

Trust Psalms

by Rev. Dr. John C. Tittle



Prayer of Illumination

Blessed are you, Lord our God, king of the universe, who gave us your Word and the truth and set everlasting life in our midst. Blessed are you, Lord, giver of your Word.
Amen.

Scripture: Psalm 62:1-12 (NRSV)

A Psalm of David.

- ¹ For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.
- ² He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall never be shaken.
- ³ How long will you assail a person,
will you batter your victim, all of you,
as you would a leaning wall, a tottering fence?
- ⁴ Their only plan is to bring down a person of prominence.
They take pleasure in falsehood;
they bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse. *Selah*

⁵ For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.
⁶ He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
⁷ On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.
⁸ Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us. *Selah*

⁹ Those of low estate are but a breath,
those of high estate are a delusion;
in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a breath.
¹⁰ Put no confidence in extortion,
and set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.
¹¹ Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,
¹² and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord.
For you repay to all
according to their work.

*The grass withers and the flower fades,
but the Word of God endures forever.*

SERMON – Trust Psalms

In May 1940 the Nazis invaded the Netherlands and took only five days to capture it. About 140,000 Jews lived in Holland then. By the end of the war, 110,000 of the Jews had been executed.

A forty-eight year old watchmaker named Corrie ten Boom was not a Jew, but she and her family were horrified. A devout Christian family, they became a part of the Dutch Underground, an organization dedicated to hiding and protecting Jews.

This was risky business, but for Corrie ten Boom, well worth it. The family had a secret room constructed in their house. It could hold up to six people at a time. A bookcase affixed to the wall concealed the entry. The family often practiced surprise, middle of the night drills to prepare for the Gestapo's raids and interrogations.

Eventually 800 Jews and defecting Nazis stayed in Corrie's hiding place and were able to find refuge and escape. Corrie ten Boom herself was eventually arrested and sent to prison camp, but she never revealed the location of the secret hiding place.

While in Ravensbrook, Corrie was mysteriously released from the concentration camp. She found out a number of years later that it was due to a clerical error. The week after she left, all the women her age were executed.

Corrie went on to write the bestselling classic *"The Hiding Place"* and was sought after as a speaker. She died at the age of 91.

*God alone is my rock and my salvation,
My fortress; I shall not be shaken.
On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
My mighty rock, my refuge is in God. (62:2)*

A number of the verses of the Psalm begin with the emphatic Hebrew word translated "only," "truly," or "alone."

"For God alone I wait silently." (62:1, 5)

The repetition is like a prayer mantra that the psalmist repeats over and over. It's a reminder. Yes, I have pursuers, but there is no one to fear. Human beings are just humans—no matter who they are. God is immortal, but we are mortal. God is infinite. We are finite and transient. When placed on heaven's scale, every human being, including generals and leaders, are all lighter than air in the eternal scheme of things. Vapor. A mere mirage. But God, God is a rock. Solid. Secure. Weighty. Eternal.

The key is to trust in God, not in mortals or misplaced things. Place no confidence in forceful threats, Set no vain hopes on stealing or bending the rules. Don't fix your heart on wealth or ill-gotten gain. If you come into money, don't make it the center of your life. Keep things in perspective. Don't get too attached to it. Trust in God, not in yourself or your resources. Be still.

Ryan Holiday in his book *"Stillness is the Key"* tells about archery master Awa Kenzo. Unlike most masters, Kenzo spent almost no time training the archer in aiming and shooting. Instead, he taught his apprentices the mental skill of detachment. "What stands in your way," said Kenzo, "is you have too much willful will." "Willful will" is about craving for control, trying to dictate the process—bending things the way you want them, when you want them.

It was this willful will that would often hinder students from learning and truly mastering the art of archery. Kenzo's guidance was this: Let go. Let go of the outcome. Hone the skill of being still. Don't overthink it. Don't force the outcome. Stillness heightens performance. Looseness provides better control than a tight grip. Pour your energy into focus, patience, breathing, steadiness, clarity. Release the arrow like it falls from you "like ripe fruit." In this posture you can slow down and collect yourself. You're aware and attuned to yourself and your surroundings. You're poised—even when surrounded by adversaries or distractions. Trust allows you stillness under stress.

