

Dear GOD



Connect group questions

Dear God, sometimes I'm not sure if you care

Psalm 62, 2 Corinthians 12:7b-10

1. Have there been times when you've doubted God's care for you? Share with the group.

RUN TO YOUR FORTRESS

Read Psalm 62

2. Describe the situation David finds himself in as he describes it in vv3-4. Can you relate?
3. Now return to the start of the Psalm. What strikes you about the opening verses given what he's described in vv3-4?
4. Explore all that is described in vv1-2:
 - What does it mean to find rest in God?
 - What did it mean for David that his salvation comes from God? What does it mean for us?
 - What did David mean that God was his rock? His salvation? His fortress?
 - What did David mean when he said that he will never be shaken?
5. What is the best sign for us that God cares?
6. What might it mean to pour out your heart to God? Have you done that? Under what circumstances?
7. If people don't turn to God, where else will they look for help? What is the message of vv9-10?
8. Power without love is? Love without power is?

Note - v12b - David's assurance that those seeking to do him harm will meet justice.

DELIGHT IN YOUR WEAKNESS

Read Psalm 2 Corinthians 12:7b-10

9. Why do you think the Lord said 'no' to Paul's request to take his 'thorn in the side'?
 10. What do you think the Lord meant by 'my grace is sufficient for you'?
 11. How is God's power made perfect in our weakness?
 12. Why could Paul - why can we - boast in weakness?
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13. A Christian friend from church says to when facing challenging circumstances, "I'm just not sure God cares about me anymore". How would you begin to encourage her?
 14. What will you take away from this message/these passages?
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Pray that in challenging circumstances, we might learn to run to our fortress and delight in our weakness. Pray that we'll be able to offer encouragement to any one we know who feels that God no longer cares.

Date: 25th August
Services: 730, 930 Tewanin
Series: Dear God
Title: Sometimes I'm not sure if you care
Passage: Psalm 62, 2 Corinthians 12

Outline:

1. **Run to your fortress**
2. **Delight in your weakness**

Introduction

- “Dear God, sometimes, I’m not sure if you care”
- I could almost guarantee we have **all** felt - at some point or another - that God doesn’t **care** about our **situation**; or that if he did **once**, he doesn’t anymore.
- While sometimes such feelings are related to a **medical** episode of **depression**, it is not **necessarily** the case.
- We can feel this way when it seems our **prayers** have been **unanswered**, when we are doing it tough **financially**, when facing a difficult **family** situation, when we’ve lost our **job**, or we are going through a **time** when **nothing** ever seems to go **right**. /
- **Where** do we turn when we’re not sure if God **cares**?
- We turn again to the **Scriptures** and we draw on the **facts**, to **override** our **feelings**. //
- If **today**, you feel like saying ‘Dear God, sometimes I’m not sure if you care’, here is what I **suggest**:
 1. **Run to your fortress**
 2. **Delight in your weakness**

1. RUN TO YOUR FORTRESS

- Let’s have a look at Psalm 62 and learn again from King **David** – at a time when he may well have been thinking – “*I’m not sure if you care*”.
- Look with me first at vv3-4 as they are the **context** for this Psalm. David is talking both **TO** his enemies and **ABOUT** his enemies

How long will you assault me?

*Would all of you throw me down –
this leaning wall, this tottering fence?*

⁴*Surely they intend to topple me
from my lofty place;
they take delight in lies.*

*With their mouths they bless,
but in their hearts they curse.^[4]*

- He is obviously under **serious attack**, as he was many times during his life.
- He **challenges** his enemies, by asking them for how long will they continue to **attack** him.
- Will they throw him **down** though he is but a **leaning wall**?
- That is, he is in a weak and vulnerable state.
- It would not take much to win **victory** over him.
- He sees in his enemies, an **intent** to **knock him flat**
- He observes their **lies** and their **hypocrisy**: With their **mouths** they **bless**, but in their **hearts**, they **curse**.
- David was just **hanging on**. //
- His very **life** is at stake. His enemies are **lying hypocrites**. He’s at **breaking point** - on the **brink** of **collapse**.
- “**Dear God, sometimes I’m not sure if you care!**” . //
- Have **you** had times in your life like that?
- You feel like you’re at your **wits end**!

