

## God, and God Alone

### Psalm 62

Where would we be without 1970s rock 'n roll and 1980s worship music? Phil McHugh's wrote, "God and God Alone." Steve Green released it in 1986 as the title track of his album, *God and God Alone*. You probably are familiar with it, but here's the first verse and chorus:

God and God alone  
Created all these things we call our own  
From the mighty to the small  
The glory in them all  
Is God's and God's alone

God and God alone  
Is fit to take the universe's throne  
Let everything that lives  
Reserve its truest praise  
For God and God alone

In part, the song came at a turning point in Steve's life. He was successfully pursuing a career in Christian music. He was one of the founding members of the *Gaither Vocal Band*, and the Christian rock band, *White Heart*.

At a family reunion, Steve's older brother, Randy, lovingly confronted him, asking *if he was simply going through the motions? And if he might be covering some hidden sin?*

Steve became defensive, but deep down knew his brother was right. That night, on his knees, Steve prayed, *God I give up*. He confessed his spiritual emptiness, hypocrisy, and his need for spiritual transformation. Through that experience, God brought to Steve vulnerability, freedom, a clean conscience, and spiritual renewal.

Shortly after this experience with God, he released his album *God and God Alone*. The album was part of his public declaration of the supremacy of God and a life fully surrendered to Christ. From that time his music reflected a deeper emphasis on God's holiness, lordship, and worthiness of exclusive devotion.

The psalmist had his own *God and God Alone* song, and Psalm 62 is it.

Psalm 62 is an individual psalm of confidence.<sup>i</sup> The psalmist quietly and confidently declares his trust in God alone and encourages the faithful to do so as well.

Trusting in God alone brought a confidence into the life of the psalmist that was absent in his opponents.

Although it is not obvious in the English translations, 6 of the 12 verses that make up this psalm begin with the same word that is typically translated *only* or *alone* (Heb. ‘ak).<sup>ii</sup>

62:1a—*Only/alone to God—silence—my soul.*

62:2a—*Only/alone he [is] my rock and my salvation, my fortress.*

62:4a—*Only/alone they plan to thrust him down from his high*

62:5a—*Only/alone to God be silent, my soul.*

62:6—*Only/alone he [is] my rock and my salvation.*

62:9—*Only/alone a breath are those of low estate.*

The psalmist uses this construction to show the contrast in those who trust in God alone and those whose trust lies elsewhere.

The psalm calls to mind the Reformation cry of *by faith alone in Christ alone*; or perhaps our baptism confession, *Are you trusting in Christ alone for your salvation?* The psalmist would say, *Yes!*

This psalm confronts us at the fundamental level of our trusts. You are going to trust something or someone. The psalmist calls on you to place your faith in Christ alone. Here’s why:

### **1. Faith in Christ alone stills our souls (1-4).**

The psalmist declares that he is trusting in God alone for his salvation. His trust in God alone brought into his life a confidence that alluded his enemies and quieted his soul.

#### **A. Confidence of faith (1-2)**

The psalmist sets in contrast his single-minded trust in God alone with his attackers single-minded trust in their plans by using the same word to begin verses 1, 2, and 4, describing his faith over against their plotting.

Verse 1 literally reads, *Alone/only to God silence my soul.*

Verse 2 reads, *Alone He [is] my rock and my salvation, my fortress.*

Of his enemies, verse 4 reads, *Alone/only they plan to thrust him down from his high position.*

The contrast is between psalmist's quiet trust in God alone and his enemies frantic power grabbing.

You can see how trusting in God alone stilled his soul when he affirms in verse 2 that God *alone is [his] rock, [his] salvation, [his] fortress, I shall not be greatly moved.*

In the face of the attack of his enemies, he confidently affirms that God alone is not only his salvation but also his security. He might be shaken but not greatly. He may go down, but he will not be out.

## **B. Confronting his enemies (3-4)**

So confident is the psalmist that God will deliver him from his enemies that he addresses them directly in verse 3 and then, talks about them in verse 4.

### **1) Rhetorical question (3)**

In verse 3, he asked his enemies a rhetorical question: *How long will all of you attack a man to batter him, like a leaning wall, a tottering fence?* The word *batter* (rasha, cf Ex 20:13) is the same word for *murder* in the Ten Commandments.

His question arises from his quiet confidence in God. The psalmist is so confident in God that he is amazed at the persistent attacks of his enemies. They viewed him as weak and vulnerable, like a leaning wall and tottering fence, because they did not comprehend the reality of the power of trusting in God alone. They thought, *just a little push, and he will collapse under his own weight.* To them trusting in God was simply nothing, of no substance.

