

14. Psalm 52-61

May 30, 2013

Some of you may remember what I taught at the beginning of the Book of Psalms as an Introduction. The Book of Psalms can be divided into five sections. The second section from chapter 42 to chapter 72 is coincided with the Book of Exodus in the theme of "Deliverance".

These 31 psalms have much to say about trouble and God's power to deliver us from that trouble. In these psalms we find encouragement and strength for all who are in the midst of struggles.

There is one common style in all of these psalms in the second section of the Book of Psalms. They all start with cries to the Lord for help and deliverance and end with the praise and adoration of His faithfulness.

Psalm 53

This psalm is an almost duplicate version of Psalm 14. One obvious and expected difference is the reference to 'God' as "Elohim" more frequently than 'LORD' which we translate to "Yahweh".

Psalm 52 relates to the story of Doeg, a king Saul's snitch which we can read in 1 Samuel 22; and Psalm 54 to the incident of the Ziphites according to 1 Samuel 23 and 26. But in Psalm 53, the term 'fool' which is "nabal" in Hebrew is suggestive of Nabal, who acted foolishly to David and his men in 1 Samuel 25.

Psalm 53:1-3 The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity; There is none who does good. 2 God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God. 3 Every one of them has turned aside; They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.

It takes tremendous effort from a person to deny the knowledge and existence of God, because the evidence of His presence is everywhere in nature as well as human body.

The exact number of cells in the human body is not known, although most estimates put the figure at somewhere between 50 and 75 trillion cells. There are some estimates that say there can be up to 100 trillion cells in the body. Even Richard Dawkins, the famous atheist evolutionist, has calculated himself that one cell's DNA contains about 4,000 books of 500 pages each of information. The biologists also found that each cell contains the blueprint for the entire body.

To say this complicated cell just happened out of evolution through multi-million generations takes so much more faith than simply believing that Jesus Christ created the entire universe. The evolutionists' argument goes directly against the well-established and undeniable fact, the second law of the Thermodynamics. Thermodynamics is the study of the inter-relation between heat, work and internal energy of a system.

The British scientist and author C.P. Snow had an excellent way of explaining the Second Law of Thermodynamics in layman's terms: "You cannot break even. You

cannot return to the same energy state, because there is always an increase in disorder; entropy always increases." In a simpler phrase, it goes from normal to chaos unless there is an intervention from superior being .

Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit made it very clear to us in the Book of Romans about those who deny the evidence of God's presence:

Romans 1:20-22 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools

Psalm 54

Psalm 54:4-7 Behold, God is my helper; The Lord is with those who uphold my life. 5 He will repay my enemies for their evil. Cut them off in Your truth. 6 I will freely sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O Lord, for it is good. 7 For He has delivered me out of all trouble; And my eye has seen its desire upon my enemies.

The resolution of the prayer lies in the conviction that God is just. He will not permit His children to suffer without vindication. The imprecation is not vindictive rather expressive of one's trust in divine justice.

The people of God must understand the boomerang effect of sin whether it is for themselves or their enemies:

Hosea 8:7a They sow the wind, And reap the whirlwind.

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

The faithlessness of David's enemies stands in contrast to God's faithfulness. They are enemies who defame him. The Lord is faithful in His relationship to His people; therefore the psalmist is calm, trusting that his God will protect him from his adversary.

Psalm 55

Psalm 55:12-18 For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; Then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; Then I could hide from him. 13 But it was you, a man my equal, My companion and my acquaintance. 14 We took sweet counsel together, And walked to the house of God in the throng. 15 Let death seize them; Let them go down alive into hell, For wickedness is in their dwellings and among them. 16 As for me, I will call upon God, And the Lord shall save me. 17 Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice. 18 He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle that was against me, For there were many against me.

David's psalm moves from the general to the more specific. The enemy is none other than his friend according to v12-13. His pain is more intense because of his personal relationship with those who have betrayed him. The wound through betrayal of this close friend is much deeper than the one from his average enemies, because David expected his enemies to come after him, but not his friend.

David does not point out any particular name here. But I would venture to say that this close companion of David would be Ahithophel who used to be a counselor of David, grandfather of Bathsheba, one of his wives. His counsels were highly esteemed by the kings, both David and Absalom.

