Ps. 61:1-4 – From Overwhelmed to Overcome

Intro:

1) **Fascinating – Did you know that stress and anxiety can affect your physical vision?**
    a. When we encounter overwhelming circumstances, our bodies have a natural response known as *fight* or *flight*
    b. During this response, our bodies release stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol
    c. These hormones prepare us to respond to danger
        i. Our hearts beat faster
        ii. Our breathing becomes more rapid
        iii. Our pupils dilate
        iv. In fact – the American Academy of Ophthalmology explains that severe anxiety can cause temporary blurred vision and tunnel vision
    d. Interesting – the very response designed to help us react to danger can sometimes interfere with our ability to see clearly

2) **Let me share an interesting medical study with you**
    a. January 1987 – researchers published a study in the American Journal of Psychiatry examining 33 patients who experienced a particular form of vision impairment
        i. The condition was called central serous chorioretinopathy
        ii. Essentially, fluid collects beneath a portion of the retina, potentially causing blurred or distorted vision
    b. The researchers discovered something fascinating
        i. Of the 33 patients – 91% reported experiencing a significance disturbing emotional event before their vision problems began
        ii. In some cases, patient's vision improved after stressful circumstances improved
    c. It was clear by the study, and ongoing research – overwhelming circumstances can affect physical vision
    d. Statement – Sometimes the pressures of life can affect more than how we feel, they can affect how we see

3) **Here's something I want you to consider – Stressful circumstances don't just affect our physical vision – they can also affect our spiritual perspective as well**
    a. Have you ever faced something stressful or anxiety causing that caused you to struggle to see your way forward?
    b. It's interesting – when faced with overwhelming issues, we often use language of visions to describe our struggle
        i. "I just can't see how this is going to work out"
        ii. "I feel like I'm in a fog"
        iii. "I just can't see the light at the end of the tunnel"
        iv. "I just need some clarity"

c. When circumstances overwhelm us, It's easy to have our perspective become consumed with the problems immediately in front of us
    i. It's easy to see the problem, it's hard to remember God's promises
    ii. It's easy to see the danger, but we can lose sight of God's delivering ability
    iii. It's easy to spot our limitations, It's hard to identify God's sufficiency
d. Truth – sometimes the greatest problem with an overwhelming circumstance is not simply what we're facing, but how we're viewing what we're facing

4) This brings us to Psalm 61

a. David is experiencing an overwhelming season in his life
    i. He states it clearly – V2 "when my heart is overwhelmed"
    ii. <u>Overwhelmed</u> – carries the idea of becoming faint, feeble, or weakened
    iii. IOW - David's heart is struggling under the weight of his circumstances
b. Although the Psalm doesn't explicitly identify the historical setting, it is believed to be a reflection on King David's flight from Absalom
    i. 2 Sam. 17-18 – David is displaced, discouraged, and depressed
    ii. He faced uncertainty
    iii. He longed to back at the place of worship – Jerusalem
c. Worth noting – we aren't 100% sure what overwhelming situation David is facing
    i. His life had many
    ii. God saw fit to leave that detail out
    iii. Reason – it could apply to many aspects of David's life
        1. And it could apply to many aspects of your life

5) Interesting – Even though David is facing an overwhelming circumstance – he doesn't spend his time explaining how great his problems are

a. Rather – he consistently acknowledges how great God is
b. He speaks about a God that:
    i. Hears his prayers
    ii. Guides him
    iii. Is a Rock
    iv. Has been his shelter
    v. Who is his strong tower

6) Here's the difference – David's problems had overwhelmed his heart, but they did not override his confident trust in God

7) This morning I want to examine Ps 61 and learn from these holy words on how to overcome over things that overwhelm

a. Sermon – From Overwhelmed to Overcome
b. Text: Ps. 61:1-4

Inscription

1) **Although the inscription can be overlooked – it can provide valuable information about the Psalm's authorship, musical setting, and intended usage**
    a. Note – this Psalm is intended for public worship
        i. "chief musician"
        ii. Chief – Hebrew carries the idea of one who supervises, oversees, directs
        iii. In the Psalms – it refers to the music director
    b. Interesting – this word is used in connection with the supervision of the work associated with the house of God
        i. 1 Chron. 2:2 – context (2:1)
        ii. 1 Chron. 23:4 – "set forward"
        iii. Great reminder – music has a unique way of "building up" the people of God
            1. Congregational music
                a. Sound theology
                b. Discipleship
                c. Congregational

2) **Implication of this Psalm**
    a. The fact that this Psalm was penned by David during a time of great struggle and distress and was intended for public worship tell us:
        i. God can take the troubles of our hearts and use them to strengthen the faith of others and give glory to Him
        ii. Example – "Praise time" during bulletin reading

