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**ONLY
GOD**

WHEN HE IS ALL YOU HAVE

DR. J. VERNON MCGEE

ONLY GOD

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For the music director; according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

My soul waits in silence for God alone; from Him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I will not be greatly shaken. How long will you attack a man, that you may murder him, all of you, like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence? They have planned only to thrust him down from his high position; they delight in falsehood; they bless with their mouth, but inwardly they curse.

Selah

My soul, wait in silence for God alone, for my hope is from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my refuge; I will not be shaken. My salvation and my glory rest on God; the rock of my strength, my refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts before Him; God is a refuge for us.

Selah

People of low standing are only breath, and people of rank are a lie; in the balances they go up. Together they are lighter than breath. Do not trust in oppression, and do not vainly rely on robbery; if wealth increases, do not set your heart on it. God has spoken once; twice I have heard this: That power belongs to God; and faithfulness is Yours, Lord, for You reward a person according to his work.

-Psalm 62 NASB

Songs have a way of touching us in the hardest seasons of life. This is especially true for those who write and compose songs. David experienced this—you can read his story and identify with how he faced problems similar to ours. He wrote Psalm 62 as a song, just one in the great hymnbook of the Bible, the book of Psalms. He wrote out of profound *experience*. His psalms encompass his own life, and many have instructions to set them to music. Though they won't make a "Top 40" list, their impact is eternal.

Psalm 62 expresses David's heart during the greatest crisis of his life. In it, we can see the depth of his soul laid bare.

When you think about David's life, you often recall a succession of mountaintop experiences.

As a boy, he wrestled with a bear and a lion. Can you get more exciting than that? But Psalm 62 doesn't deal with that experience.

Then there was the day he was called in from the sheepfold and anointed king. We can only imagine the emotions of the lad as the anointing oil, poured by Samuel, ran down his hair. What an experience—all the way from the pasture to the palace! But this psalm isn't about that, either.

Then there was the time the boy David went against Goliath with nothing but his slingshot. But he doesn't refer to that episode in Psalm 62.

We recall the torch-lit palace and Saul hurling a javelin at David, missing the mark only because of David's quick action. Exciting? Yes, but he's not writing about that here.

He spent years out in the hills and dens of the earth, encountering many a crisis peculiar to rugged living, but none of these lie in the body of this psalm.

Then came the day when Saul and Jonathan were killed in the same battle. When word was brought to David, a song rose from his heart, a funeral dirge. But it wasn't this psalm.

And of course, David committed the tragic sin against Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah—the sin that stood out in a glaring fashion in David's life. But, again, he does not tell of it here.

Psalm 62 doesn't depict any of these grave seasons in his life, but it does tell of the *greatest* crisis that came to him. David was an old man when Absalom—his own son, his favorite son, the son who was more like him than any of his other sons—led a rebellion against him. Because of that, David was forced to leave the comforts of the palace and flee from Jerusalem, returning once more to the dens of the earth.

In his flight from Jerusalem, we witness the highest peak or crisis in the old king's life. His soul is involved in the drama of faith's supreme test. Turn back to the historical record for a moment:

So David went up by the Ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up. –2 Samuel 15:30

This was a tragic time, his dramatic moment, David's time of crisis. Thomas Paine, a great political philosopher, wrote of "the times that tried men's souls." This time had come to the old king.

Absalom's march into Jerusalem forced a time of decision. Some chose David; others chose Absalom. David found out who were the loyal and the disloyal in his ranks. The betrayers and followers were well-marked.

Of note was Ahithophel (related to David by marriage through Bathsheba), an astute statesman, a man of sagacity, of wonderful ability, one upon whom David had leaned. He deserted and went over to Absalom's side. This was the first Benedict Arnold on record, and it broke David's heart when he found out this trusted man had deserted him.

Then Ziba, the servant of Jonathan's son Mephibosheth, came and said that his master had betrayed him. But Ziba was two-faced, and David could never know which face to believe. Therefore, he wasn't quite sure about Mephibosheth.

