

**The Rock: 01-17-2021****Reflections in the Psalms**

**First reading:** Romans 12:9-13

**Title:** A settled focus

**Scripture:** Psalm 5

**Theme:**

Strength in despair, learning to look to God and His revealed promises, especially when all around you seems to continue going from bad to worse.

**Introduction:**

Often many of us wake up and turn to the news straight away, looking for the damage report, or the sports score. What the headline reads based upon what we had seen the night before.

The events of these past weeks in our country have probably caused many feelings to flow as well as the ups and downs of needing to remind ourselves that God has got this under control.

Yet we see a world in conflict, a rebellious people going their own way, and an unsettling feeling creeps in.

We ask ourselves along with the Psalmist:

"...if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

**-Psalm 11:3 ESV**

Looking to the Bible once again this week, and seeing again the writings of King David, we find hope and assurance.

Why? Because David, who asked that very question of 'What can the righteous do?', just like the rest of us has dealt with some difficult things.

Wrestling it seems, with what he sees going on in front of him, with what he knows in his heart to be the truths of God.

I don't know if this Psalm is attached to any particular event in his life, but it seems to me that he is learning to process what he sees and perhaps even how he feels about things and people who continue in their rebellious way, with the truth of God.

Learning how to bring his feelings under the authority of the Scriptures and allowing the Holy Spirit to assure him that God is still God and no matter what things look like, or how people act, God's law and His word is where comfort and joy are found.

Even in persecution and turmoil. Asking the question that perhaps many of us have asked: How long O' Lord do we have to watch this and deal with a world in collapse and rebellion against her creator?

### **The Story:**

One of the first and most important observations in the Psalm is found right at the beginning and in particular verse three:

"Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my groaning. Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.

### **-Psalm 5:1-3 ESV**

We learned last week that David ended his day by coming before the Lord and that allowed him to put his head down and rest in peace. Why? Because he had his eyes focused in the proper direction.

Psalm five in many ways, teaches us that we need to start our day in the same way, with our eyes focused in the right direction and preparing our hearts and minds for the day ahead.

"Begin the day with a friendly voice, a companion unobtrusive."

**-Neil Peart: Spirit of the radio**

A line from a song, I know and as usual, right? But it speaks truth. How we begin our day, where we begin our day really determines how well we will do and how we will handle the events that unfold.

David started his day by preparing a sacrifice and the watched for the Lord. That is the friendliest voice we can hear in the early hours of our day.

Giving that time to God is really the best way to start our day. Not the noise of the news feed, the vitriolic voices of our world that are talking and pushing the buttons of our feelings.

Listen, once our emotions are stirred, most especially right away in the morning, and before God has settled and spoken into our hearts, it is rare that the remainder of our day will be settled.

In starting his day in this way, David is able to keep proper perspective of truth and of reality. Look at what he says next after starting the day before God as opposed to looking out his window:

"For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you.

The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. You destroy those who speak lies; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man."

**-Psalm 5:4-6 ESV**

Keeping right focus has allowed David to know that God is in charge, and that he can have joy because he knows that ultimately justice and judgement will come upon those who continue in their ways.

This may seem to be negative, but in reality, it isn't. I'm reminded of what Paul tells the Philippian church. We will really look at this in the months ahead, but he is reminding them to keep the right focus:

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

**-Philippians 4:8-9 ESV**

Start your day right, and end your day right, God will take care of everything

in the middle, no matter how rough it may get for you.

This can, at times, be incredibly hard when not only in our country, but in the entire world we see a turning away from the God who created us and promises peace if we would just come to Him.

I wonder if David wasn't struggling with this as he wrote. Here is what I am seeing and feeling, God. (verses 4-6) And yet, this too is the reality that I know to be true, so help me to hold onto this:

"But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you. Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me."

**-Psalm 5:7-8 ESV**

It is hard, we must admit, to maintain a settled focus and spiritual balance here. Which is why we need our Bibles every day.

It is only because of Christ and the Holy Spirit that we can see things right. No effort on our part will get us to this place, except our choice of how we start our days and finish our days.

Will we, because of His great love for us, choose to start our day on our face as it were before the throne of God, in prayer asking Him to help us keep the right perspective?

David here, I think, recognizes his place and his life and character in light of God. We need to remember to keep the right frame of mind -always.

To remember also that it can be hard and often is. But God's word is of deep encouragement and comfort. Paul again as he writes to the church in Rome says this:

"Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."

**-Romans 12:12 ESV**

David also, it seems to me, is fighting that battle of perseverance. Holding the line in a world which has no boundaries. Where the enemy is doing what they want without hinderance and with results.

Often times we can get depressed and fall into despair because of all that is going on. Yet, in our weariness in that, and our wrestling with it, we need to remember, God's steadfast love.

I believe that is what David is doing here. Verses 9-10 are powerful in their truth and perspective. Look at them:

"For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue. Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you."

**-Psalm 5:9-10 ESV**

David recognizes that in his weariness and frustration, that ultimately the evil and strife he is suffering is actually against God Himself, and not David. David is just His representative here on earth.

All human rebellion ultimately is against God. It may very well play out against His Church and in His people, as it often does, but it is the heart in rebellion against God.

Charles Spurgeon wrestled with depression far more often that even he would care to admit. At times it would keep him in bed for weeks.

