

Lead Me To The Rock
A Bible Message by Bayless Conley
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Please turn to Psalm 61:1,

- 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;
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

“Selah” means to meditate on what he has said. We are going to do that this morning. I want to talk to you from these four verses.

The first thing I would like you to notice is what he said in verse 2, “When my heart is overwhelmed.” Notice he did not say, “If my heart is overwhelmed.” Everyone, at one time or another, has felt the floodwaters entering their soul. Some people have developed greater spiritual resources, inner resources of the heart, and they are stronger and more stalwart. Even though it says in the Bible that those who faint in the day of adversity do so because their strength is small, each one of us will come face-to-face with things that are bigger than we are. We will come into situations that we do not have the ability, the wisdom, or the strength to cope with. At some time in our lives, we will be faced with things that we cannot handle on our own.

Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul in Second Corinthians 1:8, “For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.”

I would say that the great Apostle Paul, who wrote more than half of the New Testament, was overwhelmed and not ashamed to admit it. He said, “We despaired even of life. It was above strength. We did not have the ability or the inner resources to cope with it.” In fact, he went on to say, “So we put the sentence of death in ourselves that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.” They found deliverance and hope in God; but the point I am making is that he very clearly and honestly shared, “We were at the end of our rope. We were overwhelmed. We didn’t know what to do to the point that we despaired even of life.”

In verses 3 and 4, there are at least three figures of speech used to relay God’s different means of aid and protection. By sharing these different means of God’s protection and keeping power, we can also see potential causes for an overwhelmed heart.

MEANS OF GOD’S PROTECTION

The first one he mentions is a **shelter**. “You have been a shelter for me.” He mentions it again at the end of verse 4, “I will take shelter under Your wings.” The second one is a **strong tower**. The third one he speaks about is a **tabernacle**. Again, I believe we see three causes for an overwhelmed heart revealed in these verses.

CAUSES FOR AN OVERWHELMED HEART

1. Calamities of Life

I would put the first cause under the category of calamities. That is what a shelter shields us from. We are living in a fallen world. Everything does not function as it was originally designed to function. In fact, in the Book of Romans it says the entire creation is groaning and travailing, waiting for the manifestations of the sons of God, waiting until God makes new heavens and a new earth; because, friend, a curse has come into the earth because of the fall of Adam. Everything does not function as it should. There are natural disasters. There are calamities when we have a world that is ravaged with war, disease and famine. There are floods and accidents. All of those calamities of life come because we are living in a fallen world.

Maybe you have experienced something in that category. Maybe the loss of a loved one, or a tragedy or accident has happened; and you have just been overwhelmed emotionally and in other arenas of life. I think about the news lately of the things that are going on in Pakistan, the assassination that took place and violence that is breaking out all over the country. God does not love Americans more than Pakistanis. There are areas throughout our world where war is the norm of the day and, famine, disease, and different things are happening. God loves those people just like He loves us, no less.

I think about my friends who had to flee their country because of a military coup, and in one night they lost everything they had. They lost several generations of accumulated wealth, all of the father's wealth and property that he had worked for, all of the grandfather's and great-grandfather's wealth and property that had been passed down. Everything they owned was seized in the name of the new government. They lost everything, and they had to flee for their lives from their country.

I think about the fire victims from the fires that recently ravaged Southern California. We have had teams up in the mountains helping people who lost their homes. We have sent over 20 teams to the New Orleans area. Over 400 volunteers went to help rebuild homes and churches of people who were devastated and lost everything. They are inwardly crushed and overwhelmed at the thought that their whole way of life is suddenly gone. One storm changed everything. The calamities of life.

2. Calculated Assaults

The second category is calculated assaults, which is what the strong tower shields us from. "You are a strong tower from the enemy." My friend, we do have an enemy. Ephesians 6:11 says, "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles (*or the tricks or strategies*) of the devil. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, against huge hosts of wicked spirits in the heavenly realms." We do have an adversary. First Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary, the devil, walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour."