3) **Neginah – on a musical instrument**

4) **David – clearly while he was king (v5,6)**

5) **The beauty of this Psalm is that it reminds us – God can take the overwhelming and cause us to overcome bringing Him glroy**

David recognizes his Desperation – V1

1) **As you read V1 you can't help but sense the seriousness of David's situation**
    a. V1
    b. Let me Interpret – God! I need You to hear me in my struggle and intervene!
    c. IOW - David was not content with praying to complain, he prayed to be heard

2) **David uses 2 different phrases here, but has one goal in mind – Get God's gracious attention**
    a. David was desperate to get God's involvement
        i. He knew by the Word and experience – when God gets involved the situation changes
            1. As a Shepherd – lion and bear – 1 Sam. 17:37
            2. As a Warrior – Goliath – 1 Sam. 17:45,46
            3. As a King – Samuel's anointing – 1 Sam. 16:13

3) **David's desperation is heard in his Petition**
    a. "Hear my cry"
        i. Hear – listen, be recognized, to hear with attention
            1. In many contexts, the word goes beyond simply hearing, it expresses a heeding
            2. Example – Deut. 6:4
                a. More than an audible reception, it was a theological submission and action
                b. IOW – hear this and heed this
        ii. Further – David was not praying for God to "hear" him because God was in someway unaware
            1. This was an intense appeal for God's favorable intervention
            2. Ps. 34:15 - "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry."
            3. Ps. 18:6 - "In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears."
        iii. Cry – a plead, a shout, carries the idea of a piercing cry
            1. Trans. as proclamation, rejoicing, songs
            2. Word describes vocal loudness
    b. Note the progression – David does not begin with an explanation of his circumstance, he begins with a petition to God
        i. David's 1st response to his overwhelming circumstance was not to explain his problems, but to express his dependence

4) **David's desperation is heard in his Prayer**
    a. "Attend unto my prayer"
        i. Attend – to listen carefully, to pay attention, to give heed
            1. This word frequently occurs in contexts where someone asks another to consider what is spoken
                a. Ps. 5:1,2 – "hearken"
                b. Ps. 55:2
            2. Hebrew word imagery – to prick up the ears like an alert animal
        ii. Prayer – plea, petition

5) These phrases indicate that David was pleading from a position of desperation
- a. If you've ever been there, you can relate

6) These two requests are what we call in Hebrew literature "Synonymous Parallelism"
- a. Hear – attend
- b. My cry – my prayer
- c. Its not a way to ask God to perform 2 distinct actions
    - i. Rather it is a way to intensify one central request – God listen to my appeal!

7) Note – hear and attend are stated as imperatives
- a. Unique – when directed at God is does not express a position of authority, it expresses a position of dependency

8) David desired God to look his way!
- a. Margin
    - i. Prov. 16:15
        1. Countenance – face, appearance, presence
        2. Latter rain – rain before the harvest
    - ii. Numb. 6:22-26

9) **Take this with you –3 things a prayer of desperation expresses**
- a. Expresses our limitations
    - i. David was a warrior and king – he had great influence
        1. Yet here he is recognizing the situation is out of his control
        2. Ps. 20:7
- b. Expresses humility
    - i. Earnest prayer is often the product of humble desperation
    - ii. You don't pray like David until you truly grasp your inability
    - iii. 1 Pet. 5:5b-7
    - iv. David was humbly desperate
    - v. David knew that when God's ear hears, His hand moves
- c. Expresses confidence in God's character
    - i. David doesn't cry to God in uncertainty – he addresses Him personally
    - ii. We are taught to do this all through Scripture
        1. Ps. 50:15 – Call upon God in trouble
        2. Ps. 62:8 – Pour your heart out before Him
        3. Heb. 4:12 – Come before Him with boldness to get help

David recognized his Distance – V2a

1) **David not only shares how he prayed, he also shares where he's praying from**
    a. V2a
    b. David is praying from a position of distance
    c. "When we are in trouble, God often feels distant. Notice that David says he is crying out to God"from the end of the earth" (v2). He is wandering far from what is familiar, and God seems far off." – Dane Ortlund

2) **David recognizes his geographical distance**
    a. "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee"
        i. Lit – From + End/Extremity + Earth/Land/Territory
    b. Literal - If the historical setting of Absalom's rebellion is correct - this could refer to David's physical location – Mahanaim
        i. 2 Sam. 17:24 – David was near the eastern border of Israel
            1. Mahanaim – was a strategic borderland situated in the region of Gilead assigned to the Tribe of Gad
        ii. Point being - David not at home in Jerusalem doing what he was anointed to do

    c. Figurative – expresses that David somewhat emotionally distant from God in his present circumstance
        i. David was not only away from home – he was away from the sanctuary and the presence of God
        ii. "For an Israelite, and especially David, separation form the sanctuary could carry considerable emotional and religious significance"
        iii. David was used to the delights of daily worship in Jerusalem
        iv. David was used to being close to the Ark of the Covenant (presence of God) and mercy seat
            1. Something David left behind – 2 Sam. 15:24-25

    d. This phrase reveals that David felt the weight of his distant from God
        i. Ever been there?
        ii. You know God is present – it just doesn't feel like it – or it's hard to see?

