

Trust in God Alone

Devotional Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-11

Background Scripture: Psalm 62

Today's Scripture: Psalm 62

I. Calm Amidst Trouble

Psalm 62:1-4

1 Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.

2 He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.

3 How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? Ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence.

4 They only consult to cast him down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah.

1. *Truly* translates a key word in this psalm (translated “only” in Psalm 62:2, 4-6 and “surely” in 62:9). Its repetition throughout the psalm emphasizes the truth of each statement, lending a heightened sense of the sincerity for the psalmist.

My soul identifies the seat of a person's commitments and loyalties. It is the “I” of personhood. *Waiteth* translates a rare Hebrew word in the Bible, occurring only four times (Psalms 22:2; 39:2; 62:1; 65:1). This waiting is restful, sometimes even silent. David was not an autonomous self but a dependent one. David entrusted himself to *God* because *salvation* comes from God, though we do not yet know from what David required rescu-

ing. In this instance, salvation should not be thought of as a distant spiritual reality but as a present, physical rescue.

We are wise when we entrust ourselves to the Lord and do not trust ourselves. Completely trusting God is related to the covenant. If David trusted God completely based on covenants in Israel, how much more should we, given that we have received what Israel hoped for?

2. Repeating the word *salvation* is another way David emphasized his confidence that he would find what he needed from the Lord. Only God, the *rock*, can serve as the source of stability and rest. When God was David's *defence*, he could confidently and boldly profess that he could never *be greatly moved*—and so can we. Grounded in God's gracious salvation and protected by God's power, we confess that nothing will shake us. Our feet will not slip or give way. The soul committed to God alone is stabilized by God's saving work and protective care.

3. This verse and the next feature several contrasts between what has come before to what will come after. *Ye shall be slain* and the images of an unstable *wall* and *fence* contrast the transient nature of David and his enemies with the unchanging, faithful God, who is David's “rock” and “defence” (Psalm 62:2, above). The contrast highlights God's power versus

the ultimate powerlessness of any human as well as God's integrity in His dealings with David against the unreliability of his enemies. We do not know the specific nature of the *mischiefs* David's opponents imagined, but we know that David's life was full of situations that might fit the bill.

4. The Hebrew adverb translated *only* appeared in Psalm 62:1-2. In the opening of the psalm, God is the only ground of assurance. But David's opponents lacked reverence for God, as evidenced by their total disregard for David, God's chosen king (1 Samuel 16:7-12; 2 Samuel 7:8-9).

Speaking of himself in the third person, David suggested these opponents conspired to *cast him down from his excellency*, referring either to his position in Saul's court or to the throne itself. Some examples come from before David became king while he was part of King Saul's court or exiled from it (1 Samuel 18:10-11; 23:7-29; etc). Another possibility occurs decades later when King David's own son Absalom revolted against his father and tried to depose him (2 Samuel 15:13-14). These and other efforts revealed David's enemies to be liars and hypocrites, willing to *bless with their mouth* while they *curse inwardly*. They sought to undermine God's chosen and unjustly attacked David.

II. Calm Discovered

Psalm 62:5-8

5 My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.

6 He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved.

7 In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.

8 Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.

5-6. These verses form a refrain, largely repeating what was expressed in Psalm 62:1-2 (above). *Wait* is a form of "waiteth" that appeared in 62:1. In Psalm 131:2, the same word is used, describing a weaned child with his mother. There as here, the image is of security, peace, and silence.

7. This verse expands what is said in Psalm 62:1-2 and 62:5-6. Here as there, God is the psalmist's *salvation, rock, and refuge*. The only new language here is of God as the psalmist's *glory*. The word can also be translated "honour" (Psalms 26:8; 66:2; etc.). The first example of God's giving people glory is found at creation (Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 8:5). We also think of Jesus' honoring people by becoming fully human in order to minister among us and die for our sins (Philippians 2:6-11).

8. Imagine a temple worship service where a singer offers a testimony and expresses his or her hope in God's loving care. Then the singer turns to the congregation and invites them to share in this testimony. The singer calls the people of God to *trust* God, just as the singer does. God is not only the singer's refuge but is a *refuge for us*. The people of God share the same story. They rehearse the story of God's powerful deliverance through the exodus and His loving election of Israel as the people of His Old Testament covenant.

III. Calm Grounded in God

Psalm 62:9-12

9 Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.