Listen to what Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 2:18. "Therefore we wanted to come to you, even I, Paul, time and time again. But Satan hindered us." Now Paul always brought things back to the fact that he found hope, deliverance, and an answer in God. He always brought it back to the word of God and the truth of God. Yet, he very openly and candidly shared his troubles and

struggles with the people whom he had won to Christ. He says, "We wanted to come to you time and time again. We tried, but Satan hindered us." By no means do I blame everything on the devil. Still, some of our troubles are the direct result of satanic activity. We do have an adversary; and there are some things that happens that is just "off the chart" as far as finding an explanation for it. You cannot say anything else except that dark spiritual forces are at work to hinder and impede the progress of the kingdom, and to impede the progress of God's work in our own life. God is a strong tower from the enemy.

3. Crossroads

The third potential cause for an overwhelmed heart is what I would call crossroads. You stand at one of the intersections of life, and you don't know which way to go. You are daunted, perhaps even overwhelmed, as you consider what choices to make. I believe that relates to the reference of His tabernacle, often called throughout Scripture "the tabernacle of meeting," because it was a place to meet with God and to receive guidance and counsel. Moses went there to meet with God; Joshua went there to meet with God; the elders went there, and the priests went there. The tabernacle of meeting is where the manifest presence of God dwelt under the Old Testament. I think that sometimes when we stand at the crossroads and have to make hard decisions, it can be overwhelming.

I think about the wife that has just found out that her husband has been cheating on her almost their whole married life, and he was exposed. Now he says he repents, and she is standing at the crossroads thinking, "What do I do? He has been cheating on me for eight years, and I have Scriptural grounds to divorce him. But do I want to start a new life? What about the kids? Do I forgive him? How can I trust him because all adulterers are liars." That is a very, very difficult place to be, as you stand and look at the different directions that you could possibly go, and it can be overwhelming!

I think about people in our church right now who are involved in the real estate industry. I read the other day that right now the real estate market in California is the worst it has been in 19 years. There are people who are standing at the crossroads thinking, "What do I do? Do I seek a new line of work? You know, I really felt God led me into this. Or do I just do something to supplement my income? Do I just continue to follow the leads I have and stand strong and trust God? What do I do?" Their hearts can be overwhelmed as the bills pile up and the market continues its current trend.

I think of a gentleman I know who had an employee who was creating a lot of havoc in the company that he owned and was being paid far more than he was worth. You think, "Well, that's pretty easy. Just fire the guy." Except it was his little brother. So he is literally agonizing over what is happening because there is a lot of strife and things happening within the company. He knows he ought to fire his little brother; but if he does, there is going to be trouble with the family. So there are no easy choices at all. He is standing at a crossroad and literally feels overwhelmed with the decisions that are before him.

Whether they are calamities, calculated assaults, or crossroads, all are potential causes for an overwhelmed heart. The good news is that God has a cure for every one. He can shelter us from the calamities of life. He is a strong tower against the enemy and all of his assaults. Thank God there is a tabernacle where we can go and commune with God and receive counsel, guidance and comfort. If you are looking for the tabernacle, you don't have to go far, friend. If you are born again, you are in. God moved out of that old tabernacle under the old covenant, and He moved into a new tabernacle. The Scripture says in First Corinthians, chapter 3, verse

16, "Do you know that you are the temple (*the tabernacle, the tent*) of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" I can commune with God in the quiet of my own spirit and receive counsel and guidance when I stand at the crossroads of life.

