

Rock of Ages: The Christian Experience of Sole Hope in God

Psalm 62:1-12

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If you have your Bible I'd invite you to turn with me to Psalm 62. We're in Psalm 62 this week and this Psalm shows us the fruits of adversity, or to say it right, the way that God in His wisdom and grace brings forth spiritual fruit in our lives in and through adversity. Adversity, as you know, in and of itself doesn't create spiritual fruit. You've known friends who were made bitter and hard and cynical by adversity, and you have known friends who were made a fragrant aroma of Jesus Christ through adversity.

What's the difference? The work of God's Spirit in the heart of that person using the instrument of adversity as the anvil to hammer out character...And this Psalm shows us the kind of character that God's Spirit means to craft on the anvil of trial. Note in this Psalm how David moves from a specific problem. David's in trouble again in this Psalm. In fact, you can tell that the trouble's not over yet. Look at verse 3, troubles not over. And he moves from his situation of trouble to reflection on God in that situation to self-exhortation—he starts exhorting himself with Scripture with his knowledge of God—and then from there he moves to exhorting us. So the movement in the Psalm is from David's situation of adversity, first, to his reflection on God in the midst of that adversity, and then thirdly to trying to convince himself to believe what he knows to be true about God. I meant to say that, trying *to convince himself* to believe what he knows to be true about God.

There are things that you know to be true about God and there are times when you begin to wonder, and it is that kind of a time that David was in and so David is exhorting himself to convince him of that which he knows to be true about God. And then he gets some victory in that and as soon as he does, what does he do? He turns to you and to me and he starts exhorting us, 'Now you believe in God. You trust in God. You pray to God. You run to God.' And so there's that four-part movement: David's trouble, David's reflection on God, David's exhortation to himself, and then David's exhortation to you and to me. He moves from his own soul's discovery to self-exhortation and then to public-exhortation. Now let's hear God's word in Psalm 62. Before we do, let's look to Him in prayer. Let's pray.

Lord and God, we need You and we need Your word. Here we are in the midst of the week in the middle of the days right between Lord's Day, and we are tired and we are needy and we are weak and we need Your word. We need the refreshment of Your Spirit. And here in Your mercy You've gathered us to pray and to trust and to hear Your word read and proclaimed, and so we ask that by Your Spirit you would refresh our hearts with Your word. Teach us who You are and teach us to believe who You are in every situation of life. And teach us to go to You, to pray to You, to trust in You in every situation of life. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's hear God's word in Psalm 62.

1 For the choir director; according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David. My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation. 2 He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken. 3 How long will you assail a man, that you may murder him, all of you, like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence? 4 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. 5 My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him. 6 He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be shaken. 7 On God my salvation and my glory rest; the rock of my strength my refuge is in God. 8 Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. 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. 10 Do not trust in oppression and do not vainly hope in robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart upon them. 11 Once God has spoken; twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God; 12 And lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord, for Your recompense a man according to his work.

Amen. And thus ends this reading of God's holy, inspired, and inerrant word. May He write its eternal truths upon our hearts.

This Psalm is about the Christian experience of sole hope in God. Now we could make a little play on words with the word *sole* there. Was I saying 's-o-u-l' or 's-o-l-e'? Well, both. The Psalmist wants to emphasize that God only is His hope. He is our sole hope. But he also emphasizes here, doesn't he, the deep and the depths of his being? He has come to rest not on his circumstances but on God. And so God is his *soul's* hope and God is his *sole* hope. This Psalm is about God, our Rock of Ages. We've sung of the Lord Jesus Christ who is our Rock of Ages already tonight, and the Psalmist is pointing us to that rock which is higher than we are, that rock who is a refuge.

And you know this Psalm is very interesting because it does not address God in a petition. That's unusual. Most Psalms address God at some point with a petition, with a prayer and this Psalm doesn't. In fact, this Psalm only addresses

God directly by way of an inscription at the very end. You saw those words where the Psalmist pauses and almost as an aside says, 'Lord, You have lovingkindness.' "Lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord." That's the only time the Lord is directly addressed in the Psalm. In fact, much of this Psalm finds the Psalmist speaking to himself rather than speaking to God, or speaking to you as a fellow believer and exhorting you to believe in God. Most of what this Psalmist says is said to himself and to fellow believers; nevertheless, this Psalm is radically God centered. Even though the words of this Psalm are by the Psalmist directed first to himself and then to you and me as fellow believers, what he has to say to himself and to fellow believers is all about God. Yes, he says a little bit about his circumstances (just enough to let us know that he knows what he's talking about and that he's been in situations just as tough as ours), but most of what he has to say is about God because that's where we're going to find help where we are.

