

“THE ROCK THAT IS HIGHER THAN I”

PSALM 61

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INTRODUCTION

This psalm describes circumstances in David’s life when he was away from Jerusalem and the tabernacle and outside the holy land proper as indicated by the words “from the end of the earth” in v. 2 and his desire was to be able to be at the tabernacle again (v. 4). Moreover, he was experiencing some traumatic events in his life as shown by the fact that his “heart is faint” (v. 2). Three historical periods in David’s life have been suggested as possibilities:

- 1) The circumstance when he was in Syria and received the devastating news of Edom’s attack against southern Israel (Psalm 60). However, that situation does not well explain why David feels shut away from the tabernacle; for he voluntarily left on that military campaign and would return when finished. Moreover, an enemy attack would not necessarily threaten his divine right to the throne and the fulfillment of the promise given him by God in II Sam. 7 of the continuity of his house, throne, and kingdom to future generations.
- 2) The time of David’s flight from Saul and Saul’s attempt to kill David and prevent his rule. Two primary facts seem to rule out this suggestion:
 - a. The reference to “the king” in vv. 6-7 favors a time when David had already assumed rule, not a time when he had only been promised rule.
 - b. The mention of God’s “tent”—the tabernacle—and David’s desire to “dwell” there can hardly speak of the time when the ark of the covenant was in an unsettled location—and especially a time when it was in the land of the Philistines and then soon thereafter in a private home for many years far from the rest of the tabernacle. Staying there under the shelter of God’s wings fits the time after David had brought the ark to Jerusalem (II S. 6).
- 3) The time when David fled from Jerusalem to Mahanaim in Transjordan at the rebellion of his son Absalom. This time is the most likely, for David’s throne was threatened, he was in great emotional distress, and he had to leave the tabernacle and ark behind.

To get a better picture as to how David put his confidence in God during this difficult time, let us read II Sam. 15:24-26; 30-31. Now we can understand David’s distress expressed in vv. 1-2 and why he desperately needed help getting up on the “Rock that is higher than I” (v. 2).

Reading the Psalms helps us realize that we can face life’s problems also, and can be confident that God will bring us through them with victory and joy—“singing praise to His name forever” (v. 8). *God is with us; God strengthens us; God delivers us. God keeps His covenant faithfulness with us; God will make it possible for us to keep our vows to Him and rejoice in Him forever.*

GOD WILL LEAD YOU TO THE ROCK THAT IS HIGHER THAN YOU!

- I. CRY OUT TO GOD IN YOUR DISTRESS (1-2)
 - A. Wherever you are—even “from the end of the earth.”
 - B. Whatever your emotional state—even when your “heart is faint.”
 - C. However impossible the circumstances may seem—the Rock is “higher” than you; you cannot ascend it in your strength.

II. REMEMBER GOD'S PAST PROVISION AND PROTECTION and HIS PROMISED HOSPITALITY AND SHELTER (3-5).

Notice how David keeps getting closer and closer and in a more personal relationship: from a high craggy rock, to a refuge further defined as a "tower of strength"—intentionally built by someone, to personal hospitality provided within the tent of his host and the resulting safety among friends (v. 4), and then to the "affectionate parental shelter symbolized by "thy wings"—v. 4b.

- A. God has been a "refuge," even "a tower of strength" for David (3).
- B. God will allow David to "dwell in His tent forever" and to "take refuge in the shelter of His wings" (4).
- C. God has "heard his vows"—along with his prayers (5).
- D. God has given David his inheritance belonging to "those who fear His name" (5).
 - In David's case the inheritance involves the land rights and his possessions.
 - But especially it involves the divine promise of throne, house, and kingdom from II Sam 7:16.

III. LOOK FORWARD TO THE FULFILLMENT OF ALL OF GOD'S PROMISED BENEFITS TO YOU [as did David] (6-7).

- A. God adds "days to the days of the king." (6)
- B. God makes his years to be as "generation and generation." (6b)

Remember the glorious future that each child of God has also!

- C. God secures the king's sitting on his throne **forever**. (7a)

We must remember the application of David's covenant promises to his kingly descendants, and also to his ultimate Kingly Descendant—King Messiah!

- D. God provides as "guardians" His most special divine attributes: His **loyal love** and His **faithfulness** (7b).

These guardians "preserve him"—cf. 40:11.

IV. KEEP YOUR VOWS AND SING HIS PRAISE FOREVER—DAY TO DAY (8).

- The Hebrew is simply "day/day." One day after another, involving both frequency and regularity.
- Normally a vow is paid in a single ceremony at the tabernacle.
- David thinks of what cannot be dispatched so quickly, but will enduringly be paid by him.
- He will make his whole life one continuous paying of vows.
- His debt to God can never be fully paid.

CONCLUSION

George Herbert in "The God of Love my Shepherd Is" puts it this way:

Surely Thy sweet and wondrous love
Shall measure all my days;
And as it never shall remove,
So neither shall my praise.

Yes, **GOD WILL LEAD YOU TO THE ROCK THAT IS HIGHER THAN YOU!**

Therefore, you will be able to "keep your vows and sing His praise forever!

See *Revelation 22:1-5* with *Revelation 5:11-14*.