

Psalm 61

To the chief Musician upon Neginah, [A Psalm] of David.

Verses 1-8: David may have written this wonderful psalm when his own son, Absalom, temporarily drove him away from his throne in Israel (2 Sam. Chapters 15-18).

The psalm is rich in metaphors and references to God's covenants with Israel.

David once again demonstrates a godly response to overwhelming and depressing developments in life.

- I. The Cry for Help (61:1-2).
- II. The Confidence in God (61:3-7).
- III. The Commitment to Loyalty (61:8).

Psalm 61:

This psalm would have fit many occasions in David's life when he was distraught from fighting his numerous enemies.

He offers his petition (verses 1-2), expresses his trust (verses 3-5), prays for prolongation of his kingship (verses 6-7), and offers a vow of thanksgiving to be delivered when God answers (see verse 8).

Verses 1-4: David begins with prayers and tears, but ends with praise.

Thus the soul, being lifted up to God, returns to the enjoyment of itself.

Wherever we are, we have the liberty to draw near to God, and may find a way open to the throne of grace.

And that which separates us from other comforts, should drive us nearer to God, the fountain of all comfort.

Though the heart is overwhelmed, yet it may be lifted up to God in prayer.

Nay, I will cry unto thee, for by that means it will be supported and relieved.

Weeping must quicken praying, and not deaden it.

God's power and promise are a rock that is higher than we are.

This rock is Christ.

On the Divine mercy, as on a rock, David desired to rest his soul.

But he was like a ship-wrecked sailor, exposed to the billows at the bottom of a rock too high for him to climb without help.

David found that he could not be fixed on the Rock of salvation, unless the LORD placed him upon it.

As there is safety in Him, and none in ourselves, let us pray to be led to and fixed upon Christ our Rock.

The service of God shall be his constant work and business: all must make it so who expect to find God their shelter and strong tower.

The grace of God shall be his constant comfort.

Psalm 61:1 "Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer."

(See the notes at Psalm 5:2).

The word rendered cry in this place sometimes denotes a joyful shout, a shout of triumph.

But the connection makes it certain that it here refers to the voice of prayer.

It is implied that it was audible prayer, or that the psalmist gave utterance to his desires in words.

It is language such as would be produced by deep distress; when a sad and burdened heart gives vent to its feelings in a loud cry for mercy.

It seems that David is praying this prayer very often.

This time he goes further than just a prayer.

David wants immediate attention paid to his prayer.

Attend means God whatever your answer is to this prayer, please do not delay.

This is an urgent plea.

Psalm 61:2 "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock [that] is higher than I."

"From the end of the earth":

David's absence from his homeland compounds his feeling of discouragement and exhaustion.

The phrase also hints at feeling of estrangement from God.

“My heart is overwhelmed”:

David’s hope and courage were failing.

“The rock that is higher than I”:

David expresses his disregard of personal autonomy and his reliance on his God in this metaphor for refuge.

This verse leads us to believe that this was in a time of terrible anguish of being away from God.

He is overwhelmed with grief, because he feels that he has alienated himself from God.

David loves God more than he loves anything in this world, and this separation is almost more than he can bear.

Even though David is at this moment unable to go to his favorite place to meet with God, he does not stop crying out to God.

He says, it does not make any difference where I am physically, I am seeking God in my prayer.

His heart is breaking. He is overwhelmed with grief.

We are like David in many ways.

When it seems that all the world has turned against us, we cry out to God.

Troubles seem to bring us closer to Him than when things are going well.

God will listen and forgive, when we have a broken and contrite heart.

David says, God, I cannot seem to walk the straight and narrow path; come and lead me to the solid rock.

This Rock of course, is Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is the Rock that cannot be moved.

This Rock is higher than us all.

This is the Rock that the storm cannot move.

This is the Rock that we must all build upon.

This is not like the sand that shifts when the waves come.

Praise God!

The sweet Holy Spirit led us to this Rock of our salvation.

I shall not be moved, because I have placed my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ (the Rock).

Psalm 61:3 "For thou hast been a shelter for me, [and] a strong tower from the enemy."

“A strong tower from the enemy”:

One of 4 figures of speech (in verses 3-4 for security); the strong towers stabilized the city walls and served as places of defense and refuge.

The image of God as a “shelter” or “tower” is also seen (in 14:6; 46:1; 62:7-8; 71:7; 91:2, 9; 94:22; and 142:5).

True security is found in God alone.

David is very well aware that God protected him from Goliath.

God had hidden him from Saul who sought to kill him, and God will protect him from this peril as well.

Christians, when I see this, I think of the hedge the Lord has built around each of us to keep us from the enemy.

