



Summer Song

Part 4 – Psalm 3

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It's always good to be at Woodland Hills Family Church. Ted and Amy are great friends. We went to dinner and I think maybe in all the times we've been to dinner, it's the first time Ted bought my dinner. We actually did the little swap this week. He is preaching at my church this morning and my church got the better end of that deal. So we're glad that you're here.

Ted and Amy are great friends and I'm going to tell you something that you already know. Sometimes when you are in it all the time, it's hard to see. You are greatly blessed with your pastor and his family. There are a lot of pastors who pretend to walk with Jesus. There are a lot of pastors who pretend to love their family and then sacrifice their kids on the altar of ministry all the time. You don't have that. You have a pastor who loves the Lord with all of his heart and loves his family and takes great care of his church. And I know you're here in Branson so you see it every single week, but I'm all over the place all the time. You are uniquely blessed in the pastor that God has given you and I hope you receive that as a gift from the Lord.

There are times in your life when you need a good friend. I don't know if you've walked through any of those times recently, but Meredith and I have been walking, for the last five weeks, through this journey. I have four kids: Katherine is 15, Eli is 13, Benjamin is 11, and Lemley is 9. So I have four kids and one wife. My second child, Elijah, when he was first born – in fact he was just a few weeks old – they told us he had a murmur in his heart. A few weeks later, the pediatrician said that if that murmur was still there at four months of age, he wanted us to see a cardiologist.

We lived in Northwest Arkansas at the time. He told us we would need to drive to Little Rock and see a pediatric cardiologist. We did that when he was four months old and the cardiologist told us it was a murmur and that was no big deal, but they found something else. They found this extra electrical pathway in his heart called WPW. It stands for Wolf Parkinson White. It's a condition that can cause the heart to race and get way out of sync and beat into tachycardia. He said "It may never show up; he could grow out of it and it may be asymptomatic his whole life. If it does come around there is medication that we could give and if the medication doesn't work, there is a surgery that we could do, a procedure where we go in and take care of his heart."

They told us when he was four months old that if it's going to show up, it would play out somewhere around 13 years old. On Saturday, May 30th, Eli played his third basketball game between breakfast and lunch. In the third game, he came over to the sideline during a time out. After the time out, he turned and looked at the coach. His name is Tyler. He looked at Tyler... I'm the assistant coach so I'm standing

there in the huddle when Eli turned and said "I need a sub." He's 13 years old and I don't remember one time him ever saying "I need a sub" in any of the sports he has ever played.

In this gymnasium that we are playing the basketball tournament in, there were these cubbies, like kids would put books in, on the wall behind the bench. So Eli sat down on the bench and then put his head back in the cubby. He turned as white as your t-shirt and his eyes got really big around and all of the sudden, he went into a seizure. If I hadn't been there to grab him out of that cubby, he would have beaten his head around like a ping pong ball in that cubby.

Luckily, by the grace of God, my brother-in-law, who is a physician, was at that game. It's the only game this year that he came to watch Eli play basketball. Because he was there, he was able to help Eli. He was able to massage the carotid artery and get him out of the seizure, but his heart was beating somewhere between 300 and 400 beats a minute which is extremely dangerous. I just have to tell you that as a dad... This is the first I've talked about this and that's part of the privilege... I feel like I'm at home at Woodland Hills. In fact, I was talking to some guys on our staff this morning and I was telling them to give Ted a hard time. They asked what I was preaching this morning. I told them it was a brand new message. I've never preached it before and we're in a series called *Summer Song* so I'm preaching a Psalm. They asked if I was going to share it with the church. I told them "Yeah, I'm going to give birth to it today and if it's not breach, I'll preach it at home one day."

Watching your kid in a seizure like that and to be completely unconscious, etc... We knew what it was almost immediately because we'd seen a cardiologist every year for his whole 13 years of life. We got the cardiologist on the phone and he talked to my brother-in-law. He was able to shock his heart out of that racing arrhythmia.

We ended up seeing our cardiologist on Monday morning and he said it was time to do the procedure. He said the first occasion was so severe that we have to just do the surgery. So we started barking up trees with doctors. He recommended an adult doctor who does this. Quite honestly, I scared the doctor. When we met with him, I just asked him a bunch of questions. In fact, I just looked at him and said "Who is the Michael Jordan of this procedure? And I don't mean in Oklahoma because he's probably not in Oklahoma." You understand that, right? Because he's not in Missouri either and he's certainly not in Branson.

