



Psalm 62 - Song of Trust in God Alone

To the leader: according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

Introduction

God's people sing this psalm to foster confidence in his care, especially as they are faced with people who use power and wealth to oppress them. The strong temptation in such a case is either to despair or else to seek security in power and wealth rather than in God. The simplest way to follow the flow of thought in the psalm is to observe how the addressees shift: from a description of 'my soul' and God (vv.1-2), to speaking directly to and about the attackers (vv.3-4), then back to 'my soul' and God (vv.5-7), on to exhorting the whole of the worshipping congregation (vv.8-10), and finally back to a description of God's trustworthiness (vv.11-12).

Jeduthun is mentioned also in the title of Psalm 77 and was one of the musicians appointed by David to lead Israel's public worship (1 Chronicles 16:41 and 25:1-3). Charles Spurgeon wrote regarding Jeduthun: "The sons of Jeduthun were porters or doorkeepers, according to 1 Chronicles 16:42. Those who serve well make the best of singers, and those who occupy the highest posts in the choir must not be ashamed to wait at the posts of the doors of the Lord's house."

Psalm 62:1-2 - My Soul Waits for God Alone

On its surface, this section is descriptive of my soul as relying on God alone in silence, and of God, who is a rock and fortress. God is the only reliable hope; although it does not exclude all human activity, the psalm makes a contrast between God's salvation, which is received through faith and faithfulness, and the kind that comes through unjust means: <<**Put no confidence in extortion**>> (v.10). The description of a trusting soul is there to set an ideal for God's people: each one should aspire to this kind of quiet faith.

- 1 For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.
- 2 He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall never be shaken.

Psalm 62:1-2

For God alone my soul waits in silence. The emphasis in this first line is of surrendered silence before God and God alone: <<**Be still, and know that I am God!**>> (Psalm 46:10a). The word alone is often translated truly or only and seems to have that sense here.

From him comes my salvation. In many psalms David began by telling his great need or describing his present crisis. Here, David began by declaring his great confidence in and trust upon God. Psalm 62 seems to come from a time of trouble, yet it asks God for nothing. It is full of faith and trust, but has no fear, no despair, and no petition.

He alone is my rock and my salvation. David is trusting in God alone for his strength and stability. The description is of a man completely focused upon God for his help, firmly resolved to look nowhere else. This is also seen in the song of Moses: <<**The Lord is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him**>> (Exodus 15:2).

Psalm 62:3-4 - To the Attackers: We Know What You Want

The next section speaks to those who attack a man, particularly using lies and injustice. As indicated in the comment made on Psalm 13:1-2, the expression 'how long' is not asking for information but is expressing the sense that the behaviour has gone on far too long already. The purpose of singing this is to remind the godly that such attacks have only, Hebrew 'ak, one plan, and only one pleasure. There is thus only one safe recourse: trust in God, which prepares for the next section.

- 3 How long will you assail a person,
will you batter your victim, all of you,
as you would a leaning wall, a tottering fence?
- 4 Their only plan is to bring down a person of prominence.
They take pleasure in falsehood;
they bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse. Selah

Psalm 62:3-4

How long will you assail a person. David's faith was in God alone, but he had words for his enemies. He rebuked them for their crazy persistence in attacking him, and warned them of judgement to come.

As you would a leaning wall, a tottering fence? David's image is clear enough, but there is disagreement among translators and commentators as to whom this applies. The NKJV presents the opponents of David as the leaning wall and a tottering fence. Others think that David himself was the leaning wall, in his weakness unfairly set upon by his enemies. The prophet sees sin as cause of collapse: <<*therefore this iniquity shall become for you like a break in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse, whose crash comes suddenly, in an instant*>> (Isaiah 30:13).

Their only plan is to bring down a person of prominence. David described his enemies as those who only think through a matter if it involves bringing down a man of God. They were liars, especially in the sense of being two faced, i.e. they bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse.

Selah, used 71 times in the Book of Psalms and three times in Habakkuk, has never been fully understood because the Hebrew root word is undefined. Many take it to be an instruction related to either the music, such as an interlude, or the cadence of the song, e.g. stop and reflect.

Psalm 62:5-7 - O My Soul, Wait for God Alone

The first two verses here are quite close to vv.1-2; the main difference is that the descriptive 'waits in silence', which sets an ideal, is now explicitly an imperative, 'wait in silence' in the ESV although that is missed in this translation. Verse 7 develops the thought of God's reliability from v.6.

- ⁵ For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.
- ⁶ He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
- ⁷ On God rests my deliverance and my honour;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

Psalm 62:5-7

For God alone my soul waits in silence. In the opening lines of the psalm David said that his was the state of his soul. Here he spoke to his soul, telling it to remain in that place of trust in and surrender to God. David's complete

expectation was upon God: <<**Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in him**>> (v.5 NLT).

He alone is my rock and my salvation. David assured himself by repeating the lines from v.2. It was true for David and he wanted it to remain true.

David repeated the idea from v.2, but with this small variation. In verse 2 he wrote <<**I shall never be shaken**>>. In this verse he seems to remain in a strong position, I shall not be shaken. Once again, different translations vary in their language and it is worth comparing several translations to get a flavour of David's true thoughts.

My refuge is in God. The emphasis again reflects David's decision to trust in nothing or no one else. God alone is his salvation, his glory, his rock, his strength, and his refuge. It can be sensed that David was tempted to trust many different things, but he refused and kept his expectation in God alone.