- People are **fighting** you – and they are **lying hypocrites**... and it wouldn't take too much for them to push you over the **edge**. //
- Where was **God** in all this?
- Didn't he **care**? ///

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- So that's the **context** – that's what David is **facing**. It's **tough** and it's **hard**. //
 - But note how David **starts** the Psalm!!
 - Despite all that's going on in **vv3-4** – **despite** that being **so hard** and **so painful**... where does David **start**?
 - By talking to **himself**...
 - Vv1-2 – have a look with me – *Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.*
 - His **enemies** may be intent on his **downfall**... “they intend to topple me” he says – but the reality is, he's finding **rest in God**... “he is my **rock** and my **salvation**” ... “he is my **fortress**, I will never be **shaken**”.
 - That takes quite some **doing** doesn't it? //
 - To face a **very challenging situation** – **whatever it may be and stare it down and say** – “well you may want to bring me **down**... But **God** is my **fortress**, I will **never** be **shaken**”. //
 - I've seen people do that here at church.
 - **Fiona** in the office – her husband **Wayne** – **brutal** facial surgery last year followed by a **massive radiotherapy** schedule...
 - '**God is my fortress, I will never be shaken**'
 - When **Cassie** died 6 weeks ago... Steve texted me and said – '**she** is with **God** and I am at **peace** with **that**'.
 - **God is my fortress, I will not be shaken.**
 - After a time, Ian Dredge, facing his sad situation, came to claim '**God is my fortress, I will not be shaken**'. //
 - You may **well** say – 'God – I don't **know** if you **care**' // care about my **health**, my **finances**, what I'm **accused** of... but in end, we have **nowhere** else to **turn**... /
 - And God as **rock** – on whom we can stand **strong** and **sure**... and our **fortress** – who we can run to for **refuge** and **protection** – he is our **only hope**. /
 - Ultimately it is the **cross** of our **Lord Jesus Christ**, and the **salvation** that is ours through **God's mercy**, that demonstrates to us in a **very powerful way**, that even if at times we don't **FEEL** like God cares, we must **counsel** ourselves to find **rest in God alone**. //
 - How are **you today**?
 - **Doubting** God **cares**?
 - Look **again** to Jesus' **death** and **resurrection** and see God **caring** for you in the most **profound way possible!**
 - For God **SO** loved **YOU**, that he gave his one and only Son, so that if you **believe** in **him** you will not **perish** but have **eternal life**. //
 - **That** is how much he **cares!** /

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- Do you ever **talk** to yourself?
 - Well, you know what some say that is a sign of!!
 - However, there **are** times we need to give ourselves a good **talking** to!
 -and wondering whether or not the God of the universe **cares** about us, / is **one** of those **times**.
 - David talks to **himself** in these verses – and then talks to **his people**.
 - Have a look with me at v5 - “*Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.*”
 - He urges his **soul** to be **still** before God.

- In the face of **enemies** and in the face of **uncertainty**, he urges himself to **trust God**.
- Note that he announced this to **us** in **v2** and now he is reminding **himself** of the very same truths – v5 – *Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.* //
- As a preacher, I often need to preach to **myself**, that which I proclaim to **others**, and that is what David is doing here.
- The sense of “resting in God” here is actually being **silent before God**. //
- Not rushing to him with loads of **requests**, but simply **waiting** on him in **silence**.
- And in so doing, David will find God to be a **fortress** and in turn, will not be **shaken**.
- It was right for David to speak **frankly** of the traitors and their plots in the opening verses.
- But **now** it is David’s wisdom not to **brood** on them; but to fill his thoughts with **God**.
- Now in v8, (have a look), he commends what he is doing, to us.
- What God has been to **him** / God can be for **others**.
- *Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.*
- What **he** has found in **this** crisis, is something to draw from in **other** crises and something **WE** should draw from too. /
- What ought we do when we wonder whether or not God **cares**?
- We should **pour out our hearts to him!** /
- Note that we see the **two most significant things** we can do in prayer when we are **struggling**:
- we need both to **wait on him in silence** (ie to rest in him)
- **AND pour out our hearts to him.** /
- **Pouring out our hearts** will result in **resting in him** and **resting in him** will lead to **pouring out our hearts to him** all the more! /
- When did you last **rest** in **God** – ie... just sit in **silence** with **him**...? /
- When did you last pour out your **heart** to **him**? **Openly; honestly**...
- We’ve done a bit of **both** this year haven’t we?
- We’ve both sat in silence **AND** poured out our hearts – when **Cassie** was so **ill**;
- ... I’m sure many a time, **Vernon** both sat in **silence** and poured out her **heart** about **Graham**...
- And when **Sue Weeden** died suddenly... we sat in **silence** and then **poured** out our **hearts**... //
- And **YOU** today?
- With whatever is **troubling you** – with whatever is causing you to **question** whether or not God **cares**...
- ...here’s an **invitation** – to **rest** in **God** – to sit in **silence** with him – and to pour out your **hearts** to him...
-and as you **do** – you will find that he is your **rock** – your **salvation** – your **fortress** – and that you will **not be shaken!!** //

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- Let me ask you – if people **don’t** turn to God for help in a time of need, where **else** do they **turn**?
 - What David does toward the end of this Psalm, is give a **review** – a **scathing review** – of the **alternatives** of turning to **God** for **refuge** and **help**...
 - Some people for example – will look to only to other **people** – people of **power**, people who are **financial** or **influential**...
 - And what David says about people is a bit of **shock**... have a look with me at v9 – *Surely the lowborn are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie. If weighed on the balance, they are nothing; together they are only a breath.*
 - Every translator struggles to portray what is understood by ‘**lowborn**’ and ‘**highborn**’.
 - Hebraic poetry often makes use of different words meaning the same thing, simply for **emphasis** using **repetition**.

