

God's Love in Uncertain Times

It's a self-evident truth that we live in a culture that, in large measure, doesn't understand the true meaning of love. In this country in 1969 the state of California became the first state to legalize what came to be called 'no fault' divorce. Prior to this, married couples were required to prove that there was a valid reason that the state would recognize before they could get a divorce. With 'no fault' divorce all that was now needed is to say 'we just don't love each other anymore.' The vows taken of 'til death do us part' became 'until love departs.'

As if this weren't bad enough, I once read where the idea had been put forward of what might be called a 'wed-lease.' In a wed-lease, a couple would sign a contract for a 5-year marriage. The contract could be renewed at the end of 5 years, but if it wasn't renewed the marriage dissolved with no need for a divorce. Try it and see if you like it. Thankfully, this idea hasn't taken hold or become law, at least not yet. Of course our culture is confused about love in a number of ways—but what about Christians? Do we really understand the love of God? Psalm 48, our text for this series of articles, is connected to the worship of God by his people, but it also points us to the covenant love of God for his people. I want to look at this Psalm under four primary headings, three of which express God's love for his people with the last expressing what our response is to be to God's love for us. Let's begin with saying that God expresses love in his...

—Presence

This Psalm is one of the 'Songs of Zion' which calls our attention to Jerusalem, the city where God chose to place the Temple and where he would especially meet with his people. And this is what we see in verse one. "Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth...." The Psalmist speaks of Mt. Zion as being 'beautiful in elevation,' and yet scholars note that there are actually taller and possibly more beautiful mountains that surround Jerusalem. It's been said that Mt. Zion would hardly be noticed except that it's the place where the Temple stands. And that's exactly the point!

The Psalmist refers to the beauty of this holy mountain because God chose to be especially present with his Old Covenant people in the Temple on Mt. Zion. The children of Israel believed that no other mountain could compare with Mt. Zion. One scholar has noted that, "Belief in the superiority of Mt. Zion is based on the conviction that God is truly present among his people and that he is their strength." The focus is on God's presence with his people, especially, in corporate worship and yet we know that God is omnipresent so that there is never a time when we have to fear that he's far away from us or that he cannot hear us. Psalm 140:13 says, "Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name; the upright shall dwell in your presence." This is one reminder of God's covenant love for his Church; his constant presence—

and certainly his special presence in corporate worship in the church today. In addition to God's presence, God shows his love for his people by his:

—Protection

This truth begins in verse 3 of our text: “Within her citadels God has made himself known as a fortress.” Verses 4-7 speak of pagan kings who assembled with the intent of harming God's people, but they were unable to do so because of God's protection. We don't know the exact situation that the Psalmist is referring to but the Psalm is broad enough to encompass God's protection of his people at all times, i.e., protection from any and all harm according to God's perfect will for our lives.

Notice the verbs given in verses 4-5; the kings “assembled”; when they came face to face with God's protection they were “astounded,”; they were in “panic” and they took to “flight.” The Psalmist uses a very vivid illustration in verse 6 of the fear of pain that the enemy experienced. Just like a woman that fears the “anguish” of being in labor—they trembled. God makes the enemies of his people to be in fear because of his promised protection of his people! It's a great blessing and comfort to be reminded of God's love for his people in these uncertain times.

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