They were like those around the cross who said of Jesus, *he trusts in God; let God*

*deliver him now, if he desires him.* I would have like to have seen them on the third day. The world views faith in God as of no consequence, no substance, simply the imagination of weak-minded people.

What a confrontational question, *How long will all of you attack a man...?*

## **2) A sharp contrast (4)**

To draw attention to the contrast between himself and his attackers, the psalmist again uses *only/alone* as the first word of verse 4: *Alone they plan to thrust him down....*

It's not like his attackers were not devoted to something. They were devoted to plans of their own minds and ambition. A man trusting in himself is in no position to ridicule a man who trusts in God.

How did they plan to take the psalmist down? *Lies.* They would *murder* him with lies, rumors, and suggestions. They *blessed with their mouth but inwardly they cursed.* His opponents were inside operators. They appeared to be godly,<sup>iii</sup> but they were using their office for gain. In their minds accomplishing their aim of tearing down the psalmist to advance themselves justified their hypocrisy—the ends justify the means. Everyone seeks some kind of justification, but only one justification really justifies: God's declaration.

Dear Friend, the doctrine of justification by faith alone is not a *Johnny-come-lately* doctrine, but it is grounded in the OT Scriptures. Until you, perhaps like Steve Green, come to the place where you say, *God, I give up,* you are going to struggle with being secure in your faith.

You cannot scheme your way through life. For some, like David's attackers faith is all talk but not reality. You know the right answers, but you don't know if it's real.

I was listening to an interview of former Kansas Governor and Senator Sam Brownback. In his interview, he said that when he was in his 40's he was diagnosed with cancer. He had always thought of himself as a Christian and gone to church, but faith was divorced from reality. God used cancer to open his eyes. He said concerning faith, *For the first time I had to figure out if this is real.* It changed his life.

Faith in Christ alone will still your soul.

## **2. We must exhort ourselves to trust in Christ alone (5-8).**

In these verses, the psalmist exhorts himself and others to quiet trust in God alone. Verse 5 and 6 again begin the word *only/alone* to show the psalmist's trust is in God alone:

*Alone to God be silent my soul (5a);*

*Alone/only he is my rock and my salvation (6a).*

### **A. A self-exhortation (5-6)**

Verse 5 and 6 repeat verses 1 and 2 but with **3 variations** that show the psalmist's confidence of faith increasing. **First**, the psalmist declared his quiet faith in verse 1. Here he exhorts himself to quiet faith. He moves from silence as a noun in verse 1 to silence as an imperative verb in verse 5.

There is no contradiction between a declaration of quiet trust (1) and a self-exhortation to quieting our souls in God alone (5). Maintaining a quiet soul can be challenging. The temptation is to give in to anxiety, worry, and fret. Quiet trust is not our natural state. Self-exhortation is essential to the maintenance of quiet faith.

A **second** variation replaces the word *salvation* (1) with *hope* (5). Hope is not all that different from salvation. It simply expresses the expectation of salvation. We are not only saved; we look forward to our salvation.

A **third** variation is the move from *I shall not be greatly shaken* (2) to *I shall not be shaken* (6). We might have thought the psalmist was cracking under the pressure of his enemies' attack because he exhorted himself to maintain his quietness of soul. But that is not the case. Rather, his confidence had increased. He moved from not being *greatly shaken* to not being *shaken* at all.

### **B. Exhorting others (7-8)**

This self-exhortation became the basis for exhorting others to trust God alone as well.

Verses 7-8 are tied together by the repetition of the word *refuge*. I think this shows that the psalmist's exhortation of others to trust God (8) is rooted in his own trust

in God and what he found God to be for him: *salvation, glory, mighty rock, and refuge* (7).

In verse 7, he is saying to others that everything about his life—his future hope of salvation and his reign as king—depended completely on God alone. God had been to him a *mighty rock* and *[his] refuge*.

In light of his own experience with God, he exhorts others, *Trust [God] at all times, O people, pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us*. This is the classic thought of, *Here is what God has done for me; he will do it for you*.

The temptation is to reason that David was the king. Of course, God would save him. Dear friend, God delights in saving his people as much as he delighted in saving David.

*Trust him at all times* is the equivalent of saying *trust him alone*. Trust him in every conceivable situation. Kids rebelling? Trust the Lord. Worried about the future? Trust the Lord. Need a job? Trust the Lord. Marriage difficult? Trust the Lord.

How do you trust him? Call on him in faith. *Pour your heart out before him*. There is no contradiction between quieting your soul before the Lord by trusting him alone and in pouring out your heart to him. Get real with God.