- The words translated 'lowborn' and 'highborn' are simply two different words for 'man'.
- So he's really **simply** saying: '**mankind** is but a **breath**; **mankind** is but a **lie**.'
- He's making the point that **human beings** (generally speaking – and when compared to God) have **nothing to offer**.
- We would be mad to put our **hope in** or try and find our **rest** in them – **alone!**
- Where **else** do people look for help and comfort when everything is hard?
- In **greed and wealth!** What does David have to say about **them**? *Do not trust in extortion or put vain hope in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.*
- Wealth and riches – whether gained **illegally** or through honest **business success** – will **never satisfy** and will never give, what **God** can **give**.
- They will be **shaky ground** on which to **depend** – compared to **God the rock...**
- The **financial markets** over the last few weeks have **demonstrated this!!**
- In the final verses, David reminds himself – and us – that power **only** belongs to **God** and to **no one** else and **nothing else!**
- Have a look with me at v11 – *One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: 'Power belongs to you, God, and with you, Lord, is unfailing love'*
- Isn't that **beautiful?**
- That is why David was **so** determined to trust in **God** and **God alone**.
- David **refused** therefore, to look for strength anywhere **else**.
- Yet even though all **power** belongs to God, he is also the one with **unfailing love** for us!
- God is **strong** and God is **loving!**
- Someone has said: "**Power** without **love** is **brutality** and **love** without **power** is **weakness!**" /// God has **both!**
- "Dear God", you may have come here this morning thinking, "**Dear God**, I'm not **sure** if you **care**"...
- But I hope you have seen by **now** – that in fact our **great God** is the **only** one we can **run to, sit with**, pour out our **hearts** to... and that when we **run** to him as our **fortress**, we will not be **shaken**. //

2. DELIGHT IN YOUR WEAKNESS

- Much more **briefly**... from 2 Corinthians 12 – will you turn there with me now please?
- The Apostle Paul – when he had this thorn in the **side** – must have **wondered** sometimes, whether God **cared**.
- Have a look at v7b – and we'll remind ourselves of these verses again - *In order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*
- We don't know what his 'thorn in the side' was... but it wasn't **good** and he pleads with God to **take it away... three times!!** /
- God said *My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*
- I **won't** take away the thorn in your side... but you **will find** that my **grace** is **sufficient** for you...
- Now this is a specific instance with the apostle Paul...
- But I'm confident from what we know of God.. that the principle is **transferable** to **us**...
- There may be something in **your** life that you're facing right now... and you've asked God to **take it away...** //
- And **perhaps** – – his answer to **YOU** is – *my grace is sufficient...*
- That **medical challenge** you're facing right now – **my grace is sufficient**
- That **family challenge** – **my grace is sufficient**
- That burden of **grief** you carry – **my grace is sufficient**

- That **terrible week** at home such as Julia shared last week – **my grace is sufficient...**
- That is – if you **turn** to him – pour out your **hearts** to him – **rest** in him – run to him as a **fortress** – his **love** – his **power** – his **peace** – his **presence** – will see you through **YOUR** thorn in the **flesh...**!
- And **THEN** – even though you are **weak** – you will be **strong!**
- It seems an **absurdity** doesn't it, that we would **boast** or **delight** in our **weaknesses...** but **Paul** says he **does!** – *why?* // – because when he is **weak** – then he is **strong...**
- That is, when he is **weak**, and therefore **runs** to God and leans on him and **depends** on the riches of **grace...** then he is **STRONG>>>.....!!**
- **And** that can be **your** testimony **too...**
- When you **feel** like God doesn't **care...** instead of running **away** from him at that moment – turn and run **TO** him... **rest** in him – pour out your **hearts** to him – and then feel his loving **embrace** and his strong **arms** – and his **rock** to stand on – so you will be **strong** – and not be **shaken!!**

- Yes – sometimes it may *feel* like God doesn't **care**.
- But our feeling are unreliable... and nothing could be **further** from the **truth**.
- For Jesus' **death** and **resurrection** for you, is the **sure sign** he cared for you at your **deepest** point of **need...**
- It's the **beautiful reminder** that he is on our **side**
- ...and that you **should turn** and **run** to **him** every **day** ...and especially when life gets **tough....** //
- I will **boast** all the more about my **weaknesses** says Paul, so that Christ's **power** may rest on **me**
- For when I am **weak**, then I am **strong**.