Then, as David fled from Jerusalem, barefoot and weeping, there stood Shimei, just outside the town of Bahurim. He was of the house of Saul, and from his store of bitter hatred for the old king he heaped cursings upon David and threw stones.

Absalom entered Jerusalem in triumph, and the same crowd that shouted to the rafters for David now shouted deliriously for Absalom. The children of these people later were the ones who shouted, "Hosanna," to the Lord Jesus Christ and in the days following shouted, "Crucify Him!" David knew the sting of the voice of the mob, and Psalm 62 is the song of David in that moment of anxiety.

David had committed his way to God; he traveled in the spiritual stratosphere, living above the storms, shocks, and stresses of this life. As we read this psalm that burst forth from his heart in that hour of betrayal, defeat, and testing, we're amazed to find not one note of discouragement, no suggestion of fear, no word of distress. There is neither rancor nor bitterness welling up in the heart of the psalmist. He sings a song of salvation, a paean of praise, an opus of optimism. It's a song of sanguinity, a thesis of trust, and a work of wonder. How could David write such a "Hallelujah Chorus" out of an experience so dark?



IT IS ONE THING TO BE BORN;
it is another thing to live.

AND IT'S THE *life of faith*
THAT COUNTS.

A photograph of a person standing on a rocky cliff, looking out over a vast landscape. The person is wearing a white and black long-sleeved shirt and tan pants. The landscape features a dense forest of evergreen trees, a large body of water (likely a lake or river), and mountains in the distance. The scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of a sunset or sunrise, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a hazy, atmospheric effect. The person's arms are slightly raised, and they appear to be in a contemplative or joyful pose.

- DR. J. VERNON MCGEE

THE ONLY PSALM

Briefly let's note the mechanics of this psalm, because it's important to have this understanding. The little word *selah* occurs twice. You should not verbalize *selah* in reading the Psalms, because it's actually a kind of punctuation—it's similar to coming to the end of a sentence, you have gotten to the end of the thought.

Selah occurring at the end of verses 4 and 8 breaks the psalm into three stanzas, the first line of each stanza containing the little adverb “only.” It's very clear in the New American Standard version:

My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation....

My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him....

Men of low degree are only vanity and men of rank are a lie.

—Psalm 62:1, 5, 9 NASB

The little word “*only*” occurs but three other times in the psalm. Spurgeon was the first to call this “the *only* Psalm.” There are certainly 149 other psalms, but this is called “the *only* Psalm” because of its emphasis on the word “only.”

The three stanzas divide the psalm:

1. The test of faith, verses 1–4
2. The time of faith, verses 5–8
3. The triumph of faith, verses 9–12

THE TEST OF FAITH PSALM 62:1-4

Here we see the deep conviction that motivated the life of David—the currents that swept over his spirit, guiding and directing him through life. Here, for the first time, we see David’s soul laid bare. While you don’t see the heart of the man in the historical account, you do see him in clear view in this song of his soul. His favorite son is in rebellion, actually seeking his life, and now his enemies have come to the front. They have moved to lay hold of him so they might destroy him. Some of his friends have turned traitor. David was forced to flee, for he would not offend Jerusalem, his beloved city, by doing battle within her walls. Therefore, he left and returned to the caves of the earth. He had been dealt a cruel blow.

Weaker men have crumpled under circumstances less trying than this, but from David we hear no complaint, no condemnation, no criticism. He was committed to God and cast himself upon Him. There was nothing to say; he had no defense to offer. He said God had permitted this thing to come to him and that the outcome of it all held no concern for him. His one concern was that he remain in the hands of God. He was undisturbed, unmoved by the things taking place around him.

No doubt there were those around David who urged that he stand his ground and thereby exhibit his faith, for he was God’s anointed, and God should overrule this whole matter. Not David! He said his life was in God’s hands, and it seemed best that he leave Jerusalem. Beloved, while small men cried for a miracle, David avowed to walk in the dark, trusting God. Oh, for a faith

like that—a God-given faith! To David, what others called defeat was but a test of faith. David could retreat from Jerusalem, and it is still going to sound like a victory.

