

On God the Solid Rock I Stand  
Psalm 61

Intro. 1) Life, by its very nature, is filled with uncertainty. We really do not know what tomorrow will bring. A loving mate of many years can suddenly be snatched away by death. A child can, without warning or explanation, reject everything you have taught them and break your heart. Financial security can be swallowed up overnight leading to bankruptcy. Years of perfect health can be wiped out with the words, “its cancer.”

2) When life hits us between the eyes with the unexpected and the unwelcomed, we have 2 options staring us in the face: we can run from God or we can run to God. We can run from Him into the sinking sands of sin and despair, or we can flee to the solid rock of safety and security, the God who is our rock, our refuge, our strong tower, our dwelling place, our shelter, the God who will establish and prolong forever the reign of His Son, King Jesus (v. 6-7). This is the solid rock where we want to stand.

Psalm 61 could be classified as “a royal psalm of lament” (Van Gemeren, 417). The psalm can rightly be prayed by oneself for oneself, or for the well-being and prosperity of the Messiah-King.

3) Psalm 61 is something of a combination of poetic genres.

- Psalm of lament and petition (vs 1-2)
- Psalm of confidence and assurance (vs 3-5)
- Psalm or messianic promise and expectancy (vs 6-8)

4) Its emphasis on God as “our rock” picks up on a theme that appears 20 times in the Psalms. The Lord alone is our firm foundation.

- The psalm is part of a unit of psalms (Ps 61-64) which are united by the theme of “trust in God during times of trouble.”

- Its background is uncertain, though it appears David is away from his home in Jerusalem, (v.2). Some believe he is on the run because Absalom has pulled a coup and now sits on his father's throne (2 Sam. 15-18). If this is so, he is a king in exile.
- Thus he asks for God to keep His covenant promise of 2 Sam. 7:12-17, and to prolong the life of the king forever (v.6). Kidner is most certainly correct when he writes, "What he could hardly have foreseen was the abundant answer to the prayer for the king, destined to be granted, in Christ, above all that he asked or thought" (p. 219). God will indeed prolong the life of King Jesus (v. 6). He will, for sure, abide before God forever (v. 7).

Trans. What then can we anticipate, can we expect, when we make this Great God the rock upon which we will take our stand?

I. Let the Lord provide for you. 61:1-2

- The Psalm begins intimately and personally; my cry, my prayer, my heart. It is fervent and passionate, even desperate.
- Perhaps David wonders: has God rejected me? Has my Lord forgotten me? Turned against me? Put me on the shelf? Has my God abandoned me (cf Ps 22:1)?
- One thing David knows: he can still pray, and he does so and with confidence. Why is he confident. Because:

1) God will hear when you call. 61:1

- Hebrew poetic parallelism

Hear → attend

My cry → my prayer

- My cry. There is a note of pain and sorrow, of desperation and despair. The situation is urgent as David sees things. David really has no where else to turn, so he turns to the One we should seek first, continually and last in any and every situation. He “cries a prayer” to God. Tears add steel to our prayers. Tears witness to a heart made tender by the experiences of life.

2) God will lead when you call. 61:2

- David is away from the presence of God either geographically (literally), figuratively or perhaps both! He is the King, God’s chosen and anointed, and yet he is not where he is suppose to be and wants to be.

- “From the end of the earth” (far away)
- “my heart is overwhelmed” (*NIV*, “grows faint”)

- He feels far from God. I have no sense or awareness of the divine presence. The “absence of God” overwhelms me. I cannot go on like this. You seem to be out of sight. I cannot hear your voice. Where I am, you are not.

- Thus the content and substance of His prayer: “Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I” (capitalization mine). David had hid among the rocks when pursued by Saul and Absalom, but he needed more than this, He needed a true Rock, the Rock who is His God, His Lord. This is the Rock he must have. This is the Rock we must have.

- David takes an upward look. He seeks a vision of His God as His safety and security. He asks to be led. How? How can we be led to this “exalted Rock?” 1) Word, 2) Holy Spirit, 3) Prayer, 4) Worship, 5) Counsel of the godly.

- “The rock that is higher than I” – Note: this is a king who writes these words.

The phrase acknowledges the majesty and greatness of our God. He is exalted above and over all things. Why would we even think of calling on or turning to lesser things or persons?

## II. Let the Lord Protect you.

61:3-4

- David gets historical

- David recalls God’s past faithfulness in his life

- 4 magnificent metaphors depict various aspects and facets of our God’s care for His children.

- It is interesting to note that each picture of God’s protective care is more tender and personal.