In this Psalm there is something that preceded the language of shelter, strong tower and tabernacle. David is crying out to God and praying. In verse 2 he said, "From the end of the earth I will cry to You!" In other words, when I feel like I am as far away from You as I can possibly be, when I am isolated, alone, cut off, and forsaken; I will pray, and I will cry out. The prayer begins in a very general way, but gets specific in a hurry. It funnels down into the statement, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." "From the end of the earth I will cry out to You when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

I have been spending a lot of time between Psalm 61 and Psalm 65 in the last couple of months. I have been reading them over and over, and God has been speaking to me. I went to sleep quoting Psalm 61, saying to myself over and over "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. From the ends of the earth I will cry out to You. When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I." I literally fell asleep speaking those words. I woke up Saturday morning hearing my own voice, and what I was saying is, "I need to see something; I need to do something." I woke up, and I thought, "Who is saying that?" And it was me. I need to see something; I need to do something. I was saying it over and over. I got up and walked across the bedroom saying out loud, "I need to see something. I need to do something." I knew what was happening. It was in connection with my meditations on Psalm 61. I went downstairs, made a cup of tea and some toast with marmalade, saying, "I need to see something. I need to do something." For about 10 or 15 minutes I just paced around in the kitchen saying, "I need to see something. I need to do something." I want to talk to you about those two things in connection with this Psalm.

YOU NEED TO CLIMB HIGHER TO GET THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE

David said, "When my heart is overwhelmed, I am going to cry, 'Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.'" A rock that is higher, a new vantage point, a place from which I can see farther.

I was golfing with a friend recently at his home course. You hit the ball from one of the tee boxes, and your drive goes over a hill down into a valley. You go down and you can't see where the green is. So you have to walk up a hill and see where the flag stick and green are, and how far it is, and then you walk back down to your ball and you have to hit it blind. **The idea is that you have to climb up higher to get your direction.** You have to climb up higher to get the right perspective to know which way to go.

I used to pray on top of the roof of this building several times a week. I would just walk around and pray up there for an hour or so a couple of times a week. It is amazing how far you can see. The perspective is quite different from up there. You can see way into Long Beach, Orange County, and over to the coast. It is just amazing how your perspective changes when you get up higher. This is a prayer for a new perspective, a new level of understanding, or a new revelation about God's purposes in what you are experiencing, or the true nature of a situation. Perhaps it is even a look into your own motivations that you may not be quite aware of, the things that are driving and moving you in the direction you are going. Sometimes God may show you the true motivations of others that you are associated with, things that you cannot see from where you are. When God brings you to a rock that is higher than you, you can see and perceive and understand things that you do not see and perceive at present.

Look at Matthew, chapter 16. Jesus uses this language of a rock in Matthew 16, beginning in verse 13,

13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Now Jesus was not telling Peter that he was the rock that the church would be built on. In fact, Jesus used a play on words here. Peter is the word for rock, but the word is a little rock, the Greek word. Jesus then uses another Greek word that means a huge, large, immovable rock, referring to "This is the rock. You are a little rock, Peter, but this is the rock I am going to build the church on." What rock is that, Jesus? **It is the rock of the revelation that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.** You see, the church is not made up of religious people who just get together and do religious things. The church is made up of people who have a revelation from the Father in heaven that Jesus is more than a mere man, more than a good teacher, more than a prophet; that He is, indeed, the Son of the living God, the Christ, the anointed of God. That is the rock the church is built upon. Friend, you cannot get that revelation from a man. God may use a person as a vessel to bring the message, but God alone can open your heart.

My point is that Jesus referred to this revelation from on high as a rock. It makes me think: When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I am. I need a fresh perspective; I need new insight; I need a new revelation.

In the struggle over our new church property and the court battle that went on for about two and a half years, I will frankly confess to you that my heart was overwhelmed several times on that journey. I cried out to God, and God faithfully brought me to a rock that was higher than I was. You might ask, "What did you see?" Well, I saw that God is not in a hurry. I saw that He is working things according to the counsel of His own will and His purposes, not mine. I saw how God sees and works things from a long-range perspective when we tend to be more focused on the immediate. "God, help me! I am in this thing right now!" And that is all we see. Yet, God sees the end of the thing. He starts from the end and works back to the beginning, and He always has the long-range perspective in view. I saw that God desires to work on a much bigger scale, weaving our lives and our acts of obedience into a plan to bless multitudes and generations. My present distress, though important to God and tended to by God, is not the main deal. Even our local church is not the main deal. Friend, we are just a very small part of a very large tapestry that God is weaving to reach and touch generations and the globe. God is thinking, and He is working big. I will tell you, when I cried out to God in my distress, He lifted me up and gave me a fresh perspective; and it changed everything for me. He will do the same for you in your distress.

