

Psalm 62:7

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[0 : 00] I'd like you to turn now to the book of Psalms in the Old Testament, Psalm 62, which is on page 579 of the Bible.

So, page 579, Psalm 62, and we'll look particularly at verse 7, although I'd like to say something I want to share with you relates to the whole psalm.

And yet verse 7 is the central verse in the psalm, and many of the psalms have been constructed in such a way that the central verse is the pivot of the psalm.

And I think this is the case in this psalm. My salvation and my honour, says the psalmist, depend on God. He is my mighty rock, my refuge.

As I explained to the children, baptism is a sign of ownership, a sign of ownership that God has given to his church.

[1 : 15] And because it is a sign of ownership, it thereby is something, a sacrament that demands an act of submission or a profession of faith on the part of those who receive it, either for themselves or for their infant children.

Now this psalm, Psalm 62, is a profession of faith. It's a profession of the psalmist's faith. He is telling others here about his faith.

God is not directly addressed in the psalm until the very last verse. The whole psalm is a profession or a confession of faith.

And it's been preserved, along with similar psalms to this, in the Psalter, to help us to profess our faith together. As we sing it, and as we meditate upon it.

Over two billion people in the world have been baptized as Christians. That is one-third, roughly, one-third of the global population of six and a half billion people have received Christian baptism.

[2 : 37] And then, if that is the case, then you ask the question, why is the world in a mess? If one-third of the world's population have been baptized as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, why are things not better?

Why is the world not a better place? A third is not a majority, but it is undoubtedly sufficient to attain a critical mass to change the world.

The answer, I think, was, we might guess, but the answer was certainly brought out statistically in an analysis that was undertaken, I think, in the year 2005 in churches throughout the United States.

And the situation there, I suspect, is very similar to the situation here in this regard. And in that analysis, which is carried out by a man called George Barnier, who is a researcher of religious trends in America, he discovered that eight out of every ten Christian believers do not feel they've entered the presence of God or experienced a connection with God during their church worship service.

You may have two billion professing Christians, but according to this research, only two out of ten have a sense of entering the presence of God when we come together on the Lord's Day.

[4 : 18] And further, in research which was done the following year by the same organization, this revealed that only one Christian in seven ranks his or her relationship with God as the top priority in their lives.

Now, these are American statistics, but I suspect that the situation here is no better, it may even be worse. Only one Christian in seven believes that their relationship with God is their top priority.

Now, when we have any service of baptism, it is a challenge to all of us to renew our commitment. And it raises questions concerning the degree and the depth of our commitment to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so I suspect that these figures which are quoted from America resonate with us. And all of us feel uncomfortable when we hear them because we can identify ourselves with the majority of those who do not have this sense of the presence of God.

What then is the remedy? Well, I think this psalm, Psalm 62, points us to the remedy. It is a profession of faith.

[5 : 48] It is a confession of a believer, albeit a believer under the old covenant, but nevertheless a believer in the Messiah, a believer in the Lord God.

And this psalm, I think, points the way forward to us out of this inertia and this spiritual doldrums in which we find ourselves.

It points the way forward in three ways. First of all, by highlighting the priority of worship. Secondly, by emphasizing the importance of testimony.

And thirdly, by underlining the power of commendation. Now just let's look at each of these in turn. First of all, the priority of worship. Now, if the psalmist, this psalmist, were to be asked by George Barna the questions that he asked Christians in America, he would undoubtedly have been among the one who makes God, one in seven who makes God their top priority.

Because he says here in the first verse, my soul finds rest in God alone. He's got this focus on God alone.

[7 : 09] He repeats it again in verse five. Find rest, O my soul, in God alone. This priority of God and the priority of worshipping him is a very strong focus.

The NRSV and the ESV are more literal rendering of, but not quite literal, but more literal rendering than the NIV, where they translate the opening verse, for God alone my soul waits in silence.

The literal words in Hebrew go like this, silence is my soul unto God. And so what the psalmist is saying here, he's speaking here about stillness and silence.

Now he's doing this in the context of worship. And worship tends to, you know, be noisy, not in the loud sense, but we speak, we sing, we pray.