And I'd like you to look at this Psalm about the Christian experience of sole hope in God in three parts. You'll see three stanzas. There are verses 1 to 4 where we see the Psalmist expressing a silent hope in God. We'll talk about what a silent hope is. Then the second stanza is in verses 5 through 8 where we see him exhorting himself to patience, a patient hope in God. And then there's stanza three—you see that in verses 9 to 12—where he gives us some wisdom for life, wisdom for life based on two realities about God. Well, let's look at each of these stanzas as we consider the Christian's experience of sole hope in God.

I. A Declaration of Trust in an All-Powerful God (1-4) [Silent Hope in a Sovereign God]

Let's begin with stanza one, verses 1 through 4, where we see this silent hope in a sovereign God. This verse, these verses, this stanza is a declaration of trust in an all-powerful God. The title's interesting, isn't it? The Psalm, as it were, is dedicated to or given over to the choir director so that he could write a tune for him. And so it says "*For the choir director; according to Jeduthun.*" Now Jeduthun was a Meraite Levite who was one of the three main Levites in Davidic times in charge of the worship in Jerusalem, the central worship of the people of God. And he wrote music for worship and he directed the choir in the tabernacle worship in the Davidic times, and this Psalm tune may either have been written by him or named for him.

You know, occasionally we'll name a tune for somebody. Did you notice that when you sang "Rock of Ages" tonight the tune is named Toplady? And do you know who it's named after? It's named after Augustus Toplady, the great Anglican clergyman who wrote the words to the tune. Toplady is the name of the tune. So maybe this Psalm had it's tune written by Jeduthun or maybe the tune was named after Jeduthun. I don't know, but that's how the Psalm starts out, with this ascription.

But the main thing to see is, of course, that David's in trouble again. The Psalm doesn't tell us enough to know when or where's he's in trouble but he's in trouble. He's surrounded by enemies. He's seeing men in high places commit injustice. He's seeing both lowly men and men of high rank engaged in evil, toppling people, oppressing others, stealing. And David's soul is oppressed by that and in that context he declares his trust in an all-powerful God. "My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation." Here we see the soul's silent sole hope in God. David in the depth of his being, silently and only puts his trust in God. Here he is surrounded by enemies and he doesn't murmur and he doesn't complain against the Lord, and he doesn't murmur and complain to the people of God that the Lord has forgotten him; but he goes to God and he trusts in God and he stakes his life on God because he says there in the very end of verse 1, "...from Him is my salvation." Did you notice that? David realizes that his salvation comes from God only. I want you to remember that. We're going to come back to that in just a few moments.

And after announcing that his salvation is from God he meditates on God's character, and he says three things: that God is his rock, and God is his salvation, and God is his stronghold. Now those are beautiful images, aren't they, for a man who feels surrounded by evil foes who would undo him? What a glorious thing to meditate on the fact that God is a rock. You know, picture a gigantic rock out in the wilderness that separates you from your enemies who are circling about you. And then he thinks of God as his salvation, the One who rescues him from the hands of his foes. And then he thinks about God who is a stronghold, a fortress—"A mighty fortress is our God." That's what David is saying and he thinks of God in these ways. In other words, he thinks about who God is, and his focus is on God.

And yet as you look at verses three and four he has his eye on the wickedness and treachery of man. "How long will you assail a man that you may murder him, all of you, like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence?" The picture is of a group of evil men conspiring to take someone down, and the picture is of them sort of pushing someone over like a leaning wall or a tottering fence. The good man doesn't bruise a tender reed and doesn't quench a smoking flax, but the evil man takes advantage of a person in his or her weakness and pushes him over, pushes her over like a leaning wall or a toppling fence. You see evil is ruthlessly competitive and so it's attracted to weakness. And when it finds weakness, instead of attempting to aid it, it takes advantage of it. This is how David describes the wicked who have surrounded him.

And yet in this context, as he sees these foes, he says that he will "wait in silence for God only." What does it mean for him to wait in silence? *Silence* here means "an unmurmuring submission to God's will." He will not like the Israelites in the desert grumble against the Lord. He will not like the Israelites in the desert grumble to one another. He won't spread discouragement against the people of God by grumbling about God's providence. No, in silence he will wait. That is, he

will not murmur against God's will. And in this context of being surrounded by foes...and it is no new thing for David to have foes banded against him, and it is no surprising thing for us to have foes banded against us. In this context he will realize the grace of God and that God is his only hope. My soul waits in silence for God only.

