

Fight or Flight [Psalm 62]
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INTRODUCTION

1. In my pastoral position, I'm constantly approached by people facing decisions.
 - a. Sure, there are regular decisions that we make daily with which we grapple
 - 1) Health food or otherwise//comedy or drama// highway or back-road.
 - 2) But then there are the more difficult decisions, ones that have consequences
 - b. The standard default for Christians is to say they'll just side with God's will.
 - 1) And then they wait. And if the solution doesn't materialize, things get worse.
 - 2) And somehow we can get at God BECAUSE of the choice itself
 - 3) This is ironic because we love to choose . . . just not about difficult things.
2. Friends, choices made under duress wear on us.
 - a. Perhaps you're currently facing a choice or have one coming.
 - b. How do you grapple during the tough times, when there are no easy answers?
3. Fortunately, the Scriptures show us examples of those who went through it too
 - a. Today we turn to Psalm 62.
 - b. It's a psalm of King David, reflecting a time when he is under siege.
 - b. As a younger man, he served King Saul who wanted him dead.
 - c. As an older man, his son Absalom attempted to overthrow and kill him.
4. Regardless of the occasion, this is a psalm of a man engaged in difficult choices

VERSES 1-7

Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him.

²*Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.*

³*How long will you assault me? Would all of you throw me down— this leaning wall, this tottering fence?*

⁴*Surely they intend to topple me from my lofty place; they take delight in lies. With their mouths they bless, but in their hearts they curse.*

⁵*Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.*

⁶*Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.*

⁷*My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge.*

1. From the outset of this psalm, the author gives us his approach to his quandary
 - a. It is imperative, in times of duress, that your position is solidified.
 - b. There is an allusion to construction here, especially in **vs2,6,7** with rock and fortress
 - 1) A firm foundation is necessary, and it should be formed by Christ and God
 - 2) In my recent travels, I saw in **Gloucester, MA** a home by the ocean
 - 3) I went closer and it was really built behind a wall. It was a fortress.
 - 4) It's position on the shore makes it virtually impenetrable, but also firm.
 - c. The overarching theme here: with God supporting you, you can do this.
2. So as we examine choices, we see an interesting one in vs 3: **Fall or Push**. Let me explain
 - a. The Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy, is one of the world's most interesting structures.
 - b. Construction of the tower occurred in three stages across 344 years
 - 1) started in the 12th century and completed in the 14th.
 - c. The tower's famous tilt began during construction
 - 1) caused by a foundation built on half hard/half soft ground.
 - 2) The tilt increased over the centuries until the structure was completed
 - 3) Over the years, it's been stabilized
 - d. Unfortunately, it's now the subject of merciless photobombing, people holding it up.
 - 1) **Take out the tower**, and it looks like people doing Tai Chi
 - e. But then there are some people who love to watch the world burn.
 - 2) **They take pictures** trying to knock the tower over.
3. And this is where I believe we need to be truly introspective about our lives.

- a. Friends, we're either those who knock down, or those who push up.
 - 1) How many of us are truly without fault?
 - 2) Have we not been leaned upon, or been leaned upon ourselves?
- b. One thing I hope has become apparent in our value of creativity: destroying is easier
 - 1) This is what every young child (or prepubescent man knows): it's fun to break stuff.
 - 2) And there are times when even we do this to people and projects.
 - 3) However unbearable it is for us, when subject other people to it?
- 4. And this just heightens then need for us to stake a firm foundation
 - a. We become more like the Lord, in our ability to both **BUILD and WITHSTAND**.

VERSES 8-10

⁸Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

⁹Surely the lowborn are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie. If weighed on a balance, they are nothing; together they are only a breath. ¹⁰Do not trust in extortion or put vain hope in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

- 1. Again, we see it is imperative to trust in the Lord. The repetition is for our benefit.
 - a. The word "trust" in the Hebrew literally means "to attach oneself to another object."
 - b. I visualize this like velcro, one of the best inventions of the 20th century (1948?!?!?).
 - c. Our trust binds us to the way of the Lord and helps in difficult times.
- 2. In verse 9, we're presented with another choice: that of the **Low or High**
 - a. Understand that in the ancient world, the discrepancy was great between the two
 - 1) The general understanding was that the affluent were superior and blessed
 - b. Here David wants to show that there's actually equality, if not in lifestyle, but in our end.
 - 1) We don't like to dwell on it, but these distinctions exist today.
 - a) In our city, infant mortality rates are almost double rest of U.S.
 - b) On average, one baby dies every three days.
 - c) This is mostly due to high levels of poverty and lack of education.
 - 2) Similarly, there are wealthy who benefit on the backs of the poor
 - a) I'm always hesitant to bring specific examples, but I'm going to frame one
 - b) Dan Gilbert, owner of Cleveland Cavs, made wealth through loans & casinos
 - c) These ventures prey on the impoverished.
 - c. So here's the point: it's all a breath. Enjoy what you got because God equalizes
 - 1) So if you're chasing financial glory, check both your methodology and motivation
 - 2) The Scriptures don't decry wealth, but it warns that it can pull us away from God
 - 3) Again, it comes down to trusting God.
- 3. How we ought to react is best seen in verse 8: **POUR OUT YOUR HEARTS**
 - a. In the Hebrew, it's a complete pouring with no reserve- nothing held back.
 - b. It involves vulnerability and transparency before God.
 - 1) In these difficult choices we usually default to **OVERCONFIDENCE OR DESPONDENCY**
 - 2) In pouring out, we discover a third way: trust (Velcro) with the Lord.

VERSES 11,12

¹¹One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: "Power belongs to you, God,

¹²and with you, Lord, is unfailing love"; and, "You reward everyone according to what they have done."

- 1. This psalm concludes with two things: a poetic, literary device
 - a. Power is God's, as is unfailing love (*chesed/grace*). And that he is ultimately responsible.
- 2. In the midst of choice, here's something that you don't have to choose: **Strength and Mercy**
 - a. We serve a God that possesses both and this is a very good thing.
 - 1) If God had power but no mercy, he could save us but wouldn't want to.
 - 2) If God was merciful but lacked power, he might want to save us, but couldn't.

3) 19th century theologian **John Perowne** *"This is the only truly worthy representation of God. Power without love is **brutality**, and love without power is **weakness**. Power is the strong foundation of love, and love is the beauty and the crown of power."*

4) Thus, we serve a God who can truly deliver us from all of our troubles.

3. Ultimately, God is just and will deliver those of us who trust in him.

CONCLUSION

1. Finally, as we face conflict like David did, we're left with a key choice: **Fight or flight**

a. And I would urge us, friends, that we need to embrace and face the tough choice

b. Don't shy away from it just because it's difficult but own up to it.

c. And do so acknowledging that it's not all on you: when you trust God, it's on him.

1) Giving up attempts to escape or avoid attack forces one to acknowledge just how dependent one is on God alone.

2. There's a cost for the difficult choice, but there's an even greater cost from fleeing

John 6:66-68

"From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. 'You do not want to leave too, do you?' Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.'"

END MESSAGE WITH A TIME OF COMMUNION