

## FROM PROBLEMS AND PLEADINGS TO PRAISE

Psalm 59: 1-17 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

The heading of Psalm 59 tells us that this Psalm has its setting back in the very beginning of Saul's persecution of David, when King Saul watched the house of his son in law, David, for David was married to his daughter, Michal. David fled by night from the city. Psalm 59 may well be one of David's oldest psalms. This psalm shows David's faith and courage, even in the first burst of danger with Saul, before spending years running for his life. Yet this psalm is the message of the devout, anointed next king of Israel who was writing in a time of deep sorrow and fearful terror. In some ways, the whole psalm is encapsulated in one verse—verse 9. “O my Strength, I will watch/wait for You, for You, O God, are my fortress.”

As we begin examining this psalm, David uses a remarkable word to speak of waiting for God. He says, literally as the ESV gives it, “I will watch for You.” Many translations give this, “I will wait for You.” The King James Version beautifully translates, “Because of His strength will I wait upon Thee: for God is my defense.” This Hebrew word, “I will watch or wait,” is a remarkable word, **shamar**. Shamar means to watch for, to hedge about, to protect, to guard, to keep watch, to observe carefully, and it is often used of a shepherd tending and caring for his flock. The ESV accurately translates this word, “I will watch for You.” This is not usually a word about our looking up to God, but about His looking down to us. It describes the actions of a shepherd guarding his flock; of a sentry keeping a city; and of watchers in David's day who sat and watched for the morning. By using this particular word, David is saying, “As God is watching over me, there are also my times of watching for God. I look up to Him to bless me; He looks down upon me to take care of me. As He guards me, so I stand expectant, anticipating, watching before Him, as soldiers in a besieged town, standing upon the ramparts or the walls of the city, looking eagerly out across the plains to watch for the coming of long-expected helpers. Beloved, there can be no waiting on God for help, and no forthcoming help from God, without our watchful expectation for Him to act in our behalf. Often when we fail to receive strength and defense from God, is it, or could it not be because we are not on the outlook for Him? If we expect no help from God, does it explain why we will get none, or very little encouragement from God?

Alexander MacLaren once said, “He whose expectation does not lead him to be on the alert for its coming will get but little... No wonder we have so little living experience that God is our 'strength' and our 'defense,' when we so partially believe that He is, and so little expect that He will be either our strength or our defense...” Growing up in Kentucky, we used to put out pails, water jars, buckets and tubs underneath the gutters to catch rain water for dishes, baths, washing and cooking. Unless we put out our water-jars before it rained, watching in expectation, we had no extra water, and we had to put it all up by rope from our hand dug well. When it

rains without catch buckets, you will catch no water; if you do not watch for God coming to help you, God's watching to be gracious to you will be of no good at all. God's waiting over us is not a substitute for our watching for Him. Because He watches for us, therefore we should watch for Him. We say, we expect Him to comfort and help us. The question is, are we standing, as it were, on tiptoe, with empty hands upraised to bring a little nearer the gifts from Him that we are looking for? Are our eyes raised, looking up towards our Lord? Do we examine all God brings to us, scrutinizing it all, trials and troubles and gifts, as eagerly as a gold-seeker looks for the quartz or the gold he is searching for in his pan? Are we watching to detect every shining speck of precious metal? Do we go to work and face our daily battle with confident expectation that God will come when our need is the greatest? How many sweet and blessed messengers from God flutter all around us, like Noah's dove looking for an olive branch, but yet they go back to God homeless, un-recognized and unwelcome. Why? It's all because we have not been watching for God or His blessings!

What good does it do for a strong arm to throw a life jacket or a safety line with good aim, if no one in our sinking boat is watching for it? The rope hangs there against our little sinking boat, useless and unseen. Finally it drops into the water, as every person on board is drowned. It is our own fault-and very largely the fault of our lack of watchfulness for God's help that is on the way. Are we ever overwhelmed by our tasks and duties, or difficulties, or sorrows of life? We wonder that God seems to leave us alone to fight our battles by ourselves. But are we? As Alexander MacLaren also said, "Is it not rather, that while God's helpers are hastening to our side, we will not open our eyes to see, nor our hearts to receive them? If we go through the world with our hands hanging listlessly down instead of lifted to heaven, or full of the trifles and toys of this present, as so many of us do, what wonder is it if heavenly gifts of strength do not come into our grasp?"

