

The Dangerous Temptation of Trying to Know the Future

Several years ago my sister Doris told me she wished God would let her see into the future. I responded that the Lord may not let us see down the line because we could not handle tomorrow's difficulties today.

The very next day my sister called me, crying. Her husband, Larry, had been laid off, a victim of corporate downsizing.

It's no easy thing to be unwanted: by an employer, a spouse, a child, a parent, a friend, or a fiancé.

Psalm 61 appears to have been written during a time when David was banished, an exile from his son Absalom. (See 2 Samuel 15–18.) It is filled with longing—for safety, strength, refuge, length of days, eternity, and God himself. “Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer” (v. 1),

David prays.

The geography of the banished

David launches his prayer “from the ends of the earth” (v. 2). He had been forced away from the “center”—Jerusalem. The psalm does not tell us his specific location; but when you are in tough times, wherever you are is the “end.”

Is your struggle difficult? No longer where you really want to be? Only the Lord, and perhaps a few others, know how far you are from where you prefer to be.

Lord, can You hear a prayer from one as far away as I? I'm not in Jerusalem today. I am out past all the mail routes, the courier trails, the phone, fax, and modem paths. I am way out on the edge of humanity this morning. I feel so out of touch and away from even those who love me. I am at the end—and if I

go any further, I will simply drop off the edge. Can You hear me from where I am?

The chronology of the banished

David describes both the where (“the ends of the earth”) and the when (“as my heart grows faint”). The geography and the chronology go together.

When you are at the end of the earth, you are depleted of emotional and spiritual resources. The heart, in which dwells your resolve to continue, no longer has the courage to face a Goliath.

David finds himself, as you may also, with a very weakened reason for being. You possessed great goals, wonderful dreams, aspirations, and plans. But now your hold on life is so very tentative.

What can you do? Take your geography and chronology to God. In geography, David looks forward to God moving him on; in chronology, he draws strength by looking back and draws hope by looking forward.

The geography sought

God will not leave you at the ends of the earth. Here is where He intends to bring you.

1. A rock higher than yourself (vv. 2,3). David wants to be on a high rock—to have life again with a view, to be in a safe and impregnable position, “For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe: (v. 3).

Lord, You are that Rock. Lift me up to You, out of this morass of closed-off options and emotional despair.

2. A tent forever in which to dwell (v. 4). The end of the earth has no protective covering: no roof or walls to protect from the elements, none of the felicities and comforts of

home.

But oh, the security and well-being of ensconement within a chieftain's luxurious tent. To the Bedouin-like David, God's palace was that tent—the very best in the desert.

I'd like to live in such a place, Lord. Where relationships are all healed, and there is peace, security, and comfort. I'd like to be in a place not only of duty, but also delight. Bring me to such a tent, for today I am a wanderer and, like Jacob, sleep under the stars with a stone for my pillow.

3. In the shelter of God's wings (v. 4). High up in the aerie, the eaglets huddle under their mother's wings—protected from predator, harsh wind, and violent storm.

O God, I feel so unprotected and exposed. I am prey to the slightest danger, and defenseless. Would You tuck me under Your wings today and hide me until this storm passes by or this marauder has gone to other lairs? Keep me safe, Lord, dry and secure.

The chronology remembered and envisioned

David looks backward in time when God protected (v. 3) and heard him (v. 5). Even when your "heart goes faint," remember how the Lord has helped you in the past. Remember His promises to you.

But also look ahead. David sees brighter days coming (vv. 6,7). In the very place of despair, a word of hope is present.

By the way, my brother-in-law went without work for a number of months. Then a wonderful job opened. My sister decided she never wanted to know the future again. She is content to let tomorrow remain in God's hands.

George O. Wood is general superintendent of the General Council of the Assemblies of God in the United States. He has been chairman of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship since

2008. You can learn more about him at .