

Grace and Gratitude

A Sermon on Psalm 61

by

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1. Introduction

2. God Hears the Desperate Cry of Our Hearts (vv. 1-2a.).

- a. “Hear my cry, O God; give heed to my prayer. From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint.”
 - i. Just like many of the psalms we see from David, he is at a breaking point where his distress overwhelms him.
 1. He cries out “from the ends of the earth,” and he cries out with a faint heart, or quite literally, a heart that is about to give out.
 2. No matter what situation David may be in right now, he set his hope and his trust in the grace of God.
 - ii. The point, therefore, is not so much the crisis of David’s circumstances, but the faintness of his heart and where he then places his hopes.
 1. Despite the temptation for him to give up or turn to something else for his hope—it is God and God alone that he returns to, because He knows who God is.
 2. God is ultimately the One who has set His love upon David, and therefore, He is the One who cares for him most.
- b. As David’s heart is failing and he senses this vast chasm between himself and God, his resolve begins to steady. He reminds himself of that truth he knows so well by this point: God is the One he can lay his needs before.

- i. In the midst of times of crisis, you might sense there is nowhere to turn, no one to confide in, and no one to trust—but this is not the truth.
 1. God is all of these things to us and more. He is an ever-present listening ear, who delights to hear and even grant the needs of His children.
 - a. In some ways, we tend to think of God as if He is a man. He grows weary of our struggles and constant prayers for the same thing.
 - b. Yet the opposite is just the case; the psalms as a whole not only prove this abundantly, but so does all of Scripture. He is the One we are to cast all our cares upon.
 2. Though your heart may fail and sense God does not care, if you are in Christ, you have an audience before God that isn't dependent on how you feel.
- ii. Think of the words of Christ in Matthew 7:11, "If you, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more so will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?"
 1. If you have need, ask your Father in heaven. It truly is as simple as that.
 - a. For some, this is a radically hard thing to wrap their minds around because of how we treat prayer in our culture.
 - b. But what David does today is simply take up the Word of God and pray it back to his heavenly Father.
 2. He is a good Father. He knows what you need and He knows it better than you.
 - a. Even as your Father denies some of your prayers, he supplies his grace to you through that denial.

- b. Perhaps to one He will say, “You are cured,” whereas to another He will say, “My grace is sufficient for you.” While you may not understand, He continues to supply you with a constant stream of grace.

3. God is Our Place of Stability, Safety, and Strength (vv. 2b-3).

- a. “Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For You have been a refuge for me, a tower of strength against the enemy.”
 - i. Notice that David’s request here is that God would lead him to a rock that is higher than he is.
 - 1. The point he makes here is a simple one—but it is one that again, we simply tend to forget in our everyday lives.
 - a. God is the One who is far removed from the constant chaos and instability of this life.
 - b. The world you and I live in, is in constant ruin under the weight of sin.
 - 2. All this is indicative of is that we’ve forgotten this life, this world, and everything in it, is not our home.
 - ii. Trials provide us with a sense of sobriety. They cause us to truly see that this life is not as stable as we’ve been led to believe.
 - 1. The weight of hardship and suffering pulls back the veil and shows the world for what it truly is: a broken and distorted world.
 - 2. Yet trials also show us the preciousness of our Creator, who stands above this broken and distorted world.
- b. As David looks to this reality, his confidence in God is only building all the more. The reason for it is simple: God has always shown Himself to be a strong shelter to His servant.

- i. Thus, when he asks that God would lead him to the rock that is higher than himself, his request is one where he asks that God would lead him.
 1. Where does he pray that God would lead him by His grace? To the place where he is safe, under the protection of his God.
 2. I would argue this is the fundamental difference between the believer and the unbeliever.
- ii. For the Christian, it is no small coincidence that Christ is called the Chief Cornerstone, our Rock and our Redeemer.
 1. Matthew 7:24-27 provides us with perhaps no better picture of this, when Christ speaks of the wise builder and the unwise builder.
 - a. The point Jesus makes in Matthew 7 is that there is a fundamental difference between the one who hears and the one who both hears and does.
 - b. Everything becomes evident once the storms of life hit, and our foundation is revealed for what it is.
 2. Christ's ultimate point then is to get you and I to simply ask the question: what is the foundation we are building upon? What is the object of your hope?
 - a. If it is Christ, you will find that when the storms hit, you will still stand at the end of the day.
 - b. If it is not Christ, then all shall come crashing down.

4. God is Our Dwelling Place and Refuge (v. 4).

- a. "Let me dwell in Your tent forever; let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings."
 - i. The place of refuge David seeks is in the presence of His God.