### 1) He is your refuge

61:3

- “Shelter for me” is better rendered “my refuge” (*NIV, ESV*). God is a place of protection and safety, security and peace.

- Ps 18:2 says, “the Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge” (*NIV*).

- Ps 62:7-8 adds, “My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, Oh people; pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge (*NIV*).

### 2) He is your strong tower

61:3

David is no longer fleeing to a place of refuge. He sees himself at home, in a citadel, a strong tower, protecting him from his enemies. Prov. 18:10 reminds us, “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (lit.

“set on high”). The man or woman of God will have enemies. Not everyone will love you, like you, or appreciate you. When they attack, run quickly to your strong tower. He is all powerful (strong). He is your tower (set high over all).

3) He is your dwelling place 61:4

- Most translations take vs 4a as a request, though it is one of confidence. It is best rendered: “let me dwell in your tent forever” (*NASB, ESV*). The image of the tent or tabernacle looks both backwards and forward. It looks back to Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness (Ex 33; Num. 11) when the Lord lived in the midst of His people in a tent as they moved about.
- It also looks forward to the Word who because flesh and tabernacled, pitched His tent among us (John 1:14). To dwell with this tabernacle is to live with God Himself.
- The tent is a place of domestic dwelling, a home to welcome family, friends and even strangers. David wants to be near God and with God as one who is welcomed in the Lord’s home. And, he wants to live there “forever.” (cf Ps 23:6; 27:4).

4) He is your shelter 61:4

- Once again the image of the protective wing of a mother bird is drawn upon. It appears in 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 63:7; 91:4.
- David says, “Let me hide in the shelter of your wings” (lit). The *NASV* says, “Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings. Selah.”

- The wing of a mother bird conveys warmth, security, peace and tranquility. It is a place of rest. Absent are feelings of anxiety, vulnerability, and fear. Here you are protected. Here you are safe.

Trans. Here is a 4-fold protective shield provided by the “Rock who is higher” than anyone or anything. Let Him protect you.

### III. Let the Lord preserve you

61:5-8

Our God is a God who can be trusted. He is faithful to His children and He is faithful to His King, His Son, His Anointed. Therefore we can be faithful to Him. We can give ourselves completely to Him without hesitation or reservation.

#### 1) Trust His promise

61:5-7

In confidence David believes God has heard his prayer (vs 1-2). We now learn that in addition to the request of vs. 2, there were vows made as well. David pledged to honor and serve His God, to trust Him and thank Him for His goodness and gifts. Two particular ways in which He is good is noted.

#### a) He will prosper His people

61:5

- You heard my vows, my words of devotion and commitment.
- You have given me the heritage, the blessings of the covenant that includes land, life and a Lord!
- The blessings of this “inheritance” (NASV) are reserved for a very particular people: “those who fear [respect, honor] Your name.” This heritage is both now and not yet, it is present and future, it is anticipated and it is also certain.

#### b) He will promote His King

61:6-7

- What we will inherit is wedded to the King that God promotes, preserves and

prospers. What He receives we will receive, for we are “joint heirs with Christ, if we indeed suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Rom. 8:17).

- Verses 6-7 may be understood either as a statement of fact or a petition. Either way, the result is the same and it is sure.
- The days of the king’s life will be prolonged or extended. Amazingly, it will add up to “many generations.” Further, “he shall sit forever before God (*Elohim*)” [lit. trans.] The *NIV*: “May he be enthroned in God’s presence forever.” This is a prayer God has answered in raising King Jesus from the dead and placing Him at His right hand (Heb. 1:3), exalting Him over all things as Lord (Phil 2:9-11).
- Either David must have a succession of sons that never ends, or he must have one Son who never ends! It is the latter, and that Son is King Jesus.
- God sends 2 wonderful companions to insure the preservation or protection of His King. They are mercy (*hesed*) and truth. The covenant love and loyalty of God to His King will guard Him and keep Him. His truth will give witness to the world that this King is God’s King.

## 2) Honor Him with praise 61:8

- The proper response to all this is clear: worship. David makes 2 great affirmations:
  - I will sing praise to Your name forever
  - I will daily perform my vows
- David says I will worship you with my voice and with my life. I want to do this daily! I want to do this forever!

- How different does Psalm 61 end from how it began.
  - From the ends of the earth to the shelter of God's wings.
  - From crying in desperation to praising the Lord forever.

How did he get from back there to right here? He got to that Rock that is higher than anyone or anything.

### Conclusion

#### “The Solid Rock”

- 1) My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name.

On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

- 2) His oath, His covenant, His blood, support me in the whelming flood.  
When all around my soul gives way, he then is all my hope and stay.

On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.