I think of the blood that covers me and which keeps me out of harm's way.

I think of the name of Jesus, that he has given me authority to use against my enemies.

He is my shelter and He is my strong tower. He is my Savior.

Psalm 61:4 "I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah."

I shall, I doubt not, be restored to the tabernacle from which I am now banished, and, according to the desire of my heart, worship and enjoy thee there all my days.

In the meantime, while I am in danger and trouble, I will cast myself upon thy protection with full confidence.

David is asking to be able to go back into the tabernacle.

Abide, as we have said before, means to continually live.

We could look at the word tabernacle in a more permanent way.

It could mean the dwelling place of God, and could mean heaven as well.

In a previous lesson, we got in to the study about the wings forming a covering or protection.

Again, Selah means pause and think on these things.

The covering of the Christian is the white robe of righteousness washed in the blood of the lamb.

The tabernacle that David was speaking of here, was just a type and shadow of the true tabernacle in heaven.

Hebrews 8:5 "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, [that] thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."

The eternal tabernacle is with God in heaven.

Psalm 61:5 "For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given [me] the heritage of those that fear thy name."

“The heritage”:

Refers to the benefits, including life in the Promised Land (compare Deut. chapters 28-30), of participating in a covenant with God.

Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

David has made his commitment to God.

He knows that God knows the vows he made were real.

David knows that he is heir to the promises made to Abraham.

We are also heirs according to the promises, that if we shall fear God and call upon the name of Jesus Christ.

We know from the following Scripture that there is a heritage through Abraham.

Galatians 3:29 "And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Psalm 61:6 "Thou wilt prolong the king's life: [and] his years as many generations."

“Prolong the king’s life”:

In the immediate context, David prays for himself in his struggle with Absalom.

Beyond this, here is a prayer for the continuity of the divinely established monarchy.

Because he realized that one of his descendants would be the Messiah, David sometimes does not distinguish himself from the messianic dynasty.

David was king for 40 years and when he died, his son Solomon reigned for another 40 years.

David lived many years on this earth, but I believe this is a prophetic Scripture speaking of the reign of Jesus Christ who reigns forever and ever.

The David that we have been reading about in this lesson, is the David who was actually ruler for 40 years.

The real Beloved of God, Jesus Christ the Righteous, shall reign forever and ever.

Psalm 61:7 "He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, [which] may preserve him."

“For ever”:

The Davidic Covenant guaranteed that on the basis of God’s merciful and faithful dealings with David and the nation, David’s descendants would rule on the throne of Israel forever (compare 2 Sam. chapter 7; Psalms 40:11; 89:4, 33-37).

“Mercy and truth”:

Combined mean “loving loyalty”, and the pairing is similar to “grace and truth” (that is found in John 1:14).

Jesus is even now sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven, but His reign is never ending.

Jesus is Mercy, He is Truth, He is Eternal.

The following Scripture is speaking of the reign of Jesus.

1 Kings 9:5 "Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel."

The following Scripture leaves no doubt who this is speaking of.

Luke 1:32 "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:"

Psalm 61:8 "So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows."

“I may daily perform my vows”:

As a regular means of expressing thanksgiving for prayers answered, the psalmist promised daily obedience to his LORD (compare Psalm 56:12).

Jesus in a sense, was a descendent of David, but He was also David's Lord.

Matthew 22:45 "If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?"

David in verse 8 above, is saying that he will sing and praise God all the days of his life.

His praise is performing his vow to God.

David in the verse above, is promising to praise the Lord every day.

David's gratitude for the Lord answering his prayer is the reason he will praise for ever.

His vow had been to God that he would praise him, if the prayer was answered.

Psalm 61 Questions

1. Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my _____.
2. What did David mean by, (from the end of the earth)?
3. When my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the _____ that is higher than I.
4. What is the general condition of David, in verse 2?
5. When does it seem we are closer to God than other times?
6. Who is the Rock, in verse 2?
7. I shall not be moved, because _____ have placed my _____ in the _____.
8. What 2 things does David call the Lord, in verse 3?
9. Who are two specific people God had protected David from?
10. What covers the Christian and keeps them from harm's way?
11. David is saying, he will abide where forever?
12. What does abide mean?
13. What are some of the things tabernacle, in verse 4, could mean?

14. What is the covert of thy wings telling us?
15. This tabernacle, in verse 4, is a type and shadow of what?
16. What was David an heir to?
17. How long was David king?
18. How long did Solomon reign as king?
19. How long shall Jesus Christ the Righteous reign?
20. What does 1 Kings 9:5 tell us of the reign of Jesus?
21. Luke 1:32 calls Jesus whom?
22. How often did David say, he would perform his vows?
23. What had David called Jesus?