

WHEN I'M OVERWHELMED, LEAD ME TO THE ROCK THAT IS HIGHER THAN I

{Message given by Pastor Joe Keenan, May 27, 2007}

*“Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”
(Psalm 61:1-2)*

Life is full of situations that can overwhelm us. First of all, let us look at how the dictionary defines the word “overwhelm”:

1. to overcome completely in mind or feeling; overwhelmed by remorse.
2. to overpower or overcome, esp. with superior forces; destroy; crush
3. to cover or bury beneath a mass of something, as floodwaters, debris, or an avalanche; submerge
4. to load, heap, treat, or address with an overpowering or excessive amount of anything
5. to overthrow.

Surely most of us can immediately identify with this definition! In the Bible we see that this word also describes many very real situations that King David found himself in. Nevertheless, as in Psalm 61 (which David wrote), he didn't give up and quit. Rather, he cried out to God in the midst of those feelings and confessed that he knew that there was a higher place of rest, release, and victory – a place God could lead him to.

One would think that being a mightily used apostle and anointed servant of God, Paul would have been “far above and beyond” any feelings of despair, but his writings indicate that he also knew what it was like to be overwhelmed.

*“For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were **pressed out of measure**, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.” (2 Corinthians 1:8)*

The term “pressed out of measure” is very vivid description of what it means to be overwhelmed by our circumstances. Paul gave out more of his feelings in the very next verse, but with his confession we can also see his attitude of trust and faith:

“Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.” (2 Corinthians 1:9 – NIV).

Another man in the Old Testament, King Jehoshaphat, knew what it meant to be overwhelmed and quite literally “under the gun.” In 2 Chronicles 20, we can see that he was in an impossible predicament. The surrounding enemy armies outnumbered the troupes of Israel, but Jehoshaphat, being the man of God that he was, clearly understood that there was simply

no time to have a “pity party”. It is time to draw near to God! Jehoshaphat took it all back to God. He began to seek God. He clearly declared how overwhelmed he felt, but he also confessed and claimed the promise God had made with Israel.

“O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee.” (2 Chronicles 20:12)

God answered Jehoshaphat and in a single moment by a mighty act of God the victorious outcome of the battle was fully in the hands of Jehoshaphat!

Here we can learn that when we focus our attention upon our own talents and abilities or lack thereof, we can quickly be overwhelmed. On the other hand, when our focus is upon the Lord and how great and how awesome He is, then He can do some mighty things for us! All we need to do is to cry out to Him and trust that He will answer!

Let’s not allow doubt and fear quench our ability to cry out to the Lord. As the Psalmist confessed, God will attend unto our prayer! Just think of how a mother’s love enables her to walk in the midst of many crying children and still be able to pick out her own child’s cry. In the same way, when one of God’s children cry out from their heart, our Heavenly Father picks up on it right away. In another Psalm we see once again how David puts his trust in the Lord, and with great confidence encourages others to do the same:

“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge for us.” (Psalm 62:7)

“Pour out your heart before Him!” This is the release! This is where the pressure is released during those times in which we feel completely overwhelmed. Habakkuk, the prophet, made the following confession of faith during circumstances that could make anyone want to just quit and give up:

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength . . .” (Habakkuk 3:17-19)

Let’s allow the Lord to teach us how to cry out and pour out our hearts before the Lord. Those times will become precious times of fellowship with our Heavenly Father. Whatever we are facing, remember that when we lift our eyes to God, He can lift us up to that Rock (which is Christ!) that is higher than any situation we may find ourselves in! It is a place of refuge, strength, and victory.