Ted and I were on the boat yesterday, singing God Bless America with Whitney Houston. My wife said "I mourn Whitney's death." So we started talking about whose death we mourn.

Ted said "I mourn Elvis."

I said "That's weird, Ted."

He said "No, because he would be in Branson now if he were still alive."

I said, "Yeah, but you'd have to go to three services, right?"

There are times in life where you need a good friend. So we are searching the country for the Michael Jordan of this procedure. Today I want to talk to you out of Psalms 3 in this series called *Summer Song*. If you have your Bibles, flip over to Psalms 3. We are going to read it together and we'll stop and we'll talk and we'll pause every place that the Lord leads us to do that. By the way, this is one of fourteen of the Psalms that are actually linked to actual events in David's life.

This one is attached to a story out of David's life and it's about the story where his third son, Absalom (Avshalom) is trying to overcome his dad. He's trying to take over the kingdom. He has concocted this four year plan to remove his father from the throne and to take the throne for himself. You can read about that in 1 Samuel. So he has done this and he has lifted himself up as the king and created support and rallied support and turned the hearts of the people away from his dad and away from the King, the anointed one of God, to himself. This is the story that is playing out as David writes this psalm.

While his troubles were unbelievably monumental, David, as we will see in this Psalm, is finding peace in the Lord and he's finding strength in the Lord. In fact, one of the commentators that I read this week is Steven Lawson. Listen to what he says about Psalm 3. He says *"This is a hymn of individual grief and sorrow, written to paint a clear picture of what triumphant faith looks like when it's tested by the fires of adversity."*

I don't know if you've ever felt like your faith has been tested and that your faith was at risk for a moment, but this is a Psalm about that. An interesting fact... This is the first Psalm that the word *selah* appears. If you've read the Psalms ever, you've read that word *selah* in the middle of Psalms. It's a word that comes completely from music and from the world of songs. Where the composer puts in a *selah*, he means I want you to pause and I want you to break and I want you to rest and I want you to hush.

We have family friends who named one of their little daughters *Selah* and I tell her all the time "Your name means hush." I don't actually tell her that. But ever musician knows the importance of that. If you're a musician, you understand how important it is to pause, to take a breath, and to let the music build.

Look at Verse 1. ***1 LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me!***

I don't know if you ever feel that your foes are multiplying and that they are rising up against you. Listen, we have a very real enemy. Part of my prayer for you this week is that God would awaken you to the fact that you have a real enemy who hates your guts. Why does he hate you so desperately? He hates you because he hates God and he hates what God loves and you are what God loves and so he hates you and he's after you.

Periodically, I will get a call about another pastor who has fallen into some sort of sexual immorality or some sort of greed or lust of money or something, some tragedy. When I get those calls, I end up having conversations with people and I'm talking with people and I'm praying with people. I've talked to many pastors over the years.

What's interesting to me is that in those conversations, I have found most people think in those scenarios that the guy just couldn't keep himself clean and that he just couldn't keep himself out of trouble. I just want to say to you that line of thinking is incredibly naïve. Do you think that a man of God, somewhere early in his ministry just said "Hey, I'm going to do X number of years of ministry and then somewhere down the road, I'm just going to torpedo the whole thing. I'm just going to have an affair and throw this whole thing into the garbage and just ruin my testimony and ruin my family and ruin the church and ruin the ministry."

These guys have been picked off by a very real enemy who has plotted the very destruction of that man, his family, and his ministry. I just want to say to you that man, just like you, has a very real enemy. In most cases, those kinds of disasters were long, subtle assignments where the enemy has come after the child of God. Usually, that subtle assignment is so long that it is designed to wear down the defense of the child of God. Usually, it's not through the battle as much as it is through boredom where the child of God has no cause to fight for and Satan, the father of lies, has come to kill, steal, and destroy. That's the M.O., according to scriptures, why he has come.

What I want you to hear today is that he studies you and he knows you and he is plotting against you. He knows every single one of your weaknesses and he will set up deliberate plans to trip you up and to go after those that you love. In fact, every man in the room, I would say to you if there was somebody with skin on doing that to the ones you love and doing that to your family, you would take him out. And in a very real sense, there is an enemy that's way more real than somebody with skin on that's trying to take you out and trying to take your family out and trying to take those that you love out and everything that matters to you.

