

Psalm 61 The Higher Rock

This chapter is short, but it contains one of the marquee verses of the book of Psalms, 61:2. It is another chapter where David asked God for help. Repeatedly in the Psalm, David cried unto the Lord for help.

I have learned much from the study of the Psalm of David regarding the great privilege we, as children of God, have to call on our Lord for help. I have come to know the following:

- There is no limit on the number of times we can call on him.
- It is not possible to irritate or overload God.
- There is no kind of problem that we cannot bring to God whether it be family problem, health problems, or any other kind of situation life may present us.
- God is equally willing to listen to our problem regardless of the size of the problem.

May I speak from my heart for a moment. Growing up, there were a number of times when I was mischievous. I was not into bad things, but I was in a Christian home with extremely high standards. Mom and Dad were saints and had great reverence for God and his Word. They believed strongly in *holy* living. I can almost still hear my mom scolding me for the slightest of things. Five minutes later, she was on me again. Looking back at the strict rules we lived under, I was not sure at the time that it was acceptable to breath! I developed a feeling that God required perfect conduct. “You can’t do this, and you can’t do that. This is wrong, and that is wrong.” I wondered if anything was okay in the eyes of my parents. I wondered, from time to time, if there would ever be a time in my life when I would be acceptable to the Lord. I doubted that I would ever be able to have a relationship such a holy God. The harder I tried to be perfect, the more I failed and saw my short comings.

As I grew older, I began to study the book God wrote, the 1611 King James Bible. I found scripture like Ecc 7:20 which reads *For there*

is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. I found Psalm 39:5 which says *Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.* Then there is that verse Romans 7:18 stating *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.* These verses showed me that, after all, I was about normal in my conduct. It wasn't just me. We were all sinners.

In addition to the verses in the previous paragraph, along with other verses in the Bible, I began to study the life of David. I saw all his shortcomings and all his problems. Now, as I study the more than 70 Psalms God instructed David to write, I find we have a God that knows and understands our situation on this sin-cursed earth. We can go to him in any and all situations.

Psalm 61 is yet another time in David's life when he used the great privilege God gave man to call on him in time of need. Likely, this Psalm was penned down during the time of Absalom's rebellion and attempt to steal the throne from David. Joab, probably the greatest warrior in the Bible, had crushed Absalom's uprising. Absalom was now dead. David was still in exile having not yet returned to his rightful seat on the throne. One can read of his return to the throne in II Samuel 19.

61:1-2

Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. 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.

Sometime, we *pray* to God. Sometimes, we *call* on God. In verse 1, David *cries* to God. This is the most urgent approach to the throne. I know God has good hearing. I know he is capable of hearing even a whispered prayer. However, there arises times and issues of great urgency in one's life. It is then that we *cry* unto him. To cry is to sound a *piercing* and *ringing* plea to God. This is one reason we all need a closet to pray in.

Place yourself, for a moment, in the shoes of David. The people once loyal to him have turned against him. His throne has been taken away from him by his own beloved son, Absalom. David was in exile. David had forgiven Absalom once, and he would have forgiven him again. However, Absalom's day of grace had run its course. Don't let this happen to you. Absalom was killed (see II Samuel 18). David loved his son, Absalom. Aside from the pain of his affair with Bathsheba and the death of the baby that was born, the loss of his firstborn son, Absalom, may have hurt him the most.

David is in exile in Gilead. He is only two- or three-day's journey from Jerusalem. However, he feels a thousand miles away from home, for in verse 2 he cries *from the end of the earth*. He may as well have been in Egypt! Sorrow can overtake one such that home does not even seem like home. I hope it does not happen, but someday the test results for you or a loved one may bring bad news. Someday, the phone may ring and the caller have shattering news of a loved one who is critically injured or, perhaps, killed. What can we do?

David's heart was *overwhelmed*. When I think of the word *overwhelmed*, I think of a tsunami, a massive tidal wave capable of wiping out large cities when it comes ashore. The news of Absalom's death had driven a dagger through David's heart. He is in a pitiful predicament. He has lost his way. So, he asked God to *lead* him. One gets the feeling David has been relegated to a child. We lead our children in times when there is risk of getting lost or hurt. Have you ever been there? I have, and I predict you will be there some day if you haven't already.

You and I still have the same *rock* David had in verse 2. The problem that sometimes arises in our life is that we have trouble admitting we are sinking. We lift one foot to the top, and the other foot sinks lower. The Devil leads us to believe we, within ourselves, are making progress. We are given false hope. We struggle to realize and admit we are in sand. However, God is the solid rock. God does

not sink or shake. God is not washed away by water or blown away by wind.

61:3

For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.

I am glad we can remind God, not that he forgets, that he has delivered us before, and that he can do it again. When David, as a lad, was being quizzed about his ability to confront Goliath, he reminded the people he had beforehand slain both a lion and a bear. The God that delivered us yesterday can deliver us today. He changed not. Just as sure as he was our shelter and tower yesterday, he will do the same again.

61:4

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

Sometime, when we face trouble and challenges in life, we turn away from God. David decided he would do no such thing. He was with God for the long haul. The Devil will say “See what happened to you. There is no victory in serving God. Why not come over into my camp.” The Devil is a liar.

The word abide means to be a house guest for a night. David tells the Lord *I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever*. I will be your house guest tonight and tomorrow night and the next night and every night forever.

I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Covert means *secret hiding place*. God has a secret hiding place for his children. It is the place unknown to Satan. It is a place unknown to society. It is a place hidden from sin. It is a place the eye of man cannot see. One may be in the middle of a crowd of 10,000, and yet, unseen by the masses for he is hidden in God’s *secret* place. It would do not good for the FBI and the CIA to search for this secret place.

61:5

For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name.

We know from the book of Genesis that God promised Israel a great inheritance through father Abraham. However, enemies of Israel were entrenched in much of the land. When David came to the throne, being the warrior that he was, he whipped the enemies and drove them from the land. I once read that the most of their promised land that Israel ever occupied happened during the reign of David.

Now, Absalom, not David, was in control of the land. Absalom was never the warrior David was. As long as Absalom was in power, the enemy had golden opportunity to retake Israel's land. In this verse 5, David rejoices that he is back on the throne and the *heritage*, that is, the promised land, was back under his kingship. We, the people of God, need to reclaim the land the Devil has stolen from us.

61:6

Thou wilt prolong the king's life: and his years as many generations. 7 He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him.

There is much prophecy in the Psalms of David. God allowed David to look beyond this mere life and see eternity. David does not speak of living forever in this flesh. He looks to a time beyond the grave when God's people will step into eternal life where there are no watches or calendars. Time is no more.

However, while we are on this earth, we have many confrontations. David asked God to *prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him* While he abides on this wicked earth. Only God can build a hedge around one of his children that can withstand the darts of hell.

61:8

So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.

Numbers 30:2 says *If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.*

David intended to keep the promises he had made to God. He intended to pay some portion daily. If someone borrows 1,000 dollars with a vow to repay and repays 100 dollars, the vow is not satisfied. Even if 900 of the 1,000 was repaid, the vow is not satisfied. I like David's approach. His faithfulness to God required that he render something to God *daily*.

Are we sincere with God or do we skip payments? We give him our attention on Sunday, but ignore him on Monday. God cannot be pleased with anything less than a daily commitment.