And the psalmist is here speaking about silence, about stillness. Stillness in his soul. And he's telling us that this is so important, this is his priority, to have this sense of stillness before God.

[8 : 25] It wasn't easy for him to do this. David, at this particular point, was facing a crisis. As we see, and as we sang in verses three and four, he was under attack.

People were trying to topple him. It may have been the great rebellion of Absalom. Many of David's friends turned their backs upon him.

And he was within an inch of losing his kingdom. And yet, he finds time to be silent before the Lord, to be still in his soul before God.

Outside there was this great storm raging. But in his heart, there was this stillness before God. He took time. He created space to be silent before God.

The storm was raging around him. And nevertheless, he was able to say, I shall not be shaken. We live in a world of noise and a world of speed, which is very difficult to be silent.

[9 : 41] The focus today is on efficiency. This leads to all sorts of tensions and stress in people's lives. The need for achieving and accomplishing are deeply ingrained in our culture.

God has given us the Sabbath in order that we might slow down, in order that we might be still, in order that we might know God.

I think this is the first lesson that the psalmist has for us. We need to slow down. We need to be still. We need to be silent. We need to put the brakes on.

Calvin, in his commentary in the psalm, speaks about the grace of silence. I wonder if that's a grace that we need to cultivate. I'm sure it is.

The grace of silence before God. And so worship, public and private, is a time of encounter with God.

[10 : 50] And we need to prepare our hearts for worship. And that's why, you know, underlining again what I said about just coming to church a little bit early, to be still.

It does help. It does enable us to appreciate the presence of God in a greater way and to a greater extent. It was hard for David.

It was hard for us. David himself discovers that he has to return to the need to be silent. Having said that he is silent before God, in verse 5 he comes back and he encourages himself again to be silent.

Because it's not easy, it's difficult. And it won't come easily. But like David, we need to make the effort, we need to make the attempt to be still, to still our souls before God.

The second lesson is the importance of testimony. We read in Romans chapter 10, verse 9, that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

[12 : 02] So what Paul is saying in Romans is that it's important, yes, that we believe in our heart, but it's also important that we confess with our lips. That we make a confession, a profession of our faith.

And as many of us may look back upon our own spiritual history, we know, certainly it's true in my case, that when by the grace of God I came to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and receive him as my Lord and Savior, what clinched it from a human point of view was when I told others that I'd done that.

When I shared my faith with others, it sort of underlined my faith and ratified my faith. And Paul is emphasizing that.

He says, we must not only believe in our hearts, but also confess with our lips. And this psalm gives us an opportunity to do that together because it is a profession of faith.

David is here professing his faith in God. And that's why faith is so important. And that's why baptism, whether the baptism of infants or the baptism of an adult, is preceded by a profession of faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[13 : 23] So this psalm is the psalmist's testimony regarding God's intervention at one critical period in his life. He testifies how God met him when his world was turned upside down, how God met him at the point of his need.

And he tells us and he tells the world how impressed he became by God's power. He speaks in verse 11, he says, one thing the Lord has spoken, two things I have heard, that you, O God, are strong.

God, he discovered the power of God in this situation and he piles up metaphors of God's strength in the psalm. He says, God is my rock, God is my mighty rock, God is my fortress, God is my refuge.

Verses 1, verses 6 and 7. And all of these words are metaphors that describe what he calls my salvation, his relationship with God. His soul being still with God and right before God.

We come back again to the word alone that is found in verses 1 and 5 which emphasise the exclusivity of the psalmist's faith in God.

[14 : 47] This word is found elsewhere in the psalm. It occurs in fact five times, perhaps six times in the psalm. It's a monosyllable in Hebrew.

It's a word which sounds like och, it's ach, that's all it is. But it's a word which is a very interesting word. It usually implies that while certain things may be true, in this case David was facing a plot to usurp his throne.

Yet this word also affirms that there's something else which must not be forgotten. It's like when we say yes, but, and that's what the psalmist is saying, yes, my enemies have rebelled against me, my friends have turned against me, and my throne is in danger, but, God is my rock, God is my refuge, God is my salvation.

