

Psalms 61

This evening - we're continuing our overview of the Old Testament book titled Psalms.

With this as our focus - let's open our Bibles to Psalms chapter 61 - and as we make our way to the 61st Psalm...

...I wanna begin by first pointing out that this Psalm - was written by King David - for the purpose of corporate praise.

With this as the goal - David directed the Chief Musician of Israel to lead this song of praise...

...with the musical accompaniment of stringed instruments - which probably included...

...stringed instruments played with the hand, like the harp and guitar, or with a plectrum.

I should also point out that - King David didn't provide us with the historical context surrounding the creation of this Psalm.

But what we do know is that - this song was written at a time when his heart was overwhelmed.

And while we can't say for sure - many commentators believe that this Psalm was written during the dark days...

...when King David's third son - Absalom - was driven by ambition - to overthrow the throne of his father.

It was at that point in time when David and his men fled from Jerusalem - in order to escape Absalom's coup.

And it's possible that this song was written - while David was hiding in Mahanaim.

Well - regardless of the reason for the writing of this song...

...it's my hope that our study of this Psalm will bring comfort to those who's hearts are overwhelmed.

And knowing that there are many different reasons for why we might feel overwhelmed tonight...

...it's my prayer that we will all leave here tonight - resting in the confidence...

...that comes from knowing that our God is a supernatural shelter...

...for those who trust in Him.

With this as our focus - let's consider the lyrical content found here in the 61st Psalm.

Look with me beginning there at verse 1 - where King David writes...

Psa 61:1 To the Chief Musician. On a stringed instrument. A Psalm of David.

Hear my cry, O God;

Attend to my prayer.

Psa 61:2 From the end of the earth I will cry to You,

When my heart is overwhelmed;

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

Psa 61:3 For You have been a shelter for me,

A strong tower from the enemy.

Psa 61:4 I will abide in Your tabernacle forever;

I will trust in the shelter of Your wings. Selah

Here in the beginning of this Psalm - we find King David crying out to God.

He not only asked God to Hear his cry for help - - but - he also asked God to attend to his prayer.

And as we consider this request - I can't help but to wonder if David felt like the Lord was ignoring him.

You might not know this - but - there are times when the Lord chooses to ignore our prayers.

And while I don't mean to suggest that He can't hear our prayers...

...I can assure you that there are times when He turns a deaf ear to our prayers...

...and for several different reasons.

In order to understand why - let's take some time to consider some of the reasons - for why the Lord might be ignoring our cries for help.

It's in Matthew chapter 6 - where the Lord Jesus declared...

Mat 6:5 “...when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

Mat 6:6 “But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Mat 6:7 “And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

Mat 6:8 “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

Here in these verses - we find the Lord Jesus - helping his audience to understand that...

...God the Father is not listening to the prayers of the religious hypocrites...

...who publicly proclaim prayers that are nothing more than vain repetitions in the ears of the Lord.

If you want God to hear your prayers - then pray with spiritual sincerity.

We should also pray with humility - because - God isn't listening to those who's hearts are filled with pride.

Let's consider how James explained it - in the fourth chapter of his epistle - - beginning at verse 3 - James declared...

Jas 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Jas 4:4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Jas 4:5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

Jas 4:6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

According to James - the prayers of those who pray with a heart that's filled with pride - will be rejected.

And one reason why is because - the prayers requests of the proud...

...are presented by those who are only interested in their own selfish pleasures.

This reminds me of the warning that the Psalmist presented - in the 66th Psalm - - it's verses 18 thru 20 - where he declared...

Psa 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart,
The Lord will not hear.

Psa 66:19 But certainly God has heard me;
He has attended to the voice of my prayer.

Psa 66:20 Blessed be God,
Who has not turned away my prayer,
Nor His mercy from me!

According to the psalmist who wrote the 66th Psalm - the Lord isn't listening to the prayers of those who regard iniquity in their heart.

In other words - God is ignoring the prayers of those...

