

Psalm 61

Title: God Is My Refuge

Author and Date: David

Key Verses: Psalm 61:3-4

Type: Trust or Individual Lament

Outline

- A. Request (verses 1-2).
- B. Refuge (verses 3-4).
- C. Reassurance (verses 5-7).
- D. Resolve (verse 8).

Notes

Title: “For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.” See the notes on the title of Psalm 4.

Summary: Psalm 61 is a psalm of confident trust in God’s protection. The psalmist wants God to hear his prayer (verse 1) when he is isolated and his heart is overwhelmed (verse 2). The psalmist trusts God because he is the psalmist’s refuge, strong tower, tabernacle, and wings when attacked by his enemies (verses 3-4). The psalmist is confident in God who gives the psalmist his heritage (verse 5) and prolongs his days and years (verse 6). The psalmist wants God to prepare mercy (loving-kindness) and truth to preserve him (verse 7). In return for all that God has given him, the psalmist promises to sing praises to God and daily perform his vows (verse 8).

Verse 1: The basic request in lament psalms is “hear” and “attend” (Psa. 17:1; 66:19). Note the Hebrew parallelism between “hear” / “attend” and “cry” / “prayer”.

Verse 2: The psalmist may be in exile far from Jerusalem, or he may feel isolated from God (“the end of the earth”). This may be a reference to when David was at Mahanaim during Absalom’s revolt (2 Sam. 17:24). The psalmist is also “overwhelmed” (KJV) meaning that he feels faint, isolated, helpless, and discouraged (Psa. 55:5; 77:3; 142:3; 143:4). The “rock *that* is higher than I” (KJV) is a high rock that provides asylum. God is the high rock that provides safety and shelter away from the enemy and the elements (Psa. 18:2).

Verses 3-4: God is likened unto four types of shelter: refuge, strong tower, tabernacle (tent), and wings. God as a “refuge” (Psa. 5:11; 7:1; 9:9; etc.) is common in the Psalms. The “tabernacle” (Heb. tent) in David’s day was located in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:17;

Psa. 15:1; 19:4; 27:5-6). The “covert of thy wings” (KJV) is a symbol for God’s care, protection, and refuge (see Psa. 17:8; 36:7; and the notes on 57:1). For “Selah”, see the notes on Psalm 3.

Verse 5: The mood is positive from verse 5 to the end of the psalm. The “heritage of those that fear thy name” is the inheritance (like the land promise, or some other blessing from God) given to the faithful and God-fearing Israelites.

Verses 6-7: These two verses are a prayer for “the king’s life”; his well-being. The “king” (see also 63:11) may be a reference to King David who speaks of himself in these verses. Despite many close calls on his life, David lived to be 70 years old. For the combination of God’s mercy (“loving-kindness”, ASV) and truth, see Psalm 25:10; 26:3; 40:10-11; 57:3; and 57:10.

Verse 8: “Daily perform my vows” (KJV) shows that the psalmist is interested in practical obedience to God. For the Israelite vows, see Leviticus 27.

Questions

1. What does the psalmist request of God (verse 1)?
2. When does the psalmist call unto God and where does he want to be lead (verse 2)?
3. What is God to the psalmist (verse 3)?
4. Where does the psalmist want to dwell and take refuge (verse 4)?
5. What has God heard and what has he given the psalmist (verse 5)?
6. What does God prolong for the king (verse 6)?
7. Where does the king abide and what preserves him (verse 7)?

8. What does the psalmist sing and what does he perform (verse 8)?

Applications for Today

1. God hears our prayers no matter how far away the distance, no matter how far down the depth, and no matter how great the danger (verses 1-2). Who does God hear (Psa. 34:15)? Why was Jesus heard by his Father (Heb. 5:7)?
2. God is our refuge (verses 3-4). Why is God a good refuge for Christians (Heb. 6:18)?
3. God gives his faithful people their heritage or inheritance (verse 5). What heritage or inheritance do Christians receive (Eph. 1:11; 1 Pet. 1:4)?
4. Let us pray that God would prolong our days and years so that we can use that extra time in his service (verses 6-7). What prolongs a person's life (Deut. 4:40; 5:33; 6:2; Prov. 10:27; Eccl. 8:13)?
5. May we never take a vacation from our vocation. Daily service to God is just as important as singing praises to God (verse 8). What are some things that faithful Christians do daily (Lk. 9:23; 11:2-4; 2 Cor. 4:16; Heb. 3:13)?