

TRUST IN GOD ALONE

9

**BACKGROUND
SCRIPTURE**

Psalm 62

**A VERSE TO
REMEMBER**

For God alone
my soul waits in
silence,
for my hope is
from him. (Ps. 62:5)

Daily Bible Readings			
M	Oct. 21	Mark 9:14–27	I Believe, Help My Unbelief!
T	Oct. 22	Ps. 28	God Is My Strength and Shield
W	Oct. 23	Prov. 3:1–8, 13–14	Trust God with All Your Heart
Th	Oct. 24	1 John 4:4–13	God in You Is Greater
F	Oct. 25	1 John 4:14–21	Boldness on the Day of Judgment
Sa	Oct. 26	Jer. 17:5–11	Blessed Are Those Who Trust God

STEPPING INTO THE WORD

Let's imagine that we could invite the psalmist who wrote Psalm 62 in for an interview. This experiment stretches the imagination, partly because the psalmist wouldn't speak modern English, and we would need a translator who could translate words as well as cultural understandings and meanings. Still, let's suppose the psalmist did a crash course in modern English and understood enough about the world we live in to answer our questions in a way that makes sense to us.

Me: Hi, everyone! Today, we have the incredible opportunity to talk with the esteemed psalmist who wrote Psalm 62.

Psalmist: Thank you, I'm glad to be here.

Me: Let's dive right in. Could you share with us the inspiration behind this particular psalm?

Psalmist: Definitely. By the way, back when I wrote it, what you all call Psalm 62 didn't have a number on it. That was added long after I wrote it. Anyway, the psalm was written during a time of personal struggle and adversity. I found myself facing a storm full of challenges, including external opposition and internal turmoil. In those moments, I was looking for solace in the Living God, and I found great comfort and strength in God's unwavering faithfulness.

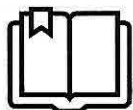
Me: That's an amazing testimony. Are there any specific verses or lines that hold significant meaning for you?

Psalmist: One verse that has always resonated with me is verse 1, which also appears in verse 5: "Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him." I think it captures the essence of the Psalm—finding rest in God's presence and acknowledging that true peace comes from God.

Me: Thank you so much. Before you go, I'm wondering if you would say a prayer for us.

Psalmist: Certainly, let's pray.

God, who speaks through silence, power and steadfast love belong to you. You alone are our rock and our salvation. Ready our hearts for the peace that you give, and create in us the silence we need to hear you and to live the experiences of your steadfast love. Amen.



SCRIPTURE

Psalm 62

62:1 For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.

²He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall never be shaken.

³How long will you assail a person,
will you batter your victim, all of you,
as you would a leaning wall, a tottering fence?

⁴Their 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*

⁵For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.

⁶He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

⁷On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

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

⁹Those 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.
¹⁰Put no confidence in extortion,
and set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

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

Note: Find Scripture
Notes for this
reading on the
final page of the
lesson.

A CHORUS OF ASSURANCE

In stillness and quiet, the psalmist finds God's refuge and deliverance. Psalm 62 is filled with repetition that gives structure to the psalm and raises a question: are the repeated words and phrases echoes of certainty that comes from the inside out, or is the repetition an attempt to assure the psalmist's self, working from the outside in? Can it be both?

The opening lines provide an anchoring chorus, making the assertive claim that God alone is the source of calm and hope: "For God alone my soul waits in silence . . . He alone is my rock . . . I shall never be shaken" (Ps. 62:1-2). The chorus expressing trust in God alone appears again in verses 5-6. Then, at the end, the psalmist moves from waiting in silence to a proclamation of God, breaking the silence about God's power as steadfast love or *hesed*.

After each instance of the anchoring chorus, the psalmist lines out what could be understood as a few of the experiences that lead the psalmist to trust in God. For example, in verse 3, we read the psalmist's experience with people who "assail" other people and "batter" their victims. Disappointment with people clearly runs deep, because the psalmist asks how long will "all of you" keep doing these things? Verse four 4 the pain of betrayal, saying, "They take pleasure in falsehood; they bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse." After these examples of the disappointment, the psalmist returns again to the anchoring chorus of waiting for God alone in silence.

The second half of the psalm shows the assurance that comes from the inside out as well as the benefit of vocalizing outwardly

the confidence that the psalmist longs to fully internalize. After the second instance of the psalm's anchoring chorus, the psalmist gains the confidence to commend trust in God to others. Moving from testimony to exhortation, the psalmist writes, "Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts before him" (v. 8). People are of little weight in comparison with God (v. 9), and there is no amount of money we can steal, extort, or even earn that could ever balance the scales with the peace that God provides.

In the end, in response to the twice repeated anchoring chorus, the psalmist states, "I heard this: that power belongs to God" (v. 11), who is the originator and keeper of the steadfast love that is our rock, our salvation, and our source of peace.

? How does Psalm 62 capture, if at all, the tone of our times: violence, deception, corruption? What are the echoes of the psalmist's experiences that you recognize in modern life?

OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH

When the psalmist writes, "Once God has spoken; / twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God" (Ps. 62:11), they express a revelation about God's presence with the psalmist in their time of trouble. It does not read as a direct quotation from God, or another person, or even a specific event, but rather a profound realization experienced by the psalmist.

While trust in God and the refuge that God provides are central meanings, it's equally clear that the psalmist is in pain, resulting from profound disappointments and harm other people have caused. This doesn't make the psalmist less than anyone who might read this text today. If anything, the pain the psalmist feels makes the psalmist relatable, because, as we say in my faith tradition, we live "in a broken and fearful world."¹

For most of the psalm, through the dual expressions of trust in God together with the causes of the psalmist's pain, the psalmist waits in silence, confident that they will encounter the divine. Actually, the NRSVue reads, "My soul waits in silence" (Ps. 62:1, 5). It's not that everything has suddenly become quiet. Instead, the psalmist finds a stillness that cannot be touched by the outside world, a peace that comes from God alone.

But this does not mean that the only place the psalmist can encounter God's steadfast love is in isolation. The steadfast love of God, God's *hesed*, is a communal relationship between God and people as creatures of God's making. While there is certainly

1. A Brief Statement of Faith, *Book of Common Worship* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), 88.

pain and isolation that humans cause each other that might drive the psalmist, or us, to long for the calm and silent assurance of God's love, we can easily imagine the psalmist would also experience echoes and reflections of *hesed* in deeds of kindness and care from other people in the community.

We can connect Psalm 62 with other psalms that refer to God as refuge and that don't overemphasize the idea of being alone. For example, we find people experiencing refuge as a community in God in Psalm 14:5–6 and in the famous opening verse of Psalm 46. We should not misinterpret Psalm 62 to suggest a preference for experiencing God in solitude, distrusting everyone else. Even when the world around us is frenzied and hostile, we can experience God's calming presence together in a worshipping community and in silent solitude.

? How, if at all, have you experienced silence and meditation as a form of worship or prayer? What are life experiences that might make people in your community long for silent worship, and what life experiences might make people long for worship with more sound? How are those experiences different? Similar?

STEPPING INTO THE WORLD

While the core themes of trust, rest in God, and finding security in God remain timeless and relevant, there are differences in the context and challenges faced by modern readers compared to when the psalmist was writing. In the time of the psalmist, the challenges and struggles may have been more immediate and tangible, such as physical threats, external opposition, or societal turmoil that was specific to ancient Judah.

In contrast, we may face different challenges and struggles. The world where we live brings complexities and unique difficulties, including the intense pace at which we live, the pressures of technology and information overload, mental health issues, social and political unrest, and relational struggles.

While the specifics of the ancient psalmist's challenges may differ from our own, the basic condition of humanity remains very similar. With the exception of a few folks who prefer chaos, we generally long for security, peace, and a sense of purpose in the midst of uncertainty and turmoil. The longing for the peace that God can give transcends time and culture. A basic human need remains constant for God's presence and

steadfast love, serving as a firm foundation on which we can find stability.

Psalm 62 offers modern readers a model for patient introspection that leads to communal prayer and worship. It offers a chorus of assurance that undoubtedly comes from an inward source and provides a prayerful script that, when vocalized and repeated in private or in public worship, invites peace from the outside in. While Psalm 62 emphasizes trust and reliance on God, the sense of isolation expressed in the psalm does not imply a complete disconnection from other people or a denial of God's *hesed* being manifested through them.

Certainly, the psalmist would have experienced God's *hesed* through people, even while others caused pain. We are reminded that, in community, we experience the echoes and reflections of God's love, compassion, and support. We see God's *hesed* reflected when we see people showing kindness, mercy, and grace in moments of difficulty, and we might say, "Thanks be to God." For, in those moments, they have provided comfort, encouragement, and assistance when it was needed most. Even the act of gathering together for worship is an act of care and compassion for the whole community when the gathering is in the name of the One Who Gives Life.

As a spiritual practice, spend ten, twenty, or even thirty minutes waiting on God in silence and then, afterward, record the thoughts you had while you were waiting on God.

SCRIPTURE NOTES

The following notes from the Church Uniform Series provide additional information about today's Scripture.

1. The phrase "waits in silence" (v. 1) translates a Hebrew word for motionless waiting, stillness. The stillness of the whole being ("soul"; *nephesh* refers to the human being in mind, body, spirit) indicates the psalmist's trust and confidence.
2. The Hebrew word we translate "alone" occurs seven times in Psalm 62. The psalmist trusts in God alone (v. 1), God alone is my rock (v. 2), see also verses 5–7. The psalm conveys an affirmation of trust that rests exclusively and entirely in God.
3. The psalmist calls on all godly people to trust God (vv. 8–10), moving from an individual, personal trust, to exhorting the congregation to do the same; "my refuge" (v. 7) becomes "a refuge for us" (v. 8).