...who entertain the sinful desires that are hidden in their hearts.

And it's for this reason that we will do well to confess our sinful desires to the Lord.

Another reason for why the Lord might reject our prayers - has to do with the way we treat our spouse.

Let's consider how the apostle Peter put it - in 1st Peter chapter 3 - it's verse 7 - where he declared...

1Pe 3:7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

According to Peter - the prayers of a husband can be hindered...

...whenever we fail to love them with Christ-like consideration.

And I think that it would also be safe to say that the prayers of a wife might also be hindered...

...if she consistently disrespects her husband with a heart that's filled with pride.

It's also important for us to realize that - the Lord will ignore that prayers of those - who's hearts are filled with doubt.

Let's consider the way James put it in the first chapter of his epistle - beginning at verse 5 - where he declared...

Jas 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Jas 1:6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

Jas 1:7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

Jas 1:8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Those who pray for wisdom - without faith - won't receive the wisdom they're asking for.

Remember - those who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Therefore - if you want to make sure that the Lord is listening to your prayers...

...then - we must make sure that we're praying with a heart that's filled with faith.

With this as the goal - we might do well to begin our prayers - with the same request made by a man who was struggling to believe.

I'm referring to the father who asked Jesus - to save his son from a demon that possessed him.

It's in Mark chapter 9 - beginning at verse 23 - where we learn that...

Mar 9:23 Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."

Mar 9:24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

Christian - listen - there are times when we must confess that - we believe - - and yet - there's still a little unbelief.

It's at those times when we should ask the Lord to help us overcome our unbelief.

And as we pray in this way - we can rejoice in knowing that...

...the Lord will hear our prayers - and help us to have a heart that is filled with faith.

With all of this in mind - let's consider the way that the Lord helped King David - by answering his cry for help.

Look with me again - there at the 61st Psalm - beginning there at verse 1 - where David declared...

Psa 61:1 Hear my cry, O God; Attend to my prayer.

Psa 61:2 From the end of the earth I will cry to You,

When my heart is overwhelmed;

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

Here in these verses - we find David - humbly confessing that his heart was overwhelmed.

That word - overwhelmed - was translated from a Hebrew word - which was used of those who are feeble and faint.

The same word was used of those who are devastated - defeated - and despairing.

And while it's true that David cried out from that place of despair...

...it's also true that the Lord raised him up from the pit of despair...

...by placing him on a rock of refuge.

I like the way the scholars who created the Amplified Bible rendered verse 2 - they put it like this...

Psa 61:2 From the end of the earth I call to You, when my heart is overwhelmed and weak;

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I [a rock that is too high to reach without Your help].

As David sank down into a pit of despair - he realized that he needed help from on high.

And it's for this reason that he cried out to the Lord to lead him to an exalted place of salvation...

...that he was unable to secure for himself.

I like the way that Albert Barnes explained it in his commentary of this verse - he put it like this...

The allusion is to God as such a rock or place of refuge...The idea is, that he had no strength in himself; that if he depended on himself, he could not be safe. He was, as it were, in a low vale, exposed to every enemy. He wished to be put in a place of safety. To such a place of safety - to Himself - he prayed that God would lead him. We need one much higher than we are to save us. A Saviour - a Redeemer - on the same level with ourselves could not help us. We must have one that is supreme over all things; one that is divine.

Simply put - our Redeemer is the Rock of refuge - that is higher than the enemy.

Let's consider how King David put it back in the 18th Psalm - it's verse 46 - where he declared...

Psa 18:46 The LORD lives!
Blessed be my Rock!
Let the God of my salvation be exalted

The Lord is the Rock of refuge - - because - He is the God of our salvation.

And knowing that David elaborates on this incredible truth in the next Psalm...

...I'll wait for next week - to present you with more details about Jesus - as our Rock.

For now - I wanna direct your attention back to the 61st Psalm - let's take a closer look at verses 3 and 4 - where David declared...