David's words in this summary verse nine, reminds me of the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8: 24, 25, "For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." The measure of our confidence is most often the measure of our patience. So waiting for God means watchfulness and patience, and the roots of watchfulness and patience have foundation and basis in trust. And when we watch and wait, we sing, as David tells us in verses 16, 17, "But I will sing of Your strength; I will sing aloud of Your steadfast love in the morning. For You have been a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress. O my Strength, I will sing praises to You, for you, O God, are my Fortress, the God who shows me steadfast love." As I studied the context of this Psalm and the psalm itself, it began to break down for me into three component parts, teaching me how to watch for God. (1) God Sees Our Problems, (2) God Listens To Our Pleas And Pleadings, and (3) God Proves His Power To Protect Us So We Will Live To Sing His

Praises. Now follow with me as we look carefully for these three component parts of watching, waiting and singing.

**GOD SEES OUR PROBLEMS!** (I.) Surveying this psalm, verses 1-7 give us the picture that God is never in the dark about what we are going through. The mystery of each of our unique problems is not a strange puzzle that has God scratching His head and unable to understand. God sees clearly and He knows every fiber of our being, every failure of our many strong-hearted attempts, and He knows the way through to the end of our wilderness. Look at verses 1-7, and notice verses 6, 7 are repeated in verses 14, 15. “Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; protect me from those who rise up against me; deliver me from those who work evil, and save me from bloodthirsty men. For behold, they lie in wait for my life; fierce men stir up strife against me; For no transgression or sin of mine, O LORD, for no fault of mine, they run and make ready. Awake, come to meet me, and see! You, LORD God of hosts, are God of Israel. Rouse yourself to punish all the nations; spare none of those who treacherously plot evil. Selah. Each evening they come back, howling like dogs, and prowling about the city. There they are, bellowing with their mouths with swords in their lips—or “Who,” they think, “will hear us?”

As I sat on the plane last Sunday, studying this psalm, I watched David break down the problem before God, but be certain, God knew it all before David described his problem. It breaks down into 10 pieces. Follow verse by verse. (1) My enemies rise up against me—v. 1, (2) My enemies work evil and are bloodthirsty—v. 2, (3) My enemies lie in wait for my life—v. 3, (4) My enemies stir up strife against me—v. 3, (5) My enemies run and make ready, by inference to capture me—v. 4, (6) My enemies treacherously plot evil—v. 5—Selah, think of it. (7) My enemies come back after me each evening, howling like dogs and prowling the city—v. 6, 14 (8) My enemies bellow with their proud mouths—v. 7, add verse 12—with their cursing and lies, (9) My enemies have swords in their lips—v. 7, and (10) My enemies wander about looking for food and David implies, “I am the food they seek for,” and they growl if they do not get their fill.” Now you’ll notice David speaks as if God weren’t watching or seeing, but don’t be confused into thinking David wasn’t certain God could see. Nevertheless, David does say words like “Awake, Lord of Hosts, God of Israel”—v. 4, 5 or “Rouse Yourself to punish the nations,” –v. 5. God didn’t need to be awakened or roused, but David used those words anyway, because he was desperate and he wanted God to act quickly. Beloved, don’t mistake the truth. God knows what is happening in your life. God sees our problem.

For a moment, let’s see exactly what the problem was that David was facing. I Samuel 19: 1-17 reports David’s awful dilemma. Listen! “And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul’s son, delighted much in David. And Jonathan told David, “Saul my father

seeks to kill you. Therefore be on your guard in the morning. Stay in a secret place and hide yourself. And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak to my father about you. And if I learn anything I will tell you.” And Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, “Let not the king sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his deeds have brought good to you. For he took his life in his hand, and he struck down the Philistine; and the LORD worked a great salvation for all Israel. You saw it, and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?” And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan. Saul swore, “As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death.” And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan reported to him all these things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before. And there was war again. And David went out and fought with the Philistines and struck them with a great blow, so that they fled before him. Then a harmful spirit from the LORD came upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand. And David was playing the lyre. And Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he eluded Saul, so that he struck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night. Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, that he might kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, told him, “If you do not escape with your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.” So Michal let David down through the window, and he fled away and escaped. Michal took an image and laid it on the bed and put a pillow of goats' hair at its head and covered it with the clothes. And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, “He is sick.” Then Saul sent the messengers to see David, saying, “Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him.” And when the messengers came in, behold, the image was in the bed, with the pillow of goats' hair at its head. Saul said to Michal, “Why have you deceived me thus and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?” And Michal answered Saul, “He said to me, ‘Let me go. Why should I kill you?’” Don't ever think God does not see your problem. Take your burden to the Lord. Tell it to Jesus. But be certain. He sees and He knows your every problem. Secondly,