My hope is in God alone. He is my God. He is my refuge. And so this little word expresses the language of faith, tackling head on the shattering experiences, one shattering experience in life, affirming that God has not lost control, that God is powerful, and that those who trust him are in the hollow of his hand, even in the heart of a hurricane, even in the heart of a tsunami, we who believe are in the hands of God.

This is the testimony of the psalmist. He testifies that God is his rock, God is his fortress, God is his refuge. This is his testimony, and this is the testimony that he shares with us, and we have an opportunity to share our testimony, those of us who believe together as we sing this psalm, and give him the praise and the glory for what he has done for us.

[16 : 54] I wonder as we come to church this morning, can we say that God is my rock? Can you say that? Can you say that God is your refuge?

Can you say that God is your salvation? God, in his mercy and his grace, is available to us to become our refuge, to become our rock, to become our salvation.

He's available to us so that when we pass through hard and difficult crises in life, we can say yes, but, we can say God, my soul will find rest in God alone.

I'm silent before him alone. He and he alone is the one who matters. He is the one who gives me identity, who gives me security, who gives me meaning and purpose in life.

Other things may be important but not nearly so important as he is. God alone is at the center of my life. By the grace of God, it is possible for men and women to enter into that assurance that the psalmist had and that Paul had.

[18 : 14] But finally, we have here in this psalm the power of commendation. You've seen the priority of worship, the importance of testimony, but the third remedy, if you like, to what we might call a light beneath in God is the power of commendation.

See, the psalmist not only shares his testimony, he urges others to believe. He urges others to make the discovery that he has made.

We see this particularly in verse 8. Trust him at all times, O people, pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

And so he's concerned not simply to testify to what God has done for him, but to urge others to make that discovery too. And he says to the people, he says to the congregation, he says to the nation, he says, trust in him at all times, not just in a crisis, but at all times.

Trust him, follow him, serve him. Another feature of contemporary Christianity that is highlighted by the research that George Barna did in the United States is that Christians tend not to share their faith with non-believers.

[19 : 54] We've come very private about that. We tend not to urge other people to believe. I'm not suggesting that not as he, I don't think, suggesting that we go out and call everybody that we find and urge them to believe.

That can be counterproductive. But the Lord does give us opportunities when in the normal conversation the question arises, the opportunity is given us, when we can testify and we can urge people to believe.

And so often we flank these, so often we duck below the parapet and we remain silent. We may not be silent before God, but we're so often silent before men and women.

And so the psalmist is urging us here to witness, to tell others and to urge others to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust him.

Trust of course in the Bible is more than mental assent, it's more than, you know, ticking the right box, it's more than nodding the head. It's a life commitment.

[21 : 14] And this trust, the psalmist says, should be exercised at all times. There's some people who seem to work on the basis of a 999 faith.

And when there's an emergency, they believe. The story is told of a fisherman out in the storm. He wasn't a believer.

He didn't go to church. But the storm was so fierce that he really was awakened to a sense of urgency. And he called out to the Lord, O Lord, he said, save me in the storm.

And if you deliver me from the storm, I'll never bother you again. And that is the attitude of so many people. They come to God in a crisis, but they never bother him again.

Now the psalmist is saying that if we're going to believe, to really believe, then we believe at all times, not just in crises, not just when things go wrong and when our world is turned upside down.

[22 : 21] He says, Father, he said, pour out your hearts to him. And the heart in the Bible is our innermost being, our thoughts, our feelings, everything that we include in our character, in our personality, in our will, and in our mind.

Pour out your heart. Tell God how you feel. Bring all your emotions, all your thoughts, all your desires to God.

Pour out your heart to God. That's what Hannah did when she prayed for a psalm. That's what the psalmist tells us, he does in Psalm 42, I pour out my soul, he said.

I pour it out. He's speaking figuratively. He's saying, I'm sharing everything, all that I am, my whole personality with you. I'm bringing myself, handing myself over to you.

In Psalm 142, the psalmist says, I pour out my complaint before him. Before him I tell my trouble. I bring myself.

