

SBC – March 9, 2025
Psalm 61 (NKJV)
“God Our Protector”

We now come to a series of very special Psalms as found in the 60s (cf. Psa. 61, 62, 63, etc.).

To the Chief Musician. On A Stringed Instrument. A Psalm of David.

This is another Psalm penned by David. It is addressed to “the Chief Musician” which is also translated as to “the choir director”. The intent was that it be used in corporate worship. It was intended to be accompanied by a stringed instrument.

Those who hold to “non-instrumental” worship – that is they don’t believe it is proper to use musical instruments – I have no idea what they do with the Psalms. You basically just throw out the Psalms, which was the Song Book of God’s people Israel.

We are not sure what the occasion of this Psalm was. But as is so often the case, David was desperate and the situation was urgent for God to come to His aid. Since David speaks of being at “the end of the earth” it is surmised that he was on the run and far from his normal habitat of being in Jerusalem and close to the tabernacle. Some therefore, think the dire situation may have been when he was on the run from his son Absalom (2 Sam. 17:21-29 – but we don’t know that for sure.

Slide # 1
Psalm 61

“God Our Protector”

- vv. 1-2 Crying Out to God when Overwhelmed
- vv. 3-4 Present Trust based on God’s Past Faithfulness
- vv. 5-7 Answered Prayer
- v. 8 Praising God Forever

1 Hear my cry, O God; Attend to my prayer.

Right out of the gate we have David’s desperate appeal to God. Before asking God for anything, he first asks God to HEAR his cry – to attend to his prayer.

Isn’t that an interesting prayer – asking God to hear it.

Do you ever start your prayer in this way? I don't know that I ever have. I assume God will hear.

But note it was not that David didn't think God heard him – he really was asking for God to hear in the sense of ANSWERING. We actually might interpret this: “Answer my prayer – respond to my prayer.” That's really what he is saying.

But note David did not presume upon God that He would respond in a certain way – but rather came in the spirit of asking.

Name it and claim it theology almost seems to reverse who is really in charge – like we can in any way force God's hand.

In biblical praying we come asking. We come dependent. We come humbly looking to God to answer. That is the spirit of David's prayer.

2 From the end of the earth I will cry to You, When my heart is overwhelmed; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

This is a great verse for when you are overwhelmed to the point you don't feel you can take it anymore.

This verse would suggest that David is on the run – away from his home and all that would make him feel comfortable. Again, this is why some think the occasion may have been when he was on the run from his son Absalom and his hostile takeover attempt.

David was evidently far from the sanctuary – the tabernacle – the designated place of worship (cf. Deut. 28:49; Ps. 46:9). It felt like he was at “the end of the earth” – the end of it all – far from the intimate place of worship.

Yet, even here, at the end of the earth, at the end of his strength, at the end of human resources, ever there, David KNEW that he could cry out to God!

He was obviously not at “the end of the earth,” but he felt that way, for he was away from home and away from the sanctuary of God.

– **Warren Wiersbe**

When you come to the end of everything – you can still cry out to God. Even there God will meet you! The old song: “**Where could I go but to the Lord**” is fitting.

David says, “When my heart is overwhelmed”. The word “overwhelmed” is also translated as “faint” or “without strength”.

It is sometimes used to describe being “exhausted” or “being spent” (cf. Ps. 77:3; 142:3; 143:4; Jonah 2:7).

In the condition of being “overwhelmed” we need HELP – we need God’s help. And so David prayed, “***Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.***”

As David was running for his life – he would often find safety and security in the rock caves of the wilderness. But here he is looking for something more – something HIGHER than he can find by himself.

The ROCK is a secure, steady, safe place. He asks for God to put him in that position. David realizes he will not find this within himself. He needs a ROCK higher than himself. Ultimately, this ROCK is the Lord Himself.

What David is really praying for is that God will lead him into the security that is found in God Himself. This is clear, because in context David immediately goes on to say in verse 3 that God Himself is his shelter and strong tower.

In the Bible the LORD Himself is often called the ROCK. This metaphor is never used of any mere man in the Bible, including the reference in Matt. 16:18 which either refers to Christ (and not Peter), or as I prefer, the ROCK truth that Peter has just confessed which is that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Slide # 2

Deuteronomy 32:31 (NKJV)

31 For their rock is not like **our Rock**, Even our enemies themselves being judges.

2 Samuel 22:32 (NKJV)

32 “For who is God, except the LORD? And **who is a rock, except our God?**

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself in thee.

[David] needed God to lead him to that rock. David was unable to get to the firm-footed place above his crisis on his own. ...Assuming David wrote this as king, humanly speaking he had reached the top of the ladder. He still realized that wasn't enough, and needed something higher than himself. – **David Guzik**

3 For You have been a shelter for me, A strong tower from the enemy.

David here speaks in past tense. He remembers how God in the past has been a shelter (or a refuge) for him. God has been a shelter for him in times of danger.