Psalm 62:8-10 - To the Faithful: Evil Men Are but a Breath

From addressing his own soul in vv.5-7, the singer turns to address the whole congregation, i.e. O people, with whom he is singing this hymn. He urges them all to trust in God and to find in him a refuge (v.8), as he had described in v.7. They express their trust by prayer; <<**pour out your heart**>> (v.8) describes earnest prayer: <<**But Hannah answered, 'No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord'**>> (1 Samuel 1:15), <<**These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng, and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival**>> (Psalm 42:4), and: <<**Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord! Lift your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint for hunger at the head of every street**>> (Lamentations 2:19). By refusing to have any part in the methods of the attackers, i.e. <<**put no confidence in extortion**>> (v.10). Humans cannot outweigh God: <<**they are together lighter than a breath**>> (v.9), so any human effort that does not arise from true faith will fail to achieve lasting good.

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

Psalm 62:8

Trust in him at all times, O people. David felt what was good for him was good for others also. As a leader of God's people he spoke wisdom to them, reminding them

that God was worthy at all times of their trust in him: <<*Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord God you have an everlasting rock*>> (Isaiah 26:4).

Pour out your heart before him. God's strength and stability made David rightly think of him as a rock. Yet God was not insensitive or unfeeling like a rock. God invites his people to pour out their heart, their sorrows, their joys, their trust, and their doubt, all of it, before him.

God is a refuge for us. The Lord welcomes the poured-out heart as the cities of refuge welcomed the hunted man in ancient Israel.

⁹ Those of low estate are but a breath,
those of high estate are a delusion;
in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a breath.

¹⁰ Put no confidence in extortion,
and set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

Psalm 62:9-10

Those of low estate are but a breath, those of high estate are a delusion. This psalm speaks much of trusting in God alone. Now David explained why it was important to not set trust in man. David understood that whether they are people of high or low standing in the community, they are together lighter than a breath: <<*Remember that my life is a breath; my eye will never again see good*>> (Job 7:7) There is no substance there worthy of trust: <<*Even the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as dust on the scales; see, he takes up the isles like fine dust*>> (Isaiah 40:15).

Put no confidence in extortion, and set no vain hopes on robbery. David had seen men advance through cruel or dishonest ways: <<*For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them*>> (Isaiah 61:8), <<*The people of the land have practised extortion and committed robbery; they have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the alien without redress*>> (Ezekiel 22:29), and: <<*Ah! City of bloodshed, utterly deceitful, full of booty – no end to the plunder!*>> (Nahum 3:1). He warned the people against this, understanding that the results never justify evil used to get the results.

If riches increase, do not set your heart on them. As a king, David ended up being a very wealthy man although most of his earlier years were in deep poverty.

David knew what it was to see riches increase, and he knew the foolishness of setting one's heart on them. It is possible to hold great wealth without trusting in those riches, but it is not easy.

There are at least three ways in which one may set the heart on riches:

- To take excessive pleasure in riches, making them the source of joy for life. Paul warns of this: *<<For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains>> (1 Timothy 6:10).*
- To place one's hope and security in riches: *<<But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?">> (Luke 12:20).*
- To grow proud and arrogant because of riches: *<<As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment>> (1 Timothy 6:17).*

Psalm 62:11-12 - God's Word Is Certain

To say once then twice is to indicate that the idea is sure; namely, that to God belong both power, by which he can carry out his will (contrast v.9), and steadfast love in which he has pledged himself to the faithful, and for which they may safely trust him. God will render to a man according to his work; i.e. a person's 'work' shows whether his faith is real or counterfeit (the attackers are probably Israelites), and God will sort out who is who: *<<So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith without works, and I by my works will show you my faith>> (James 2:17-18).* This is therefore a ground of confidence for the believer and a warning to the unfaithful.

¹¹ Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,
¹² and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord.
For you repay to all
according to their work.

Psalm 62:11-12

Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God. This truth was deeply ingrained in David's soul. Through repetition he understood that power belongs to God and to none other. This is why David was so determined to

trust in God and God alone. Since power belongs to God, David refused to look for strength anywhere else. Since power belongs to God, David did not long for power for himself, even as king. Since power belongs to God, David did not become arrogant as a ruler, knowing any power he held was as God's representative. Jesus pointed this fact out to the Roman governor Pilate: <<*Jesus answered him, 'You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin'*>> (John 19:11).

And steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord. Gratefully, David understood that God's nature was much more than power. He also is rich in mercy. Just as men could and should look to God for power, so they should look to him for mercy. Mercy translates one of the great words of the OT, *hesed*. It may perhaps be better translated as love, steadfast love, or loyal love. David knew that power belongs to God, but that God is a God of love who is loyal and good to his people. This meant that David had no expectation of mercy from man. If it came he was pleased, but he knew that ultimately this great covenant love or mercy belonged to God.

For you repay to all according to their work. The Greek translation of this phrase is almost identical to the Greek of Proverbs 24:12, the Hebrew is different but conveys the same idea, and Paul uses it in Romans 2:6. If Paul is speaking specifically to a Jewish interlocutor who passes judgement in Romans 2:1, which seems likely, then he is reminding such a person that mere Jewishness does not guarantee eternal life; one must embrace the covenant and prove the genuineness of one's faith by one's deeds, i.e. along the lines of the original intent of both v.12 and Proverbs 24:12. If, however, Paul is speaking to moralisers without respect to their place in the covenant, then he is using v.12 as an instance of the more general principle of God's just judgement. The idea that the final judgement will use believers' deeds to vindicate the reality of their faith appears in Matthew 12:33-37 and 16:27, John 5:28-29, James 1:12, Revelation 20:13 and possibly, although debatably, in Romans 2:13, 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Galatians 6:7-8.