

My Spirit Rejoices in God My Saviour

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- [0 : 0 0] You might open your Bibles to 506 to Psalm 62 that Audrey just read for us. Was I the only one in the church that felt the floor moving during the first reading?
- I was. It might just be me then. I don't mean to alarm you, but if an earthquake happens, there is a small shelter underneath the pew.
- We've thought through this very carefully. Stay away from the windows, and there are lots of exits here and here, back there, and behind me here.
- However, earthquake, wind and fire, we're into the stillness right now, so let's focus in on Psalm 62, shall we? By the way, we don't get earthquakes in Australia really, and we have an earthquake kit in our house, and if an earthquake does happen, we have Vegemite available, just in case.
- Well now, this is an important Sunday for us. This is the beginning of the church year, and we are being guided toward the coming of the Lord Jesus, and led by the song of Mary.
- [1 : 2 3] And I want to share with you that I've had three firsts over the last week or so. I've lain down flat for the first time since August. I've knelt down in church for the first time since August, and I got back on my bicycle last week.
- I thank you very much. You'll be pleased to know that I've given Whistler Mountain a very wide berth.
- I've chosen instead, yesterday, to challenge the dreaded fog around 59. It was cold, wet, and very unfriendly, but riding out of it was lovely.
- It was one of those Vancouver moments, blue sky, sun was shining, everything was crystal clear. And I thought as I was riding out, that's exactly what Mary's song does for us.
- We come out of the fog, and we begin to see things with great clarity. For Mary, the angel's words had begun to sink into her heart, and her cousin Elizabeth had greeted her, and had reaffirmed the truth of those words, and she sang, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, my soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
- [2 : 4 3] And it's the first time Saviour is used of Jesus in Luke's Gospel, and it opens for us the most central, most vital, most precious theme in all of Scripture.
- God is our salvation. And as Mary seeks to comprehend what is incomprehensible, she speaks for all of us when she says, my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
- Do you know, of course, the language of salvation doesn't begin with Mary. Woven deep into the fabric of the Old Testament, Mary articulates her joy in words from the Psalms.
- Again and again the Psalms say, the Lord has become my salvation, and perhaps none better than Psalm 62. And here is a Psalm that is written under extreme stress.
- And you can see, there is a deep aloneness in suffering. And this is brought out by this little word, only, or alone, that comes six times in the Psalm.
- [3 : 4 8] You see verse 1? For God alone, my soul waits. Verse 2? He only is my rock. Verse 4? They only.

Verse 5? God only. Verse 6? Verse 9? And in the original, each time is it right at the start of the line, like a bell ringing, to call us to the importance of what is being said.

It's a little like Jesus' phrase. You remember, truly, truly I say to you. You see, there is a sense in which suffering must be experienced and faced alone.

You know that suffering doesn't automatically make us better people. Suffering can make us embittered and more self-focused. But it can also be received from the hand of God.

And when that happens, it clears away the smoke and mirrors that we use to prop up our lives. And in their place, by God's grace, we begin to see what we can trust alone.

[4 : 47] God alone. He is the only true place of safety. You see, the result of David's adversity here is not just that we can look as spectators and see his growing confidence.

But what this psalm does is it opens before us the door of salvation so that we might understand and say together, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

Well, the psalm is a sandwich. There are two outer sections where David faces two enemies of salvation and then in the middle section he applies it to us.

So let's look at the two outer sections. The first I've called the only safe place in affliction. And we're going to read together verses 1 to 4.

For God alone, my soul waits in silence. A mouth and cross and that his home comes through his malady. My Father policy is my God and my salvation.

[5 : 46] My interest I shall not hear anything to do. On the behalf of the Holy Spirit, the church, our man, who shatter. Salah, thank you.

Yes, David's enemies had managed to make his life feel very insecure. He feels like a wall that is leaning, leaning, leaning, and all it's going to take is just one nasty word for him to collapse.

Or he feels like a fence with the palings that have been pulled away, a fence that's past its prime, that's only useful for being pushed down and replaced. And these words are terribly important for us in a world that is increasingly insecure, where you can be in a luxury resort in Kenya or in Bali, or you can be in any commercial jetliner now and be the target of deadly attack.

And in a world where the Christian faith seems increasingly ridiculous. You see, if you look at verse 4, it's very interesting that the main weapon of the enemies of God's people is misinformation.

They take pleasure in falsehood. They bless with their mouth, but inwardly they curse. You see, flattery and falsehood are a developed skill. And this was before the advent of the popular media.

[7 : 22] You see, when someone lies to you, it's difficult enough. But what when they move the stage further and take delight in their falsehood? What do you do when you have been lied to and lied about?

What do you do when you have prayed and prayed and it seems that nothing is happening? And the answer is verse 1. For God alone my soul waits in silence.

For he only is my salvation. You probably know that some Bibles translate this, my soul finds rest in God alone. And I've heard this used as a kind of proof text for tranquility and stress reduction.

And I wish it meant that, but that's not what it means. It's not about finding rest. First, David tells us his soul is silent. Toward God alone my soul is silent.

In other words, he has said all that he can say. He has prayed his prayers. He has no more words of prayer left. Or perhaps no more words will come in prayer.

- [8 : 25] It's now up to God. And even the word silence isn't quite it. The word really is stillness. And whatever this stillness is, and how desperately we need stillness, it is clearly not some higher state removed above the nastiness of life.
- I mean, verses 3 and 4 are brutally realistic, which looks at all the envy and the malice and the lies around us and calls them for what they are. The stillness that David is talking about here looks at the reality of our circumstances.
- It looks right into the face of those who have hurt us most deeply. It looks into the eyes of those who wish us ill and are working to bring us down.
- And instead of plotting and strategizing and sharpening the tongue, it says, For God alone is my salvation. He only is my rock, my salvation, my fortress.
- You see, the biblical stillness is not a fatalistic resignation to my circumstances. But in the face of conflict and abuse, in the face of a campaign of lies, in the face of insecurity and fear and anxiety, true faith is able to see where its confidence truly lies.
- [9 : 47] Not in others, not in ourselves, but in God alone. Biblical faith is not true faith until it rests on God alone.
- And if our faith rests on God and other things together and is mixed, we don't have any right to feel secure and confident. That is why the emphasis here is not really on the rest or the stillness or the silence.
- The rest is in God, sorry, the emphasis is on God and God alone. And you know, here we are right at the heart of the biblical revelation. The singularity of God.
- We've already heard it in our service. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And because the Lord our God is one, salvation comes from Him alone.
- Where else could it come from? It means that He Himself is our salvation. Salvation isn't something separate from Him. But it comes to us as we cling to Him as our one Lord.
- [10 : 56] And that's why David picks up these pictures of a rock and a fortress. You see, the rock is the place we run to when we're scared. But the fortress is the place where we live secure. And since God only is my rock, my fortress and salvation, David says, I shall not greatly be moved.
- It's a great line. You might expect him to say, I shall never be moved. But he's aware that he might move just a little bit. He's still aware of his weakness. And he says, although I may move with the tide, my anchor is firmly fixed.
- And so I shall not greatly be moved. Here is the only safe place in affliction. And in the last section, verses 9 to 12, we read about the only safe place in affluence.
- Let's read verses 9 to 12 together. Men of lower state are but a breath. Men of higher state are a delusion in the balances they go up.
- Amen. Men of higher state are and fear.
- [12 : 09] Men of higher state are and greater. Amen. Men of higher state are and Jeremy comedy. Mind of higher state and spoiled Dayton's claims that he's still alive. Thank you.
- In just the same way that affliction does not automatically make us better people, neither does affluence. You probably knew that. The problem is the same problem in both issues.
- It's where our confidence lies. And you might be excused for thinking that if you were born in the right circles, it might weigh in your favor.
- Or if you've managed to accumulate significant wealth, you have a significant future. Or if you don't have either, you might look from the outside and imagine that money and position brings meaning and contentment.
- But the Bible says to us in these verses that wealth is a lie. It's a lie because it deludes us that both the wealthy and the poor are but a breath.

[13 : 19] And the word breath is the same word in Ecclesiastes for meaninglessness and vanity. It doesn't mean our lives are meaningless, but it means apart from God, there is nothing worthy of our trust.

Nothing. At a part, living a life without reference to God, who gave us breath in the first place, misses the reason for that very breath.

God's scales are so different from the ones that we operate with. It's so easy to be infatuated with position and prestige and the platinum club, particularly since we are being told this week that the real meaning of Christmas is giving.

At least that's what the Oak Ridge Mall are telling us. What these verses are saying is if you put all the wealth and prestige that this world has to offer on one side of the scales, it is air, it rises up compared to the weight of the eternal refuge and salvation that we have in God.

I mean, once we start to see this, it becomes foolishness beyond belief to place our confidence in possessions or position in anything but God.

[14 : 39] And this is what God's word warns us about again and again. And David says he only needs to say it once, we need to hear it again and again, that if our lives are not anchored in the rock of God's power, if we do not live within the fortress of God's love, we are like the chaff which is blown away.

We are either absorbed in riches or absorbed in God. We are either living for this world or for the next. We either set our hearts on this world or we set our hearts on God.

And in the midst of our self-deception, David holds up the power of God and the love of God against our transitory, temporary, ephemeral lives.

Stands the power of God and the love of God opening the door for salvation for us. Here is the only safe place in affliction and the only safe place in affluence.

Well, what's the application? Let's have a look, shall we? Let's read together verses 5 to 8. And as we do so, notice that David doesn't turn toward the enemy of salvation.

[15 : 51] He now turns to us, the congregation. Verses 5 to 8. For God alone my soul waits in silence. For my hope is from him.

He only is my rock and salvation. My fortress I shall not be shaken. For my God is my deliverance and my honor.