**GOD LISTENS TO OUR PLEAS AND PLEADINGS.** (II.) Notice with me seven pleas, seven pleadings in this psalm. (1) In verses 1, 2 –**Deliver me.** Deliver me from my enemies and from those who work evil. Notice how personal are David's pleas and pleadings. The Hebrew word for deliver is **natsal.** It means snatch me away and let me escape. (2) **Protect me.** –v. 1. The Hebrew word is **sagab** which means “make me inaccessible.” Don't let Saul find me. (3) **Save me.** Notice verse 2—save me from bloodthirsty men. The Hebrew word **yasha** means be my Savior. (4) **Meet me.** Verse 4 states, Come to meet me and see! The word for meet me is **qirah.** It means a friendly encounter to behold the state a person is in. It's almost like meeting a doctor in a room for an exam. Come, Lord and take a look for Yourself. (5) **Let me or allow me.** I read in verse 10, “My God in His steadfast love will meet me, emphasizing He will meet us, and saying, “God will

let me look in triumph on my enemies.” Let me comes from the Hebrew word **dobe**. Dobe means to be restful, to move slowly and cause to happen. David is saying, “Allow me. Give me this opportunity, Lord, to look in triumph over my enemies. (6) **Be to me**. Notice verse 16, “For You have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress. (7) **Show me**. Notice verse 17 and David’s title as the God who shows me steadfast love. Here are seven magnificent pleas and pleadings God will hear, beloved. “Deliver me, protect me, save me, meet me, let me/allow me, be to me, and show me.” God listens to all our pleas and pleadings. Lastly, thirdly, the third and last component part of watching, waiting and singing:

**GOD PROVES HIS POWER TO PROTECT US SO WE WILL LIVE TO SING HIS PRAISES.** (III.) Notice verses 8-13 and 16-17. “But **You**, O LORD,

laugh at them; **You** hold all the nations in derision. O my Strength, I will watch for **You**, for **You**, O God, are my fortress. My God in his steadfast love will meet me; God will let me look in triumph on my enemies. Kill them not, (Destroy them not—as in the Psalm’s liturgical or musical title) lest my people forget; make them totter by **Your** power and bring them down, O Lord, our shield! For the sin of their mouths, the words of their lips, let them be trapped in their pride. For the cursing and lies that they utter, consume them in wrath, consume them till they are no more, that they may know that God rules over Jacob to the ends of the earth. Selah” David is so personal with God in this part of the psalm –using You over and over. It wasn’t what he could do, only **You**, Lord.—5 times. Then in verses 16, 17, David concludes by saying **You** 5 more times, “But I will sing of **Your** strength; I will sing aloud of **Your** steadfast love in the morning. For **You** have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress. O my Strength, I will sing praises to **You**, for **You**, O God, **are my fortress, the God who shows me steadfast love**. So how does God prove His power to protect us so we will live to sing His praises?

I see 5 ways. **(1) God proves His power by laughing at our enemies**, and holding enemy nations who hate Him in derision, v. 8. **(2) God proves His power by fulfilling our expectations** of Him as we watch for Him to be our fortress, to meet us, and let us look in triumph on our enemies, v. 10 **(3) God proves His power by knowing when and how to win our battles**. We may give God suggestions as David did in verses 11-13. It’s the way we are—praying at times one way and then another, but in the end knowing God knows how to prove that He rules over us to the ends of the earth. Selah. Think of it. **(4) God proves His power by shielding us from the lips of our enemies** and consuming them in their pride so they will know He rules the world. See v 12, 13. **(5) God proves His power by strongly being our refuge and fortress and showing us His strength and steadfast love**. See verses 16, 17. Hallelujah. What a Savior! Wait, watch & sing for joy. 1-3 Amen