

A Spiritual Spring for the Week

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Sermon Text: Psalm 62
Sermon Title: "Under Attack, and Doing Fine"

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What is interesting about Psalm 62 is that it was probably written at the exact time that King David was going through adversity. The pain and struggle is so intense for him at that moment that he has to write about it to relieve some tension.¹

King David hasn't got a friend in the world. According to the history books, David was the great king of God who brought two kingdoms together, Israel and Judah. For decades they worked together as God's people to face any hardship, and win. King David was God's anointed king, and the Messiah would carry his kingdom toward eternity. Yet we come to Psalm 62, and David hasn't a friend in the world.

"How long do you wish to attack me?" he writes to those who want to cause him pain. How many times will you throw yourselves against me, like a battering ram against a wall that is cracking and crumbling? David is crumbling under the weight of his enemies. He might be the king, chosen by God, but he is feeling

¹ Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Psalms 1-72*, cf. 238.

very weak, very vulnerable, and he cannot stand up against it much long.

What is worse: even those close to him seem to want to knock him down. At least he knows who his enemies are by what they do to him publicly. But it is intolerable to have people, who are supposed to be your friends, doing everything they can to cause you pain. “They delight in lies. They bless with their mouths, but curse inwardly.” In other words, David’s cabinet of priests and soldiers and rich individuals could praise him up and down to his face about how wonderfully he is doing as king; but when they leave the king’s court, they gather together and conspire against him. They gossip amongst themselves about David’s faults and shortcomings, never letting him know what those faults and shortcomings might be. They plan on how to get rid of him and replace him with a better king. David hasn’t got a friend in the world.

That is a dark place to find ourselves in: to feel as though nobody cares about us, as though nobody thinks highly of us (or thinks of us at all). It is even worse when people attack us to our faces or through emails or on Facebook, and others seems to agree. They click Like, and laugh at our expense.

My sister went through a period of being hated, when she was in middle school. When girls reach middle school, something happens inside their bodies that makes them want to argue and fight with other girls, even girls who used to be their best friends. It is generally accepted that such adversity will occur, when hormones are developing and going wild within the body of a young girl. But what my sister went through was unacceptable. One girl, who was my sister's good friend, found joy in spreading vicious rumors about my sister, such as she loved to drink and party every weekend, such as she slept around with a bunch of guys, such as she was an awful human beings that nobody should hang out with. For a time, nobody did. They believed the lies of a so-called friend, and it tore my sister up.

I once knew a woman whose boss and co-workers treated her with contempt. The boss favored the younger, better looking girls, and this woman wasn't one of them. He would give her fewer hours to work and the younger girls more hours than they needed. She would be made to do jobs that others were responsible for. Her coworkers would gossip, making up lies about her, just to annoy her. They knew they could bug her, and cause her to become upset. This abuse went on for months, until she quit in defeat.

It is a dark place to be in, when people seem to be ganging up on us, spreading rumors, laughing at our misfortunes. It is horrible when so-called friends attack us and make us feel inferior. It is even worse when parents do this to us, or spouses, or other family members. Family is supposed to be where we find friends, where people who love us and we love them, where people will stand up for us and we will stand up for them. Family is supposed to be a safe haven for all of us, but even parents can treat their own children as though they are no-good. Spouses can treat spouses as though they are second-rate. Brother goes after brother, sister after sister, and the safe haven of family falls apart.

King David could have quit, abdicated his throne to one of his more popular sons. King David could have gathered faithful people around him, and gone after those who attacked him. He could have fought fire with fire, and “napalmed” the blazes out of his detractors. At one point, David does declare, “You will all be slain, all of you, like a leaning wall or a tottering fence” (Psalm 62:3).²

Yet, how does King David begin his Psalm 62?

² The NKJV and KJV state that the people attacking King David are like a leaning wall and tottering fence, while the NRSV and NIV state that David himself is the wall and fence. The translations are different, because (I believe) it is difficult to translate Hebrew into English, and determine who is the subject of the sentence. The Hebrew is not clear on this matter, which may occur from time to time throughout the Old Testament. Either way, God’s word doesn’t lose its relevance and power.

Remember, he is in the thick of it and could have written anything. Raw emotions can turn to hate and rage and vengeance. No, this is how Psalm 62 starts, “For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall never be shaken.” He could have written anything: “God, rip their hearts out. Make them hurt like I hurt. I hate all their guts!” But he didn’t.

When under attack, we focus too much on the attack. We believe the attacks; we believe their power to steal our hope and joy. Then, we turn in on ourselves, and focus too much on our own self-preservation. We don’t find too much hope and joy there, either. The psalmist, David, is in the middle of the attack, and he says I will focus on God. More specifically, he says, “My soul is still, if focused on God alone.”³ “Only when one is able to focus on God alone does the power of the storm recede in response to his command, ‘Peace! Be Still!’ Only then is our lack of power swallowed up in [God’s] complete adequacy.”⁴

The other night my family and I re-watched the movie *Facing the Giants*. It is about a high school football coach who is losing games left and right. Parents are getting frustrated, and so are the players.