Listen to David and watch his actions as the disastrous floodwaters broke upon him:

He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be shaken. —v. 6 NASB

Zadok, the high priest, was faithful and decided to go with David. He brought with him the ark, a symbol to the Israelites of God's presence in their midst. The old king turned and, seeing the ark, commanded Zadok to carry it back to the city:

Then the king said to Zadok, "Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me back and show me both it and His dwelling place. But if He says thus: 'I have no delight in you,' here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him." —2 Samuel 15:25, 26

I would love to make this great truth clear and alive for you! Here was a man so wholly committed to God that he turned aside from any thought of merit in the ark, clinging only to God and saying to Zadok that if it was God's will for him to come back to this city, he would be allowed to come back; if not, then he was in God's hands. He refused to attempt to force God to do anything, but instead determined to go the way God led, regardless of the path. Oh, to live like that today!

In Psalm 62:3 David said to his enemies,

How long will you assail a man, that you may murder him, all of you, like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence? (NASB)

Many of David's former friends had turned against him or betrayed him. Ziba did a dastardly thing, thinking he would gain favor with David if he lied and said Mephibosheth had deserted him. And Ahithophel, David's best friend and wisest of counselors, went over to the other side in David's darkest hour. Here in this

psalm David spoke of Ahithophel prophetically as Judas Iscariot. Ahithophel was in David's inner circle and the man he leaned on, and just like Judas he turned on his master.

David said they were running over him as a mob runs over a fence, but he also said, *"It's all right as long as it's God's will. If these things must come to me as a result of my sin, I'm going to accept it."*

They have counseled only to thrust him down from his high position; they delight in falsehood; they bless with their mouth, but inwardly they curse. –v. 4 NASB

Let's understand David's action under the bitter attack of Shimei. While David was on the throne, Shimei bowed like the rest of them. But when he was free to express his heart of hatred, we find him cursing and hurling rocks after David as he fled from Jerusalem. David had a loyal captain by the name of Abishai, a son of Zeruiah. He said to the king: "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head" (2 Samuel 16:9).

My friend, if you want an example of what the Scripture means by "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord" (Romans 12:19), listen to David as he replies to his captain:

But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David.' Who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'"

–2 Samuel 16:10

In other words, David told Abishai, "God has permitted him to curse me." Have you ever stopped to think, my friend, that God has given you certain enemies for a definite purpose, to test you so you might become a better Christian? Do not become alarmed at the presence of enemies and difficulties that God has permitted to impede your path. He isn't being hard on you. How we need to trust God to the extent that we would not cry out at a time like that!

THE BEST TIME TO
trust God
IS AT THE CRISIS MOMENT
OF YOUR LIFE.

- DR. J. VERNON MCGEE



THE TIME OF FAITH

PSALM 62:5-8

“The time of faith” is the entire life of any believer. The moment you place your faith in Jesus Christ, you are saved. It’s an important moment, but we shouldn’t fix on our birthday. Unfortunately, it’s too common to neglect the life of faith. It is one thing to be born; it is another thing to *live*. And it’s the life of faith that counts. So David is talking about “the time of faith.”

Is the time of faith only on a sunny day when there’s not a cloud in your sky? Is it when everything is going exactly right, with nothing to mar your outlook? David’s answer is that the best time to trust God is at the crisis moment of your life—“My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him” (Psalm 62:5 NASB). This is a Bible definition of prayer, by the way. I once had a little card sent to me bearing this message, “True prayer is the Holy Spirit speaking in the believer, through the Son, to the Father.” That is real prayer. “My hope is from Him.” David wasn’t making a wild prayer, some audacious statement—he wasn’t demanding God do anything. Instead, David avowed, “My hope is from Him.” He expected God to put into his heart the thing *He* wanted done; therefore, he would be praying for the thing that was best.

