

June 2/3, 2007

*Psalms Volume XI*

## **God Alone**

### **Psalm 62**

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I really don't know your emotional state as you walked through the doors. But just based on statistics and research, it'd be fair to say there are probably a very high number of people that walked through the doors and in your heart there is anxiety. In your heart there is worry. In your heart there is fear. There is a restlessness that seems to stir within you. Research continues to show we are a very depressed, anxious, fearful people. And maybe that's because we live in a very chaotic, unpredictable, uncertain world.

But, what if it really was possible to, in the deepest part of your soul, experience quietness? Experience a tranquility? Experience a stillness that remains steadfast regardless of the circumstances of life? Would you be interested in that?

That's what this Psalm that we're going to look talks about and helps us with. Listen to how one commentator described this particular Psalm.

**There is scarcely another psalm that reveals such an absolute and undisturbed peace, in which confidence in God is so completely unshaken, and in which assurance is so strong that not even one single petition is voiced throughout the psalm.** (as quoted in James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms Volume 2 Psalms 42-106* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), p.509)

If you have a Bible, turn with me to Psalm 62 as we try to better understand how to experience this level of quietness and stillness. The superscription, which is the little writing that appears under the number, tells us this is meant to be a song. It's meant to be sung by the choir. There's a note there to Jeduthun. He was a worship leader much like Asaph among the Hebrew people. We're told it's a Psalm of David. Nobody really knows the background. My personal opinion would be the background has to do with a number of different experiences that David has had in life. He brings them together to write this particular Psalm. Verse 1:

**My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken.** (Psalm 62:1-2  
\*NASB)

David opens the Psalm by talking about his soul waiting in silence. That word silence does not mean verbal silence. The Hebrew word means a stillness, a quietness. I think we would use the word tranquility. Deep within his soul there's a sense of stillness, quietness, a tranquility that defines his soul or his heart. And he says it comes from trusting in God only.

The word only is a translation of a very interesting Hebrew word. As a matter of fact, it's a word that's really hard to translate into English but it's a key part of this Psalm. It shows up six times, verses one, two, four, five, six and nine. And in each one of those verses, it shows up at the very beginning of the sentence which is a way of saying this is the most important word in the sentence.

And the emphasis is on the fact that the way that David experiences this quietness, this tranquility of soul, is because his trust is in God alone. God only. That's a very important concept to understand if we're going to understand this Psalm.

Think of it like this, let's imagine that as soon as the service is dismissed, you're driving home and somehow you end up in the ditch. And you're stuck in the ditch in your vehicle, and you can't get out. So, I stop to help you. And I pull out a chain and you ask me, "Is that chain strong enough to pull me out of the ditch?" I say, "This chain is so strong it could pull a tank out of the ditch. I mean this chain is plenty strong." I hook it up to my vehicle, but it's not long enough to reach down to you. So I say, "No problem. I have another one." "Is that one strong enough?" you ask. "Yeah, this one is also so strong it could pull anything out of the ditch."

The problem is I have to hook the two chains together. So I pull out a shoe lace and I tie the two chains together. We would understand that it doesn't matter how strong those chains are, there is a weak link and that's where the chain is going to break.

That's what often happens to us in the world of faith. If we were to take a poll here this morning, the overwhelming majority of people would say, "Yes, we trust in God." The question is do you trust in God alone? Do you trust in God only? Because what happens is the majority of us, we trust in God and.... God plus.... And what happens is we introduce a weak link to the chain. As long as our trust is in God alone, we know that God has the power and the adequacy for everything we face in life.

And on that basis we have every reason for tranquility and quietness and security. But as soon as we add one more link to the chain, suddenly we've introduced a link that could fail. Suddenly we realize that person may fail, that thing may fail, and now our chain has been weakened down to the weakest link. It doesn't matter how powerful we believe God is, if we've added one more link to the chain, that's what's creating the anxiety. That's what's creating the worry. That's what's creating the tension. We know that is the point at which the chain will fail.

So the goal this morning is really to try to eliminate all the weak links so that we believe with all of our confidence that this chain is strong enough to hold. Well, that is what David is saying here. It's on the basis of that then he believes that God is his rock, his salvation and his stronghold; three metaphors or pictures that are often used throughout the Psalms.

