

WITH GOD WE SHALL DO VALIANTLY

Psalm 108: 12, 13 and Isaiah 60: 12 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

As I pondered in Psalm 108 this week, and I read, verse 10, “Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom? Who was Esau and what was Edom? They had a city in the rocks called Petra. It was almost impregnable. Who would lead David to victory over this impossible enemy? Immediately—another verse of David’s Psalms came rushing into my mind and spirit—Psalm 16: 11—“You make known to me the path of life; In Your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Finding the path of life God wants to make known to us—is like settling on a path to make it from one point to another. God’s Word is our GPS but God the Holy Spirit doesn’t always initially hem us in. Sometimes he says, “What’s your preference in these three paths before you?” In the end, God does show us the path of life, but it’s rarely a path initially without options. This past Thursday a man of God from Durango, Colorado called me for my directions to Kemmerer where he will be candidating next Sunday. He asked me, “If you were in Durango, heading to Kemmerer, which way would you go?” He told me his GPS had him going north west to I-15 into Salt Lake City and then taking I-80 past Evanston and up 189 to Kemmerer. That’s a fine way—longer by miles, but maybe the fastest way. Yet, I pondered on his question and gave him two alternatives, my first alternative of going north to Grand Jct. and on I-70 to Loma, then north over Douglas Pass to Rangely and Dinosaur, then west on 40 to Vernal. From Vernal to Dutch John and on to Manila, up to Mountain View, under I-80 up to Carter, hitting 189 just south of Kemmerer. My second alternative was another Colorado route up to Grand Jct. then east to Rifle, north to Meeker, then Maybell, Sunbeam and through Irish Canyon up to Wyoming 430 to Rock Springs and then I-80 west to 30 up to Kemmerer.

Then he asked me again, “This time of year, which way would you go?” I told him, “Your GPS gave you the fastest way, but if I wanted to see awesome scenery, elk, and lots of deer and eagles, I’d go there over Douglas Pass.” We laughed and I prayed God would show him the path for next Thursday when they drive north from Durango. As I was working on Friday on this message, in came Preston Ackerman. We embraced and he wanted to tell me about being a walk-on for the University of Wyoming Football Team. It wasn’t that the coach cut him, but after allowing Preston to work out for a week, the Coach took away any peace for him to continue. It’s like my looking for a wife. God initially gave me many options, but when all was said and done, God hemmed me in. Forty eight years ago, this coming June 16th, I was no more looking at any other options. God had shown me the path for my life. In the presence of obedience to God, there came fullness of

joy. I think of Hudson Taylor trying to decide even how to pray as a young missionary. He wrote about it, saying, “I used to ask God to help me. Then I asked if I might help Him. I ended up by asking Him to do His work through me.”

As we come to Psalm 108, I do a double-take. The first thing that impresses me is that going through the psalms one by one, this psalm is strangely familiar. I have seen it before. Upon examination, I was right. The psalmist in Psalm 108, under divine inspiration, grabbed David’s Psalm 57:7-11 as the source for the first five verses of Psalm 108 and he borrowed David’s Psalm 60: 5-12 as his source for the last eight verses of Psalm 108. And the unknown psalmist who pieced together part of Psalm 57 and Psalm 60 was kind and careful to give the due credit to David as being the author of Psalm 108, a compound psalm. Yet the timing of Psalm 108 is following the return of Israel from Exile in Babylon, while centuries earlier—over 500 years before, David wrote psalms 57 and 60. Beloved, there’s a lesson here for us. “Give credit to where credit is due, but don’t try to re-invent the wheel. It’s not that the Holy Spirit was running short on words of worship. No! It was rather that the unknown psalmist 500 years later knew the Word of God well enough to say—“It’s time for parts of Psalm 57 and 60 to be revisited, combined and used for a new generation. The old words of promise and prayers with their historical associations in David’s day were needed by the Lord to be adapted to new needs for the Israelites freshly returned from Babylon. The same God David knew as he wrote expressing his joys, fears, and hopes in psalms 57 and 60 was still the same God wanting David’s joys, fears, and hopes revisited 500 years later. Can God be said to inspire repetition? It is true that we are warned by Jesus Himself, against vain repetitions in Matthew 6: 7, but there is also a danger of vain variations.