How to Get to that Higher Rock

How do you get to that higher rock? Well, in Psalm 61, David cried out for it. **He prayed for it.** We need to do the same thing. It is interesting what David said: "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Once you pray, He will lead you. He may lead you to a church service where you are going to hear something you need to hear. He might even lead you to the Saturday night service, or maybe the bilingual service, because they are not identical. There are things said in one service that may not be said in another service.

I was talking to a man after one of the services a couple of weeks ago, and he said, "Oh, Pastor, that changed my life! It was what I needed to hear. It changed my whole perspective! Thank you!" He wasn't even talking about my message. Here I had prayed and preached my heart out and done my best, and it was an off-the-cuff remark I made as we were closing that touched him. That is just like God, isn't it? That way God gets all the credit. If he had been in a different service, he would not have heard that remark because it was something that was only said in that service.

God may lead you to a story in Scripture. In fact, I would say that He will probably do that more than anything else. He has done that in my own life countless times when my heart has felt overwhelmed. I begin to read the Bible and something will come off the pages. Sometimes I will be reminded by the Holy Spirit of a particular story that I have read or a principle in Scripture and think, "You know what? This has happened to somebody before it happened to me. Nothing takes God by surprise." And it just changes everything!

God can give you a dream. There are a lot of different ways that He can lead you to that rock, to that new place of a different perspective, a new revelation, or a new vision that you have not had before. It will change everything so that you can experience that shelter, that high tower, and that tabernacle. However, before you experience those things, you may need to see something. In fact, maybe not only see something; you may need to do something, as well.

YOU MAY HAVE TO BE OBEDIENT TO GOD'S WORD BEFORE YOU GET HIS PROTECTION

Look at Luke's gospel, the sixth chapter. Again, Jesus is using this language of a rock, beginning in verse 46. Luke 6:46,

46 "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"

47 "Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like:

48 "He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.

49 "But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."

Friend, it is not enough that we just come to church and listen to the Bible being taught. It is not enough that we just read the Bible. We need to read it and listen to it with a view to obey it, to participate in it, to allow it to form our characters and to change our lives. Protection against the forces that would destroy us is the direct by-product of obedience. In this passage, it is talking about a flood and the rains, etc. Whether those forces that would destroy us come under the

category of calamities, calculated assaults, or crossroads, protection is the direct by-product of obedience.

When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I am. I need to see something, and I need to do something. Perhaps it is a matter of unfulfilled obedience. I think there are some people who already know what they should be doing. They have just not done it, or they stopped doing what God told them to do. You need to repent and pick it up and begin again.

It may be something that you don't know. It is a higher rock. Maybe it is something that you are not doing, but you don't know you should be doing it. Perhaps your heart is overwhelmed, and if you are going to experience God being a shelter, strong tower and tabernacle, if you are going to be in that place of comfort, guidance and counsel, it just may be there is something you need to do that you are not doing and that you may not know about.

Quite a few years back, probably close to 15 years, I remember listening to a gentleman share about how his ministry had gone through a great financial crisis. It was a ministry that in my opinion was having a great impact, not only in our country, but globally. It wasn't a matter of mismanagement of funds, it was just that the giving had dried up. Well, they got the board of elders together and discussed, "What are we going to do? We are in dire straits; and if things don't change within a month or two, we are going to have to shut down a lot of our operations." The leader of the ministry said, "You know what? I want a couple of days to fast and pray and seek God." He fasted for three days and prayed. During that time, God led him to the multitude of Scriptures that deal with ministering to the poor. The commands and promises connected to giving to the poor, ministering to the poor, and seeing to the needs of the poor. He thought, "You know what? We are not doing any of these things. We are certainly working overtime to get the word out, and we are being faithful with the things God has given us." But it was something that he had never considered before. He felt like God spoke to him and said, "This is what you need to do." So he convened the board together again and said, "Look, I've gotten the answer from God." They said, "Okay, what are we going to do? Are we going to cut this? Cut that?" He said, "No, we are going to give more." Everybody about fell over when he said that. He said, "We are going to direct our giving to the poor. We have not done anything directly to help the poor in their situation, and I believe that God showed me that is our answer." So they did, and within a month the logjam broke and the finances began to flow in again for the ministry.