You see, my friends, it is a grace to realize God's grace. It is a grace to realize that salvation is wholly and only from God. It is a grace when we come to realization that our hope is in the Lord. It is a grace of God Himself at work in our hearts to help us to realize that He is our only hope. It is our natural inclination to run somewhere else to find help or to help ourselves. It is a grace to realize that God's grace alone can save us. William Plumer, the great 19th century Bible teacher and commentator says this, "True piety finds God and pronounces God all sufficient." That is the person who has God's grace at work in her heart. The person that has God's grace at work in his heart finds God. He knows God, she knows God is all-sufficient and she declares that He's all-sufficient; he declares that God is all-sufficient. And that's exactly what David is doing here, and I want to tell you, my friends, that's a grace. If you have come to that point in your Christian experience where you realize in those tight spaces that your only hope is in God, that is the grace of God at work in your life because you don't get there through human effort or human wisdom. That's the grace of God teaching you to trust in Him only. And that's exactly where David is. We see the progress of God's Spirit in His work of grace in David's heart in the fact that David surrounded by these enemies goes right to God and says, 'Lord, You're my only hope. I don't have a strategy for this. I don't have a plan for this. I don't have an answer for this. I don't have a defense against them. I have you.' Well, that's a grace, my friends, and that's a grace we need to ask for. Lord, give us the grace to realize that You are our salvation. You're our hope. You're where we have to run in the midst of our difficulties, our own trials, our own temptations, our own losses, our own crosses. You're where we have to go because You're the only place that our help is coming from. You're the only place where our hope can find any secure ground to rest. Now there's the first thing we learn. David's declaration of trust in this all-sufficient God is a manifestation of that all-sufficient God's work of grace in David's heart, so that David can trust in the all-sufficient God.

II. An Exhortation to Trust in an All-Powerful God (5-8) [Patient Hope in a Sovereign God]

David's not done with us yet. Look at the second stanza in verses 5 through 8, where David now starts exhorting himself to be patient because God doesn't get him out of this pickle right away. If the first stanza is about silent hope in a sovereign God—that is, a hope which doesn't murmur, doesn't grumble against God's promise—then the second stanza is about patient hope in a sovereign God. The second stanza, verses 5 to 8, is an exhortation to trust in an all-powerful

God. First, it's an exhortation from David to David. Second, it's an exhortation from David to you and me. The self-exhortation is found in verses 5 to 7, "My soul...That's David's way of saying, 'Self, listen.' "*My soul waits in silence for God only.*" Now David's preaching to himself and you notice what his sermon is: it has two points. Wait...the word *wait* was supplied by the translators in verse 1; in verse 5 it's put there. The verb is there, *wait*. David is preaching patience to himself. Wait. Wait for God to appear. Wait for God to deliver. Wait for God to answer prayer. Wait for God to show His hand. Wait. And then look at verse 8, "*Trust in Him at all times.*"

What's the two-point sermon he's preaching? Wait and trust. What's the two-point sermon he's preaching? Patience and faith. That's what he's preaching to himself. He's saying, 'David, listen up. Self, you've got to be patient. God's ways are not your ways. God's timing is not your timing. God's plan has not been revealed to you. How He's going to use this circumstance is not something He's spelled out for you in advance so you're going to have to do one thing. If your hope is really in Him, you're going to have to wait. You're going to have to be patient. You're going to have to submit yourself to God's will, to God's timetable, to God's plan; and then you're going to have to trust. You're going to have to believe. You're going to have to believe that God is wise and that God is good and that God is powerful and that God cares for you, and that God is going to makes sense out of what doesn't look like it makes sense to you, and that God is going to protect you. You are going to have believe in God's promises.' In other words, wait and believe. Be patient and trust.

And I want you to notice...Isn't it interesting in this second stanza that David's focus on his situation and his adversaries is entirely absent? Where did they go? They occupied two verses in the first stanza. Verses 3 and 4 are all about his circumstances, all about his adversaries. He gets to the second stanza and they disappear. Why? Because David is lost in God now. Suddenly those adversaries that are right next to him and pressing in on him and those situations that were so deeply troubling, they're lost because he's lost in God. He's looking to God.

Our enemies are many. Our burdens are heavy. Our temptations are formidable. What can we do? We do just what David does...and he runs to God. And what he finds out is this God is so much bigger than anything that we're facing. Isn't it interesting that David's knowledge of God is his soul's pathway to refuge in God in the midst of the greatest trials of his life? David's knowledge of God is his soul's pathway to finding refuge in God in the mist of the greatest trials of his life.

