PRISONERS of HOPE

When the Lord is Our Stronghold

Both God and Satan use a day of pressure to prove which way we'll turn.

And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? (Job 1:8)

Satan seeks to prove to God that even those He has the most confidence in will crumble in a day of real adversity.

Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. (Job 1:9-11)

Scripture described Job's season of trial as his "captivity."

And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. (Job 42:10)

Circumstances can surround us and press in on us like a besieging army.

The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. (Psalm 116:3)

trouble > Hebrew - tsarah > straits, distress

When we are trapped in a troubling or dangerous situation, our soul can become anguished (i.e. distressed.)

And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish (tsarah) of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. (Genesis 42:21)

When people are in distress they look for a “stronghold” or “hiding place” in which to take refuge.

When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. (1 Samuel 13:6)

Our refuge can be a place of understanding, or a knowledge of what will happen.

And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. (1 Samuel 28:5-7)

A situation which we don't understand or can't see an end to can produce “misery” for us.

Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him. For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be? (Ecclesiastes 8:6,7)

The greatest part of Job’s distress was his inability to comprehend his situation.

Then Job answered and said,

Even to day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. (Job 23:1-5)
A day of distress makes our ears vulnerable to a “dreadful sound.”

A **dreadful sound** is in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him. (Job 15:21)

**Fear can drive us to the “King of kings” or the “king of terrors.”**

Terrors shall make him **afraid** on every side, and shall **drive** him to his feet...
His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall **bring him** to the **king of terrors**. (Job 11:11,14)

The **righteous** find refuge in the Lord in a time of a distress.

The name of the LORD is a **strong tower**: the **righteous runneth** into it, and is **safe**. (Proverbs 18:10)

\[safe > \text{Hebrew - sagab} > \text{exalted, set on high, too high for capture, out of reach}\]

**Spirits of fear** (i.e., "terrible ones) take advantage of a day of distress to batter the walls of our soul. Only in making the Lord our refuge can the “noise of strangers” be “brought down.”**

For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his **distress**, a **refuge** from the **storm**, a shadow from the heat, when the **blast** of the **terrible** ones is as a **storm** against the **wall**.
Thou shalt **bring down** the **noise of strangers**, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low. (Isaiah 25:4,5)

**When he was in a siege, Hezekiah turned to the Lord and invited the God of heaven to personally get involved in his situation upon the earth.**

And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and **spread it before the LORD**.
And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying,

O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.

Incline thine ear, O LORD, and **hear**; open thine eyes, O LORD, and **see**: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. (Isaiah 37:14-17)

At the most trying and loneliest moments of his life, David **turned to the Lord** and got Him **involved**.

<<Maschil of David; A Prayer when he was in the cave.>> I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. I **poured out** my complaint before him; I **shewed before him** my trouble. (Psalm 142:1,2)

**God allows all human refuge to fail us and be insufficient, so we might turn to Him alone.**

When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.
I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was **no man** that would know me: **refuge failed** me; **no man** cared for my soul. I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art **my refuge** and my portion in the land of the living. (Psalm 142:3-5)

**Job brought his anguish and confusion before the Lord and asked Him to get involved.**

If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity.
If I be wicked, woe unto me; and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head. I am **full of confusion**; therefore see thou mine **affliction** (Job 10:14,15)

While everything is still not figured out, solved, or over, when we make God our fortress in the day of trouble we are putting our **trust** in Him and able to have a good **hope**.

In thee, O LORD, do I put my **trust**: let me never be put to confusion.
Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress. (Psalm 71:1-3)

God calls His people to enter His “chambers” and take refuge in Him until the trouble outside of us is over. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. (Isaiah 26:20)
<<To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave>> Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. (Psalm 57:1)

Our relationship with God is likened to being “bound in the bundle of life with the Lord our God.” Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. (1 Sam. 25:29)

When we have fled to the Lord for refuge it is our continued hope in Him that acts as an “anchor” of our soul which keeps us nestled in His presence.

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; (Hebrews 6:18,19)

lay hold upon > Greek - krateo > to hold fast, i.e. not discard or let go; to keep carefully and faithfully; to continue to hold, to retain

The enemy wants to shake us free from our hope because he wants to drive us out of our Refuge and Fortress and into his grasp.

Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. (Isaiah 37:10)

Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. (Job 2:9)

As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? (Psalm 42:10)

While no man (or devil) can pry us out of God’s hand our own unbelief and unfaithfulness to God can.

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. (John 10:28,29)

Scripture leaves us many sobering reminders that if we break covenant with the Lord, we will not have an "anchor of our soul" that keeps us bundled up inside God’s protective care.

Then tidings came to Joab: for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom. And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD: and, behold, he is by the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go, fall upon him. (1 Kings 2:28,29)

Those who have turned to the Lord as their Stronghold in the day of distress are to let nothing shake them free of their hope. While they stubbornly remain in their Stronghold they are “prisoners of hope.”

Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope (Zechariah 9:12)