In Chapter 5, Verse 8 of his first book, Peter tells us that your enemy... Not just Jesus' enemy, but your enemy, the devil, is like a roaming lion, seeking whom he may devour. The bottom line is that you and I need to wake up to the fact that we have a very real enemy. David was in the midst of physical enemies, but he understood that this was a spiritual battle that was going on.

2 Many are saying of me, "God will not deliver him."

Selah... Break and pause and rest for a moment. In those moments where you hear the taunt of the enemy that God's not going to come through and that God is not going to rescue you and God is not going to be there for you, just rest for a moment. The forces for opposition for David, his son's allies and armies, had run him out of the palace and now they had not only run him out of the palace, they had run him out of town. They had surrounded him and they were taunting him and the taunt was "You have not hope, David, of ever being rescued by God." This arrogant taunt was designed to say "God has abandoned you, David."

I don't know if you've ever heard the taunts of the enemy that would declare to you that God is not there for you, and God is not going to come through for you, that he's abandoned you. I've heard these voices many times in the middle of the night that have said "Alex, your son's going to die." Many times over the last 30 days I've heard that in my spirit and I've heard that in my mind. I've wrestled with that and I've asked God, "Is that you saying that?" I've come to the conclusion that is not God saying that.

That's not from the Lord and I certainly didn't make that up. That's not my thought. So if it's not God and it's not me, there is only one option left. It's a very real enemy who is taunting me as a child of God and trying to get me to believe that God doesn't care or God's not there. The Bible refers to him as the Prince of the Air that he can twist things in the air in the way that we hear things. The Bible refers to him as the Accuser of the Brethren that he comes after the children of God and attacks.

2 Many are saying of me, "God will not deliver him." 3 But you, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high.

In the midst of this opposition, David found comfort in the character of God and the character of who God is. He uses the metaphor of a shield in saying "God is my shield and he is the true source of my protection. In the midst of the taunts, God is my protector." In fact, the Psalmists, over and over and over again, not just David, but others, use the metaphor of a shield to talk about God and to say that he is the one who will protect us.

In Chapter 7, Verse 10, it says "God is my shield, saving those whose hearts are true and right." In Psalm 18: 2 it says "The Lord is my rock and my fortress, he's my savior, my God is my rock in whom I find protection." Listen, he is my shield, the power that saves me, and the place of safety. In the same chapter, Verse 30, "God's way is perfect and all the Lord's promises prove true. He is the shield for all who look to him for protection." Chapter 28, Verse 7 says "The Lord is my strength and my shield, I will trust him with all of my heart. He helps me and my heart is filled with joy."

But the way, when your kid is walking through heart issues, you notice the word *heart* in worship songs and you notice the word *heart* in scripture and it has a whole new meaning to you. Psalm 119, Verse 114 says "I burst out in songs of thanksgiving; you are my refuge and my shield. You word is the source of my hope."

In Ephesians 6, the Bible tells us Paul teaches us to put on the full armor of God. And in Verse 13, it says "...and take up the shield of faith." In the King James Version, there is a phrase in there that I love that we leave out sometimes that says "...above all, take up the shield of faith." It's "above all" in a couple of ways. It's above in that you take the shield up and put it in front of all the rest of the armor. You put the shield in front of or above all the rest of the armor. The shield is the armor's armor. A soldier can take a blow to the helmet or a blow to the chest and be injured or even killed even with a helmet on or a breastplate one.

The design is for the shield to take on the fiery darts, to take on the arrows so they never even reach the rest of the armor. And it's above all not that you put it out in front of all, but it's also above all in that I think it's perhaps the most important piece of the armor. Why? It's because the fiercest battles you and I will ever fight will deal with our faith. If the enemy can get us to believe that God's ways and God are not best and not working for us and that God is not going to come through and that God is not going to rescue us... if the enemy can get us to doubt God and to destroy our faith, then he knows we won't stand very long.

Do you know what the very first words of the devil are in the Bible? It's what he says to Eve. Think about what he said to Eve. He says "Did God really say..." Do you see where the attack is? The attack is at her faith and believing God. I live in a city where lots of people are believing God for... Fill in the blank. I would just say to you today I'm not interested in people who are believing God for anything. I'm interested in a group of people who are believing God and believing in God and believing what God says and who God is. "Did God really say..." is the way Satan attacks the children of God. What he does is use a shovel of deceit to sow doubt in the heart of the children of God. We need him to be our shield and we need him to defend us and we need to believe in God.

