Finding God When One Feels Inadequate

# Scripture: Psalm 61:1-3; 62:1-3

# Key thought: If we seek God's help, our weakness becomes an opportunity for God.

# Intro:

Some years ago a severe hurricane hit the coast of Massachusetts. Weather reports were ominous. A small town was right in the path. The sky grew dark and Blair, the family’s young son, was restless. Suddenly the lights went out and in the darkness, his mother heard his muffled sobs. Trying to calm his fears, she pled, “You might just as well calm down; after all, there’s nothing we can do about it.”

“Mother,” he responded between sobs, “I know there’s nothing we can do about it – but isn’t there something we can do about us?”

When we face fearful situations in our own lives, times when we feel inadequate for the circumstances, our own feelings might well echo those of the little boy. We don’t think we can do anything about the circumstances around us, but we’re wondering, “Isn’t there something we can do about us?” How can we calm our fears? How can we find peace? How can we at least be a little bit adequate for the situation we face?

To answer these, questions we go to the Psalm sixty-one and sixty-two this morning and look at the first 3 verses of each of these two psalms. We’re going to find that David, who is credited as the author of these two psalms was in a time in his own life when he felt terribly inadequate. We’re not told exactly what this time was. As I mentioned last week, scholars often believe that Psalm sixty-three was written around the time of Absalom’s revolt against his father David. Some commentators have suggested that Psalm sixty-one and sixty-two may also have come from this time frame. It was a time in David’s life when he felt particularly discouraged and inadequate. Life was out of control. He may have even had a little bit of a sense that some of the trouble that he was experiencing was deserved. (see 2 Sam. 12:12) In my talking to people, I find that we often have the same guilty sense, sometimes with good reason and sometimes completely irrationally. But either way, I think we can relate to David’s feelings and King David can then help us to find a way of faith and hope through our own times of discouragement and inadequacy.

# Our inadequacy

## David’s words for our inadequacy

These are words form David’s Psalms that point to his feelings of inadequacy.

* fainting heart 61:2
* leaning wall; tottering fence 62:3

In another Psalm, David is even more forceful about such feelings.

But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. Ps 22:6-7 NIV 2011

Several different kinds of weakness are represented here. There is the weakness that we feel when we run out of courage. Our energy gets low. Discouragement takes its toll and we are emotionally ready to quit. That’s one kind of weakness and inadequacy that David felt and we often feel as well.

Then there’s the weakness that comes from fragile circumstances, whether of health or otherwise. Usually these circumstances have developed little by little over a long period of time like the leaning of a wall. David uses that illustration. The leaning of a wall usually takes years to happen. But the point comes, when the wall is about to fall. And sometimes in our lives, circumstances have added up and we have been weakened by their cumulative load and we feel that we are about to collapse under the weight. We feel insufficient for our challenges.

Then lastly, there’s the kind of weakness that David describes in Psalm 22. It is the weakness of a victim under attack. The unkind words and wrong actions of others often cause us to feel incapable of meeting the challenges we face.

**But whatever the kind of inadequacy or weakness that we deal with, David has an insight for us. As we seek God’s help, all of our difficulties and inadequacies can become opportunities for the work of God in our lives.**

## Paul was also very aware of his own inadequacy

Our feebleness and fragility becomes an opportunity to seek God and rely upon his ability rather than our own. Look at the example of St. Paul. Paul was very conscious that if he began with an awareness of his own weakness, then and only then could he be strong in Christ. For example he talked about how in his relationship to the Corinthian church, he was very careful not to rely upon his own abilities but to rely upon God’s power.

I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power. 1 Cor 2:3-5 NIV 2011

Paul made the same point regarding his physical affliction. He believed his physical condition was a constant reminder that he needed to rely upon God’s strength.  He had prayed for his own healing but God had answered him with a surprising message.

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Cor 12:9-10 NIV 2011

The adequacy of God working through us is often shown more clearly when he can work through our weaknesses. That’s when our hearts are open. Our pride is less in the way so the glory goes to God, not to us.

# Our seeking God

**The first step for turning our inadequacy into God’s opportunity is to seek God as David did.**

## David’s words for calling on God

It is instructive to note the different words and concepts that David includes in his poems that describe his calling upon God.

* crying out 61:1
* prayer 61:1
* calling from everywhere 61:2
* waiting in silence 62:1
* waiting in hope 62:5

## David’s concepts

### Prayer

The first three words are various synonyms for bringing our requests to God. Prayer is essential, and not just occasional, casual prayer, but continued and continuing prayer. It is true that God knows our needs, but he desires that we express ourselves to him. God wants to be in relationship with us. Both sides of the relationship thrive on communication.

Francis Fenelon was a devoted French Catholic leader who lived from 1651-1715. His writings on the spiritual life are still admired and read today. He encourages us to prayer.

Do not seek God as if he were far off in an ivory castle. He is found in the middle of the events of your everyday life. Look past the obstacles and find him. (p. 15 The Seeking Heart, Fenelon, volume 4 Library of Spiritual Classics)

Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase. Martin Luther King, Jr.