God has provided a hiding place – a place of safety. But behind the place of safety, David realizes it is really God HIMSELF Who has been his shelter.

A strong tower in Bible times was a central place in ancient cities where people could run to when facing danger and therein find safety and security.

David, says that God HIMSELF has been his strong tower providing protection against the enemy.

Slide # 3

Proverbs 18:10 (NKJV)

10 The **name of the LORD is a strong tower**; The righteous run to it and are safe.

As David looked back he recognized that God has not failed him. In every crisis God has brought him through – God has provided – God himself has been his shelter and high tower.

It is good to think through the many things God has brought us through.

Yes, he used this and that and worked in this way and that way, but behind it all God is the source – He HIMSELF is our shelter and strong tower. It is good to remind ourselves of this – especially in the midst of a crisis.

God is still God. Look how He has worked in the past. This strengthens our faith in the present.

4 I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings. Selah

Is this an expression of desire, or a statement of faith? The NASB translates this: “Let me dwell in Thy tent forever”.

Certainly this was David’s desire. He wanted to be close to God. Presently, he felt like he was at the ends of the earth far removed from God’s intimate presence. But his desire is to dwell in God’s tabernacle forever – which is to say in God’s intimate presence.

The word “tabernacle” simply means “tent”.

During the time of David, the original Tabernacle of the Lord made by Moses was located in Gibeon (cf. 1 Chron. 16:39, 21:29). However, in 2 Samuel 6:17 and 1 Chronicles 16:1, it is said that David moved the ark into the tabernacle in Jerusalem that David erected. This was a precursor to the temple that Solomon would build after the death of David. This tabernacle represented God’s special residing place in the OT. This is where people came to worship intimately with God and to experience His special presence.

The tabernacle (tent) of God is pictured as His special place of residing (although He is everywhere). It was a picture as God’s home – in that sense. Thus, the tent of God was a special place of refuge where protection and hospitality were extended to the special guest. That is where David longs to be – in that position – FOREVER.

David wanted to be close to God forever! It is no wonder that God called David “a man after His own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14). He truly had a HEART for God. He loved God and wanted to be near and in close fellowship with Him – FOREVER.

David says, “I will trust in the shelter of Your wings.”

God doesn’t actually have wings – David here speaks metaphorically of the place of refuge that is found in close relationship with God. This too pictures the place of security and protection that is found in God.

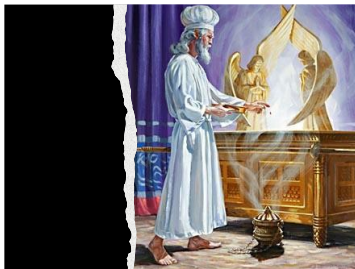
Wings as the near and protected place that a mother bird gives to her offspring, protecting her chicks under **the shelter** of her **wings**.

-David Guzik

However, another idea has also been suggested. Since David has just mentioned the tabernacle of God, some suggest an allusion to the wings of the cherubim which overshadowed the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies may be in view.

As such, David is desiring the CLOSEST of relationship in the most INTIMATE of positions with God.

Slide # 4



Building on “the rock that is higher than I” David uses image after image to illustrate what he is trying to say. In verses 3 and 4 he uses four different metaphors to make his point.

Slide # 5

- v. 3 Shelter
- v. 3 Strong Tower
- v. 4 Tabernacle
- v. 4 Your Wings

And then David says, “Selah”.

This reflects a PAUSE – sort of like “stop and meditate on this”.

How wonderful to reflect on the character of God and Who He is. This is medicine for the soul when we are overwhelmed and all strength is gone.

Reflecting on WHO God is to David and WHAT He has done for him, has in effect renewed David’s mind. He now speaks in a different tone – one of great confidence and assurance.

5 For You, O God, have heard my vows; You have given me the heritage of those who fear Your name.

The vows here most likely were those made during his time of intense pressure and would be fulfilled in thank offerings and commitment of life service – whatever all was involved in these vows.

The spirit of this seems to be something like this:

“I have vowed to be wholly yours and to serve you with all my heart. God you have responded to my whole hearted commitment and have given me the heritage that is given to those who fear your name.”

Heritage is the idea of “inheritance”. It is the blessings and benefits that are given to God’s people. In the OT it often signified the Promised Land and blessings associated with being God’s people (cf. Deut. 28-30; Ps. 16:6; 37:18; 135:12; 136:21-22).

The idea of fearing God’s name is to reverence Him for WHO He is. It is to hold the Person of God in awe and wonder, characteristic of being a true worshiper of God.

In the Bible, FEAR of God often is characteristic of having a true saving faith – those truly in relationship with God.

Slide # 6

Psalm 2:11–12 (NKJV)

11 Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

Slide # 7

Acts 10:35 (NKJV)

35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

Acts 10:43 (NKJV)

43 To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.”

The nature of a true saving faith is one that fears (reverences) God for Who He is. It is they who share in the inheritance of the Lord – what God has for those who truly know Him.