David was confident that God was going to restore him and restore the throne. Look at that phrase "lift up my head." He's the one that lifts up my head. That's the expression that God's going to return dignity. You don't need to look at the ground like a beggar would somewhere. You know that passage of scripture where Peter and John are wandering into the gate beautiful and the beggar is sitting there. Then they have the conversation and one of the phrases that they say to him is "Look at me. You don't have to look at the ground and you don't have to walk with a lack of dignity. Lift your head and look me in the eyes." In this passage of scripture, he's saying "He's going to lift my head." By the way, that's the exact same Hebrew word that's found in Genesis 40 where Joseph tells the cupbearer that in a few days the Pharaoh is going to lift his head, that he's going to restore him to his position and to his place of dignity.

God can't be absent. I can be absent. You can be absent. Our spouse can be absent. Our employer can be absent, but God can't be absent. That's one of the things God just can't do because he is omnipresent and by the way, he can't be powerless either because he is omnipotent.

Meredith and I have been powerless multiple days in this whole scenario with Eli and his heart. Watching this play out, there is nothing we can do. In fact, I've said to Meredith many times... I don't know if she always likes how I bring things down to the bottom line, but I do that. I just said to her "Honey, the only dog we have in this is choosing the doctor. Once we choose the doctor, it's all in God's hands and we are out. We can't do anything else. We don't know anything about that procedure. We don't know anything about that equipment. We've not gone to medical school. We can't figure any of this out. We just pick the doctor."

By the way, as you walk through a journey of a health issue with a family member, there is this thing that is wound up; there is this hill that you are climbing. Early on in the process, I told Meredith "We will not be at the peak of that crest and that hill until they roll them into the procedure. And just know that our emotions are going to continually be climbing and we're going to be rising and we are going to be dealing with this until they wheel him away and that will be the peak of this journey as they take him into the room."

When we pray... I've found great confidence in God as we've prayed and we've talked to him through this process. Many times I've said to God "God, we're not telling you about Eli because you don't know. We're telling you about Eli because you told us to cast our care on you." We don't pray and tell God something he doesn't know. We pray because he told us to and he told us to cast our cares on him and

to take our heart and put it into his hands. There's a principle all throughout scripture that we would cry out to God and say "God, would you help me?"

I used to do dozens of youth camps and we just finished Family Kamp at Kanakuk this week. One of my favorite places to do camp is outside a place called Cleveland, Tennessee, in the Smokey Mountains on the Ocoee River. It's called Horn's Creek Camp. A lot of life stories have played out for me at this place called Horn's Creek. The Ocoee River is where they did the rapids in the 1996 Olympics when it was in Atlanta. The upper Ocoee is like class four and five rapids, where you and I would die. They would never let us up there. But in the lower Ocoee, you can do class one, two, and three rapids. In fact, there's one four rapid.

I don't know if you've ever been river rafting. It's crazy. They get this kid that's just cut out of stone. He's just like abs on abs which I didn't even know you had. They have cut-off Daisy Dukes on and they rarely speak English. They're explaining to you the rules on land before you ever get in the water. You put this orange life vest on that's like from 1945. It just has this thing that goes around your neck, and they give you a helmet. So you've got your helmet on and your life vest on in the dirt. You get in the boat on dirt and they give you an oar and they are explaining to you what to do and how to hold on and all that.

Then he goes through this process and he says "You don't want to fall out of the boat." Captain Obvious, right? There's a chance you could fall out? He says "Yeah, if you fall out of the boat..." How many of you have been rafting before? What's the first rule when you fall out of the boat? You bring your feet up. You don't put your feet down on the bottom of the river because the current is so swift and you could get your foot caught in a rock or a crevice under the water and you could break an ankle or worse yet, you could get trapped and the current would be strong enough to push you under water and you would drown. So you have to get your feet up. In fact, you put your knees at your ears is what they say. Then you put your feet down stream. You don't go down backwards; you need to be able to see what's coming. In fact, if you're going to hit a tree or what they call a *strainer* which is limbs and stuff that acts like a strainer in the water... You don't want to get sucked into a strainer, ever, so you want to be able to kick off of that when you're going down through it.

So they go through all of this journey and they explain what you do and eventually they will get you out of the water. Then he starts naming the rapids. They all have names. The class four that the civilians are allowed to use... Listen to what they named it. They named it Hells Hole. That's the name of the rapid. The first time he said it, it was as if demons entered him by the way he said it. "You don't want to fall out of the boat in Hells Hole. And if you fall out of the boat in Hells Hole, it's going to be a problem."

