

Psalm 32:7

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[0 : 0 0] Last week, I had a couple of hours to kill in Amsterdam and took the opportunity to visit Anne Frank's house. I was mentioning about it to the children this morning, and I'm sure many of you, perhaps all of you, will be familiar, at least with the outline of the story of Anne Frank, how at the time of the Nazi occupation of Holland in the Second World War, Anne's father, Otto Frank, converted a couple of rooms in a property that he owned into a hiding place. And there, Anne and her family and some others found refuge until really rather poignantly and very tragically, very near the end of the war. The second half of 1944, they were betrayed by who knows whom, Anne sent to Auschwitz. And of those who hid in the secret annex, as they called it, only the father, Otto Frank, survived through to the end of the war. And the story of the secret annex, or the hiding place, would have remained largely unknown had it not been for Otto Frank's decision to publish Anne's diary. He wasn't aware that she was writing the diary there in the hiding place, or in any case, did not give it much importance. But when he returned at the end of the war, those who had been left behind had kept this diary and gave it to him. And after some soul-searching, he decided that this would be something he would publish. And while the rest is history, it's been translated into innumerable languages. And as I was mentioning this morning, I think it's almost required reading at some point in the schooling of our own kids.

And well, to have the opportunity of visiting the home, though it's been converted into quite a significant tourist attraction, and that in itself brings its limitations. But you do have the opportunity to stand in the very rooms where the Franks hid some seventy years ago, and it does, in significant measure, bring the story to life. I think there is something in us that is drawn to and identifies with a hiding place. It touches a very real human need and longing for safety and protection in the midst of an often hostile and dangerous world. And as I made my way through what is perhaps one of the most famous hiding places in the world, I could not help but remember the words of David directed to God and recorded in this psalm that we have read in Psalm 32 and in verse 7,

You are my hiding place. You are my hiding place. You will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

This morning we went on a whistle-stop tour of the whole psalm, with the exception of this verse 7, in order that we could consider it a little more carefully this evening, which is what we're going to do.

And I want to think about David's hiding place, and indeed, if we are believers this evening, our hiding place also. For we too can address God in this manner, You are my hiding place.

[3 : 47] But what can we draw from the language that David uses? There's three points I want to make concerning a hiding place. This would be true, perhaps, of any hiding place, and we'll apply the points in particular to the hiding place that we are concerned with, the hiding place that the psalmist speaks of and addresses, You are my hiding place. But three things that we can say. The first thing that we can say about a hiding place is that a hiding place implies danger. In the absence of danger, there's no need for a hiding place, other than for recreation, perhaps. But a hiding place implies danger. It is a place where we can go to for protection in the face of danger. That's the first thing that we want to think about. The second thing I want to mention that maybe isn't so immediately obvious is that a hiding place requires humility. And when we get to that, I'll explain what I mean by that. But then thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, a hiding place provides protection.

It provides protection. And we'll think about that aspect of a hiding place also. First of all, then, a hiding place implies danger. Why did Otto Frank go to all the trouble of securing a hiding place for his family in Amsterdam? Well, we know the answer. He and his family were in grave danger.

They were in grave danger, obscenely, simply because they were Jews. And this very intense and grave danger is the reason why this hiding place was secured and constructed for the family.

Well, what about David? Why does David need a hiding place? I asked that question of the children this morning. Why would a king need a hiding place? If anybody didn't need a hiding place, surely it would be a king. But David speaks of God as his hiding place. Why did he need a hiding place?

What danger does he need to flee from and find refuge in his hiding place? Well, we turn to the verse in question there, verse 7, you are my hiding place. You will protect me from trouble. David doesn't specify what trouble he is referring to. Maybe the fact that the language is very general is, in a sense, more helpful, because that way we can apply it legitimately to all kinds of trouble that we might face.

[6 : 22] But certainly, here David speaks of trouble from which he required a protection. And he considers and views and experiences God as his protection as his hiding place. We can maybe just look a little back in the psalm to the language that he uses in verse 6 and apply it also to this matter of what it is that David flees from, why it is that he needs a hiding place. We read there in verse 6, It says, The mighty waters troubles of one kind or another. But when they come, David will find security or finds security in his hiding place. The language of verse 7, the language of verse 6, though, as we've just commented, quite general and non-specific, does certainly point to some kind of external trouble or danger, enemies seen and unseen, opposition and attack, troubles of one kind or another that would overwhelm David.