1. If you recall: up until Solomon built the temple to the Lord, the Ark of the Covenant was housed in a tent, in the Holy of Holies.
 2. By very nature of his request, he immediately acknowledges he doesn't even necessarily have the right to ask this of God, but he yearns to be with God.
- ii. The second phrase of this verse conveys much the same imagery when it speaks of dwelling under the shelter of His wings.
1. He invokes the image of God being much like a mother hen who gathers her chicks under her wing to protect and provide for them.
 2. But there is also an incredible tenderness and mercy on display, because there is warmth, there is love, there is affection with God.
- b. Yet we ought not miss the point of these requests in verse 4: God is our dwelling place and refuge.
- i. You and I enjoy fellowship with His Spirit in a way that is unlike any Old Testament saint.
1. The Spirit of God no longer hovers over the tabernacle, so you are not limited by time and space.
 2. Even more than this, the Spirit which was given to you through Jesus Christ is your constant Helper.
- ii. What else then is God to you and I but our dwelling place and refuge, especially in our time of greatest need.
1. Even in those moments where your heart fails and you do not sense that He is near, He faithfully remains.
 2. In many ways, you can see that all David is doing here is counseling himself in what is true concerning God.

5. God Has Always Proven Faithful and Will Prove Faithful Yet Again (vv. 5-6).

- a. “For You have heard my vows, O God; You have given me the inheritance of those who fear Your name.”
 - i. David recalls a time where he made vows to the Lord. We don’t know what those vows were, but that doesn’t really matter.
 - 1. What it tells us is quite simple: David had a need arise before, he prayed to God for rescue, and made a vow.
 - 2. He also speaks of being given the inheritance of those who fear God’s name.
 - ii. David is speaking of that inheritance as the promise of life and blessings that are all part of being one of the covenant people of Israel.
 - 1. That would include the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, but also perhaps the Davidic covenant at this point. In every way, David can see God’s faithfulness on display in the past.
 - 2. In light of this, David also looks upon the faithfulness of God and says, in essence, “I will see His faithfulness again.”
- b. “You will prolong the king’s life; his years will be as many generations.”
 - i. Verse 6 is in many ways just a simple prayer for long life and a long rule as the king.
 - 1. It is likely that he does not just have himself in mind here, but the future generations of kings that would come from him, especially in light of the Davidic Covenant.
 - 2. He knows that God will prove faithful in this simply because God has always been faithful. The grace of God shall prevail.
 - ii. That is ultimately where I turn to you today and say the same principle is at work in your life and mine.

1. The trials that come our way and cause our hearts to fail will never strip His faithfulness and grace from us.
 - a. In fact, all these things do is serve to show His faithfulness all the more, for despite where a man would fail, God does not.
 - b. This is shown to us no more clearly than in the cross of Jesus Christ.
2. To you, the grace of God will prevail if you are in Christ. God will remain faithful. He cannot be anything but faithful.
 - a. Yet if we are honest, these are the very core truths of the gospel we forget most often.
 - b. So, what then do we do? We start back at the beginning, by going to God in prayer with our fickle hearts.

6. God Will Preserve Us by His Faithfulness (v.7).

- a. “He will abide before God forever; appoint lovingkindness and truth that they may preserve him.”
 - i. At this point, David has his confidence set. He remembers that God will not fail him, and that the cry of his heart in verse four will actually come to be.
 1. He longed to be in the presence of God forever and dwell with Him, on the solid rock—and God will indeed give him just that.
 2. Yet David also knows that won’t happen until the day God calls him home or returns.
 - a. This is a struggle all genuine Christians face in this life, especially as you grow more and more weary of this world.
 - b. At the same time, if we are truly honest, there is much that we still cling to in this world.

- c. The only remedy to this is that God preserve us by His lovingkindness and His truth.
 - ii. David prays that the Lord would preserve him to the very end by His lovingkindness and His truth.
 - 1. That word for “lovingkindness” is the rich Hebrew word “hesed.”
 - 2. The word for “truth” here speaks of God’s inability to lie or change His mind.
- b. What David asks for then is a wonderfully simple thing: set these things before me and guide me by them.
 - i. To David, God was the sure and steady anchor for his soul, and not his own ability and strength. God must give these things to him, or he would fail.
 - 1. But David’s desire was not merely that he would have comfort and strength in his time of need.
 - 2. He was a man who delighted in God, and desired that his every waking moment would be to live in such a way that God gets the glory He is due.
 - ii. In light of everything then, David makes a simple vow: “So I will sing praise to Your name forever, that I may pay my vows day by day.”
 - 1. You see, at the end of it all, David is in a position where he recognizes God’s utter and complete faithfulness to him.
 - 2. What David wants to do is live a quiet and faithful life, where the rest of his days he sings of God’s grace and brings God glory.

7. Conclusion

Benediction: The LORD bless you, and keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.’ (Num. 6:24-26).