

Psalm 62:1-8

Verse 3 of what we just read the author, David, stressed and attacked, says he feels like a leaning wall or a tottering fence.

But no matter what your personal experience was with COVID this past year, the year caused: **“Dis-ease”** – the very root of the word - *a lack of ease*.
AKA Stress.

We prioritize the physical body over the mind. Physical health over mental health. Physical pain over emotional pain.

And spiritually there’s a tension between the fruit of the spirit and the difficult emotions, be it anger or sadness or anxiety or depression. The Church can do a poor job dealing with that tension. The result? Many of us inside the Church live hurt, unhealthy, and far less effective lives than we could be living.

Affective Conversion *happens when a person steps into personal responsibility for their emotional healing and development.*

It happens when I realize that I can’t be spiritually healthy when I’m emotionally unhealthy. My spiritual maturity is tied to my emotional maturity

And as we’ve talked about in previous weeks, this maturity and growing more like Jesus daily... this sanctification... it is what Donald Gelpi calls *ongoing conversion*... 5 conversions

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Affective Conversion *happens when a person steps into personal responsibility for their emotional healing and development.*

“Responsibility” and **“emotions”** in the same sentence might seem awkward at first. We often think of emotions as hardwired in some deep part our brain and triggered by events and moments in life.

But Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett spent 25 years of studying brain scans and physiology studies and more to study emotions. Her findings? Emotions aren’t hardwired and then triggered. You aren’t born with an emotional circuit in your brain. In her words: **Emotions aren’t built in. They are built.**

Emotions are “guesses” or primal predictions that your brain constructs based on experiences and inputs, done in a moment of sensation as billions of brain cells are popping off in unison. Sounds wild... but what this means is you have more control than you might imagine you do.

And as Dr. Barrett says: **“More control... also means more responsibility”**

If you change the ingredients and input your brain feeds on you can slowly and gradually and sometimes arduously... transform your emotional life.

There are ingredients in life we don't control.

Things that happen TO us. Both on a broader cultural scale and an individual one. Trauma. Abuse. A diagnosis. Violence – physical or emotional. And these experiences leave traces on our emotions, our capacity for intimacy, even our immune systems.

Sometimes depression and anxiety that is circumstantial and passing day to day for some is clinical for others. For some emotions like anxiety or depression is a domineering, permanent fixture. Because it's a matter of mental health.

Whether its circumstantial or clinical... God doesn't abandon us to it, he meets us in it.

THE BODY KEEPS THE SCORE by Bessel Van Der Kolk.

This book talks about the impact that trauma can have on one's body. Namely your brain. It's not just “all in your head” ...it's input imprinted in your brain and how it operates. But one of the revelations within the book, written in 2014, is that the brain mapping has shown that the brain has a natural neuroplasticity. Meaning it can reorganize its connections and functions. Events and experiences shape our mind in profound ways. Both negatively... and positively. And from medicine to therapy over time people can push toward emotional health again.

Through the historical books of 1 and 2 Samuel, to the Psalms, and here in Psalm 62 we see **David** experiences emotional and physical assault, attacks with slander and attacks with spears, as well as various betrayals on both personal and national levels. The man had plenty of trauma to work through.

And yet in his writing, we see this is where Affective Conversion and our emotional journey receives its gift from our religious conversion and relationship with God. Jesus infuses our affective conversion and emotional journey with **HOPE**.

In Psalm 62:1 David writes - **“from him comes my salvation.”** Which speaks to his religious conversion.

In Psalm 62:5 David writes - **“from him comes my hope.”**

His affective conversion and emotional journey has been infused with hope.

It is because of this that he can pour out his heart and exhort others to do the same.

“Protect your heart” Proverbs 4:23

It speaks to what we've been talking about protecting our ingredients and the inputs in our lives. But in some circles it can be used to validate keeping emotions out. *“Positive thoughts only.”*

And protecting your heart has come to mean: Don't let anger in. Don't let sadness in.
Why do we think this?

Inside Out - it plays out almost entirely in the mind of an eleven year old girl, Riley. The main characters are Riley's emotions: Joy, Anger, Fear, Disgust, and Sadness.