2 Samuel 16:23 Now the advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. So was all the advice of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

Betrayal from close friend or spouse can be extremely difficult. It is no wonder why divorce is so nasty.

Instead of sending out a group of commandos from his own troops to take out this traitor, David turns to God and pleads to Him to avenge this betrayal and vindicate him, because he was confident that his God would see it through.

Psalm 55:22-23 Cast your burden on the Lord, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved. 23 But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction; Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; But I will trust in You.

We need to note the word 'cast'. In Greek, it is "shalak". It means more of hurling without any intention to retrieve. We often put our burden at the feet of the Lord through our prayers. But when our prayer is done, we pick it back up so that we can continuously carry it.

What is the purpose of pleading to the Lord about the burden we carry if we are not going to leave it with Him? Do we think that we can handle it better than Him? Yes, that is what is in the back of our minds. And many of us would prefer to worry about the burden we have than trust the Lord to handle it for us.

Then, someone would ask, "OK, hotshot, I have a question. After I lay my burden at the feet of the Lord in prayer, if it pops back in my mind again, what do I do?" This is what I do when that happens. I remind myself of the faithfulness of God from the Bible as well as my own Christian life. I choose to dwell on His sovereign power and goodness to take care of my needs, not necessarily desires. I also choose to acknowledge that whatever He does for me is the best for me in spite of my limited vision and understanding.

Listen, safety is not the absence of danger but the presence of God. Let's determine to learn from difficult experiences. God has a purpose for allowing every difficulty and problem. Let Him teach you new truths and work in your life in new ways.

Psalm 59

Psalm 59:1-2 Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; Defend me from those who rise up against me. 2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, And save me from bloodthirsty men.

Psalm 59:8-10 But You, O Lord, shall laugh at them; You shall have all the nations in derision. 9 I will wait for You, O You his Strength; For God is my defense; 10 My God of mercy shall come to meet me; God shall let me see my desire on my enemies.

Psalm 59:16-17 But I will sing of Your power; Yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; For You have been my defense And refuge in the day of my trouble. 17 To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises; For God is my defense, My God of mercy.

The psalm starts with a bit of the story from 1 Samuel 19:11-17. Saul sent his soldiers to capture David from his house, but he managed to get away from Saul's soldiers through his wife Michal's help.

Like many other deliverance psalms, this one starts with frantic pleas to the Lord, but ends with David praising the Lord for His power and deliverance.

What did it change his prayer? Like all of us, David was overwhelmed with his problems. That urgency drove him to his knees and prayed to the Lord. While he prayed, he focused on God and His power and faithfulness. I believe that it is the key to the secret of prayer.

Prayer is not about how or what we say to the Lord, rather how we align ourselves with Him so that we may be one in spirit to follow Him and focus on Him and His glory.

Psalm 61

Psalm 61:1-8 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. Selah 5 For You, O God, have heard my vows; You have given me the heritage of those who fear Your name. 6 You will prolong the king's life, His years as many generations. 7 He shall abide before God forever. Oh, prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him! 8 So I will sing praise to Your name forever, That I may daily perform my vows.

One of the old Maranatha worship songs uses this psalm.

V2 shows how desperate David was as he was being chased by his own son Absalom out of Jerusalem into the wilderness. He was looking for a strong tower and shelter where he could hide and rest. He found them in the Lord.

You may be facing a personal crisis right now. Maybe it is a financial difficulty, or a foreclosure on your home or a loss in your investments. Maybe you have a marriage that is falling apart or a prodigal son or daughter. Maybe you have a life-threatening illness. Maybe you are paralyzed by fear as you think about an uncertain future.

Worry is not a virtue. In fact, it can be a sin in which we are failing to trust in God. So I have a suggestion: the next time you are tempted to worry, pray instead.

Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

God promises that He will give us a peace that surpasses understanding, but not necessarily a peace that always will give us understanding.

Prayer is the way by which God helps us to overcome our anxiety and worry. Maybe God will take your problem away. That is possible. Then again, maybe He won't. But here is what happens: you get perspective like king David got it. You see God for who He is, and thus you see your problem for what it is. If you focus on our big

God, then your problem is tiny. But if you only focus on your problem, then you come to a false conclusion that your God cannot handle your problem.

Prayer gives us His peace and His strength to help us get through whatever it is we are dealing with. That is what God does for the person who will call on Him.