The idea of a rock picks up the idea that most combat in the ancient world was hand to hand combat. A soldier would always understand that the most important thing was to have sure footing. If you're in some sort of a slippery condition, a sandy soil, all it takes is one slip and you are dead. So the first thing a soldier would always look for is some sort of solid footing. So you would look for the rock, and as long as you were standing on the rock, you had the advantage.

Well, that imagery then comes into the Psalms. To trust in God is like standing on the rock. You feel like you have sure footing. He says God is our salvation, meaning He's our rescuer.

But I think theologically we often make a mistake when we talk about salvation because we refer to it as something in the past. We say, you know, ten years ago I was saved. We ask the question, "Do you think so-and-so is saved?" And what we're identifying is conversion in the past. But the Bible doesn't limit salvation to that.

As a matter of fact, salvation in the Scripture has a past, a present and a future. We were saved, we are being saved, and we will ultimately be saved. You might be interested to note that the salvation that is talked about the most in the Scripture is the *future* salvation and what is talked about the least is the *past* salvation.

So we often emphasize most what is least emphasized in the Scripture. Yes, I was saved from my sins but now I am being saved by God from the stuff of this world on a daily basis looking forward to the ultimate salvation to come in the presence of God. So that's what David is saying, "I trust God, and He is my salvation day-by-day, past, present, future."

Thirdly, he talks about God being his stronghold. It could be translated a refuge or a fortress. This is a concept that's really hard for us to enter into in our culture because we have laws that govern the world and we travel around the United States and don't have a lot of risk.

But in the ancient world it wasn't that way. There really wasn't a prevailing system of law. When you got outside of certain boundaries, it was the law of the jungle. And there was tremendous risk in being out from under the safety of the fortress. So, if you can imagine the people of Lincoln, Nebraska in essence being a country, what we would do is build a wall all the way around this city. And that wall would give us some level of protection. And we would understand that when we're outside of the wall, we're at great risk. Someone may choose to attack us and kill us. And frankly there are no laws or law enforcement to stop that.

It was only when you entered into the fortress or the stronghold that you at that point felt a degree of safety. There was a sense in which you could relax and say, "You know, here is a place where I'm safe. I can take a deep breath. I can sit down in my La-Z-Boy. I can lay my head on my pillow at night and know at least here everything's going to be okay." And that was this imagery of a stronghold or a fortress. And that's often used in the Scriptures to describe God.

That's why he's saying, "When my trust is in God alone so there are no weak links, then I know God will be my rock, my salvation, my fortress. Therefore," he says, "I will not be greatly shaken." Verse 3:

**How long will you assail a man, that you may murder him, all of you, like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence? They have counseled only to thrust him down from his high position; they delight in falsehood; they bless with their mouth, but inwardly they curse. Selah.** (vs. 3-4)

I think David's just running through some of the experiences of life that caused him to trust in God. The word *assail* in verse three is a Hebrew word that means either to shout at or to charge with a raised fist. It would be basically under attack. Many times David had been under attack both before and after he became King.

He says "**like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence.**" It's great imagery. If you've ever had a retaining wall that's starting to fall over you can understand this. Month after month, year after year it starts to lean more and more and more. And gravity starts to do its work. And you start to realize that this wall that at one time you could not have budged is now very vulnerable and with a little bit of encouragement, it's going to go toppling over.

What David is saying is that there are days when you feel like your feet are planted on a rock, you feel like you have your balance under you, and you are ready to take on the world. You in essence in your spirit say, "Okay, bring it on." But there are other days when life just knocks you off balance. And you feel like that leaning wall. You don't feel like you have your feet under you. And there's a sense in which, *If something comes along now and just gives me a little push, I feel like I'm going to totter over; I'm going to fall over.*

And what David is saying is that there are these people who plot together to bring him down. And what they're doing is they're waiting for that moment when he's vulnerable, when he's off balance, when he will be simple prey. And in that moment they will seize that moment and they'll take him out.

