

THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU ARE OVERWHELMED

(Psalm 61)

Just six months before the first iPhone debuted (in December of 2006), many of you will remember the popularity of that amazing device called the iPod. It could hold tens of thousands of songs. It was an insanely popular present that Christmas in 2006. And so were iTunes gift cards. In fact, the iPod and iTunes gifts cards were SO popular that Christmas that as people began to go online and download new music, the servers at Apple were overwhelmed. They couldn't handle the requests being made by the millions of people who were making those requests. And if a person *was* able to login, it was taking up to twenty minutes to download one song.

Now, in the Psalm we will read in just a moment (Psalm 61), David, the king of Israel, is in the same boat that Apple's servers were on Christmas morning 2006—David is overwhelmed. We're not told *exactly* what is happening in his life, but we do know that he is a long way from home in desperate need. And because of this, David says...

Psalm 61 ¹ Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer. 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. ³ For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy. ⁴ I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings.

David is overwhelmed. But the good news is that David knows exactly what to do. And what we see in this Psalm is that the God who created all things and sustains this entire universe is not anything like the Apple corporation servers in Cupertino, CA. God is **never** overwhelmed and He never has to tell **anyone** who comes to Him in prayer to try again later.

So this morning, what I would like us to do is to study David's interaction with God at time in his life when he is just simply overwhelmed. I'd like us to focus on the three word pictures David uses for God—three ways that God's magnificent greatness is portrayed that will help you and I when **we** are overwhelmed.

Title: Things to Remember When You Are Overwhelmed

(Prayer) (go to black)

About 25 years ago when Kelly and I lived in North Garland, our daughter Lauren was about 3 or 4 years old and was playing out in the backyard one afternoon. The girl next door who was Lauren's age had climbed up to the top of her six-foot fence and began to talk to her. Lauren laid down on the cushy Augustine grass in our back yard and was enjoying her conversation as she looked up at her friend and her friend looked down from six feet above. Unfortunately, the conversation didn't last very long. As I was standing in the kitchen, Lauren came running in and in complete wide-eyed panic cried out: "Daddy!" I ran over to her and immediately saw that she was covered in ants. I knew I had to do something quickly and so I tore off every shred of clothing she was wearing as fast as I

could and then reached under the kitchen sink and began to spray her all over with ant killer. It was the only thing I could think of because I knew that if I didn't do something quickly, she would be in bad, bad shape from the fire ant bites. I sprayed and sprayed until every ant was dead. It was a crazy sixty seconds. In the end, the good news was that even though she did have a ton of ant bites, they **weren't** fire ant bites. Thankfully, she didn't have to endure the horrible side effects of a fire ant attack.

Now, even though it's been over 25 years ago, I can still remember that moment in time when Lauren burst through the back door and with every ounce of strength cried out: "*Daddy!*" **It was a cry of fear, of pain, and of desperation.** I knew something was wrong, and I knew it **IMMEDIATELY!**

Now in Psalm 61, we see this same cry kind of cry, but it is not from a three-year-old girl, but from a grown man who was the leader of his nation—a man who was **himself** in a very desperate situation (much like the presidents, prime ministers, and kings of earth are right now with the coronavirus pandemic).

In agony, David says in v. 1:

¹ **Hear my cry,** O God; Attend to my prayer. ² From the end of the earth I will cry to You, when my heart is overwhelmed;

So David is overwhelmed. Not only that, he is out of the country—far away from Israel. On top of that he is in some kind of dilemma that is beyond his strength and ability to deal with it. (Now, maybe he's sick and believes he might die, or maybe foreign armies are seeking his life.) Thankfully, whatever is happening, David doesn't lose it—he doesn't come unglued—but he gets on his knees and prays the following prayer (look at v. 2):

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

*"Lord, bring me to Yourself...let me see what **You** see ... give me Your rock-solid help!"*

In the same way that Lauren knew her **earthly** daddy could help her in her time of desperation, David knew His **heavenly** Father could help him.

So first of all, when times get desperate and overwhelming, we need to remember that...

Our God is a ROCK who is greater than any situation we might face.

When David was overwhelmed he asked God to lead him to the place of His sovereign protection and help. He understood that he needed **God** to do this for him—that it was out of his reach and out of his control.

In 1 Samuel 1, we read about Hannah’s desperate situation. Hannah was childless and in her desperation she cries out to God for a son. Miraculously, she and her husband are given a baby boy, Samuel. And after God answers her prayer, she offers exuberant thanks to God. And she says:

1 Samuel 2:2-----² “**No one** is holy like the Lord, For there is **none** besides You, nor is there **any** rock like our God.

Like Hannah, David was absolutely overwhelmed, but he saw God as a strong and powerful **ROCK**, who could rescue him no matter how hopeless the situation was.