In David's case (speaking very personally) he may have had in mind his special God-given role to rule over the nation.

Slide # 8

Psalm 16:6 (NKJV)

6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; **Yes, I have a good inheritance.**

By way of application, we as true believers who fear/reverence God also have a promised inheritance.

Slide # 9

Colossians 1:12 (NKJV)

12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of **the inheritance** of the saints in the light.

Colossians 3:24 (NKJV)

24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the **reward of the inheritance**; for you serve the Lord Christ.

6 You will prolong the king's life, His years as many generations.

The broader thought of verses 6 and 7 ties into the Davidic Covenant that God made with David in 2 Sam. 7. In essence, prophetically David ties himself to the great covenant promises that are ultimately to be fulfilled in the greater David – namely the Messiah.

In the broad sense, the longevity of David's dynasty will go for many generations. Yes, God would prolong David's life by saving him from the adversary, but then in terms of the promised dynasty, David would live on vicariously through the promised dynasty of descendants – culminating in the Messiah Who will live and reign forever.

It is thought that "many generations" here is a poetical way of saying "forever" which is paralleled in the "forever" of 7a.

Slide # 10**2 Samuel 7:16 (NKJV)**

16 And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.” ’ ”

Yes, this was promised to David, but ultimately is fulfilled in the Messiah. Understood in this sense, indeed, King David's life would be prolonged and his years of rule extended through many generations in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant.

David confidently expected God's blessing upon his reign. It was not because he thought so highly of himself; it was because he thought so highly of the God who keeps His promises. – **David Guzik**

7 He shall abide before God forever. Oh, prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him!

The Legacy Standard Bible translates this...

Slide # 11**Psalm 61:7 (LSB)**

7 He will sit enthroned before God forever; Appoint lovingkindness and truth that they may guard him.

In the position of KING he will abide before God forever. How can that be? Only in the person of the greater David – Who is the Son of David – the Messiah.

The word “**mercy**” here is the Hebrew word “hesed”. This is a very rich word being a combination of goodness and faithfulness. It is often translated as “loyal love”. It expressed God's faithful covenant keeping love. It is absolute loyalty and faithfulness.

The character of God's loyal love ensures that what God has promised to David will be fulfilled.

Truth is the idea of God's faithfulness.

God's loyal covenant love and faithfulness will preserve and guard him thus ensuring this will be a FOR SURE reality.

The ancient Jewish Targum (an ancient commentary on the Hebrew Scriptures) says Psalm 61:6-7 is really talking about the Messiah. In this sense, this could be viewed as a Messianic Psalm. Many commentators do think that what was in being said in verses 6-7 finds complete fulfillment in the Messiah.

Slide # 12

The Messiah...

- His life (in the resurrection) was prolonged endlessly (Heb. 7:16).
- His years will not come to an end (Heb. 1:12).
- His throne is forever and ever (Heb. 1:8).
- God will keep Him in all His ways (Ps. 91:11; Mt. 4:6).

8 So I will sing praise to Your name forever, That I may daily perform my vows.

David began the Psalm by desperately crying out to God, but then as he focused on God and how He has been so good and faithful to him, he ends up with an affirmation to praise God forever and to daily live out his vows of commitment. Evidently, his vows involved serving God every day for the rest of his life – or something along those lines.

He will not be like those who make extravagant vows when the pressure is on, then quickly forget them when the crisis is past. He will not be one who “leaps in prayer but limps in praise.”

– William MacDonald

As David reflected on the character of God, he thought of the past and how God has been faithful. And then he focused on what God has promised him regarding the future – especially in relation to the Davidic Covenant which promised David an eternal house, kingdom, and throne.

This focusing on the NAME (character) of God caused him to commit to praising God forever and daily living out his commitment to Him as a day in and day out way of life.

There is a LOT of forever in David’s focus on God.

Slide # 13

- v. 4 I will abide in Your tabernacle **forever**...
- v. 7 He shall abide before God **forever**...
- v. 8 So I will sing praise to Your name **forever**...

If you are overwhelmed by what is going on in the present, FOCUS on the character of God with an eternal perspective.

Cry out to God.

Look to Him for protection.

We are going to live with God forever.

Therefore, in view of an eternal perspective, resolve with David to praise His NAME forever! The very best is yet to be and will be forever!

After the storm that sweeps the sea,
 After the drifting to the lea,
 After the rocks and sands are passed,
 Cometh the joy of home at last.
 After the long and toilsome day,
 After the sun's fierce burning ray,
 After the toiler homeward goes,
 Cometh the night and sweet repose.
 After the winter long and drear,
 After the snow-clouds disappear,
 After the winds sweet odors bring,
 Cometh the ever welcome spring.

After the work with self is done;
 After all sin is overcome;
 After the race [of] life is run,
 Cometh the Master's sweet, "Well done."

After all that here we see,
 What will there be? ETERNITY!

- Author Unknown

Live life with a God-centered focus!
 Live life with an eternal perspective!
 Live in light of eternity!