So, certainly, we can see God as his hiding place as protection in the face of external danger. But as we think of the whole psalm, as we were able to do in a measure this morning, and as we think of the message of the whole psalm, where in the whole psalm, the big message or the big problem for David is not external danger, but rather his big problem is internal, his own sin that he develops and speaks of in some detail in some detail in some detail in this psalm. This was the big problem that David recognized that he was facing. And so, given that that is the big theme of the psalm, it seems legitimate when we think of God as his hiding place, that God was his hiding place not only from external danger, but also, in a sense, from himself. God, a hiding place, a place of refuge from himself, from his own guilt, his own folly, his own rebellion, which, in effect, constitute a far greater danger to David than a hundred Goliaths.

And of course, that's true for us also. There are external dangers and enemies, but we're also conscious of the enemy within, while our hiding place is equipped to deal with both enemies.

So too, with us as believers, as we think of David and the danger that he faced, well, we also face external danger and trouble. We do live in a world, a society that is increasingly hostile to the gospel.

We do often struggle to live the Christian life in a world where we are often misunderstood and ridiculed and marginalized. And we need a hiding place. We need a place of refuge and security in the midst of trouble and danger and threat. But, as with David, we also recognize that there is also a danger that we need a danger that lies within. We need every day to flee from ourselves and our sin to our refuge and our hiding place in God. So, when we think of a hiding place, this is the first truth that we can recognize, that a hiding place implies danger. But the second thing that I mentioned was that a hiding place requires humility. Now, what I mean by this is simply that we need to humbly recognize that we cannot, in our own strength, stand up to danger outwith and indeed danger within. If we return to the Franks, Otto Frank,

[10 : 34] Anne's father, was a wealthy man. He was a distinguished citizen of Amsterdam, though he'd been there really quite a short time having fled from Germany. But he was a wealthy man. He was an upstanding member of the community. Maybe as such a wealthy man, he might have been, as wealthy men can be, and poor men also, prone to pride. And imagine if he had reasoned in the face of the Nazi invasion and taking of control in Holland. Imagine if he had reasoned that he had no need to hide from the advancing Nazis. Imagine if he had underestimated the danger his family faced, or had he been too proud to flee from danger. Well, he had to rather humbly recognize that he and his family needed a hiding place. They needed a refuge.

We sometimes see this problem of denial, if you wish, of imagining that we don't need a hiding place. We sometimes see this problem in the face of an impending natural disaster. It's almost every time that it happens, there's the warning of a volcano that's going to erupt, and all those who live near where they're likely to be affected are told to evacuate. But there's always somebody, isn't there, who says, well, no, I'm not leaving. I'll be all right. And though refuge or places of refuge are offered and provided, there's always those who say, no, I don't need that. I'll be okay.

The lava won't reach me. Or maybe it's a flood warning. That's maybe more common. There's a flood warning, and those who are threatened by the rising tide or the rising water are told you, I need to evacuate. And they're told where they can go and find refuge. And most avail themselves of that. But there are always those who say, no, I'll be fine. I'll be okay. I'm fine here. I don't want to leave my home. I don't need a hiding place. I don't need a refuge. I'm fine. Leave me alone. And then, of course, they're the ones that the emergency services then spend so much time trying to rescue and indeed placing their own lives in danger as a result.

Of course, we turn to the Scriptures and we find this same folly. Remember Noah, as he built his ark and how he pleaded with his neighbors to find refuge in the ark. He warned them of the impending mighty waters. There in our psalm, there's talk of mighty waters rising. Well, Noah warned his neighbors, the rains are coming. Mighty waters will rise. You're in danger. You're in grave danger. You're in mortal danger. Come and join me. Here is an ark. Here is a place of refuge, of security for you. And what was the response? Well, they laughed and they mocked. They didn't recognize that they needed a hiding place. They denied that there was any need for a place of refuge.