And I want to tell you, my friends, that principle for David is a principle for you and me. Your knowledge of God is your soul's pathway to refuge in God in the midst of the greatest trials of your life. What theologians call "theology proper," which is just shorthand for what the Bible tells you about who God is...That's why we call it "theology proper" so we don't have to say what the Bible tells you about who God is every time we say it. Theology proper, what the Bible says about who

God is, is your soul's pathway. It's how you get to the point of finding refuge in God, because you can't enjoy refuge in a God that you don't know. And so David is reveling in who God is here. Listen to this, *"He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; On God my salvation and my glory rest; the rock of my strength my refuge is in God."*

And then, having found sole comfort in God, he then turns to you and to me in verse 8 and he says to us, *"Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us."* And notice that he's got a two-point sermon for us too, but it's a little bit different than his two-point sermon to himself. His two-point sermon to himself was to wait and to trust; his two point sermon to us is to pray and to trust. Notice it? *"Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him."*

It's interesting, isn't it? He's talked about his own silence before God but to you and to me he says, *"Pour out your heart to God."* Now is he contradicting himself? No. We are silent when it comes to grumbling and murmuring, but we are noisy when it comes to taking the concerns of our soul to our heavenly Father through Jesus Christ. And David is saying, 'Dear friends, I have these two exhortations to you. If you want to lay hold of this God who is your refuge, you do two things: you trust Him and you pray to Him. You tell Him your soul's troubled. You tell Him your circumstantial difficulty. You trust in Him and you will find that He is a refuge, a refuge which is sure in the greatest trials of life.' It's interesting, isn't it? In the first stanza he said, "I won't be greatly shaken," you know as if to say, 'Well, I may get shaken up a little bit but I won't be *greatly* shaken.' But in the second stanza he says, 'You know, come to think of it, I won't be shaken at all.' He's learned the God in whom he trusts. And then there's that third stanza. Look at verses 9 to 12.

III. Life Lessons For a Fallen World From a Communicating God (9-12) [Wisdom For Life Because of the Power and Goodness of God]

Here he shares with us wisdom for life because of the power and goodness of God. He shares with us life lessons for a fallen world from a communicating God. He starts out talking about wicked men again. You see it there in verses 9 and 10. "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." The picture you see is weighing these foes who surround him. Some are lowly men; they are low-lives. Some are men of great estimation in the eyes of people around him; they are men of rank. But you put them in the scales and you put God on the other side and you know what happens? They don't measure up. What's David is saying, 'Whether high or low, whether through domination or stealth, evil men are nothing. They are weighed in the balance and they are found lacking. Stack them up against God and they don't measure up.' You see David is just seeing the bigness, the greatness of his God, and men do not measure up.

And then he says, 'There's a truth that I've heard that I want to tell you about.' You see this in verses 11 and 12 and it is a two-part truth. The first truth comes at the end of verse 11, that power belongs to God. That's the truth I've heard: Power belongs to God.

Now you look around in the world and it doesn't look like power belongs to God. It doesn't look like power belongs to God in the Massachusetts Supreme Court. It doesn't look like power belongs to God in the Ninth Circuit. It doesn't look like power belongs to God in Washington DC. It doesn't even look like power belongs to God in some places in Iraq. It doesn't look like power belongs to God when terrorists attack in Spain. It doesn't look like power belongs to God. And David says, 'Let me tell you, I've heard a truth and I've heard that truth from God and here it is: Power belongs to God.' David's surrounded by powerful men and he could cave into the illusion that they are the ones with real power, and so by divine revelation he has a word for you and here's the word: 'Don't be fooled by appearances. All power belongs to God.' Wasn't it kind of Christ to remind His disciples of that before He sent that tiny little band of men out to conquer the world? Go, make the world my disciples, but remember all authority has been given to Me in heaven and in earth. And David's just saying that he's learned that about God: All authority in heaven and earth is His, all power is His.

Here's the second, truth though, that he wants us to know about God. "*Lovingkindness is Yours*," verse 12. Friends, if you're going to trust in God, then your soul needs to see two things about God: that He is all-powerful and that lovingkindness belongs to Him. In other words, you need to see both the power and the mercy of God, and when you see the power and the mercy of God to you, then your soul is able to trust in God. Man, our enemies, our fallen world, all our difficult situations must be measured in that balance that David measured his foes in, and our situations and our fallen context needs to be put in that scale, and the God of power and mercy needs to be put on the other side of that scale. And when it happens our circumstances go up, our enemies go up. And that all-powerful God who has committed Himself in love to us in Jesus Christ is right down there on the bottom. The scale couldn't go any lower. It's flat on the ground; it's squashed on the ground. Now David tells us how to experience the Christian experience of sole hope in God. So, my friends, let me leave you with his exhortation. Trust God and pour out your heart to Him. Let's pray.

Our Lord and our God, You are more than sufficient for everything we face, and the only hope that we are bereft of is the hope that in our unbelief and in our indolence we simply won't hold our hands out to be filled up with. So by grace, show us Your sufficiency and make us to trust and to pray. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Would you stand for God's blessing? Grace, mercy, and peace, to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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