

## The Overwhelmed Man

Jesus in the Psalms

*Psalm 61*

Stuart W. Bryan

### I. The Coronavirus and the Ends of the Earth

For the Christian, to be unable to gather with God's people to worship is a great burden. Yet it is one that God's people have faced throughout history. David faced this burden. His *heart was overwhelmed*. Hence, he composed this psalm to articulate that burden and to teach all those absent from corporate worship how to pray in such times.

### II. The Overwhelmed Man

#### A. Title and Setting

*To the Chief Musician. On A Stringed Instrument. A Psalm of David.*

#### B. First Stanza: Prayer for deliverance (1-4)

<sup>1</sup>Hear my cry, O God; Attend to my prayer. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>For You have been a shelter for me, A strong tower from the enemy. <sup>4</sup>I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings. *Selah*

#### C. Second Stanza: Prayer for the king (5-7)

<sup>5</sup>For You, O God, have heard my vows; You have given to me the heritage of those who fear Your name. <sup>6</sup>You will prolong the king's life, His years as many generations. <sup>7</sup>He shall abide before God forever. Oh, prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him!

#### D. Final Vow of Praise (8)

<sup>8</sup>So I will sing praise to Your name forever, That I may daily perform my vows.

### III. How do we deal with absence from God's presence?

For David, the assembly of God's people was the center of the earth. Hence, to be unable to assemble was to be stuck at *the \_\_\_\_\_ of the earth*. David's *heart was overwhelmed*. But there are also other times when our *hearts are overwhelmed*. *The Westminster Confession of Faith* wisely remarks:

*18.4. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it; by falling into some special sin, which wounds the conscience, and grieves the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation; by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light: yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may in due time be revived, and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.*

In His mysterious providence, God sometimes withdraws the light of His countenance from us.

### A. Cry out for God's merciful deliverance (cf. Ps 139:7-12; 1 Tim 2:1-7)

First, Psalm 61 teaches us to cry out for God's merciful deliverance. When David's *heart was overwhelmed*, when he felt at *the end of the earth*, far from God, he cried out to God.

<sup>7</sup>Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? <sup>8</sup>If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. <sup>9</sup>If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, <sup>10</sup>Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. <sup>11</sup>If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night shall be light about me; <sup>12</sup>Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.

Though David is absent from the sanctuary, unable to gather with God's people to worship, he is not bereft of comfort. \_\_\_\_\_ is still with him. The same is true for us. There is hope in God; He is capable of lifting us from the pit. Spurgeon writes, "...had David ceased to pray he would have become the victim of despair; there is an end to a \_\_\_\_\_ when he makes an end to prayer."

But not only should we pray for our personal restoration, David also teaches us to pray for the preservation of God's king, "Oh, prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him!" (7b) Likewise, Jesus teaches us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." When your *heart is overwhelmed*, pray that Christ's \_\_\_\_\_ would prosper in the world. Why? Because as Christ's kingdom is advanced in the world, this will enable your life to return to normal so that you can return to corporate worship.

### B. Recount God's mercies and promises

1. Recount God's mercies (3, 5a)
  
2. Recount God's promises (4, 5b, 6-7a cf. Rom 8:16-17)

### C. Commit to praise the Lord forever

When our *hearts are overwhelmed*, we can often be moved to make promises, vows to the Lord. These vows are fitting. We simply need to follow through with them, particularly when God answers our prayer. It is all too common for us to be passionate in prayer when our hearts are overwhelmed, and then, once the trouble is past, to be slack in fulfilling our vows. Spurgeon writes, "We ought not to leap in prayer, and \_\_\_\_\_ in praise" (Spurgeon, 42). Allen Ross writes:

"Paying of fulfilling vows means offering the praise that was vowed during the time of prayer... A prolonged life demands a long life of praises; and so when God grants [us] more days, it will be more days to praise." (Ross, 358)

## IV. Conclusion