In the mid-1850's he wrote a series of sermons about that, and one of them was on Elijah the prophet and his fear and frustration about how from the top of Mt.



Carmel and his greatest victory, he found himself full of fear because of Jezebel.

He lost his joy and confidence in an instant because of what he heard and saw. I leave that with you to read on your own (1 Kings 18 -20) as time is short today.

But Spurgeon writes this about the incident and Elijah's attitude, in one of these sermons-directed now at his listeners:

"So dear friend, you may depend upon it that you cannot be Elijah upon Carmel without the probability that you will be Elijah under a juniper tree before long. The great prophet of fire proves himself to be only a man, after all- and in the time of testing you, also, will be as weak as other men...(encouraging I know, but true and here is why)

Because of his (Elijah) intense love to God and his grievous disappointment with the people...Elijah could not endure that and I think that the heaviest sorrows to a really gracious heart are the sins of the times, the transgressions of the multitude, the national sins that bite like asps into an earnest soul, especially if you have done something, or have seen it done by others which ought to have ended the discussion and settled the matter once and for all..."

**-The Silent shades of sorrow: Elijah fainting Pg. 75-76**

You see in the middle of a great work of God and a huge deliverance, the people simply went about their business as if nothing of significance happened.

Looking at David as he wrote here, he is a victorious king and the people of God are established solidly in the kingdom God had promised, and yet evil still prevails, and that unsettles David's heart.

This, I think is important for us to remember if we are to maintain a sense of joy. Even though evil seems to continue unchecked and unfettered, God's steadfast love delivers us, sustains us in Christ.

That ultimately, man's rebellion at every level here in this world is actually aimed at God in heaven.

I wonder if that isn't part of our focus problem. That we depend too much, or rather think too much of ourselves and about ourselves.

We take everything personal, that the corrupt things and the bad things in this world are somehow aimed at us. Spurgeon says that the gracious heart is heavy when these things happen, but that we

must remember it is against God in the end, that these things happen.

Because we are His, it breaks our hearts, but proper focus reminds us, as it has David in this Psalm, that God will win the day:

"But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you. For you bless the righteous, O Lord; you cover him with favor as with a shield."

**-Psalm 5:11-12 ESV**

You and I, and all of God's people are to be instruments of peace in this world which is so full of chaos. We are to hold out the hope of the gospel, because God by His grace has called you, just as he did David.

This Psalm brings a balance and clear truth to us. We are to seek God. He does not like what is happening in the world, and He sees all of it. Don't think He doesn't.

Part of Elijah's problem, and I think ours too, is that we forget this. We ask: Where are you God in all this mess? Do you not see all this evil and destruction and rebellion? I feel all alone here!

Well, no, no you are not. What is wrong with you is you have taken your eyes off of me and have focused on the storms of life.

Come to me, you who are wearied in the fight:

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

**-Matthew 11:28-30 ESV**

Come to me, I will make your way straight, and your assignment clear. The world has no concept of truth and cannot tell the truth. Don't think that God misses this.

Come, find refuge in me. There is peace and joy there, even in the mess. Stop letting all the trials, tribulation and chaos of the world bring you down and control your feelings.

Listen feelings are real, and depression is a very real thing. Sometime we need medical help to bring balance to our bodies. Please hear and understand that.

But sometimes, like David and like Elijah, God's people just get wearied in the fight and the daily struggle.

This is why the Psalms are so good and this one in particular. They cover the reality of God and the struggles of His people. I have yet to find a Psalm that pulls punches and dances around the truth of what the Psalmist is writing.

David, I think is reminding himself more than anyone else as he writes here. That encourages me in so many ways, because that means, how I feel at times is not unique to me.

It also encourages me because the Holy Spirit made sure this was kept for us all these years later as a way to encourage and build us up.

God's people are not exempt from trial and sickness and despair. Pretend that you are and you are in for a long haul to the finish line.

Again, our first reading from Romans reminds us of that: Hope -Tribulation- prayer

Rejoice in hope. What hope? The hope of Christ and His promises. Much like David remembering the promises of God, we too have this hope in Christ:

"For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory."

**-2 Corinthians 1:20 ESV**

We will have peace in our trials. Jesus prayed for his disciples and by implication and application for us:

"I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one."

**-John 17:14-15 ESV**

Notice what it is He has given us. His word. That is the assurance that in Christ, we are kept by God in all things.

Lastly it is by prayer that we come to know that God hears, answers and assures us.

Paul tells us to be constant in prayer. David sure was, as it was the only way he kept his sure footing in all the trials he faced.

I leave you with one last quote from Spurgeon:

"Since God has done this, we are bound to admit that there is power in prayer, and that God's promises in the Scriptures are not a dead letter."

**-The silent shades of sorrow: Elijah fainting Pg. 77**

This word many find you in a very good place before the Lord, and it may find you in a very unsettled place. I do not know.

What I do know is that God is in each situation, in each unsettled thought, in every angry outburst of disgust because of what we see happening in our world.

In each joyful exclamation of what He is doing and has done, and in each thankful breath we take because of His goodness and gracefulness toward us.

We need each other more than many are caring to admit. Small groups, honest fellowship and encouragement are so critical for us as His people.

As a church in this community, going it alone every day, or just thinking Sunday morning coming in and then leaving with little or no connections to this body will not fit us for the task ahead.