So, he lives with the reality of that on a daily basis. And of course that creates a great deal of anxiety. And that's what verse four is about. They counsel **“only to thrust him down....they delight in falsehood.”** Any of you who have been in a leadership role whether it's in a church or out in the marketplace, have probably experienced this. What he's talking about here are those people who because they somehow get disgruntled or they disagree, they get out of sorts, and they begin to misrepresent the truth. They delight in falsehood in order to get people to side with them in order to side against you.

Over the years I've been disappointed and amazed over and over again when people whom I would consider people of great integrity and character get out of sorts, they get disgruntled, and they intentionally begin to misrepresent the truth. They seem to delight in falsehood just to get people to side with them against someone else. David says, **“They bless with their mouth; but inwardly they curse.”** In essence, he's saying they're a politician in the very negative sense of the word. In other words, they know what to say in front of whom. And in front of the right people, they say all the right words and they come off as being really impressive. But deep in their hearts, there's this cancer growing. There's this bitterness and in those private moments it comes out because what you see in public is window dressing and deep inside there's something very bad going on.

Well David I think is just describing some of what he's experienced as a leader. These may or may not be your experiences. Your experiences this morning may have to do with a physical ailment, may have to do with stuff in your job, may have to do with something with one of your children. Whatever your issue is, it's really irrelevant if it's like David's or not. Those are the things in life that create fear, that create uncertainty, that create a degree of anxiety and worry that we must face.

What he is saying is that God alone when life comes at him is his rock, is his refuge, is his salvation. Verse 5:

**My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be shaken. On God my salvation and my glory rest; the rock of my strength, my refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah.**

(vs. 5-8)

Verses 5, 6 and 7 should sound familiar because they're almost a word for word repeat of verses one and two. The only difference is in verses one and two it's what we would call declarative where David is saying, “This is how I have lived my life.” But in verses five, six and seven, this is exhortation where he's saying, “This is how I want to keep living my life. This is how I have lived, and this is what I've experienced with God as my rock and salvation. But I also want to continue to live that way.”

There is reminder in this that this is a day-by-day, hour by hour choice we make. It would be a wonderful thing if all of us this morning could walk out these doors and decide, *You know, I'm going to trust in God alone from this day forward.* And the issue was settled. But we understand

that it doesn't work that way. Tomorrow life is going to throw stuff at us and with each passing day we must decide, *Do I trust in God alone or do I trust in God plus something else*. And that's going to determine how I process the stuff of life.

Verse eight is an interesting one for a couple of reasons. In verse eight David exhorts not only himself but the community of faith. He's talking to the Hebrew people and there was a reminder in that, that these Psalms were intended not just for personal edification, but they were intended to be delivered to the life of the body of believers—the community of faith.

I want to take just a little bit of a rabbit trail off that because this is a common theme that comes up over and over again in the Psalms. We tend to think of the Psalms as being kind of this very personal language that we experience in our quiet moments at home. But when you read through the Psalms you find that their primary purpose is really not that. Their primary purpose is that they would be celebrated among the community of faith. In other words, the exhortation is for us together as the gathered people of God.

There is a sense in which the Old and New Testament highly, highly values the idea of the community of faith. We tend here in United States to imagine our faith as being very individualized, very personal. It's kind of *my* thing. Maybe I go to church on Sunday, but for the most part, it's my thing. It's between me and God. But you have to understand, that concept simply does not appear in either the Old or the New Testament.

And as a matter of fact in world history, it has really not been a prevalent view except maybe the last 50 years here in the United States. Even in most places in the world today, there's much more of a sense that we are a community of faith, not individuals of faith. It's very important to recognize that the New Testament calls us “resident aliens” because our citizenship is in heaven which means we no longer really fit here on earth. If you choose to walk in obedience to God, you feel that on a daily basis. There's a sense in which I don't share the same values of this world. I don't have the same priorities. I don't have the same purposes. I sense, on a daily basis, I don't really fit here anymore.

And that's a very difficult way to live life. There's only one place where you feel like you really fit. And that's when the community of faith gathers together and you're together with fellow resident aliens. And there's a sense in which at last there's a place where I fit. These people share my values; these people share my purpose; these people share my priorities. This is a gathering of resident aliens where we come together and remind ourselves who we are. So there's this sense that there's a community of faith.