3) **Notice where David felt this**
    a. <u>Heart</u> – Heb word indicating the seat of emotion, the inner person, the place of the will
        i. Wisdom and understanding reside in the heart – 1 Kings 3:12, Prov. 16:23
        ii. It is the immaterial part of you
        iii. IOW - David was externally and internally drained
    b. <u>Overwhelmed</u> – grow faint, grow feeble, to ebb away
        i. In and agricultural setting - Denotes a lamb which is born unhealthy and in a weakened state – unable to help itself – Gen. 30:42 "feeble"
        ii. To clothe, cloaked over, to cover over – covered in weakness

4) **Here's what's unique - Notice what David does when faced with such circumstances**
    a. "I will cry unto thee"
    b. David's distance did not silence his prayers
    c. David knew – his circumstance may have changed, but his God did not
    d. David knew – he may be far from Jerusalem, but he was still within the reach of Jehovah

5) **Lesson – the best thing to do when you're feeling distant is to recognize your distance and run back to God**
    a. I love the imagery Ps. 23 affords - Ps. 23:3
    b. Statement – distance is only a barrier is you stay away

David recognizes his Defense – V2a-4

1) **As a man of war – David knew the importance of a good defense**
    a. Especially when the enemy was attacking

2) **David knew he was desperate and distant, but he also knew he wasn't defenseless**
    a. Write down – I may be desperate and distant, but I know I'm not defenseless

3) **God was his Rock**
    a. Lead – guide me – God is gracious with His willing children
        i. David knew what is meant to be "lead"
            1. Shepherd – Ps. 23:3
            2. As a king – he led the people
    b. The rock
        i. Notice – not "a" rock, but "the" rock – a specific rock
        ii. Rock is often used as a metaphor for God throughout the Psalms (20x's)
        iii. Rock gives imagery of protection, fortification, and strategic defense and refuge
            1. In ANE – heightened rocky terrain was a great fortified defensive position
                a. Could see enemy's approach
                b. Made enemies approach difficult
                c. Provided heavy duty barriers
    c. Higher than I
        i. Interesting – David was camping out among the rocks of Gilead – yet he knew real safety was in the Lord
        ii. David looked beyond his physical protection to his Ultimate Protection
        iii. Higher than I – a place of safety that David himself could not attain
            1. Interesting - because he was fortified by rocks
                a. He had the best mighty men around him
        iv. Phrase indicated that although Absalom was reigning, it was God who was on the throne

4) **God was his Refuge**
    a. In V3 David is looking back on God's previous deliverances
        i. David knew that God comes through
        ii. Note "for" – a transition word of reason
        iii. IOW – David had historical evidence of God's provision and protection in his life
            1. He was interpreting his present distress through the lens of God's proven faithfulness
    b. Shelter – refuge, trans. Hope
    c. Strong tower – a place people would retreat to during an attack
        i. Place of protection
    d. Let me interpret – God, You've never let me down before, You've been true to Your word, You have delivered me over and over again, do it once more!

5) God was his Redemption

a. Interesting – <u>abide</u> – a house guest for a night – sojourner, visitor
b. David wanted to be God's house guest
c. Problem – David was king, but not high priest
    i. Only high priest had the privilege that David was asking for
    ii. <u>For ever</u> – priest only went in once and quickly
d. So what was David really seeking?
    i. The real, eternal presence of God
    ii. It's like David looked past the rites and rituals and gazed at redemption
e. This phrase is a humble desire to be in God's presence – knowing that it was only possible through God's mercy
f. Notice – V4b
    i. Covert – hiding place, secret place, covering
    ii. <u>Wings</u> – hen shelter
    iii. <u>Wings</u> – language of tabernacle – reference to Mercy seat
        1. Ex. 25:17-21
    iv. In other words – David was resting on the mercy of God to provide and protect and lead him to the presence of God
    v. Gospel

6) David recognized who his real defender is during times of distress

<u>Closing</u>

1) We learn today that to move from overwhelmed to overcome we need to correct our vision

a. Things we need to recognize:
    i. Desperation – Prayer
    ii. Distance – presence
    iii. Defense – protection and provision

2) These things we ultimately find in Jesus:

a. He is our Great intercessor
b. He is the presence of God brought to us – Immanuel
c. He is our Great protection and provision from the wrath of God - Propitiation

3) Turn your eyes upon Jesus

a. O soul are you weary and troubled
No light in the darkness you see
There's light for a look at the Savior
And life more abundant and free

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace