

Psalm 61:1-8

As well as experiencing the joy of the Lord, which is our never ending strength, the Christian life often includes many tears, conflicts and struggles.

Summary

In Psalm 61, David experiences forlorn sadness and anxious distress and shows us that when we feel alone and troubled, we should draw near to God in prayer.

1. Distant Isolation vv. 1-2a

We are not told the precise setting and time in David's life to which this refers. Whatever the occasion, David was experiencing sadness and distress over some unspecified troubles.

For many people, the disconnected nature of today's world leaves them struggling with a profound sense of loneliness.

David shows us that when we feel alone, we should draw near to God in prayer (**Psalm 61:1-2**). However far we may be from the comfort of family and friends, God is always as near. This is why fellowship with God-through his Word and prayer is the best antidote to isolation (**Psalm 34:18**).

2. High Rock vs. 2b

Psalm 61 suggests that David was not only lonely but also in some danger, since he speaks of longing for a rock of shelter (**Psalm 61:2b-3**). Throughout his psalms, David often refers to a "rock" as a strong place of shelter from enemies.

When David speaks of a rock that is higher than I, he probably means that he needs a place of refuge high enough to be out of his enemies' reach. His problem, though, is that he himself cannot reach that secure place. David is asking God to lift him up to that strong and secure place where he can look down on his foes without fear.

There are good reasons why Christians read David's reference to "the rock that is higher than I" as referring especially to Jesus Christ.

The Bible frequently uses the imagery of a rock with respect to Christ and his gospel. Christians look up to Jesus and worship one who is infinitely high above us.

When David speaks of his saving rock as being "higher than I," his main point is that he needs God's help to reach its safety.

This predicament accurately describes the sinner's soul in the presence of Christ.

3. Pictured Security vv. 3-4

No sooner does David ask to be lifted up to the rock than he begins to remember the ways that God has helped him in the past (**Psalm 61:3**), and as he does so, his prayers give way to praise.

Psalm 61:3-4 present a series of four pictures by which David rejoices in God's gracious safekeeping.

First, the general statement that "you have been my refuge" (**Ps. 61:3**).

Secondly, David referred to the Lord as "a strong tower against the enemy" (**Psalm 61:3**).

Thirdly, David exclaimed, "Let me dwell in your tent forever" (**Ps. 61:4**).

He spoke of more than safety in a secure place.

He also spoke of enjoying intimate communion with God in that refuge.

Fourthly, the picture of a mother bird covering her vulnerable chicks with her wings (**Ps. 61:4**). This image speaks not only of protection but also of comfort.

4. Prayer for the King vv. 5-7

By remembering who God is for him, David also recalls what God has done for him: (**Psalm 61:5**). For God to have heard David's vows is to have accepted him among the God-fearing company of the Lord's servants.

The second half of psalm 61 is notable for its remarkable prayer for blessing on Israel's king.

Whether David is thinking of threats to himself or is petitioning God for long life for all the sons who will sit on his throne (**Psalm 61:6**), he realized that the peace and blessing of the nation flow from the stability of the kingship. Whilst David may have the earthly line of kings in mind, his prayer includes requests that can be fulfilled only in the divine kingship of his descendant Jesus Christ (**Psalm 61:7**). Just as Israel's blessings of peace and prosperity flowed from the stability of David's kingship, the same is true for the throne of Jesus Christ and his eternal kingdom of salvation.

5. Christ, Our Rock vs. 8

With these exalted thoughts of Christ's eternal throne in mind, David concludes his psalm by resolving to worship the Lord in reverent obedience (**Psalm 61:8**).

These words provide a good summary of our Christian duty and the right response to the great salvation revealed through Jesus Christ.