We could wonder if some pious person around David might have suggested to him that, considering they were in a pretty tight place, it might be a good time to have a prayer meeting. To this David would surely have responded that his whole life was a prayer—“My hope is from Him.” Here is an illustration of what Paul had in mind when he said, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Paul didn’t mean you’re to get on your knees and remain there 24 hours a day. But he did mean for you to get on your knees and pray, and then live in the expectation of that prayer for 24 hours every day. So, David did not call a prayer meeting. Amazingly this psalm has no prayer in it at all, but the entire psalm is in the atmosphere of prayer. David was a man so committed to God that his life and actions were that of prayer.

As we watch the old king going out of Jerusalem, we hear him weeping. But these exterior things fade away when we glimpse the depths of his heart, for he was a man who was committed to God, and he would go with God regardless of what the outcome might be. Other men would have become bitter, but not David. He was saying something here that is tremendous:

My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be shaken. –Psalm 62:5, 6 NASB

“He only is my rock” is the central truth of the psalm and the central truth of David’s life—it’s the dynamo that ran his life. This truth caused him to stand head and shoulders above other men on the horizon of history and cast a long shadow down the corridor of time.

When we come to the New Testament, we can see what the Lord Jesus meant when He made the tremendous statement, “And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder” (Matthew 21:44). Christ is that stone, that Rock. There is coming a day when the stone cut out without hands will fall on this earth. Today you and I can fall on this Rock and be saved. But if you wait, it will fall on you, and you will be crushed.

A woman once got up in a testimony meeting and gave this as her testimony: “You know, sometimes I tremble on the Rock, but the Rock never trembles under me.” Are you on this Rock? Whoever falls on this Rock shall be saved. This is what Paul meant when he said,

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. –1 Corinthians 3:11

David said, “*He only is my Rock. He is the One I am trusting. Oh, the throne is toppling, Jerusalem is in convulsions, the people have turned against me, but I am on the Rock!*” David had learned that glorious lesson.

THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH
PSALM 62:9-12

David came to the place where he could say:

Men of low degree are only vanity and men of rank are a lie; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than breath.

–Psalm 62:9 NASB

He had learned that one cannot trust the mob; they can't be expected to be loyal all the time, for they are fickle. He had found that men of high degree, such as Ahithophel, were not to be trusted; they could not be leaned upon. The first thing a new Christian must learn is *not to look to men, but to look to God*. Many new Christians have become discouraged, disappointed, and disillusioned, because they set their eyes upon a man. A young Christian once told me he had set his eyes upon a man, and it had all but made a shipwreck of his faith. David knew all of the time that he could not trust men, so his faith was fixed utterly upon God. He rested upon a Rock that could not be moved.

Then he made the point that we cannot trust in material things, either:

Do not trust in oppression and do not vainly hope in robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart upon them. –v. 10 NASB

Why is it that you can trust God? David said,

Once God has spoken; twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God. –v. 11 NASB

Friend, you can trust God because He has all power, and He can do anything He wants to do! We catch the thinking of the psalmist that power belongs to God. It did not reside in David. He was simply a great king because God made him a great king. Now He had permitted that David be made to leave Jerusalem, and if it was not God's will that he return, then he would not go back. But David was resigning all to God, for He is the One alone who has all power.

The mad rush to gain power is the destroying element in the world at this hour. In the effort to gain power, the bomb has been created. This form of power wreaks destruction. It is man's effort at power. But David discovered that with true power there is another element that always goes with it:

And lovingkindness [mercy] is Yours, O Lord, for You recompense a man according to his work. —v. 12 NASB

If you have power, you ought to be able to exercise mercy. David was saying that his God, who can exercise power, is a God who can also exercise mercy. David said to Zadok that he wanted him to take the mercy seat back to Jerusalem and place it in the tabernacle, for David knew he would find mercy with God.

At the very heart of Old Testament religion was the mercy seat. At the heart of the Christian faith today is mercy. "Come, every soul by sin oppressed—there's mercy with the Lord," is how it's worded in the old hymn, "Only Trust Him." George Bennard may also have meant this when he wrote: "I will cling to the old rugged cross." Mercy!

When you can say, "He only is my Rock," then you can stand adamant against the battles and issues of this life. "He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken."

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

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THE MOST
IMPORTANT
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A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The phone screen displays a list of booklets from TTB.org. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a wooden table.

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