We heard from a woman just recently, outside of our country, who contacted us and said that she was in a bad marriage and was crying out to God for an answer, and God brought her to a higher rock. He happened to do it by leading her to watch one of the broadcasts. In that broadcast, if I am not mistaken, I was teaching right here from Luke, chapter 6. She and her husband at that time were in adversarial positions to one another. She was basically responding in kind to his ingratitude and insensitivity to her, and things were just spiraling downward. Their marriage was coming apart at the seams. It was a verse that we have heard a lot. Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given to you good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over shall be given to your bosom. For the same measure you meet, it will be measured back to you." How many have heard that verse a time or two? Mostly we hear it in connection with an offering and although that is not the context of the verse, I think it is fine because the principle applies. We do know that principle is found elsewhere in Scripture in connection with giving. The one who sows sparingly will reap sparingly; the one who sows bountifully will reap bountifully, specifically in the context of offering. So it is fine to use that Scripture in that setting. But it is most powerful if you take it in its context. Look with me for a moment at the context of that verse. This is what dawned on the woman that wrote to us. Luke 6:35,

35 “But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

36 “Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

37 “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

38 “Give, and it will be given to you...”

The context is showing love, being merciful, being kind to the unthankful and to the evil, doing good, being a forgiver. If you give love, forgiveness, mercy, kindness, and goodness, it will be measured back to you good measure, pressed down, shaken together, measured into your bosom. With the same measure that you give out love, mercy, forgiveness and kindness to the unthankful and the unworthy, it will be measured back to you. She saw something she had not seen before, and she began to do something she had not done before. Even though she didn't feel like it, even though she felt like just paying her husband back in kind with his unkind acts and his insensitivity, she began to speak words of love and began to sow kindness and mercy. She contacted us and said, “Everything has changed. My whole marriage has changed. Everything has turned around.” She began reaping what she had been sowing, but she saw something, and she did something.

God wants to be a shelter and a strong tower to us, and He wants to be that counsel and guide to us; but perhaps, just perhaps, we need to see something and do something, because preceding those statements of God's means of protection, provision and covering, we cried out, and He brought us to a rock that was higher than we were.

Heavenly Father, we settle our hearts down before You right now. I know there are people here who are overwhelmed. Some have experienced calamity in their life and unexpected things have rolled in. Perhaps they have been victims of the present economy. Others may have experienced loss of one kind or another due to the fact that we are living in a fallen world. Lord, there are others who are here that, no doubt, have been assailed by the enemy. There are calculated assaults going on against their life to impede their progress and to cause them to quit and to keep them from being blessed and being a blessing the way that You would like them to be blessed, Father. Yet others stand at an intersection of their life. They are at a crossroad, and they don't know what to do. They don't know which way to go, and their hearts feel absolutely overwhelmed with the daunting choices there in front of them. God, we cry out to You right now. Lead us to the rock that is higher than we are. Cause our hearts to see something we haven't seen before. Give us a fresh perspective and a new insight. Give us revelation, O God! And, Lord, show us what we need to do. If we have left something undone that we already know, God, remind us. We will repent, and we will get busy with it. If there is something we should be doing that we don't know, Lord, we trust You to lead us to that, as well. We thank you for sheltering us from the calamities of life. We thank you for being not just a tower, but a strong tower against the enemy. Lord, we thank you that we can get quiet before You and receive the comfort, counsel, and guidance that we so desperately need. Lord Jesus, we thank you that You are more than just a man, more than a prophet, more than a good teacher. You are the Son of the living God. We praise You, Lord.