### Earnest prayer

At least two verses in this Psalm describe calling out to God in earnest, even in desperation. The Hebrew word for cry in Psalm 61:1 represents a shrill sound or a shout of grief. So the calling out to God described here is not the passionless request listing that is so often heard today. It has more kinship with the urgency of a child pleading with their parent for something that they really want/need. Or the passion of a mother pleading with an insurance rep. about a medicine that her sick child needs.

Missionary leader, Wesley L. Duewel, spoke of our need to have a sense of urgency about our praying.

The Christian life is a life of faith… We experience little of God’s touch upon us because our asking for it is so casual and superficial. We recognize that it would be nice if God would bless our efforts and plans. But if not, we are content to carry on in our own strength as we have done so often. (p. 81 Ablaze for God)

### Waiting in silent trust

Two of the phrases use the word “waiting.” The concept of silence is tied with it. So are the concepts of hope and trust. Psalm 62:5 encourages us that this silent prayer of waiting is a prayer of expectation, a prayer of faith and hope and we look for the work of God in answer to prayer to be revealed.

Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him. Ps 62:5 NIV 2011

Commentator Marvin E Tate in writing about some sixty-two says;

The speaker has found the strength of a calm stillness of soul before God, a position which gives power for both self-encouragement (vv.6-8) and encouragement for others (vv. 9-11). Stillness before God has exorcised the frequently dominant elements of life – fearful anxiety, disappointment, pain of abuse – and has become the source of assurance of the adequacy of divine power and divine willingness to help those who are faithful. When we remain calm in trust before God, we grow in strength and discipline. (P. 122)

# God’s available adequacy

What was the result of David calling upon God out of his inadequacy and weakness? We can find the answer by looking at the terms David uses to describe God in these two passages. These terms will tell us what David had learned about God in the experience of receiving the answers to his prayers.

## David’s descriptions of God’s abundant provision

Observe some of the phrases used by David to describe the strength of God on his behalf.

* rock higher than I 61:2; 62:2
* my refuge 61:3
* strong tower 61:3
* my salvation 62:2
* my fortress 62:2

These are far from the only such verses in David’s writings. Consider an additional passage where David’s faith in the character of God shines through.

Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy.
The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.
My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.
The Lord is the strength of his people, a fortress of salvation for his anointed one.
Ps 28:6-8 NIV 2011

Fenelon observes:

Live by faith as you embrace your trials. Confidently trust in God, even when you do not see what he is doing. Trust that God, with great compassion, gives you trials in proportion to the help that he wants to bring to you. ( p. 7, The Seeking Heart, Fenelon, volume 4 Library of Spiritual Classics)

Isaiah the prophet also experienced God as his strength and salvation.

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation."
 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. Isa 12:2-3 ESV

  What about us? David has advice for God’s people of every age.

Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always. Ps 105:3-4 NIV 2011

So one key is to continue bringing our situation to God. Jesus taught us to pray and not to give up on praying just because we don’t see immediate results. (see Luke 18:1-8) Ben Patterson wrote;

Prayer is a discipline before it is a joy, and remains a discipline even after it becomes a joy.” (Deepening Our Conversation with God p. 51)

Isaiah reminds us of who God is. We grow weary in praying because we forget this too easily.

The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.
He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.
Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isa 40:28-31 NIV 2011

The great preacher J. H. Jowett wrote;

The background of every day is grace, and the more tremendous the day the more abounding is the Grace. And therefore we can interpret our difficulties as the index of our resources. Our mission betokens our capital in the bank, and we can draw upon “the unsearchable riches” to the last demand of our need. “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” (The Eagle Life, p. 45)

Paul builds our confidence.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.
Eph. 3:20-21 NIV 2011

# Conclusion

Close with story

(p. 174 from 750 Engaging Illustrations)

In the fall of the year, Linda, a young woman, was traveling alone up the rutted and rugged highway from Alberta to the Yukon. Linda didn't know you don't travel to Whitehorse alone in a rundown Honda Civic, so she set off where only four-wheel-drives normally venture. The first evening she found a room in the mountains near a summit and asked for a 5 a.m. wakeup call so she could get an early start. She couldn't understand why the clerk looked surprised at that request, but as she awoke to early-morning fog shrouding the mountain tops, she understood. Not wanting to look foolish, she got up and went to breakfast.

Two truckers invited Linda to join them, and since the place was so small, she felt obliged. "Where are you headed?" one of the truckers asked.

"Whitehorse."

"In that little Civic? No way! This pass is dangerous in weather like this."

"Well, I'm determined to try," was Linda's gutsy, if not very informed, response.

"Then I guess we're just going to have to hug you," the trucker suggested.

Linda drew back. "There's no way I'm going to let you touch me!"

"Not like that!" The truckers chuckled. "We'll put one truck in front of you and one in the rear. In that way, we'll get you through the mountains." All that foggy morning Linda followed the two red dots in front of her and had the reassurance of a big escort behind as they made their way safely through the mountains.

God is waiting to provide adequacy where we are fearful and inadequate. But it’s up to us to be wise enough to look up to him for help.

 Then our attitude even in our times of feeling inadequate can change as we call out to God and give him opportunity. As Paul put it.

I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Phil 4:13 NIV 84

God is waiting to make us adequate for the challenges we face today.