Even in the images of who we are as believers, it's always plural. We're the body of Christ; we're different parts of one body; we're an army. Even when the Scriptures talk about us being salt and light, those are plural terms. You're not individually salt, we collectively are salt. We collectively are light. We are a city set on a hill. That's God's purpose. We are the called together people of God.

That's very relevant. And when we gather together like this to worship, I often hear worship people say, “You know, when we come to worship, God is the only audience.” But that simply is not correct. Biblically speaking, that's not correct. God is the only *object* of our worship, but when we come together, there's both a vertical dimension *and* a horizontal dimension.

And that's what this Psalm is all about. Sometimes we are singing to God, but sometimes we are singing about God to one another. Just like in this Psalm, sometimes we are reminding ourselves of who God is and what God is all about. And that's the value of the community of faith. We come together and we remind each another that we're resident aliens, that this life is hard, that God needs to be our focus, because it's hard to maintain that in a very difficult world.

There has to be the understanding that worship is both vertical and horizontal. As a matter of fact, even the way we have built the auditorium is because we believe this. The way it's laid is because we not only sing to God, we sing to one another about God.

There are days when you walk through this door and you have got your focus on God, you are living for God, everything seems clear and you are ready to stand. But there are other days when you walk through this door and you've had a tough week and you've been beat up by the world and you're losing your focus and you're on the verge of making a very bad decision. And what you need is the community of faith to talk to you, to sing to you and remind you, "Hey, God is still God! And He is your rock and He is your salvation and He is your fortress. You need to get your focus back on Him before you make a very bad mistake." And that's the value of the community of faith.

I would say on those weekends when you *least* feel like being here are the weekends when you *most* need to be here. The reason you don't feel like being here is probably because you've had a hard week, and you've been beat up, and you're losing your focus, and you're starting to drift, and you need some reminder from the community of faith to get back on track. Well, that's what verse eight is all about. David is exhorting the people that they would experience his level of trust.

You have to remember that this Psalm was meant to be a song. This is something they're singing to one another. You know, even the New Testament says to encourage one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Clearly this rolls in the New Testament that we sing to God and we sing to one another as we gather as the community of faith.

The other thing that's interesting about verse eight is the phrase "**pour out your heart before Him.**" Pouring out is just what you would think of, like pouring out water from a pitcher. It's a reference to pouring out your emotions. That's what the heart would be that you're pouring out your emotions. You're in essence dumping the load before God.

Now some people really struggle with this. There's a sense in which if I do that, God's going to be offended or God's going to think I don't really trust Him. And so we really don't come clean with God. We may go to the counselor, and we dump the load there. We might go to a neighbor, and we dump the load there but before God, we try to pretend that everything's fine so God won't know that we're struggling. Maybe we have convinced ourselves that because we can fool everybody around us that somehow we can fool God. But of course we know better than that. We know that God really knows what's churning deep within us, and there's no sense pretending otherwise.

But what if, dumping the load before God is not some sort of a lack of faith, but actually is your statement of faith? And what I mean by that is, if this Psalm is really true and we trust in God only, where else can we go? We were just singing about that a moment ago. If that's really true, where else can we go? There is no one else that can help us, so the only logical place to go is to God. That's the only logical place to dump the load! So in essence, instead of that being some

sort of a crisis of faith, that's my statement of faith. I come into the presence of God and say, "God, I've got nowhere else to go. It's You alone I trust, so I'm dumping the load here." And I think that's how God receives it. I think God is pleased with that. As a matter of fact, the Psalms model that over and over and over again. If I trust in God alone, then where else do I go? I go to Him, and I pour out my heart and God meets me there.

Verses 9 and 10 define some of the things we tend to trust in. Verse 9:

**Men of low degree are only vanity and men of rank are a lie; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than breath.** (v. 9)

**"Men of low degree"** would basically be just average, everyday folks. If we're not trusting in God alone then we're likely trusting God plus somebody else. So David's trying to make the case here that that's a weak link. He says, people of low degree, meaning the average, everyday persons are only vanity. It's a word that means they're only breath. They're only smoke. They're here today, gone tomorrow. They really can't deliver the goods. They cannot be trusted as God can be trusted. They're a weak link.