At the heart of the movie is the conundrum: what are we supposed to do with Sadness?
At one point early in the movie, Joy uses chalk to mark a circle for Sadness can stand in, a place that is relegated to the background so Sadness won't mess anything up. But in the end of Inside Out we come to realize not only does Riley need sadness, but sadness needs a place in us. And not just sadness: we need to make room for the full range of emotions

But if church culture had its choice of children's movies we would much prefer the **LEGO movie** for its anthem "*Everything is Awesome.*"

It wouldn't hurt for us all to go watch Inside Out...
or plain read through the Psalms...

"Pour out your heart to God"

Tim Keller in his book on prayer calls Psalms 'the school of prayer.'
We've missed some GED's and skipped some classes.
Something like 2/3 of the Psalms are laments. And some of us would no doubt prefer the angry and violent and borderline uncomfortable Psalms of imprecation like Psalm 109 didn't exist

We'd rather take those emotions and bury them thinking we are "protecting our heart"

The action David encourages? **"Pour out your heart to God"**

We can't simply bury our emotions.

If we don't pour out our emotions, they will **leak**.

Leak into the workplace. Leak into our marriage. Leak into our parenting.

Leak into our inner dialogue and hope for the future.

If we don't talk out our emotions, we will often take them out on our selves or others.

C.S. Lewis once said: "*I have learned now that while those who speak about one's miseries usually hurt, those who keep silence hurt more.*"

Burying your feelings is like emotional wack-a-mole. Those emotions will pop up somewhere. Workplace. Marriage. Parenting. Alike. They are often what's at the root of our habitual sins. Addictions and addictive habits are often how we outsource or avoid our emotions.

So what are healthy habits?

What are good ingredients that can bring emotional health?

HOLY INACTIVITY- restfulness

David says ***“my soul finds rest in God alone”***

The Hebrew roots speak to a motionless waiting, highlighting the value of sabbath, rest, and silence.

The direct translation from the Hebrew written by David reads: ***“surely to God silence my soul.”***

And in Psalm 119:164 we see David makes a habit of this.

Says ***“seven times a day I praise you.”*** Seven times a day he would stop to praise and pray.

Studies have shown that this is wisdom in regards to how our brain works,

Seven 5 minute breaks works better than an hour break followed by a 7 hour grind.

Because the grind, the demands and distractions can carry us from sunup to sundown to the point we rarely have time to pause, be still, and feel. To the point some of us need to relearn to feel and identify our emotions.

If silence and solitude don't regularly shape you for feeling,

Demands and distractions will wear you until you are numbs to your emotions.

Leighton Ford once said *“In perpetual motion I can mistake the flow of adrenaline for the moving of the spirit... French philosopher and mathematician **Blaise Pascal** observed that most of our human problems come because we don't know how to sit still in our room for an hour.”*

The rhythm of pausing. It's what some theologians would call the daily office.

It's what David calls ***“the refuge where no enemy can reach me.”***

Again ... In Psalm 119 we see David paused to pray seven times a day.

In Daniel we see he paused three times a day.

How many time do you press pause to be with God?

At the least, learn to bookend your days refueling your soul. Give God the first word and the last word. Just as your body has to be fed and rested to remain healthy... so does your soul and emotions. And the Bible is soul food.

We don't just see our need for the rhythm of pausing in our day to day.

God infuses it in our week to week with the Sabbath. A holy pause.

On my Sabbath I'm mindful to spend time with God and refuel.

“Maintenance” My body and mind and emotions need ***a release.***

Maintenance to my therapist are routines and habits and escapes that are a release.

Know what recharges you... gardening, a puzzle, a book, a hike, whatever... and do it.

Because if you don't have a healthy release, you'll have an unhealthy one.

But we don't just need to learn to feel our emotions...

Learn to distinguish feeling from thinking.

Another quote from Dr. Lisa Barrett: Emotions are data. Not directives.

Or as you may have heard it said: feelings are meant to be felt, but not always followed.

In 1 Thessalonian 5 in a broad statement we can apply to our emotions Paul says

“Test everything. Hold on to the good.”

IDENTITY - “My salvation and my honor depend on God.”

