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Enduring Assurance in the Steadfast Love of God; Psalm 52

GPBC

4.26.20

Introduction – What is the steadfast love of God? There is something wonderful about adding an adjective to the love of God. If the love we are speaking of is God's love, it already has the nature of steadfastness about it. The love of God is steadfast because God is steadfast. The love of God is steadfast because God is love and God is steadfast. God never changes. Therefore, any attribute that belongs to God never changes. We could just as rightly say the steadfast faithfulness of God, the steadfast grace of God, the steadfast righteousness of God, the steadfast holiness of God. By saying that we mean to communicate that these characteristics of God are unchanging, but that is somewhat of a redundancy isn't it?

We don't find the qualifier steadfast in front of the other descriptions of God, only as a qualifier of the love of God. I believe that to be the case because of all the characteristics of God, this is the one that we find ourselves struggling with from time to time. We never question is God really holy? Is God really eternal? Is God really righteous? But we do, at times, in our weak moments, in heavy trials, in horrible circumstances, we do wonder if God's love is still present. How can God be loving if bad things happen to good people? How can God be loving when there is so much mindless, senseless suffering in the world?

The attribute of God that we wrestle with the most is the one in which the Bible adds the adjective steadfast. God means for us to be absolutely assured that just as He never changes, so His love never changes. It never decreases. It never increases. It never comes and goes. It's constant. It's perfect. It's unchanging.

David finds solace in the steadfast love of God during a time when the love of God could come under question. The historical background of Psalm 52 is 1 Sam 22. David is fleeing for his life from the jealousy of King Saul, and he finds refuge in the city of Nob under the care of Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech gives David bread from the altar for nourishment and the sword of Goliath for his protection. Doeg the Edomite happened to be present, and in an effort to win the admiration of Saul, Doeg tells Saul of Ahimelech providing David shelter. As far as Saul was concerned, Ahimelech and all the priests of Nob were guilty of treason.

Under Saul's command, Doeg killed 85 priests in Nob and went on a slaughtering rampage through the town killing men, women, children, and livestock. One priest escaped, found David, and reported Doeg's evil deed. David responded by saying that he knew Doeg would tell Saul, and said, "I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father's house." The needless, senseless killing throughout Nob fell on David like the weight of the world. If he would have stayed away from Nob, this would not have happened. Ahimelech did a good deed and the whole town and every priest, save one, suffered horribly for it. If ever there were an occasion to question the love of God, it was this one. If ever there were an occasion for David to feel that God had withdrawn his love from David, it was this one. And yet, it is the very love of God, the steadfast love of God, that in this dire, tragic, cruel turn of events that gives David enduring assurance.

- I. The Steadfast Love of God will Outlast the Love of Evil (vv1-4)
  - a. Vv1a, 2-4.
    - i. Before Doeg had used his sword on a barbaric slaughtering rampage, he had used his tongue to cunningly prepare the way. He plotted the destruction to which he himself would partake because he loved evil. He lied with deception that he might then devour with rage. He told a selective truth to a selective hearer so that there would be a selective outcome.
    - ii. Now that his tongue had set the stage for the genocide of Nob, his tongue now boasts of his mighty, evil conquest.
    - iii. Now Doeg thinks himself great, Saul's go to man, look at how powerful and merciless he is.
  - b. And David replies in faith – not in his circumstance, but rather in his faith, why do you boast of evil, O mighty man? In other words David believes no matter how cunning and deceitful and powerful and evil that Doeg may be, there is a greater power, sufficient enough to reward Doeg for all the evil he has wrought. He won't get away with it. His boasting will be shortlived. His evil will be repaid.
  - c. How does David know this with so much assurance that he can mockingly question Doeg's boasting? The answer is the steadfast love of God.
  - d. V1b – Your evil may change your status with Saul and it may change the population of Nob, but it will never change the love of God. The steadfast love of God endures.

- e. Not only is God's love unchanging, it is unending. God's love will outlast all evil. The final victor will be the love of God. Doeg and his evil and all evil will come to an abrupt end. God's love never will!
- II. The Steadfast Love of God will Outmatch the Love of Evil (vv5-7)
- a. The unchanging, unending love of God means that God is unchanging and unending in His fierce and final opposition to all things that are not lovely and good and righteous and holy.
  - b. The love of God is the ground of assurance that justice will be meted out properly and effectively and eternally toward all those who fail to repent!
  - c. The steadfast love of God ensures that Doeg's brutality will not go unnoticed nor unpunished. He will receive what he has given! Evil is no match for the love of God.
  - d. Vv6-7 – remind us if we find ourselves in a situation where the love of God is in question, just wait, just be patient, just endure under suffering – God will bring all things under His sovereign justice, He will make right what sinners have made wrong. In time, you will see it with fear and joy. Fear in knowing apart from the grace of God we would be Doeg and we would have Doeg's end, and joy at the final upholding of justice!
  - e. When justice prevails, it brings with it a fearful sorrow and a relieving joy.
    - i. A fearful sorrow because it's always a tragic, sad occasion to see one created in the very image of God delve into so much evil. God has given life and His Son so that all might live in joy to His glory, and with all the blessings of God, there are those who still raise their fists and rage against God and against all that is good and holy. It's a sad thing to see a heart so full of hatred. And it's a fearful thing to see just how dark a heart can grow and to know but for the grace of God, go I.
    - ii. But there is also a relieving joy. As tragic as it is to see an individual created in the image of God, hate God so, and hate the things of God and the people of God and the ways of God to such a degree, imagine a world and an eternity where sin and evil and injustice and wrong are never judged, never quelled, never stopped.

- III. The Steadfast Love of God will Keep Those Who are His (vv8-9)
- a. Notice what makes David different than Doeg. He trusts in the steadfast love of God.
    - i. Green does not refer to the color of the olive tree but rather to the state of the olive tree – young, fresh, strong, growing, green.
    - ii. A green olive tree in the house of God is far different picture than the one boasting in his evil. One is out to make a name for himself. One has found all he needs in the steadfast love of God.
  - b. Notice the eternal nature of God’s steadfast love. It endures not only through this life, but for all eternity.
    - i. The steadfast love of God endures means that the steadfast love of God endures. It never changes. It never ends. Even when time ends, it does not end. Even when this life ends, it does not end.
    - ii. Because God’s love never ends, so our thanksgiving will never end.
      - 1. Done what? Brought justice to Doeg. Outlasted and outmatched evil. Endured and won. David says I’m never going to stop thanking You, O God, for living up to Your name!
      - 2. Kept David.
  - c. Now knowing that God’s love is steadfast and enduring, in the face of all this evil and suffering and injustice, all David needs to do now is wait. Because God’s love is steadfast. His name will prevail. Good will triumph over evil. Truth will stand in the end. Love will never end!

Conclusion