**"Men of rank are a lie."** Rank is talking about the high and mighty, the movers and shakers, the celebrities and the powerful in our world. And what he's saying is at the end of the day that's just window dressing, because that's just a lie. They're just smoke like anybody else. At the end of the day, whether it's the average everyday person or whether it's somebody who's a mover and shaker, at the end of the day, we're here today, gone tomorrow. The New Testament says we're a vapor; we're breath; we're smoke. Therefore, we really don't have what it takes to deliver the goods. So when we trust somebody else, we've added a weak link and we know in our hearts that has the potential of breakdown. That's why we're anxious. That's why we're fearful. That's why we worry.

We've just completed the *No Perfect People Series*, and on several occasions I referred to all of us as sinners, misfits and losers. And I suppose that some people don't really like that. But, the reality is compared to the eternal God who created the universe with a spoken word, what do we have that could impress Him? I mean, really, we're a blip on the screen. We're a vapor. We're smoke. We're here today, gone tomorrow. Is there anything I could possibly have or offer to God that's really going to impress Him? And the answer is, of course not. As a matter of fact, I was separated from God, condemned to an eternal Hell apart from the grace and mercy of God. That sounds a lot like a loser to me, and the only thing that's changed *that* is the grace and mercy of God. Now, in Christ, I have a part of being something eternal. But that's more about Him than it is about me. And that's what David's saying here. At the end of the day, trusting in someone else is trusting in smoke. It's here today. It's gone tomorrow—not very impressive.

When it says, **"In the balances they go up."** The balances means when you add the two together. So let's do a little addition here. Nothing plus nothing equals nothing! You know, that's as impressive as it is. It's just more smoke. That's what he means by **"they go up."** They are together lighter than breath. Verse 10:

**Do not trust in oppression and do not vainly hope in robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart upon them.** (v. 10)

Basically, when he's talking about oppression and robbery, he's talking about how in the ancient world, the bigger your army, the more strength you had. The more resources you had, the more secure you felt. So there was a sense in which we'll trust the size of our army. We'll trust the

size of our city and our walls and resources. And it's kind of the survival of the fittest, and only the strongest survive. And that was the mindset of the ancient world. And David is saying, "You know, that isn't going to give you any security. There'll always be somebody stronger. There'll always be somebody more powerful. And eventually you're going to lose that, and you know that. And that's why your heart can't rest."

In verse 10 he talks about **"if riches increase, do not set your heart upon them."** If we're not trusting other people, we tend to trust in stuff, in our riches, in our bank accounts. This isn't saying that riches are bad. It's saying if you trust your riches, that's bad. Now you can make a million dollars a year or you can make \$20,000 a year and still trust in riches. This isn't just a statement for rich people.

No matter what your socioeconomic status, you have the tendency to trust riches thinking somehow they give me security, somehow they're going to take better care of me. Now one of the things that I've noticed over my years in ministry is when you talk about people trusting riches, almost everybody would say, "That's not me." People really push back on that and say, "We don't trust riches. I mean, we know that's not good."

I would suggest to you this morning, that almost every single one of us trust our riches. We just do. We live in a country of affluence. And we get all hung up on cars. We get all hung up on our houses. We get all hung up on our bank accounts. And it does take its toll. It does have an affect.

The first step in addressing it is to recognize that it's true. The reality is if this morning, everything that you have was wiped out—your house, your car, your bank account, your career—everything ended and you started over from scratch, for many of you just that thought puts terror in your heart because you trust that a whole lot more than you think you do.

There are people all around the world who have very little compared to us. But day in and day out they live with a sense of stillness and quietness and tranquility. And the reason is because most of these weak links have been stripped out of their lives because of the circumstances in which they live. And all they have left is God alone. The result of that is they have this stillness, this quietness because they know God is worthy of their trust. We live in such affluence it is so easy to get caught up in trusting the stuff of this world, even though we want to believe that's not the case.