Repetition in the Word is often used. In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed three times the same words in Matthew 26: 36-46. We read He first prayed, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” The second prayer was identical. When Jesus left his disciples to pray the third time, we read in Matthew 44, “So leaving them again, He went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.” Paul wrote in Philippians 3: 1, “Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me, and is safe for you.” It is clear that repetition is sanctioned by the leading of the divine Holy Spirit. Truths and special ways those truths are expressed are not to be abandoned because they are old, but they should be used again and again, whenever they are suitable, to express new emotions, new ambitions, and new gratitude to God. As I often tell fellow pastors, for a preacher to boast that he has never repeated a sermon is either a terrible reflection on that sermon or possibly a reflection on the pastor, or on both. Jesus often repeated

Himself. Words good enough to be used once should be used twice. New language with novelty and fresh words can be lovely, but new language is not essential to our devotion to God or each other. I often say to my wife, “I love you.” I also use, “I cherish you or I treasure you,” but “I love you” still wins the day. Paul’s words in II Timothy 4: 7 of “finish the course” I used so often with my children as they were growing up, I suspect they may have felt like I at times was a broken record. Nevertheless, finishing the course is the best way I know to say to all of you, “Once God has hemmed you in as a married wife or husband, finish the course—finish the race—do not waver, regardless of your good excuses. As it was for David in asking God to lead the way to Edom, to Petra and on to victory, there was only one way up to Petra—and God alone was able to help His people in David’s day and in the day of the post-exilic psalmist who wrote Psalm 108—there was still only one way to victory—it was a narrow and dangerous path, but God knows the way through the wilderness. All we have to do is follow, and finish the course.

As we look afresh at Psalm 108, this repeated and compounded psalm, what is God wanting to tell us afresh today? God is telling us the path of life to powerful, passionate worship of Himself. In this compound psalm I find two vital keys to powerful, passionate worship: What are they?

POWERFUL, PASSIONATE WORSHIP FINDS EXPRESSION BEST IN A VICTORIOUS, VIVACIOUS HEART. (I.) Notice Psalm 108: 1-5 taken from

Psalm 57: 7-11. “My heart is steadfast, O God! I will sing and make melody with all my being! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn! I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the peoples; I will sing praises to You among the nations. For Your steadfast love is great above the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let Your glory be over all the earth!” The seeking heart is the finding heart. Jeremiah 29: 11 promises—“You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek me with all your heart.” Finding God’s presence is finding a Presence that leaves us lost in praise and worship. David was lost in worship as he penned these lines in Psalm 57: 7-11. Now the unknown psalmist who combined two of David’s psalms was lost in the same worship of the Lord. Beloved, we can join in using the same inspired words of David and other biblical writers to enable us also to be lost in worshipping the Lord. If we could think of composing a poem on computer, Psalm 57 and 60 and the combined words in Psalm 108 could never be conceived as words written that were mulled over and then corrected. No, these words initially flowed and flooded from David’s lips, came from deeper within himself, from his soul and spirit, from his deepest heart. Note that the deeper our praise is, the more intense it often can become. True worship of God pulls out the stops. Our hearts are steadfast. We wake up the harp

and the lyre. We wake up the stringed instruments and pipes and drums and wind instruments and cymbals, and how do we worship? We worship vulnerably, humbly, with a vision of Christ before us, obediently and exultantly. The psalmist is using the original words of David to bring the returned exiles from Babylon back to the heart of worship both individually and corporately as a congregation. The psalmist here is professing a fixed and immovable resolve, a steadfast heart to make praise to the Lord with unending, incessant joy.

Are our hearts fixed and steadfast? By nature, our hearts are fickle, roving, inconsistent—here one day and gone tomorrow. What we seek today, sometimes we will shun tomorrow or we will decide we are too busy to worship the Lord. God’s grace opens up for us a blessed change. All our affections and hopes and dreams become firmly fixed on Jesus. We love Him because He first loved us. Love in our heart shows up spontaneously as praise on our lips. Our tongues became instruments of praise and soon we use every means within our reach. We press everything—lifted hands, bended knees and flowing tears and raised voices—we press every part of ourselves into worship. From the earliest dawn, God desires to hear our praise. As we awaken from sleep, it is never too early to praise the Lord. Verse 2 is clear—“Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn. Returning consciousness should awaken our praise. Don’t you love that idea—that our praise will awaken the dawn—that our worship will bring the sun up? Beloved, are we busy worshipping the Lord before the sun is up?

Does worship have an early start in your home, in your life? God is crying out by His Spirit in David and this psalmist, “Worship me before you wash your face. Praise Me before your feet hit the floor.” Don’t waste your hours. A Davidic determined heart of worship gets any early start. The joy of living is so often based upon how we start our day. We don’t ever get a second chance to start our today well. God is calling you and me to embrace a glorious adventure with Him. We are to embrace God’s heart for all peoples. Notice v. 3—“I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the peoples, I will sing praises to You among the nations.” The praising steadfast worshipping heart is not a prejudiced heart. When we worship, we are as Paul tells us, in Ephesians 2: 6, “seated with Christ in heavenly places.” Guess what happens out of that kind of a heart?—It is worship gone viral—v. 4, 5 as we praise God, saying, “For Your steadfast love is great above the heavens; Your faithfulness to the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let Your glory be over all the earth! The theme is ever grand. Never let it get weary. It tells of mercy—God’s steadfast love which is higher than the heights above, and of faithfulness which is as high and unassailable as the pinnacles of heaven—reaching to the highest clouds. 2ndly, we turn from Psalm 57: 7-11 & Psalm 108: 1-5:

POWERFUL, PASSIONATE WORSHIP CLAIMS GOD’S HOLY PROMISES TO VALIANTLY DEFEAT OUR ENEMIES. (II.)

