

find it hard to maintain our trust at all times because we can be distracted by a thousand other things which call for our attention. In reality, this is a matter of our 'walk' with God. The Christian life is a journey in which we can discover that the presence of God can be something that is real all the time, but we have to work at the personal disciplines by which this becomes a reality, and many people do not wish to engage with any disciplines (yet still consider themselves disciples). Waiting on God is one of the essential disciplines of faith; it is a constant vigilance for God's presence in all aspects of life.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- Are you conscious of waiting on God? It may be that you do not find it easy to be conscious of the Lord's presence with you whilst at work, or with family, for example. Pray and ask the Lord to help you find simple ways of reminding yourself that He is with you all the time.
- Pray against the works of evil that damage the witness of God's people in your church and in your neighbourhood. There will be many different ways of responding to this challenge, but make sure you do not pray against people merely because of disagreement. Pray against the enemy for creating trouble.

Final Prayer

Great God of love, come to the hearts of the poor and downtrodden who need the hope that You alone can give. May we, knowing the privileges of the life we have been given, do all in our power to help others and serve You, the One who does what is right for all people. AMEN

Prayer

Breathe, O Holy Spirit of God, breath on me. Stir my senses into life, revive my faltering hopes and dreams, and reawaken my love for You and for others. Then, may I be caught up in the spiritual wind which blows throughout the world to do the Father's will, and become content in every way to be Your disciple. All praise to You, awesome Holy Spirit! AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Fire Services

Pray for all who work in investigating fire, and its causes and effects. Such research is crucial to the fire services and public safety; so pray that it is done with integrity.

On-going prayers

- Give thanks to God for the life of each member of your family
- Pray for those suffering with cholera in southern Africa
- Pray for all those whose prospects are bleak this Christmas

Meditation

Almighty and omnipotent God, restore our spiritual sight

To see Your Gospel in the smile of a little child;
To see beyond the visible to find the eternal truth;
To see the amazing power of Your healing touch;
To see through evil and resist its persistent lies;
To see what is beautiful amidst the world's ugliness;
To see the powerful difference that love can make;
To see all that is true and right and pursue it with vigour;
To see how to find justice without compromise.

We praise You, mighty Lord, for sight restored and faith renewed.

Bible Study - Psalm 62

¹ For the director of music. For Jeduthun. A psalm of David.

*In God alone my soul finds rest;
my salvation comes from Him.*

² He alone is my rock and my salvation;

He is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

³ How long will you assault a man?
Are you all intent on destruction,
as if of a leaning wall or a wobbly fence?

⁴ They only plan to insult His dignity;
they delight in deception.

*They bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse.*

Selah

⁵ In God alone my soul is quiet;
my hope comes from him.

⁶ He alone is my rock and my salvation;

He is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

⁷ In God alone is my salvation and my glory,

and God is my mighty rock and refuge.

- ⁸ *Trust in Him at all times, O people;
pour out your hearts to Him,
for God is our refuge.*
Selah
- ⁹ *The children of Adam are mortal,
the children of men are liars;
Weighed on a balance, they are
nothing;
all together lighter than breath.*
- ¹⁰ *Have no confidence in extortion*
- or become vain through robbery;
if your riches increase,
do not set your heart on them.*
- ¹¹ *Once God has spoken,
twice I have heard this:
that power belongs to God,*
- ¹² *Faithful love is Yours, O Lord.
and You will reward all people
according to what they have
done.*

Review

This psalm is about waiting confidently on God in the midst of the trials and tribulations of life. It is relatively easy for us to use the psalm by thinking of the evils mentioned within it as spiritual enemies, and rejoicing in the psalm's great poetic phrases of confidence, such as that found in the first verse; 'In God alone my soul finds rest ...' (62:1). It is also easy to see how this psalm may have arisen as a poem written by a king (like David) who experienced the real life oppression of physical enemies, and waited confidently on God for help at times of battle; 'He is my fortress, I will never be shaken!' (62:6).