Too often we go beyond the healthy and helpful step of identifying our emotions

“I am feeling _____.” (so life giving)

Identifying WITH our emotions – **“I am _____.”**

David found his identity in God.

Show yourself the same grace God shows you. He’s merciful. He’s kind. He cuts you slack. He realizes we were created with limits to our time, our energy, our bodies, and our emotional reserves.

Depression, grief, anxiety, even despair...It doesn’t mean that you aren’t deeply connected to God. It means you’re human.

“If you were close to God and would draw near to God or prayed more or checked these boxes you’d be OK.” If we listen to this voice - on top of the difficult emotions you’ve now got guilt and shame.

1 John 3:20 says:

“Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything.”

God is greater than our feelings and emotions.

But God is not too great for feelings and emotions.

We feel because God feels. You were created in God’s image.

Feeling emotions doesn’t just make you human. In a way it makes you reflect the divine.

In scripture God delights, he feels jealousy, he is deeply troubled, he feels anger, he feels sorrow, he loves and feels compassion, and more.

God possesses feelings and emotions. And we were made in his image.

Our varying emotions don’t dishonor God any more than his emotions do.

So no, feelings aren’t meant to be blindly followed, but they can be a part of the way God speaks and leads us as He loves us.

And I would argue that there are things that you can learn about God emotionally that you may never arrive at intellectually. It sounds like a wild statement, but trust me when the storm comes, the suffering hits, the grief gets wrestled with... there’s revelation about who God is and who you are in God that’s waiting.

COMMUNITY – “Oh people” ...other translations - “my people”

For all of the abuse others had and were inflicting on him, David still held tight to community.

The words written thousands of years later in Van Der Kolk would have resonated with him:

“Our capacity to destroy one another is matched by our capacity to heal one another. Restoring relationship and community is central to restoring well-being.”

Your family *and* your culture can leave imprints that you operate from.

From simple expectations. To scripts memorized in childhood that you operate from intuitively.

Some healthy. Some unhealthy.

From how sex is talked about to how other cultures are talked about.

From how success is defined to how money is treated.

From how sadness might get deemed weakness to how anger is treated as dangerous.

Some of this may have been out and in the open, other of it may have been unspoken.

Either way it shapes you – for better or worse.

One gift of his grace is the family of faith. We can unwrap, untether, and put aside any harmful scripts from our family of origin and begin to be shaped and disciplined in the family of faith.

Not to dishonor our past and heritage.

But to honor and obey God and his Word.

Galatians 6:2 (TLB) - Share each other's troubles... and so obey our Lord's command.

Don't suppress and repress your feelings. Express and confess them. Pour them out.

Not bleeding on everybody... but you need people you can share your feelings with – be it therapist, close friend, or spouse.

We need healthy community to be healthy emotionally.

ELIJAH'S EXAMPLE

You realize he didn't just call down fire from Heaven to burn on the altar... ***HE was burnt out.***

After this stunning miraculous showdown with the prophets of Baal,

A rogue wave of raw emotions hits him and he spirals into anxiety and depression.

God's prescriptions for Elijah?

We see ***HOLY INACTIVITY***

Take a nap. Eat this food. And then he sends Elijah on this journey to Mt Sinai. This 40 day journey to Sinai God calls him to wasn't loaded with him listening to music and podcasts on his iPhone. It was a quiet time. And when he got the mountain God didn't reveal himself in the storm or the fire—it was in the silence.

God addresses his ***Identity - Elijah - “I am no better than my fathers”***

Elijah was swimming deep in *self pity*.
God says your focus is broken... let's go get you an Elisha.

Community - it says right before this whole emotional episode that Elijah had left his servant, his steady companion, behind. God said let's fix that.

Elijah - "I'm all alone."
God - "*Actually... there's 7000 just like you!*"

He was in touch with his feelings. He felt isolated.
He was out of touch with community – THERE WERE 7000 others!

For Elijah there was a seemingly quick turnaround and emotional renewal.
For others it may take much longer. It may be a lifelong journey.

Pour out your hearts before God... and trust God meets you right where you are.

Psalm 62:1 – “from him comes my salvation.”
Religious conversion.

Psalm 62:5 – “from him comes my hope.”
The gamechanger – his affective conversion infused with hope.