalted and enthroned because and you know it's wonderful what's wonderful is that this exalted and enthroned rock is Jesus we can't get away from that because he has been exalted he has been raised from the dead he has been given the name above all names he has been seated in the heavenly places he has endured the cross despising its shame he's now sat down at the right hand of the throne of God and at the right hand say Psalm 16 the right hand of God there are pleasures forevermore because he ever lives to make intercession for his people he ever lives to plead our cause he ever lives to stand on our behalf and because of him we have an advocate with the father we have a mediator between God and men we have an intercessor who intercedes on our behalf and you know it's no wonder

David says in verse 7 may he be enthroned forever before God appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him may he be enthroned forever before God and what's remarkable is that David has said about this highly exalted rock he says lead me to him lead me to him but keep him there lead me to him but keep him there keep him there because he's keeping me keep him there because he's keeping me may he be enthroned forever before God appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him And I love these covenantal words, steadfast love and faithfulness.

They're translated in the New Testament as grace and truth. And that was the description John gave, the Apostle John, he gave regarding Jesus.

Jesus is the word who became flesh, he dwelt among us. We have beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Full of steadfast love and faithfulness. And my friend, that's who David wants to be led to. That's who he wants to be led to. He wants to be led to the highly exalted rock who is the glory of his Father and full of grace and truth.

[32 : 38] And David is saying, lead me to the exalted rock, but keep him enthroned. Keep him enthroned. Lead me to my exalted rock, but keep him enthroned.

Keep him there because he's keeping me. Keep him there because he's keeping me. He's pleading on my behalf. May he be enthroned forever before God.

Appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him. So will I ever sing praises to your name as I perform my vows day after day. Keep him there because he's keeping me.

Keep him there because he's keeping me. And by, you could say, by his grace and truth, he will enable me to keep my vows and perform my vows to the Lord day after day.

And my friend, is that not our prayer tonight? Keep him there because he's keeping me. Lord, hear me.

[33 : 44] Lord, lead me. Lord, keep me. Keep me for I cannot keep myself. Keep him there because he's keeping me.

And you know, just in closing, David's prayer during the storms of his life. It was certainly echoed all those years later by Augustus' top lady as he sheltered under another rock.

And he said, Nothing in my hands I bring.

Simply to thy cross I cling. Naked come to thee for dress. Helpless look to thee for grace. Foul I to the fountain fly. Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath. When mine eyes shall close in death. When I soar to worlds unknown. See thee on thy judgment throne. And he says, Rock of ages, Cleft for me.

[35 : 16] Let me hide Myself In thee. That's what David is saying. Keep him there. Because he's keeping me.

Lord, hear me. Lord, lead me. Lord, keep me. Keep him there. Because he's keeping me. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God. May we give thanks to thee this evening. That Jesus is to us the rock of our salvation.

And Lord, we pray that we would be led to that rock day by day. That we would perform our vows to him. Because he has performed his vows to us.

That he would love us with an everlasting love. That he would look upon us in mercy. That he would cleanse us from all sin. And Lord, we thank thee that he has begun that good work in us.

[36 : 14] And he will bring it on to completion. At the day when he returns. When he leaves his throne. And he comes to take us home to be with himself. O Lord, lead us day by day to the rock that is higher than us.

And keep us every day. Keep us, Lord, we ask thee. For we know that we cannot keep ourselves. Bless us together, we pray. Remember our homes and our families. All our different struggles, Lord. We pray that thou wouldst undertake for us. That we would commit everything to thy care and keeping. Remember those, Lord, who are not with us tonight. Those who are laid aside.

Those, Lord, who are sick. And those, Lord, who are no interest in coming. We pray for those even in our homes. And our families. Who are still outside the fold. O Lord, we plead that they too would be led to the rock.

That is higher than us. That they would see this highly exalted saviour. That they would know him and love him. Before the day where we are called. To bow before him.

[37 : 17] And confess that he is Lord. O Lord, bless us, we pray. Undertake for us. And do us good. For we ask it in Jesus' name. And for his sake. Amen.

Amen. I shall conclude by singing some verses from that psalm. In Psalm 61. Psalm 61.

The Scottish Psalter. Page 293. We're singing from the beginning down to the verse marked 5.

Psalm 61 from the beginning. O God, give ear unto my cry. Unto my prayer attend. From the utmost corner of the land. My cry to thee I'll send. What time my heart is overwhelmed.

And in perplexity. Do thou me lead unto the rock. That higher is than I. Down to the verse marked 5 of Psalm 61. To God's praise. O God, give ear unto my cry.

[38 : 28] Unto my prayer attend. From the utmost corner of the land.

My cry to thee I'll send. What time my heart is overwhelmed.
And in perplexity. To thou me lead unto the rock.
That higher is than I. For thou hast for my refuge.
A shelter by thy power. And for defense against my foes.
[39 : 52] Thou hast been a strong tower. Within thy tabernacle I forever will abide.
And under cover of thy wings. With confidence behind.
For thou hast for my refuge. For thou hast for my refuge. For thou hast for my refuge. For thou hast
for my refuge. O Lord, my God didst hear.
Thou hast given me The heritage Of those Thy name that fear The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
The love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all Now and
forevermore Amen