The reason why I have chosen this psalm for our Christmas studies is as it may also be read as an 'advent' psalm, because of its emphasis on waiting for the coming of the Lord. Just like we who wait for Christmas Day do so knowing that the coming of the baby Jesus into the world is a certainty, the one who waits in this psalm is confident of God's salvation. As with so many psalms, this great poem is capable of speaking to a wide variety of human situations because its themes are broad and comprehensive. They invite us to appreciate that the great works of God in this world are all alike, for our God has a single aim and purpose for everything He does in the world, which is to offer His love and salvation to all. Jesus came into the world to make this salvation a reality for all people of all times and all places, and this psalm speaks about the feelings of those who wait for that salvation.

Waiting for God whilst the enemy is around The enemy in this psalm appears to be constantly willing to fight against any who claim to stand with God. Just like Satan, the enemy attacks people who believe with destructive intent (62:3) and a plan to topple God by 'insulting His dignity' (62:4) and dethroning Him in our eyes. We should know that this is His aim and intent; moreover, all human attempts to deal with sin and evil are useless because in spiritual matters, we have no strength of our own. As the psalm says, when weighed, we are 'lighter than breath' (62:9).

Today, all God's people live in the knowledge that although they trust in God, sin and evil stand at the very door of our lives and will quickly enter, either if we give our permission, or if we unwittingly leave the door open. We cannot just sail through life as if problems will not come our way, we should live instead like the writer of the psalm, as people who trust in God and yet who know that we need a defence like a 'fortress' that can 'never be shaken' (62:2). The people of Israel thought of Jerusalem, or Zion, as the dwelling place of God with His people, because that is where the Temple was (or in David's day, the Ark of the Covenant). For them, this was their hilltop 'fortress'; their secure defence was rooted in their trust in God's presence with them, rather than any military strength or natural impregnability of that great ancient city. For us, God is present with us in Jesus Christ, who came to this world as a baby and consequently understands our predicament. He is therefore our 'fortress', and in waiting for His coming at Christmas, we await His help with complete confidence.

Confidence based on God's faithfulness

Confidence in God does not simply happen, it builds up in us because of the good experiences we have of His practical love, help and guidance. The people of Israel, and especially their kings, were called on to remember the great historic acts of God recorded in their scriptures and most succinctly in the story of God's deliverance of the nation from Egypt. Great Psalms (e.g. 105, 114 etc.) were written which were recited so that people would remember God's powerful work for His people, and periodically, the people celebrated the great covenant relationship they had with their God (see Joshua 24:25, 2 Kings 11:4f. 2 Kings 23:2f. etc.).

Scriptures such as our psalm today help us remember God's faithfulness to us because words such as 'In God alone my soul finds rest' (62:1) invite us to recall those times when the Lord has indeed brought us the spiritual peace and security our souls crave. In addition, however, God's people the Church, should celebrate the many things that God has done for them within their own history; special events, baptisms, even Christmas itself; all of these things remind us of what God has done for us in the past, and will give us confidence in the future. When our psalm says 'trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to Him.' (62:8), it says so in confidence that if we will honour God in this way, He will prove to us that He is faithful and will never let us down. He will always help us, just as surely as Christmas morning comes with all its joy and celebration.

Faith which transforms

It is wonderful to have confidence in the face of all evil. Most people will confess that sometimes their faith is less than secure, but a passage of scripture such as this, or the celebration of the festival of Christmas or Easter, or listening to a good and helpful sermon will help them stand firm again on the 'rock' of Christ. It is important to take every opportunity God provides for our spiritual refreshment, or we will fade for lack of encouragement and nourishment. Psalm 62 encourages us to let go of earthly means of support and all riches or means of glory (62:9,10); they are nothing, just mere vanity. True power in spiritual matters belongs to God (62:11), and we will find our strength to do what is right in Him (62:12).

At Christmas time, we look forward to the coming of Christ, because we know that in the very act of remembrance, we will be strengthened to continue to live in faith for the coming year. Each year is a persistent reminder of God's faithfulness, which never fails; and as we join in with the festivities, we can be spiritually strengthened to stand against all the perils of the day.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Discuss in your group the circumstances in which you find it possible to be at peace with God.
2. What are the ways in which 'the enemy' attempts to make trouble for God's people today?
3. How can we help each other 'pour out our hearts' to the Lord (62:8), and so discover that He is our 'refuge'? How can we minister to each other?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

'Trust in God' is a simple message, but one which many people have great difficulty with. Either we find it hard to understand what we must 'do' in order to express our trust, or we