Sometimes when we pray, God says “**yes**” and gives us just what we ask for. Sometimes we pray and He says, “**no**” because He has something better in mind for us (or b/c He knows it would hurt us). And sometimes He says, “**Wait**—*it will be better that I do this for you down the road.*”

We don’t like to wait. But our Lord Jesus taught us that, as His followers, we should “**always pray** and never give up” (Luke 18:1, NLT).

So, first of all, David saw the God **he** prayed to as a mighty, exalted ROCK, but he also saw the God he prayed to another way.

And in v. 3, he tells God the **REASON** he turns to Him in prayer:

3 For You have been a shelter for me, A **strong tower** from the enemy.

When times get desperate, not only is our God a ROCK that is high and exalted above any situation we might face, but...

Our God is a shelter—a STRONG TOWER greater than any enemies we might face.

In Bible days, if you were being chased by someone who wanted to hurt you, the towers that were on the city walls were places of safety and protection. **Now in Texas, a** word-picture *we* might use is a tornado shelter. When a tornado is headed your way, you run into it and are safe.

And in the book of Proverbs we read:

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

Spiritually, our enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Satan is **real** and his desire is to ruin your life and your family’s. And that’s why the Apostle Peter tells us:

1 Peter 5:8-----⁸ Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

But God is shelter we can hide in.

You find shelter in God through submitting to Him as Lord:

“...submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you...”

1527 was one of the worst years of Martin Luther’s life. On April 27th that year, he had to stop in the middle of his sermon because of dizziness. On July 6th, he was entertaining friends when he felt an intense buzzing in his ear. He laid down and thought this was his last night on earth. Throughout that year he battled illness and depression over and over again. In August, a plague erupted in Germany and his large home was turned into a hospital for the sick at the same time his wife was carrying a baby. And yet, at the end of this very difficult year, he wrote one of the greatest hymns ever written: **“A Mighty Fortress is Our God.”** In this hymn he said:

And though this world with devils filled
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God has willed
His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim?
We tremble not for him.
His rage we can endure,
For lo! His doom is sure.
One little Word shall fell him.

My friends...

---Our God is a **rock** with more power than we will ever need for every problem we face...

---He is a **strong tower**—a mighty fortress of safety...

But there is one more word-picture here for God. And it is found in v. 4:

⁴ I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust **in the shelter of Your wings**.

When times get desperate, we need to remember that...

Our God is like a protective mother eagle that is constantly looking out for her young.

Speaking of God’s care of Israel, Moses said:

Deuteronomy 32:11-12-----¹¹ like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them aloft. ¹² The LORD alone led him [i.e., the nation of Israel]; no foreign god was with him.

When Israel was in Egypt, God was there. When they left Egypt and headed toward the land God had promised them, God was there each step of the way.

---So when you find yourself overwhelmed by life...

---When you feel as if you aren't going to make it...

---When you can't see any possible way out of your problems...

Remember this—if you are a child of God, God is hovering over you. He is there for you and just as a mother eagle hovers over her young, God is there to see you through every circumstance and every trial. When you struggle to fly spiritually, He will catch you and carry you higher until you learn to fly.

In the 2008 film *Taken*, Liam Neeson plays Bryan Mills, a former CIA operative who determines to track down his teenage daughter after she's been kidnapped by human traffickers while on a trip with a girlfriend in France. In one gripping scene, Neeson talks to his daughter's abductor after he's retrieved a cell phone left behind at the crime scene. Neeson states his clear intent to seek and save his daughter. **He tells one of the kidnappers:**

*"I don't know who you are. I don't know what you want I can tell you I don't have money; but, what I do have are a very particular set of skills, skills that I've acquired over a very long career, skills that make me a nightmare for people like you. If you let my daughter go now, that will be the end of it. I will not look for you. I will not pursue you. But if you don't, I will look for you, I **will** find you and I will kill you."*

After a momentary pause, the kidnapper coolly replies: "Good luck."

Neeson is now focused on one thing: finding his daughter and bringing her home.

The balance of the movie is action-packed. Neeson has only has 96 hours to accomplish his task as he weaves his way through language barriers, governmental red tape, and the elaborate hierarchies of crime bosses to find his daughter. After four days, Neeson finds his daughter on a yacht, sold by the traffickers to a wealthy Arab businessman. After killing her captor, Neeson's daughter collapses into his **arms as she says, "Daddy, you came for me!"** Bloody, beaten, but ultimately triumphant, Neeson holds his daughter as he quietly says, **"I told you I would."**

And my friends, just as Liam Neeson promised his daughter that he would rescue her from her horrible situation, our God has made "exceedingly great and precious" promises to us. He promised us that He would be our rock, our shelter, and our protector. And He promised us that He would "never leave us nor forsake us" in our time of trouble.

Application: pray...run to Him for shelter...trust in His protection

(Invitation and closing prayer)