[23 : 35] There's also the title of Psalm 102 is a prayer of an afflicted person who is faint and pours out a lament before God. And so what the psalmist is saying, he's urging us to bring our total being to God, our whole personality, not just a part of us, but all that we are, and bring ourselves totally lock, stock, and barrel and pour ourselves out to God, give ourselves to him without reserve.

forever. And so the psalmist at times was silent before God, but at other times he was very vocal and he poured out his heart and he urges us to do the same, to bring all that we are and all that we have to God and hand ourselves over to him.

But the psalmist here is, the focus here is, is on urging others to do this. And the question I want to leave with you as we bring our service to close this morning is the importance of sharing our faith with others.

That's what the psalmist does here, he urges people to trust in the Lord and to pour out their soul to him. He warns them against deferring to people who are important.

He says in verse 9, low-born men are but a breath and high-born are but a lie, weighed in a balance they are nothing, together they are only a breath. Don't worry about what people think, he said.

[25 : 17] He said don't be concerned about popular opinion. He said all people, the powerful as well as the poor are but a breath. As the Jerusalem Bible translates in the last part of verse 9, put them in the scales and up they go lighter than a puff of wind.

these things ultimately don't really matter. He also urges us not to trust in riches, do not trust in extortion, or take pride in stolen goods, though your riches increased, do not set your heart on them.

When people prefer riches and even dishonest ways of gaining riches, this is an opportunity for us to do what David did.

He urged people to trust in the Lord. He is not to trust in dishonest ways, not to trust in wealth for its own sake, but to trust in the Lord.

We have in our materialistic society an opportunity, indeed a privilege, a responsibility to warn about the fact that Jesus said that moth and rust corrupt earthly riches.

[26 : 34] There is no ultimate security in acquisition of goods or of wealth. But also commissioned to warn, as the psalmist warns here in the final verse, that the Lord will reward each person according to what he has done, that there will be a day of reckoning, that there is a day of judgment, and that each one of us will have to give an account of how we have lived before God.

And so in this situation, are we, who profess the faith of the Lord Jesus, are we commending the gospel to others? What the psalmist says in the final two verses of the psalmist is that God is strong and God is loving.

But he also emphasizes that God is a God of justice. God is just, there will be a judgment. But he emphasizes that God is strong, he is able to intervene, he is able to deliver, and he is loving, he is gracious, he is merciful.

And that mercy of God is available to you and to me this morning. And we need to discover that and help other people to discover it. The secret of the growth of the church in many parts of the world today is that believers are willing to share their faith with others.

And that's what Jesus said to Peter. When Jesus said to Peter and the disciples, who do you say to others that I am? When Peter said, we tell them that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus said, upon that rock I will build my church.

[28 : 14] And that's what God is doing today. And it may be that God is waiting, waiting for us in the church here in Scotland and throughout the Western world to rediscover this truth, that the church grows, God blesses it as we share our faith with others, as opportunity is granted to us, as we witnessed him.

That's what David did. He said to all people, trust in the Lord, pour out your hearts to him. George Barna, in his research, comes to conclusion that there are many believers in the world who will die without leaving a single person to Christ.

And what a tragedy, what a waste of opportunity. God has called us to be his ambassadors, to be his representatives.

And he's challenging us today in this first Sunday of the new year, to make a commitment to him, to renew our commitment, to renew our baptismal commitment, to be his witnesses, and to commend him to others, and to take advantage of every opportunity the Lord gives us to be his witnesses.

May God grant that we may respond to his word to us by committing ourselves utterly and wholly to him, that God alone may be the one in whom we rest and trust.

[29 : 57] Now I'll ask Sandy to come forward and we'll have the vows of baptism. Sandy, do you affirm your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour and God, and do you acknowledge that apart from him there is no salvation for you?

Do you desire to become a member in full communion of this congregation of Christ's Church, affirming your commitment to love God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and to love your neighbour as yourself?

Do you affirm your faith in the Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? I do. Alexander William Leesk, I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

May the Lord bless you and take care of you. May the Lord be kind and gracious to you. May the Lord look on you with favour and give you peace. Amen. May God bless you.

I give you the right hand of fellowship on behalf of the congregation. we welcome you into our fellowship and pray that your fellowship with us and our fellowship with you may be a source of mutual blessing.

[31 : 15] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.