Psa 61:3 For You have been a shelter for me,
A strong tower from the enemy.
Psa 61:4 I will abide in Your tabernacle forever;
I will trust in the shelter of Your wings. Selah

Here in these verses - we find King David - describing our Savior as a protective shelter - and a strong tower.

This is similar to another lyric that King David wrote in the 18th Psalm where he declared...

Psa 18:2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

King David sang the praises of our Savior - by comparing Him to a fortress - and a stronghold.

It's also in Proverbs 18 - where David's son Solomon made a similar comparison - by declaring...

Pro 18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower;
The righteous run to it and are safe.

With all of this in mind - believers can rejoice in knowing that - we never need to feel overwhelmed.

And the reason why is because - our Savior is ready to provide us with the shelter we need...

...to protect us from every storm.

Let's consider again how David explained it - here in our text tonight - look with me again - there at verse 4 - where he declared...

Psa 61:4 I will abide in Your tabernacle forever;
I will trust in the shelter of Your wings. Selah

Now - remember - king David probably wrote this at a time when he fled from Jerusalem.

And with that being the case - we can be sure that he wasn't referring to the tabernacle there on Temple Mount.

No - instead - he was referring to the tabernacle of our Redeemer.

And whether he knew it or not - we know that he was referring to the Lord Jesus.

This was precisely the point that the apostle John was making - in John chapter 1 - it's verse 14 - where he assured us that...

John 1:14 ...the Word became flesh, and did tabernacle among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth.

The Logos of God came and tabernacled among us - in the person of Christ Jesus.

And now - through His crucifixion - resurrection and ascension into heaven...

...those who trust in Him can abide in the tabernacle of our Redeemer - forevermore.

Let's consider how the Lord Jesus put it - in John chapter 15 - beginning at verse 4 - He declared....

Jhn 15:4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

Jhn 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Jhn 15:6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

Jhn 15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

Jhn 15:8 “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

Christian - listen - if you want to make sure that your prayers are being heard...

...then - we must abide in the tabernacle of our risen Redeemer.

And as we abide in the mystical body of our Messiah...

...we can rejoice in knowing that the Lord will answer every prayer - according to His perfect will.

In order to further grasp the connection between abiding - and answered prayer - let's consider the way that David explained it here in the 61st Psalm.

Look with me - beginning there at verse 5 - where King David declared...

Psa 61:5 For You, O God, have heard my vows;
You have given me the heritage of those who fear Your name.

Psa 61:6 You will prolong the king's life,
His years as many generations.

Psa 61:7 He shall abide before God forever.
Oh, prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him!

Psa 61:8 So I will sing praise to Your name forever,
That I may daily perform my vows.

Here in the second half of this Psalm - we find King David - referring to the way that God had heard his vows.

That word - - vows - found there in verses 5 - and 8 - was translated from a Hebrew word...

...which was used of the prayerful promises made to the Lord.

And while it's true that we aren't required to make vows to the Lord...

...it's also true that the promises we make - will be required of us.

Let's consider how Moses explained it - in Deuteronomy chapter 23 - it's verses 21 thru 23 - where he declared...

Deu 23:21 "When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you.

Deu 23:22 "But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you.

Deu 23:23 "That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth.

From this - we can see that every prayerful promise presented to the Lord - is offered as a voluntary vow.

At the same time - it's also important to understand that every prayerful promise that we make to the Lord...

...will be required of those who offer an oath to God.

Christian - listen - those who pray - "Lord - if you do THIS for me - then I'll stop doing X - Y - or Z..."

...trust me when I tell you that God will require you to keep your end of the covenant.

And listen - the Lord not only expects us to keep the prayerful promises that we make to Him...

...but - He also expects us to keep the promises that we make to one another.

And it's for this reason that the Lord Jesus warned us about making oaths.

We find this in Matthew chapter 5 - verses 33 thru 37 - where Jesus declared...

Mat 5:33 "...you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.'

Mat 5:34 "But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne;

Mat 5:35 "nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

Mat 5:36 "Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black.