They could perceive no danger until it was too late. And so, we too need to be careful. We need to be careful with that pride that is evidenced in this idea that we don't need a hiding place. We don't need a refuge. We don't need to flee to God. We're not into fleeing from anything. We can handle our lives. We can meet the challenges by ourselves. Be very careful with the folly of self-sufficiency and rather flee daily to the Lord as your hiding place. A hiding place requires humility, a recognition that we need a place of refuge, that we can't look after ourselves. But thirdly, and perhaps in a way the most obvious aspect of a hiding place is that a hiding place provides protection. Or does it, we could ask? We return to the story that I've been referring to of the Frank family. Otto Frank's hiding place very sadly proved insufficient. To this day, it's not known who betrayed the family. But as they heard the jackboots and the winding wooden staircase, they knew that the game was up, that their hiding place was no longer a hiding place, that their secret annex was no longer secret. And well, we know sadly what the outcome of that was. But what of David's hiding place? How secure is his hiding place? Well, the hiding place spoken of in this psalm is not a place at all, not even a place provided by God. You might say, well, God could provide us with a great hiding place. He who has all the universe at His disposal, what great hiding places He could provide for us? But He doesn't provide us a place. He is our hiding place. You are my hiding place, says David. You are my hiding place, as he addresses his

[15 : 54] Lord. God is our hiding place. That's a wonderful picture. More than a picture, it's a wonderful reality. The Lord as our hiding place. And as we briefly develop this truth, I want to do so in two ways. As we consider, first of all, the nature of our protector, the nature of our hiding place, who is a person, a protector, God Himself, and also the quality of our protection, the quality of protection afforded by our hiding place. First of all, then, the nature of our protector. We recognize this simple but wonderful truth that God Himself is our hiding place. What does that tell us about God? That God would offer Himself, would make Himself available as a hiding place. What does that tell us about God?

Well, it certainly tells us that He is a loving God who is concerned for our safety and protection. When He sees His people in danger, that which He wishes to do and is willing to do and is able to do is to lovingly provide us with refuge and safety and protection. God, as our hiding place, speaks to us of a God who is a loving God. Also, of God who is an inviting God, who welcomes us into His presence and who welcomes us under His protecting wings. Such is our God who is a hiding place, a loving God, an inviting God, an intimate God, an intimate God who receives us into His intimate circle of family, to whom He provides protection and security and safety. And so, as we think of God as our hiding place, we are reminded of these great truths concerning what our God is like, a loving God, an inviting God, an intimate God. But also, that God is our hiding place, an intimate God. And so, that God is our hiding place. And so, that God is our hiding place where the protection afforded is of high quality. What can we say of the quality of our protection? Well, we can say this, certainly, that it is eternal. There is no conceivable circumstance where our hiding place will be found wanting, no conceivable time or situation where our hiding place will be unavailable.

For our hiding place is the eternal God. And so, we turn to Him and we flee to Him in the assurance and in the absolute security that He is there for us. Our hiding place is eternal. Our hiding place also, we can say, is all-encompassing. Any and every danger that we can conceive of, or indeed that we are unable to conceive of, all are covered. God is available and able to help us in every circumstance.

There's another element that I want to mention, and maybe a slightly more intriguing one, that we can say concerning the quality of our protection. And the way I'm expressing it is in this way. Our protection, our hiding place, is mobile. Now, that may sound like a very odd thing to say.

It sounds odd to me, and I know what I'm talking about, I hope. So, it must sound even odder to you. So, let me explain what I mean by saying that regarding the quality of our protection, of our protector, is that our protection is mobile. And the point is this. When we think of a hiding place, when we visualize in our mind a hiding place, we probably, or I would imagine most of us, would think of it solely as a place of escape, a place that maybe given our own nature, we might abuse of to escape the big bad world. And as we escape the big bad world, so we would fail in our mission to be salt and light in the big bad world. We like the idea of a hiding place, and who of us wouldn't say, well, I want to be there all the time in my hiding place, away from the jungle out there where it's difficult and tough and there's opposition, and I'm just gonna rest and live in my hiding place, and I'll be happy there. Maybe that's the picture that we might have. And of course, that kind of picture would end up with us not fulfilling the task that God has called us to, to be out in the world as His ambassadors, to be salt and light. But you see, our hiding place is mobile. Our hiding place goes with us. You know, our hiding place isn't on the top of a mountain. It's not in a cave in some remote desert. It's not on a desert island. No, our hiding place is God, and He goes with us. He accompanies us into the big bad world where there's danger and trouble and threats of one kind or another.