He goes through and describes all of this. He said "You will be sucked under the water if you fall out in this class four rapid." Here's what he said which is just genius. He said "When you go under the water, don't panic." I wish I was videoing these instructions because it is so funny. He said "You'll be under the water about three minutes, but don't panic because if you panic, you will drown." He said "Just relax and go with the current and then several hundred yards downstream, the water will pop you up and the life vest will do its job." So if you fall out of the boat in Hell's Hole, don't panic. You'll go underwater and hundreds of yards later, you will pop back up.

Well I'm the camp pastor so I'm in one of the first boats. I'm with the guy that is the video crew and the youth pastor. We finished and we got in the car and drove back up the road that parallels the river. We pull in next to the river and we're trying to find a vantage point to get the footage from. Obviously the best place to get footage is at Hell's Hole. We pull in next to these two lifeguards. It's not really fair to call them lifeguards because it's really a whole lot like Baywatch meets Dukes of Hazard. They were there on either side of the river with their Daisy Dukes on and they've got these buoy things on around their peccs with ropes and orange buoys.

So we're sitting there watching them and at Hell's Hole. What's funny about it was they were eating deviled ham sandwiches at Hell's Hole. So we're watching these guys play lifeguard and the boat is coming down and as the boat is coming down... Finally... About six boats go by and this little girl about 13 years old falls out of the boat. She lets out a squeal and then the sound stops abruptly. Sure enough, she is under water and they don't move. I'm thinking *What's your job. You work for the government; you're supposed to do something, right?* They're just sitting there watching this thing play out. Sure enough, she pops back out of the water and she just floats right down the middle of the river out of sight.

A few minutes later, a lady in her late 50s or early 60s falls out of the boat and it sounded like "HEL..." then the sound stopped abruptly as she went under the water. All of the sudden, these guys moved into action. One guy threw something to the guy across the river and he caught it and there is now a zip line created over the river. He hooked something on and he zipped right down to the river. He pulled her out of the water... I mean it happened in like eight seconds. It looked like a rodeo thing. The way that they got her out of that water and onto the sandbar on the other side of the water in just a few seconds... I thought that was the coolest thing I'd ever seen. Then I looked at the video guy and said "Did you get that?" He's holding the camera down by his side, shaking his head. I told them they had to do that again. He said it would happen again.

So we're sitting there watching and a few minutes later, a teenage boy falls out of the boat. You hear a yell that abruptly stops. Then here comes this man and he falls out. You hear "HEL..." then the sound stops. And they did it again. So after 30 to 40 minutes of shooting this footage with all these boats going by, I asked the guy "You have to explain this to me. Sometimes you watch them and sometimes you help them. How on earth do you make that decision?"

He said "It's very simple. There are two words. Those words are "Help me." He said "When we hear yelling and squealing, we just assume they are having fun." In fact, he said "When you get on a roller coaster, people hear the yelling and they don't get them off the roller coaster. You paid to have fun and we're just letting you have fun. But there are two words that kick us into action and every time we hear those words, even if it's just part of the first word, we move into action."

I thought what an incredible spiritual truth. If the children of God would learn to lean on God and say "God, help me in this moment..." In this story, you see this playing out.

Look at Verse 4. ***I call out to the LORD, and he answers me from his holy mountain.*** Selah... rest. That phrase "from his holy mountain" is over and over in scripture. That's why God instructed the temple be

built on a mountain. That's where the high place is and you are to see it from all areas and all directions and over and over in the Psalms. Psalms 15: 1 says "Who may worship you, Lord, in your sanctuary? Who may enter your presence on your holy hill?"

In battle, higher ground is such an incredible advantage. About a month ago, I took my 11 year old to play paint ball with his soccer team. They set up all these scenarios. These people who set up these scenarios need counseling. One of the scenarios is called "The Slaughter House." Somehow I got volunteered to be in The Slaughter House. I should have known better.

The Slaughter House is downhill from every direction. They've got these little boards that are like corners of a home or something, but they designed The Slaughter House with sadomasochism in mind in that no matter which board you're hiding behind, you are exposed from at least two angles. So you feel like you're hiding one way, but they can shoot you in the back. Or you feel like you're hiding here, but they can shoot you in one side or the other side.