Notice that these words of Psalm 108: 6-13 are basically the same words of David in Psalm 60: 5-12. The psalmist declares, “That your beloved ones may be delivered, give salvation by Your right hand and answer me! God has promised in his holiness: “With exultation I will divide up Shechem and portion out the Valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is my helmet, Judah my scepter. Moab is my washbasin; upon Edom I cast my shoe; over Philistia I shout in triumph.” Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom? Have you not rejected us, O God? You do not go out, O God, with our armies. Oh grant us help against the foe, for vain is the salvation of man! With God we shall do valiantly; it is He who will tread down our foes/our enemies.” We can join David and the psalmist in Psalm 108 and claim God’s holy promises with intense certainty. This is an exultant claim in worship. God has given us His word on it. We read in Isaiah 54: 15-17, “If anyone stirs up strife, it is not from Me; whoever stirs up strife with you shall fall because of you. Behold, I have created the smith who blows the fire of coals and produces a weapon for its purpose; I have also created the ravager to destroy; no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD.” Claim God’s holy promises in powerful, passionate worship, beloved.

Various parts of Israel are named in this holy promise the psalmist claimed. Take it to the bank. God will not lie to Abraham. There will be a day very soon when all of the territory that God has promised Israel will be under Israel’s jurisdiction. When will that day be? The millennium is not far away. Notice how prayer and praise mix in verse 6. The psalmist is mixing prayer and praise. So can we! Don’t get stuck thinking prayer is prayer and praise is praise and that they cannot mix. No! They mix well. Notice that the psalmist cannot sufficiently exalt the Lord. When he has given God all the praise he can muster, he has only reached the borders of God’s glory. “Let your glory be over all the earth” now flows into prayer—so that your beloved ones may be delivered, give salvation by Your right hand and answer me! Prayer and praise co-mingle and intermingle. We are being called of God by this psalmist to supplicate the windows of heaven for mercy and deliverance from every foe, and for answers to our every cry. Notice the boldness in v. 6, “Deliver Your beloved ones, give salvation by Your right hand, deliver me.” This progression makes me think of Pastor Larry’s message last Sunday night—“Leave Room For God” and the 4 principles of “Remember, Trust, Thank and Obey God.” This worshipping here is remembering, trusting, and thanking all combined—in v.

7—You have promised in Your holiness...” Faith remembers that our holy God has granted us holy promises. These promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus—Paul says in II Corinthians 1: 20, “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.” Wow! That gives us a quick claim to every promise in the 66 books. We can sing with the hymn writer, “Every promise in the Book is mine, every chapter, every verse, every line. All the blessings of His love divine. Every promise in the Book is mine.” This gives us an abundance of unwavering assurance. The psalmist looked around him and what did he see? By faith in God’s promises, God’s enemies and their territory were seen by faith—v. 7-9. In Christ, our worship includes praise for God’s victories—His conquests before they happen. That’s why the psalmist dropped his fear of strong cities that yet remained in open defiance to God. The psalmist claimed the victory and the triumph over the mightiest potentates.

Now the psalmist cries out again—“Who’s going to bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?” It’s a Petra is too big for me moment, and in the middle of praise and exultation—God can take it, the psalmist starts to have a moment of doubt—“Have you not rejected us, O God? You do not go out, O God, with our armies.” Can we break away from praise and go to prayer and even go to doubts, with our hearts transparently on the line? We can! Can we cry, “God, where are You? Are you going to let this oppression, this awful situation, this terrible prison we are in, this place of utter woundedness? Are you going to leave us high and dry?” Then, the psalmist breaks up his doubting heart and doubting words with a strong prayer—v. 12—O grant us help against the foe, for vain is the salvation of man!” Beloved, we can get it back together when we lose our confidence in worship and praise—when we, like Peter, look at the waves, when we like Hezekiah, weep on our beds with bitter tears. The Psalmist takes us over the threshold of doubt and weeping and he leads us, v. 13 in crying out, “It’s going to be all right—“With God we shall do valiantly: It is He who will tread down our enemies.” I believe this kind of worship can be worship that both rebukes our own doubts, lays hold of the horns of the altar in prayer, prays through, and claims God’s holy promise of victory. We can sing with, “Don’t wait till the battle’s over, Shout now. You know in the end, you’re going to win. You’re burdened down with the cares of life, and your striving seems in vain, Hold your head up high, your deliverance is nigh—Don’t wait till the battle’s over... Shout now.” God help us let our worship find expression in vivacious, victorious hearts. God help us worship God by claiming his holy promises before they happen as yes, and yes sir, yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. Don’t wait...Amen.