One of the most practical pragmatic ways to measure that is to measure your willingness to sacrificially give back to God. It's easy to say, "Oh no, I don't trust riches. I trust God alone." But if you are not giving regularly and systematically and I would say sacrificially, not out of your abundance but *sacrificially* to God, there's no real evidence that you really do trust God. You're feeling more secure because you have lots of money in those accounts.

Now some of you are thinking, *Oh here we go. He's going after our wallets again.* I want to tell you it's not my motive at all. This is my motive: I want you to experience this quietness. I want you to experience this tranquility. I want you to experience this stillness in your soul—even when this world comes at us with all of the confusion and chaos, you can lay your head on your pillow at night and know everything's going to be okay. And as long as you're trusting God plus your riches, that is not possible for you. I just want you to understand until you deal with that part of your life, you're never really going to know the peace and stillness that God wants you to experience deep in your soul. That's what David is saying.

Verse 11:

**Once God has spoken; twice I have heard this:** [This would be like us saying, “If I’ve told you once, I’ve told you a hundred times.”] **That power belongs to God; and lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord, for You recompense a man according to his work.** (vs.11-12)

It’s a Hebrew way of saying, “If I’ve told you once, I’ve told you a hundred times that God has both the power and the lovingkindness to be worthy of your trust.” This is a couplet that shows up over and over and over again in both the Old and New Testament. The reason this is so important is because God needs to have both the power and the desire or the willingness to be worthy of your trust. Really, no matter how powerful He is, what good is that if He really doesn’t *desire* to help you in your hour of need? And what good is His desire if He really doesn’t have the power to deal with whatever is coming into your life?

God has both. God has both the power and the willingness, the lovingkindness, to deal with anything that comes into your life. And if that’s true, then why not trust God alone? What could any person, what could any bank account add to that? The last statement in the Psalm is David’s way of saying, “What you sow is what you reap,” that God will reward us according to our choices.

This verse is quoted oftentimes in the New Testament, and that’s the essence of the verse that God will reward us according to our choices. If we choose to trust God alone then we will experience the reward of that. We will experience God as our rock and God as our salvation and God as our fortress. We will experience this stillness, this quietness, this tranquility in our souls that we so long for.

But if we choose to trust in God *plus* someone else or *plus* something else, deep in our hearts we know we have introduced a weak link. And we know the possibility for the chain to break is there. So, we suffer the consequences of that. We really don’t experience that level of stillness. We have anxiety. We have fear. We have this nervousness. We have this worry that just won’t go away. And everyday is characterized by that churning within us.

The reality is every single one of us has the choice to make. No matter what the circumstances of life are for you today, you can walk out with a sense of quietness, a sense of stillness, a sense of ease that says, “You know, everything is going to be okay. I know He’s going to be my rock. I know He’s going to be my salvation. I know He’s going to be my fortress in the midst of a very difficult world. God alone is worthy of my trust.”

My challenge to you this morning would be for you to try to figure out what are those weak links. God plus *what?*—that’s creating the churning, that’s creating the worry, that’s creating the anxiety, that’s making it hard to sleep at night. Try to remove all the weak links and get back to trusting in God alone.

In just a moment we’re going to sing the song *In Christ Alone*. And I would strongly encourage each of us to pay careful attention to the words of that song. Ask yourself, *Is that really what I believe? Is that really what I’m trusting? Am I trusting in Christ alone for my life?* If so there should be a stillness, there should be a quietness, there should be a sense of ease that says, *You know, He has both the power and the lovingkindness to meet me in my hour of need and because*

*of that, no matter what I'm facing, there's a stillness within me because I've placed my trust in Christ alone.*

*Our Father, we're thankful that You are so faithful. Lord, that even in the midst of a very difficult and chaotic world, we can experience a stillness, a quietness in our soul. We can experience You as our rock and our fortress and our salvation. Lord, that's only going to happen when we trust in You alone. Lord, probably the overwhelming majority of us this morning would say we trust You, the problem is we just don't trust You alone. We introduce these weak links that we know have the potential to fail and that causes us to be anxious and fearful. Lord, help us to understand what those weak links are that we might eliminate them, that we might affirm the words of this closing song—that we stand in Christ alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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