³ Artur Weiser, *Psalms*, 448.

⁴ Gerald H. Wilson, *The NIV Application Commentary: Psalms Volume 1*, 886.

To top it all off, the coach and his wife are trying to have their first baby, and that isn't going to happen soon. The salaries of both are low, so they cannot repair their vehicle which has broken down again. One evening, the coach is staying late in his office, and he discovers a meeting of men going on in one of the classrooms. They are discussing how to get rid of the football coach. They don't question his character; they question his ability to lead their boys. One of the assistance coaches of the team is sitting in the meeting, and he throws his coach under the bus, because he has a good chance of becoming the new head coach.

The real head coach of a high school football team is under attack from all sides. He has not a friend in the world to help him with his team, his family, or even his car. He believes the gossip about him. He believes that he isn't an effective coach, and that he isn't an effective husband who will never become an effective father. He hits rock bottom, and there is no other way to go but up.

He doesn't store up his anger to go after the assistant coach or the men who met secretly against him. He doesn't decide that his wife is better off without him, so he determines to leave. He comes to God with all his failures, all his weakness, all his

warts, and chooses not to focus on the problems. In a wooden area with the sun shining brightly on him, the coach prays, “Lord Jesus, would you help me? I need you. Lord, I feel that there are giants of fear and failure staring down at me, waiting to crush me. And I don't know how to beat 'em, Lord. I'm tired of being afraid. Lord, if you want me to do something else, show me. If you don't want me to have children, so be it. But You're my God. You're on the throne. You can have my hopes and my dreams. Lord, give me something. Show me something.”

King David needed God to show him something. We need God to show us something, because the giants of fear and failure want to crush us.

As David writes Psalm 62, it all comes to him. “My soul quietly waits for God.” When we wait quietly for God, we have no time to scream at others for calling us names and for making our days miserable. We have no room in our minds for hurtful thoughts against those who hurt us. Waiting quietly means being empty of hate and full of love, being devoid of vengeance and being receptive of healing. Waiting quietly for God means all that matters is God, and God alone. The pain fades away. We feel important and accepted by God. We know we can move forward with

God.

“From him comes my salvation,” David says. He is my only rock and salvation; he is my defense.”⁵ Two times, David says his soul waits quietly for God. Three times he says that God is his rock and salvation. Twice he says he will not be greatly moved. When we focus ourselves on God, it isn’t a one-time thing and then we are done. The attacks from others aren’t going to end, so our focus on God should keep going. It is essential to repeat to ourselves that God is our rock and salvation, that God will not cause us to move or fall down in the face of opposition. We have to repeat these things to ourselves over and over again, so that they become second-nature to us, and we believe them. We used to laugh at the Teletubbies for playing videos again and again and again. Do you remember that, if you had small children? They used to drive parents nuts. But the Teletubbies show knew something: the more you repeat something, the more familiar it becomes, and the more we will accept it. King David repeats and never forgets that God is his sole focus, that God is his everlasting rock and salvation, that with God he will not be moved no matter how much his enemies and so-called friends assault him.

⁵ Psalm 62:2.

Give up any attempt to escape the attacks: the false accusations, the malicious gossip, and the unfounded rumors. They will keep coming, because people will see a weakness in us; and we cannot avoid them all anyhow. Give up any attempt to conduct our own attacks, because that only increases the fire and everybody gets burned.

Sooner or later, the attacks will lose their power. The hurtful things that people can throw will lose their sting. King David acknowledges in verse 9 that “those of low estate are but a breath, those of high estate are a delusion; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than a breath.” David mentions the low and high, because they represent all of humanity. He doesn’t just simply say “humanity” but waxes poetically by calling all of us the low and high. Just as all people are like a breath and will fade away, so will the hurtful things they can do. Just as people do not last, false accusations and malicious gossip cannot remain. All that is left is God, and us with God. All power belongs to God. All mercy belongs to God. God’s power is ours. God’s mercy is ours.

I mentioned my sister, and what she had to endure. All through eighth grade she endured it, and then summer came, and then ninth grade came. The so-called friend wasn’t a friend anymore, and she

wasn't attacking my sister anymore. In fact, my sister found other friends who cared for her, and she cared for them. She learned from the experience to be a better person in God than the girl who went after her.

When we are in the thick of it, and we don't feel as though we have a friend in the world, we should enter the stillness of God's presence. We cannot fight, and we ought not to flee. We remain, quietly, eagerly, with God. We are vulnerable already, so we open ourselves completely to God. We give him all our needs, all our fears, all our weakness, all our sin. And we discover we are doing fine.

The Assurance of Pardon:

Hear the good news! Christ Jesus lives and reigns in heaven above, holding the keys to death and death's dominion. Christ reigns in power with God the Father as Lord of all creation, and he tells us to not be afraid. God our Father forgives all sin, large and small, secret and revealed. We are saved from death, and life is our reward. Believe this good news. You and I are forgiven through Christ our Lord. Amen.