Stop scheming, manipulating, plotting, fighting, and pushing. We do all those things because we think God can't do anything on his own. Dear Friend, spread out all your troubles, anxieties, sadness, hopes, and fear to him.<sup>iv</sup> Tell him you are tired of pushing your way through life, sick of scheming, sick of faking, sick of saying all the right words when your heart is far away from him.

Cast yourself on him; he is a refuge. Exhort yourself to trust in God alone. If God says it, it is right.

### **3. Consider the wisdom of Faith in Christ alone (9-12).**

The final stanza of the psalm confronts us with the wisdom of trust. The psalmist has drawn a contrast between his faith in God alone and his attackers trust in their plans. He then exhorted us, like him, to trust in God alone.

To strengthen his call for us to trust in God alone, he appealed to wisdom by telling

us what NOT to trust. He accomplished this by pointing out the obvious contrast between God and man to pull us out of the delusion hoping in this world. We must live for another world.

### **A. Consider the nature of man (9-10)**

To contrast God and man, the first line of verse 9 literally reads, *Only a breath are those of low estate....*

The word *breath* (Heb. hebel) is used 2 times in verse 9 and again in verse 10 where it is translated *vain hopes*. This word is the word translated *vanity* in Ecclesiastes. This bit of trivia helps us see what the psalmist is getting at in verses 9-10.

*Those of low estate* and *those of high estate* are simply two words for *man* (adam and 'is). When they are used together, they take on the meaning of the full range of humanity without exception (cf. Ps 49:2).

Ordinary man is a *breath*. The status of *the elite* is a *delusion* (cf. 4, falsehood). Ultimately, there is no difference between the common man and the elite. God weigh them both on the same scale. Both are lighter than a *breath*. Humans draw all kinds of distinction for themselves, measuring themselves against one another, as if at the end of all things it matters.

We pretend life is permanent, and we are somehow more worthy than others. In that state of delusion, we live for this world.

This world is exactly where we should NOT put our trust (10). The psalmist cautions us not to trust in *extortion*, *robbery*, or the *increase of riches*. What this world values most, money, can come honestly or dishonestly.

Extortion and robbery seek to gain wealth through dishonest means. Paul wrote, *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs* (1Tim 6:10).

Wealth can, also, simply increase—no dishonesty involved. If your wealth increases, *don't set your heart on it*. Pour your heart out to God, but don't set it on riches.

People think they will be secure if they can gain wealth. Money is a poor God. Considering the nature of man, where is the wisdom of trusting in people, wealth, and power?

### **B. Consider the nature of God (11-12)**

In verses 11-12, God is set over against man and money. Why would you put your hope in this life and its value system instead of God? The psalmist uses the *once and twice* wisdom formula to emphasize something that is absolutely true: God is powerful and loving.

*Power belongs to God* (11b). Humans are lightweights. No matter what it may look like in the moment, power belongs to God, not man and not money.

Thank God for the next line. Not only does power belong to God, but steadfast love belongs to him as well (12a). This line and the next one are the only two lines in the psalm that directly address God. That is because this is where the conversation gets personal.

God loves his people, and he uses his power in their behalf. The greatest blessings in life will simply overtake you. God will bring things or people into your life that you did not see coming, did not plan for, and had not even thought to ask for.

Consider God over against man and money. God is power, and God is love. And, Dear Friend, consider you will give an account of your life to him. We should live in light of the coming judgment of God. This is the most clarifying reality.

If you put your hope in men and money, position and power; if you would rob and steal and cheat and manipulate to gain wealth, these are telltale signs that you are not in faith. Remember, consider, God will render to every man according to his work. This must be a greater, more real, nearer reality to you than what you are going to eat for lunch or where you will live or whom you will marry. Without faith in Christ alone, we will not endure the judgment to come.

### **Conclusion:**

Faith in Christ alone stills our souls. We must exhort ourselves to trust God alone. Consider the wisdom of trust in God alone.

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<sup>i</sup> Psalms of confidence are also called psalms of trust. Psalms of confidence typically have a statement of trust, description of God's character or past faithfulness, and sometimes a petition, lament, or vow of praise. Among the psalms that fall into this genre are;11,16,23,27,62,91,121,125,131. Sometimes Psalms 4, 35, 40, 46, 63, 71 are assigned this genre as well.

<sup>ii</sup> The word can be used in two ways: in an exclusive sense or simply for emphasis. The exclusive sense typically translates the word *only* or *alone*. For emphasis the word is usually translated *surely* or *truly*. Context determines the meaning. The psalm seems to primarily use the word in the exclusive sense.

<sup>iii</sup> Christopher Ash, *The Psalms: A Christ Centered Commentary*, vol 3, 140.

<sup>iv</sup> Ash, 142.