Nobody survives in The Slaughter House because the enemy is descending into this hole from higher ground where they see you and you don't see them. I got shot in like six seconds in The Slaughter House by a bunch of 10 year old boys. I'm walking out of the slaughter house with my gun going "I've been hit, I've been hit," and these two ten year old boys shot me three times in the stomach and one shot me two times in the back. I almost went bananas. I almost unloaded on these kids but I thought *I'm a pastor and they know it.*

There is always advantage from being at the higher ground. Higher ground always wins. Not only is God on and in the highest ground possible, his ways are higher than our ways and greater than our ways and when we can't see his hand, we have to trust his heart.

5 I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me. The reason for David's burst of confidence in Verse 3 is expressed here in Verses 4 and 5. God has sustained him through the night against his enemies and this protection that God gave him was a token of the completed deliverance that he was expecting. The Hebrew tenses in these verbs... You can read them in the English present tense, but it's probably better to translate it in the past tense. I cried to the Lord and he answered me. Selah... There is great faith in resting before the Lord. I say this to people all the time. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is take a nap and rest in the presence of the Lord.

At this Family Kamp, I watched parents of babies wrestle their kids into naps all week long and I was like *I wish somebody would wrestle me into a nap.*

6 I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side. On the basis of this deliverance, David is expressing the absence of fear over the thousands who stand against him on every side. For me and you, rarely will it ever be tens of thousands, right? But even if it were, in that moment, we could declare "I will not fear."

One of the most famous verses in scriptures is Psalm 23. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil," David declared. He wrote that Psalms is in the path down from Jerusalem to Jericho. You're descending on that road. I've been on that road many times. You're walking through these Middle Eastern cliffs and crevices. It's in those crevices that bandits and robbers would hide. There were hills on one side where the sun would cast its bright Middle Eastern heat. There would be a shadow cast by the other hills onto this valley which is why they called it the valley of the shadow of death. The shadow was cast and in the dark shadowed crevices and path and road, the bandits would come out and rob you. In fact, the story that Jesus told about the Good Samaritan was in this path and on this path. They came out and they robbed him and they stole from him and left him for dead.

As David is walking through that valley, he is saying "I will fear no evil. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death where the light appears not to be cast, where it's not bright, where there are those that are there to harm me and hurt me."

Arise, LORD! Deliver me, my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked.

Several years ago, my wife decided she wanted to be an urban farmer. I told her we did not meet on farmersonly.com and I wasn't interested. She said she wanted to raise chickens. In fact, Ted and Amy have followed suit. If they would have waited just a little longer, we would have given them all of our chickens. Now we have about eight. We've had 11 or 12 and the hawks have gotten some of them which we prayed for. My kids don't, but I do, privately. They are not here this morning so I can tell you the truth. But we get the eggs and it's fun. We have some beautiful ones and some lay brown eggs and some lay the blue Easter eggs. We have more eggs than we know what to do with. I'm always bringing them to the office and giving them away. The kids want to set up a stand and sell them, but nobody drives on our road, so nobody would buy them.

But for Katherine, my oldest, the 15 year old, it's like a root canal to have to go into the chicken coup. She says the chickens are mean and they bite her and come after her. We have some that go broody which means they sit on the eggs even though the eggs aren't fertilized. We don't have a rooster. When they're broody, their feathers all puff out and they'll peck at you a little bit when you try to get in there and get the eggs.

I'm like "Katherine, the chicken cannot hurt you."

"It's going to bite me."

"Honey, it doesn't have any teeth. It won't hurt if it bites you."

She doesn't know if she can trust me with the chickens because when she was about 4 or 5 years old, she played soccer. I can remember telling her to quit backing off from the ball when people kick it. I told her to just run up to it and it will hit her in the legs or the chest and it won't hurt. Finally, she trusted me and she ran up on a ball and this girl kicked it and sailed it right into her nose. Before she cried, she turned and looked at me in front of all the stands and said "Daddy, it hurt. You were wrong; it

hurt really bad.” Then she started crying and bleeding. So she’s not sure she can trust me when I say it’s not going to hurt because I told her one time at four or five year old soccer that it wouldn’t hurt.

When I was a kid, I used to hear traditional preachers say “The devil can bite you, but it won’t hurt because Jesus kicked his teeth in on the cross.” I heard that dozens of times as a teenager and as a college student and in early years of my faith and I just have to tell you when the devil bites me, it hurts. How many of you could testify to the fact that when you’ve been bit or struck by the devil, it hurt? I don’t know where that came from exactly. It sounds good in preaching it to say Jesus kicked his teeth out so he’s just gumming you. It doesn’t feel like he gumming me when he comes after me. And it doesn’t feel like he gumming me when he comes after my family.

In the Old Testament, when God was giving his children the Promised Land, he described the occupants and the enemies as quickly as he did the boundaries and the parameter. In fact, over and over again, he’s talking about all the “ites” that would be there and that they were going to have to go kick those “ites” out and they we going to have to destroy the “ites.”

I just want to say to you today that our personal promised land which is not heaven by the way; it’s here on earth. The place of grace that you and I would live in and dwell in is characterized by the presence of victory; they are not characterized by the absence of opposition. That’s not the promised land that God promised today. Besides that, victory requires an opponent. We will never take our place as more than conquerors with nothing to overcome. Victory does not come without opposition. All through the story, God gave his children the victory, but they had to go into fierce battle and they had to fight and they had to participate in the journey. Why? Probably one of the reasons was so that once they got it, they would be strong enough to keep it, but I think another reason was that his children would be able to experience the thrill of victory which only comes through a fierce battle. You don’t get really excited about beating a four year old at Sorry. It’s a fierce battle that you get really excited about.

Just like David and just like the Israelites, you have a promised land and I have a promised land and in that ground... Listen to me today. In that ground, the enemy lies and he is waiting there and if you are not occupying your promised land, rest assured the devil is. He is in it and he is on it and God has given it to you and he is calling you to go get it and to take it. Your enemy is standing on God-given ground, daring you to take it.

8 From the LORD comes deliverance.

One of the greatest attributes of anyone that I hire on our team is when I watch them give credit to their team. They’ll pass the credit down. They’ll say “this is the one who did it” and “you need to praise her” and “you need to tell him” and “you need to tell them” and “you need to reward them” and this process goes on and on. That’s a good boss. I want to declare to you today that my help comes from the Lord.

As David said that... Our help doesn’t come from doctors, our help doesn’t come from medicine, our help comes from God. God is the one that gives us our next breath and God is the one that gives us our next heartbeat. He’s the one that gave us science and he’s the one that gave us medicine.

We finally found a doctor in Houston, Texas at Texas Children's. We flew to meet with this doctor. His name is Dr. Kim. In Branson, you'll appreciate this. One of the redneck guys that I hang out with and have been disciplining the last few years... and I play golf with him... I mean this is off-the-charts redneck. We were playing golf and we were talking about this scenario and he said "Hey Pastor, let me just give you some advice. Don't use a white doctor." I told him I didn't understand what he was saying. He said "You've got to get an Asian. They're smarter." This was a true conversation. When I found out this doctor's name was Kim, I thought there was a pretty good chance.

We went to meet with him and we were sitting there talking to him and he said there was no reason for us to do an EKG or Echocardiogram; we were going to do the surgery the next day. We had tests that were a week old.

I said "Listen, as just a matter of faith, I really think you ought to do one."

He said "Why?"

I said "Because we have tens of thousands of people praying and we're praying that God would heal him and I don't want you going into his chest and into his heart if you don't need to. We've been praying that God would just heal him before you go in."

He kind of backed his stool up and said "Alex, listen, not as a matter of faith, but as a matter of medicine..." He started to walk down this path with me and I thought we were about to have conflict. I don't want to have conflict with a pediatric cardiologist who trained at John Hopkins and the Mayo. I don't want to have conflict. About five sentences in, he turned the corner and he said "Now, as a matter of faith..."

He began to tell me the story of an infant that he was working on the week before and as he went into this baby's heart, he discovered that God had already healed him and he was able to pull out and not have to do the procedure. Somehow, as a matter of just coincidence (maybe) he tells me the dad's name of this baby. He said "He's one of the worship pastors at our church." I asked him where he goes to church and he said "I go to Second Baptist Houston."

I said "Really? I know your pastor." He said this guy was one of our worship leaders. His name is Tyler Newberry. I said "Is that Phil Newberry's kid?"

He said "I don't know his dad's name."

I said "Is he from Memphis, Tennessee?"

He said "Yeah."

I said his dad is a lifelong friend. He was a youth pastor at Belleview in Memphis, Tennessee, and his son, Tyler, interned with us about 15 years ago as a worship leader. He's sitting there in Houston, Texas telling me this story. I didn't know this man until I met him. I didn't know anything about his faith. I

didn't know anything about his story and he's telling me about a kid who interned with our church about 15 years before his baby was healed by God. God just said "I got this."

The next morning, they wheeled Eli into that procedure. They told us it would probably take somewhere between eight and twelve hours. That's a long time. Sitting in that waiting room, every hour they would call. Every time they stopped his heart, they were required by law to call us and tell us. I told them to break the law; I didn't want to know. After the procedure which by the way took four hours, not twelve... As that doctor walked into that room to talk to us, he said "Listen, when we get in there from those five different angles, we have to administer electricity or drugs to get his heart to race so that we can see everything that it will do so that we can map it to find out where these electrodes are because there could be more than one."

He said "It typically takes somewhere between 30 and 90 minutes for somebody's heart to begin racing so that we can see." He said "Sometimes we stay there for hours before their heart will race to show us what it will do." He said "I've never seen that before, but your son's heart started going in seven seconds." He said "I've never seen anything less than 30 minutes. Usually, it's 90 plus minutes. In seven seconds his heart started racing." He said "We knew at that moment that this was the high, high, high risk tachycardia." He said "It's not just the one that makes the top of the heart race. This went into ventricular tachycardia which is what athletes drop dead from on football fields and basketball courts."

He said "We knew in that moment we had to go get it. His heart raced so fast and so quickly and so abruptly that we had to put the paddles on him to get him to stop. We knew at that moment, because of how high risk it was, we would have to go get it no matter where it is, no matter how high of a risk the location is... "They ended up determining that it was very high risk because it was in the septum of his heart under a whole mess of veins.

He said "Had you been anywhere other than a couple of places in the world, that pediatric cardiologist would have pulled out and sent you to one of those two or three places." He said "But you were here and we were able to navigate it and God guided our hands as we went in and, through those veins, we took care of those issues." He said "Your son will be fine. It's not just treated, it's fixed." And deliverance comes from the Lord.

8 From the LORD comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people.

God's willingness and God's desire to bless his people is perhaps the most repetitive theme in this book. Over and over and over, you see God's heart for his kids. Over and over and over, you see God's willingness to come to rescue his children.

David is confidently asking for complete deliverance from his enemies. Maybe, in Verse 7, David was saying that God had always destroyed his enemies so he is praying that he will destroy them again, but I think it's better to understand those verses as an expression of his confidence. He was so sure that God would destroy them that he prayed as if it had already happened.

There is a definition of faith that says "Believing it's so when it's not so in order for it to be so." Hebrews 11 tells us in Verse 1 "Faith is the assurance of the things not yet seen." I want to declare to you today that faith is the only thing that will close the gap between your theology and your reality. The Psalm is didactic in that he's trying to teach us a lesson. What is he trying to teach us? He's trying to teach us that deliverance comes from the Lord. Selah... Rest in the fact that deliverance comes from God. God is in the specialty of raising the dead. He is in the specialty of making the impossible possible. You do not have a need that exceeds the power of God. I believe faith is God's greatest and most favorite invitation for him to intercede in the lives of his children.

Would you pray with me all across the room? I just want to ask the question today before we dismiss... With nobody looking because I don't want to embarrass anybody. If you've never given your life to Jesus, Jesus has declared that today could be the day of salvation. Right where you're seated, if you want to give your life to Christ, I just want to invite you to pray with me. I'm going to ask you to pray it out loud. The Bible says if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.

As an act of encouragement, I'm going to ask those who have already given their life to Christ to pray it out loud with you, just as an encouragement to you this morning. So right where you are, if you want to trust Christ and give your life to him, would you just pray with me.

Dear God, I know I'm a sinner and today I ask you to come into my life to forgive me for all my sins. Jesus, come into my life to be my Lord. You call the shots in my life. Come in as my savior, my forgiver and the best way that I know how, I trust you alone to save me. Thank you for saving me. I receive you and I receive salvation.

If you just prayed that prayer for the first time in your life and you meant business, I want to encourage you to let somebody know that today. Just to say to somebody today "Hey, I prayed that and I meant it. I gave my life to Christ." There are men and women here who the reason they came to church today is to help you and to encourage you and to help you take your next steps in your new found faith journey.

Before we say amen and again with nobody looking, how many of you today would say "Pastor, my faith is being tested right now. I'm in a valley and it feels like the valley of the shadow of death. I'm walking through a very difficult scenario or scenarios and I need prayer." If that's you and that's your confession hold up your hand. If your hand went up, would you just stand up so I can see you? I want to pray over you.