10 Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.

11 God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.

12 Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

9. A stark contrast is drawn between God and *men*, whether of *low* or *high degree*. These contrasts are meant to be understood together, indicating all people. When compared to God, each person from least to greatest is *vanity* and *a lie*. The concept of vanity is familiar from the book of Ecclesiastes, which frequently uses this same Hebrew word to assert the meaninglessness observed in human life (examples: Ecclesiastes 1:2, 14; 2:11; 3:19). The word describes a mist that appears for a moment and then dissipates.

10. For the powerful, their success at *oppression* can feel like safety. The illusion of having control over not only one's own life but also the lives of others creates a false sense of self-determination and influence over the world. In truth, oppressors need fear God's wrath and judgment for their sins—a lesson Israel (and Judah) would learn long after David's reign ended.

11a. These two phrases poetically emphasize the efficacy of God's speaking. We might think of creation, when *God* had only to say a word, and what He said was created. For David to hear God's speech *twice* might mean He repeated a particular message, or it could simply emphasize that David took what he heard to heart. The latter is in view, based on the confidence David has expressed in the Lord.

11b-12a. God's *power* stands in contrast to the illusion of power that people might have. It has been alluded to several times already (see Psalm 62:1-2, 6-8), but here power is called out. For many, God's power, in combination with His wrath, is the primary way of understanding Him as revealed in the Old Testament.

But a closer reading suggests that God's power cannot be understood without also

considering His *mercy*. The Hebrew word translated "mercy" is frequently used in the context of God's covenant love and loyalty toward Israel (examples: Exodus 20:4-6; Deuteronomy 7:9-12). His mercy both initiated and sustained the covenant.

One example of God's power and mercy at work for Israel was the story of the exodus. Out of His covenant loyalty, God promised to bring Israel out of Egypt (Genesis 46:3-4), and He then began that work (Exodus 2:24). Bringing the Israelites out from their slavery as conquerors and providing for them in the desert—even in the face of multiple rebellions—were actions motivated by love and accomplished with power. Even the examples of God's wrath reveal His desire for mercy (see Genesis 18:20-33; Jeremiah 23:3; Jonah 3:10-4:2). Perhaps most striking is, even after pronouncing judgment for three or four generations, God says He shows love and mercy to thousands (Deuteronomy 5:10). This is a difference of degree; God limits His wrath and lets His love and mercy overflow.

We do not know whether David wrote this psalm before or after receiving God's promise of a house for David's family. God was powerful to keep that promise centuries later, and through it, we experience God's love in Christ. Unsurprisingly, then, many called on Jesus to have mercy on them throughout His ministry.

12b. Paul alluded to this phrase in Romans 2:6 and expressed a similar sentiment in 2 Timothy 4:14. Some students propose that neither David nor Paul seems to have had the Last Judgment in mind when making this assertion. Instead, God's conduct is appropriately contrasted with human conduct. Whereas we might act with a lack of integrity or with only selfish ends in mind, God acts out of His power and mercy and intends to set the world to rights.

Involvement Learning

Trust in God Alone

Into the Lesson

List examples of pairs of objects that
1) share something in common and
2) demonstrate extreme differences in
weightiness. (*examples:* a tricycle and a
cargo plane; both are forms of transporta-
tion, but one is far heavier than the other.)

It's easy to compare objects at extreme
ends of the scale and know which will
be weightier. In the same way, when we
compare God to anything or anyone else
we might trust, it is easy to see that He is
the only true option. As we study, pay at-
tention to the ways David describes God,
and how these truths prompt him to re-
spond to everything else.

Key Verse

My soul, wait thou only upon God; for
my expectation is from him.
—Psalm 62:5

Into the Word

Read Psalm 62 and list descriptions of
God found in the psalm along with verse
references; as well as a list of descriptions
of people, also with verse references.

What, if any, attributes are shared be-
tween God and people, as described in
Psalm 62.

Survey David's life for circumstances
that might have provoked the writing of
Psalm 62, using 1 Samuel 16–19, 2 Sam-
uel 1–7, and 2 Samuel 11–19 as referenc-
es. Summarize any circumstances you
find and any specific verse(s) that suggest
a connection.

Into Life

Write down a day this week and a spec-
ific time when you will wait quietly on
the Lord.

What will that waiting will look like?

Thought to Remember

We trust God because He is willing and
able to save us.