Mat 5:37 "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

Whether we're presenting prayerful promises to the Lord - - or we're making a promise to another person...

...the Lord Jesus encouraged us to contemplate the promises that we make...

...so that our YES is actually a YES - - and our NO is NO

I like the way that James put it - in the fifth chapter of his epistle - it's verse 12 - where he declared...

Jas 5:12 ...above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.

According to James - those who swear an oath - whether by heaven or by earth - are required to keep the vows they make.

And those who fail to keep their oaths - could suffer the consequences of God's loving correction.

That being the case - we will all do well to think twice - before we make a promise...

...whether it be to God - or to man.

At the same time - we should also consider how the Lord blessed King David - for the way that he kept his vows.

Look with me again - there at verse 5 - where David declared...

Psa 61:5 For You, O God, have heard my vows;
You have given me the heritage of those who fear Your name.

In other words - the Lord heard David's vows - and in response...

...God granted him the rewards that belong to those who walk
in the reverence of true faith.

This not only included the promise of an everlasting
inheritance...

...but also the blessing of a lasting heritage...

Let's consider how he put it - here in our text tonight - look with me again
there at verse 6 - where David declared...

Psa 61:6 You will prolong the king's life,
His years as many generations.
Psa 61:7 He shall abide before God forever.
Oh, prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him!

Here in these verses - we find David - proclaiming the praises of the
Lord...

...as he considered the heritage - and the inheritance that the
Lord was promising to provide for him.

We should also notice how that the Lord not only
promised to prolong King David's life...

...but - He also promised to preserve him with mercy
and truth.

Mercy is the favor that leads the Lord to forgive those who trust in
Him.

And it's the lovingkindness that leads us to repent - and trust in
the truth of the gospel message of grace.

What this means is that - God not only preserves those who trust in Him - according to His mercy...

...but - He also preserves us according to His truth.

And with that being the case - I should remind you that - Jesus is the TRUTH.

I like the way that Jesus explained it - in John chapter 14 - it's verse 6 - where he declared...

Jhn 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

From this - we can see that Jesus is the truth - by which sinners can be saved.

And what this means is that - those who trust in the Lord Jesus will be preserved by the mercy of our Messiah...

...as He guides us on the path of His truth.

That being the case - those who feel overwhelmed tonight - should rest in knowing that...

...those who abide in the tabernacle of our Redeemer...

...will be preserved by the mercy and the truth of our Savior.

It's for this reason that King David proclaimed the praises of the Lord - here in the final verse of this Psalm.

Look with me again - there at verse 8 - where David declared...

Psa 61:8 So I will sing praise to Your name forever,
That I may daily perform my vows.

Here in the final verse of this psalm - we find King David - rejoicing as he realized that...

...He was going to sing the praises of our Savior - forever.

I like the way that David put it in the 145th Psalm - where he declared...

Psa 145:1 I will extol You, my God, O King;
And I will bless Your name forever and ever.

Psa 145:2 Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and ever.

Christian - listen - if you feel overwhelmed by the trials and troubles of this world...

...I encourage you to remember that those who abide in the tabernacle of our Redeemer...

...will enjoy the privilege of singing the praises of the Lord - forever and ever.

And listen - this isn't just a Pie in the Sky in the Sweet By-and-By - promise that's too far off to effect our lives today.

No - instead - this is a promise that ought to have an effect on the way we live our lives today.

You see - we don't need to wait - to praise the name of the Lord forever and ever - in eternity future.

No - instead - we can enjoy a taste of heaven every day...

...by simply spending some time every day - singing the praises of our Savior.

If you feel overwhelmed - like you're sinking down into a pit of despair...

...then I encourage you to shift your focus from the overwhelming circumstances that are weighing us down...

...and fix your focus on the One Who has promised to preserve us - by His mercy and truth.

And with this as our focus - let's sing the praises of the One Who is able to place us on the Rock...

...that is higher than all of our problems.