

God's Rock that is Higher Than I

Argentine Mennonite Church
Kansas City, Kansas 7-11-21

Text: [Psalm 61:1-4](#)

- 1 Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer.
- 2 From the ends of the earth I call to you,
I call as my heart grows faint;
lead me to the rock that is higher than I.
- 3 For you have been my refuge,
a strong tower against the foe.
- 4 I long to dwell in your tent forever
and take refuge in the shelter of your wings.

NIV

Introduction:

- A. A part of human experience is the tragedy of seemingly insurmountable difficulty.
 1. There was an accident Wednesday at 37th & Silver. A car t-boned a pickup. Both vehicles were essential to the livelihood of the drivers, creating a tragedy of transportation and financial strain in their lives.
 2. We are in a Pandemic of Covid – its not over yet, not even with vaccinations.
 3. There is regular gun-violence in Kansas City – sometimes 3 or 4 shootings a day. Each of those represents tragedy in the lives of the shooters, the victims, and the families. Each death signifies the end of a life that was created “in the image of God.”
 4. Disruption of relationships and deep emotional pain pervades families and friends, tragically inflicting life-time division in those relationships.
 5. The number and variety of tragic events goes on.
 6. You would think that someone who is called a “friend of God” would be immune to such overwhelming tragedy, wouldn't you?
- B. But things were looking pretty dismal for king David when he wrote this Psalm.
 1. II Samuel 15 – 18 records the setting for the writing of this Psalm.
 2. It was a time of danger. David and his team were running for their lives.
 3. It was a time of despair.
 - a. Despair that his own son, Absalom, had undercut his authority and popularity with the people of Judah.
 - b. Then Absalom had set up his own kingdom in Hebron, and had set out to kill and destroy all who held allegiance to David, including his own father. It was common practice in the Middle East for a new king to kill all of the family and representatives of authority who could challenge his new position as he assumed power.
 4. Then some of David's most trusted friends had turned against him.
 - a. Ahithophel, one of David's trusted advisors, became a conspirator with Absalom.
 - b. Mephibosheth, his dear friend Johnathan's son, the late King Saul's grandson, had stayed behind in Jerusalem in hopes that, somehow, he could inherit the kingly position. He was the one who David had taken in as family, and had fed and housed.

- c. Some of David's military leaders opportunistically turned to Absalom.
- David's favored son now became his fiercest enemy.
 - 5. So, what do you do when everything seems to be going against you, even when you try to do everything right? David's reaction was to turn to the Lord in complete dependence.
- C. In all of his dismay and feelings of helplessness David recognized that God alone is able to deliver and protect him and his people.

Thesis: Regardless of our circumstances, or how hard things get, our God will provide the way through.

- **Let's look at some key points in David's life in this Psalm, to see how God led him through this tragedy:**
 - I. **David Sought God through THE PRESSURE He FACED:** v.2 " When my heart is overwhelmed ... " Not If – but when my heart is overwhelmed, and it will be.
 - A. What is it that frequently overwhelms us?
 - 1. There are circumstances and situations that are beyond our control. We didn't choose them to be what they are. We didn't cause them to happen, though sometimes we "make our own bed" by choices we make. I believe that Satan has a lot to do with afflicting us, putting stumbling blocks in our pathways, enhanced by these circumstances.
 - 2. A second factor is that SATAN Battles Against Us. It is Satan's self-assigned job to defeat people, especially God's people. Peter warned us about that in 1 Peter 5: 8:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
 - 3. Thirdly, SIN is becoming more invasive – We live in a progressively worsening sinful society. Sinful acts, such as child abuse, adultery, mass shootings, are becoming so common as to be accepted as just the way things are now. According to CNN Statistics there were 133 people killed and 618 injured in the United States in gun violence alone over this last July 4th holiday weekend – Friday through Monday. But it didn't even make our national news. ***God help us when we view such sin as normal in our society!***
 - 4. But then we become overwhelmed by our Service to the Lord. There are 3 dangers to beware of that will result when find our service overwhelming us:
 - a. *The human impossibility of the task*. Moses was overwhelmed by the enormity of the task of judging and leading over 2 million "stiff-necked" Israelites across dry desert. In Numbers 11: 10 – 15 we read that it caused his confidence to fail.
 - b. In 1 Kings 19 Elijah was overwhelmed by the *opposition to the task he faced*. It caused his courage to fail, as he fled from queen Jezebel.
 - c. Jonah was overwhelmed by the *perplexities* of the task he faced. He really didn't want to warn his enemy, Nineveh, of the impending disaster that God was about to send. It caused his compassion to fail.

II. THE PRAYER DAVID Prayed: vs.1-2

Note here the elements of David's prayer:

- A. David felt deep emotion that propelled him into prayer.
 - 1. First, he probably felt distanced from God.
 - a. He prayed from the "ends of the earth."
 - b. For David, one who had won the right to the comforts of Jerusalem, as well as the comfort of being near God's temple, the east of Jordan felt like the "end of the earth."
 - c. In Old Testament times, for a faithful Israelite to be a distance from the sanctuary it seemed equivalent to exile in a foreign country.
 - 2. Secondly, he felt defeated by his circumstances, even though some of those circumstances were of his own making. He had failed to discipline Adonijah during his childhood. And now that failure came back to bite him. At the time of this Psalm, He was being exiled by his own son.
 - 3. Third, he felt deeply discouraged in his heart. He said, "I call as my heart grows faint."
- B. The second element, God was the focus of his prayer.
 - 1. David desired the attention of God.
 - 2. David desired the Assistance of God.
 - 3. This was the God that he knew well. He was called a "friend of God." He had composed psalm after psalm on his harp in praise to God.
 - 4. Now he craves the power and wisdom of God in his circumstance.
- C. Thirdly, his "cry" expressed fervency in his prayer. V. 1, 2
 - 1. The Hebrew word translated "cry" could mean to shout praise as well as of despair. So, by this definition it could be a time of praise.
 - 2. But the context of this Psalm is that of petition. So, this cry is a deep, mournful petition, as was the cry of the blind man to Jesus, whose cry was that he might be able to see.
 - 3. David's cry here was most likely a loud, vocal cry, one that was earnest, one that would persevere until the answer came.
 - 4. The very foundation of his prayer is his God, his "strong tower." V. 3 " for You have been ... "
 - a. The might of God is expressed as a "strong tower."
 - b. The mercies of God are illustrated by "shelter."
 - c. The memories of God, His perfect, unending knowledge is promoted by observing His faithfulness in the past, to find His pattern of protection and comfort for the future. David knew that even as tragic as things were, His God is the unchangingly Sovereign!
Lam.3:21 This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. [It is of] the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, *because his compassions fail not.*
- D. A fourth element is that he expresses FAITH through Prayer- v.4 "trust."
 - 1. He expresses dedication in time of trouble. He dedicates his desire to "abide" in God's tabernacle forever. Indeed, in the story he did abide in a tent outside of Jerusalem, so this metaphor was very real to him.

2. He displayed devotion in his time of trouble. He devoted himself to trust in God. In essence, he is simply turned it all over to God, and let Him handle it.
3. He displayed dependance upon God in time of trouble. He seeks the "shelter of His wings." * **Closeness** * **Covering** * **Comfort**

III.THE PLACE DAVID SOUGHT: v.2c - "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I"

- A. That Rock was a HIDDEN PLACE he couldn't find on his own - "lead me" - covert... secret. You get there by design, not by chance. You have to be going there to get there. David, the man who knew the desert, and had been able to hide from all of king Saul's army intelligence and observation, is asking to be led to a place that not even he can get to by mere chance.
- B. That Rock is a HIGH PLACE- It's a "higher than I" rock... cliff refuge safety. A refuge must either bring us above the storm or be more powerful than the storm.

Illustration: When we visited Israel in 2014, we visited the *Masada*. It is a high, plateaued mountain where the Essenes and Jews made their last stand against the Roman army that was attacking them under General Titus. There is now a tram that lifts visitors to the top of the mountain. But at that time there was only a trail, called the "snake path" because it doubled back on itself frequently to allow climbers the ability to climb the steep grade.

The mighty Roman army took 2 years to finally conquer this fortress. The Israelis would roll huge stones over the side of the mountain and onto the "snake path," knocking seasoned soldiers and climbers off the path.

Finally, the only way that the Romans were able to conquer the Masada was to build a ramp to the top of the mountain. They used slave labor to do it. Countless slaves and their Roman taskmasters were slaughtered by spears and arrows raining down upon them from Masada. Heat from the desert killed many as they labored in the tropical sun.

When the Romans finally finished the ramp, and breached the wall, they found that all of the Israelis had systematically committed suicide rather than allowing themselves to be conquered by the pagan Romans.

It was a "High Rock."

- C. In David's prayer, the high rock is a humbling place. It humbles us, because our need implies our own weakness and inability to withstand the problems and circumstances on our own.
- D. It is a holy place. It is like the place where God allowed Moses to see His glory as He passed by. But God protected Moses with his hand, so that he could see and not die from His holy appearance. Read about it in Exodus 33.
- E. It is an honorable place - "enthroned in God's presence forever." (v. 7).
- F. It is a place of hope.
 - a. This prayer is really that of bringing our problems to God, and leaving it in His capable hands.

- b. When we bring our circumstances and situations to Him, He, in all His wisdom, will carry us through so that we can see a possible way to deal with them. When we come to the end of our rope, we find that He has tied a stronger rope to our end.
- G. It is a place of heart-felt rejoicing. V. 8
 - a. When God gives us the answer, we can be assured that it will be the right one.
 - b. We can rest upon His promises of deliverance and redemption
 - c. We can be satisfied that He has heard and answered our prayer.

Conclusion: May our hearts be challenged and focused by this experience from the life of David and his prayer sung with the accompaniment of his harp. Just as this psalm is personal and singular, may each of us allow the Holy Spirit to apply God's truth to our lives. God is able and wants to guide and empower us through the tragedies in our lives.

End Note: David was human. He made mistakes. He sinned against God, against his country, against his family, and especially against himself. Yet God was pleased to hear and answer his prayer, the prayer of a penitent man.

2 Chron 7:14

14 Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land. NLT