Spirituality is a lot like archery. Even in the midst of a crisis or criticism, you have confident trust in God's presence and protection. We can relax and be loose—yet disciplined.

Trust is about getting in the flow of the Spirit—in your relationships, your work, your performance, your relationship with God, even when life is getting choppy and disjointed. Another way of describing getting in the flow is *abiding in Christ*. Remaining in him. When you're in that place of

trust, no matter what's going on you're unruffled, unflappable, imperturbable. Different religions and cultures have tried to describe this.

- The Buddhists call it *upekkha*.
- The Japanese *zanshin*.
- Muslims *aslama*.
- Hebrews *hishtavut*.
- The Bhagavad Gita call it *samatvam* – evenness of mind.
- The Greeks *euthymia*.
- Christians *aequanimitas* – or as we know it in English, Equanimity. Quietude. Stillness. Calm resolve. Relaxed alertness – even under fire. With trust in God, we can be steady – even as the world spins.

Life is kind of like muddy water. In order to see through it, you have to let things settle. When we're stirred up or disturbed in the heat of the moment, it's hard to see clearly. But when we trust, when we're patient and still, clarity often comes. Trust is willing to wait for it.

King David, the author of this Psalm, models this for us. He was being assailed by enemies in the wilderness. I can just imagine him praying as he hid in the desert rocks: Rely upon God alone. Look not to people, not to control, not brute force, not money, not self-reliance. God. Just keep breathing. Everything I need comes from God. Nothing but God will suffice.

God, you're all I need. My all in all. And man, do I need you now.

Trust means you're content but not complacent.

"In God alone my soul is at rest, my HELP comes from him." (62:1, 5)

With calm resolve, we can wait in stillness and quiet.

*Come what may, God, you're my rock of strength, my rock of refuge.
Jesus, you're my rock of Gibraltar. (62:6)*

I stand unshaken and I shall not be moved. I will not falter or fail.

J.R.R. Tolkien gives us some great guidance here. The Greek word *katastrophe* means "a sudden turn." In English the word *catastrophe* means "a sudden turn for the worse." But when we're in a state of trust, our catastrophes can be seen as what Tolkien calls a "*eucatastrophe*," a good catastrophe.

Eucatastrophe is a sudden turn, a joyous turn where we experience serendipitous and miraculous grace in an impossible time. Tolkien writes that fairy stories help us to build our proficiency in seeing the eucatastrophe in the catastrophe. A eucatastrophe isn't pretending that bad is good, or living in a state of denial. Rather, in a trusting state, we're committed to hope. The smudges on the window of life are windexed. We can see the big picture better and more clearly. We see beyond circumstances to a hope that awaits us. No matter how bad things are, we trust God will eventually bring upon us a sudden turn for the good. A *eucatastrophe*.

Trials strip us down to the bare minimum. We're almost forced to whittle down to a spiritual minimalism, going back to the basics. The psalmist puts it this way:

Two truths about God are clear:

- #1 To God alone belongs power, and
- #2 To God alone belongs merciful love, or *chesed*.

When you're feeling vulnerable and exposed—like a leaning wall or a tottering fence, and your enemy wants to give one last shove, it's there you remember—God has the power and the love. We can wait quietly for him. He will remember me and my labor of love.

When life is kicking you when you're down. You go to God, breathe deeply, and say: I may be getting a butt kicking right now, but God is my buttress. I can lean upon him. He's got my backside.

We don't have to give psychic space to forces that drain, distract, or deplete us. We focus on God and God fills us up. As the psalmist says,

"My SECURITY and my SIGNIFICANCE depend upon God."

His feet are on the rock and he's on a roll. He's not just talking to himself. He's gaining momentum.

David starts preaching to the congregation too. There's a movement from "my" to "our." We move from worship to witness.

*"TRUST IN HIM AT ALL TIMES YOU PEOPLE!
POUR OUT YOUR HEARTS BEFORE HIM—God is our refuge."*

No matter what happens, it's going to be okay. It won't be easy, but God won't leave us hanging. My catastrophe—a turn of events for the bad, is going to become a eucatastrophe—a turn of events for the good.

"God alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress. I shall never be shaken." (62:6)

Amen.

New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.