[21 : 07] Notice the language that the psalmist uses just in the previous psalm, in Psalm 31 and in verse 20. There, the psalmist speaks of those who fear God, and he speaks of those who fear God in the following way. In the shelter of your presence, you hide them. In the shelter of your presence, you hide them.

And we know that God is omnipresent. And so we can say this, whatever God is, our hiding place also is.

Not on the top of a mountain, not in some hidden way where we escape from the world, but our hiding place accompanies us, for He is everywhere. Whatever God is, there is our hiding place. And so a hiding place presumes, implies a danger. It requires humility, a recognition that we need refuge, we need protection. A hiding place provides protection. But I want to close by asking a final question. And it is this, how do we make use of God, how do we avail ourselves of God as our hiding place?

The language of the psalmist, as we're accustomed to, the language is very beautiful language. It's very suggestive language. It's very inspiring language. You are my hiding place. But my question is this, in the real world, tomorrow. Tomorrow is Monday and you all have things to do, work to go to, essays to finish, relationships in which you need to participate, struggles of one kind or another.

How do you avail yourself of God as your hiding place tomorrow? Once you're out of church and you can't sing the psalm, well, you could, of course, but just out there, how do you avail yourself of God as your hiding place? Well, let me suggest three ways in which we can avail ourselves of God, that we can flee to God, we can discover God as our hiding place.

[23 : 20] One way that I think is implicitly suggested or implied in the psalm is by prayer. Notice that in the verse immediately preceding the statement of David, you are my hiding place, notice what he says, therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found. Surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him. David is speaking of danger and of trouble and of the need for protection.

And he says, if you want to find your protection in God, what do you need to do? You need to pray to God. Let everyone who is godly pray to you and you will be found. How do we find God as our hiding place?

How do we hide in God? Well, this is one of the means that God has provided for us as we pray to him. I think we can also suggest that another way in which we can discover God as our hiding place is through his word. The Hebrew word that is here translated hiding place is found or occurs on only two other occasions in the Old Testament in this particular form. Related forms are found on many occasions, but in this particular form on two other occasions, we've already sung one of them in Psalm 119 and verse 114. And what I want you to notice there in Psalm 119 is how the psalmist there connects enjoying the protection of God with trusting in his word. Notice the language that he uses there in Psalm 119 and verse 114. We read there, but you are my refuge and my shield. And there the word in the NIV translated refuge is the word translated hiding place in verse 7 of Psalm 32. You'll remember that when we sung the psalm in the Scottish Psalter, it was the word hiding place that was used there. You are my refuge, you are my hiding place and my shield. And then notice what the psalmist immediately goes on to say, I have put my hope in your word. And it seems to me that what the psalmist is saying is that he discovers God to be his hiding place. He experiences God as his hiding place in the measure that he puts his hope in God's word, in the measure that he trusts in God's promises, in the measure that he goes out into that big bad world with danger and trouble and threats of every kind, trusting in God's word, trusting in God's promises. And so in this manner, we avail ourselves of God as our hiding place through prayer, through a knowledge of and a trusting in God's word and God's promises.

But in one third way that I want to notice, and we return to Psalm 32. And the third way in which we avail ourselves of God as our hiding place is by fellowship with God's people. Notice verse 7, You are my hiding place, you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

Especially that final phrase, surround me, you will surround me with songs of deliverance. Again, it's beautiful language that suggests this all-encompassing protection, and this beautiful protection by means of songs of deliverance. But the question I would pose is this, who are singing these songs? The psalmist speaks to God. He says, you are my hiding place. He declares, he testifies that God will protect him from trouble. And he also declares this, that you will surround me with songs of deliverance. And who are singing these songs? Is it not other believers? Other believers singing songs of deliverance to bring encouragement and strength to the psalmist in days and in times of danger and opposition and trouble? You see, God serves as our hiding place in and through the fellowship and protection of God's people as we would look out for one another and protect one another and be conscious of each other's difficulties and needs and seek to meet them in the measure that we are able to. And so, by these very practical means, we can discover God to be and experience God to be our hiding place as we pray to Him, as we read and study and especially believe and trust in God's Word and promises, and as we enjoy the fellowship and the protection of God's people as God would surround us with His people singing songs of deliverance. And so, the psalmist addresses God in this wonderful way, in a way that we can also address our God. You are my hiding place. I trust that that is the manner in which you can address God. You are my hiding place. You will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

[28 : 28] Let us pray.