I thank God and my grace, God. For my grace, God. For my grace, God. For my grace, God. For my grace, God. For my grace, God. For my grace, God. For my grace, God.

For my grace, God. Thank you. It's impossible to miss the deeply personal nature of this, isn't it? I mean, David says, it's my soul, my hope, my rock, my salvation, my fortress, my deliverance, my honor.

Nine times in three verses. And the reason is because salvation means absolutely nothing unless we can say, God is my salvation.

[16 : 53] God is my salvation. He doesn't just give salvation. He doesn't just reveal salvation. He is my real protection. I often hear people say to me things like, I wish I had faith.

As though the big issue is my ability to have faith or the quality and quantity or strength of my faith. But the issue is not the quality or size of my faith.

The issue is where my faith is placed. And what the psalm does for us is it shows us that there is only one place worthy.

And it is God himself. True faith is not placed in the gifts God gives us or the people God gives us to us. Even less in prestige and position, but in him personally.

And that's why Mary sings, my spirit rejoices in God my saviour. I mean these are the only words that become adequate to describe what is happening to her. There is no more personal issue than who God is to me.

[17 : 59] And God offers himself to us as our rock and our fortress and our deliverer and our salvation. And he waits for us to brand our initials personally on each one of the names that he gives to us.

The psalm is inviting us to taste and see that the Lord is good. To taste the sweetness of salvation. We cannot taste it unless we can say he is my rock.

He is my salvation. And that is why verse 8 is the pivot. David turns to the congregation and he says trust in him at all times.

Pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for the only time he says for us. What that means is that we do not come to church for our own spiritual benefit.

I hope it is spiritually beneficial for you. But the real reason we come is for the benefit of the brothers and sisters who are sitting around you. The main reason we say the creed week by week and sing hymns week by week.

[19 : 03] Just as the main reason for this psalm and Mary's song is not to give personal expression to my faith. But it is to strengthen the faith of people who are sitting around you.

I wonder if you find like I do that I begin to think like the world does. And I think this whole thing about trusting God is vaguely ridiculous. I mean it is so much easier to believe the lies and the things that I can buy.

And I feel like a tottering fence and a bulging wall trusting in God's salvation. And then we come to church and you hear the person behind you say Amen. And you stand and you hear the person next to you when it comes time for the creed say I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

But for us and for our salvation he came down from heaven. And we move through the career of Christ and the Holy Spirit and we finish by saying together I believe in one holy catholic apostolic church.

I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. And it is a massive encouragement to one another.

[20 : 14] I met a man who was here for a number of years who was going through an extraordinarily difficult time in his life. And I said to him, what is it that kept you in the faith? He said to me, well, and this was during Harry's time I should add.

He said, well I heard lots of sermons and I can't remember anything out of all of them. He said, it was during my time as well I should add. But he said, I used to come to church and I would say the creed week by week by week.

And people around me would say they believed in God's creation and salvation in Jesus Christ and his coming again. He said, that was reality for me. That's why, let me add as a little footnote, it is so important to be weekly in your attendance.

I need to say, you are not coming to support the clergy. That's a kind thought but completely irrelevant. The reason you come is to strengthen the faith of those around about you.

Your being here is a gift to them. And that is why the key to verse 8 is this phrase, pour out your heart before him. The issue is not how much we are suffering so much as it is to whom we entrust ourselves.

[21 : 31] In whom is our confidence. And David says, pour it out. Take the bucket, turn it upside down. All the inmost desires and suffering and sorrow and sin, hide nothing from him for you can hide nothing from him.

So, let me finish by asking you this question. Where does your trust and confidence lie? We are in a period of tremendous uncertainty and anxiety.

And there is a great deal to unsettle us and to give us fear. And the question is this, where will we put our trust? Is the love of God sufficient for us?

Is the power of God adequate for us? I mean, where shall we look? To whom shall we turn? Where is the only true place of security?

Is it not God and God alone? Are you able to say with Mary and David, God is my salvation? You may have been a church goer for many years and you know that Jesus died to save us from our sin.

[22 : 44] And you know that in his death the power of God and the love of God are working together for our salvation. You know that because of Christ you and I matter infinitely to God.

But your confidence, you know your confidence isn't really in Christ. Again I say salvation remains completely outside of us until we can say God alone is my salvation.

We are placing our confidence and our trust in all sorts of things all the time. I place my trust in my doctor to give me a right diagnosis and to give me the right medication. I trust my car's brakes are going to work.

And they often do. But if I trust my doctor to stop me in traffic, I'm going to be in trouble. And when it comes to salvation, the temptation is to share our trust with God and some other things.

Then God alone is not my salvation. And to trust him means taking the confidence that we have in other things for salvation and removing it and placing it in him, directing it towards him and him alone.

[23 : 56] Trust in him at all times, says the psalm. Pour out your hearts before him. For God alone is our refuge. God alone is our rock. God alone is our fortress and hope.

God alone is our fortress and hope. My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.