

# Learning from the Psalms: Trust

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Psalm 62

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The more we have lived, the more we have accumulated reasons to distrust ourselves, to distrust others, and in our dark moments, even to distrust our God.

On Amazon there are over 100,000 results when you search “trust”. One of the first books listed is by Cynthia L. Wall and Sue Patton Thoele called *Courage to Trust*. They write, “Trust is the heartbeat of every single relationship with yourself and others. Without trust, love has no place to grow.”

In the television series “Lie to Me”, a father specializes in being able to read a face in order to tell if someone is lying. His daughter tells him “you don’t trust anyone, that’s why you will always be alone.” “I’m not alone,” he declares, staunchly making his stand as he walks over to a woman, a long-time friend, who perhaps will become more. And perhaps not....

Trust relinquishes the power to take care of yourself, to control the end result, and, instead, let another in. It is fragile, easily broken, and the very thing that gives us life.

Today, I want to take you on a journey, with the help of Psalm 62, to help strengthen that spiritual muscle we call trust. Isn’t it ironic that the first developmental stage Eric Erikson wrote about was marked by that very conflict, trust verses mistrust? You can see what trust looks like when you look into the eyes of most 3 year olds as they talk about whatever is on their mind without a care in the world, believing you are there to love them. But we grow up and our hearts harden. And we no longer believe people care about us, not like that. We become silent, hidden. Not today. Psalm 62 has another story for you to live because the 3 year old knows the truth, you are here to be loved.

Anne Sexton writes “To pray, Jesus knew, is to be a man carrying a man.”

Psalm 62 carries us from accusation to acclamation--from distrust to trust--from our own schemes to allowing ourselves to be part of God’s scheme.

When you join with the Psalmist you let the one who learned how to trust carry you.

The Psalms, tradition says, were written by David. More importantly, they were spoken in worship by a community of faith. The Psalms move beyond a silent prayer said in the shadows to a public, unified proclamation of God’s active work, presence, and steadfast love.

Please turn to 643 in our hymnal. As you can see, you can sing the Psalms as well...another day.

Congregation: 1 and 2

Reader: 3 and 4

Congregation: 5, 6 and 7

Reader: 8

Reader: 9 and 10

Congregation: 11 and 12

Ready? Well then, come along, let’s begin...thank you!

The opening lines speak as a remembered fragment of a prayer. A theme is chosen by an inward, holy desire... that for God alone my soul waits in silence. It is a prayer pilgrimage to join with God, a trust that God will come. All effective prayer begins with the belief that something will happen, something will change in the act of prayer. I will wait...for from God comes my salvation. I will wait... for God alone is my rock and my salvation...my salvation. Oh my God, I need to be saved, again. My salvation...my fortress...for I am beset. My rock, my salvation, my fortress, I shall never be shaken.

I wonder if the Psalmist first spoke these words with the intent of having God calm the storm inside his soul. I wonder if he came hoping that the trouble that sends him into prayer this day might simply dissipate into the air. Remembered words, spoken to calm, prayed in order to seal in what is holy and right. But, look! God refuses to let the Psalmist be. God hears between the lines.

O my dearest child, you are shaken. Something you counted on has been taken away. You have more

coming at you than you think you can handle.

2) My rock, my salvation, my fortress, I shall never be shaken.

Hearing this, God opens the gates, and allows the inner storm room to blow...

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?

God opens the gate to let the Psalmist cry out. And you thought that when your prayer strayed from God and went instead into the center of your frustration you were off track. You have just found the right track...for this is where God can truly enter in.

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.

There it is...the accusation, the pointed finger of blame, the assumption that "they" seek only to hurt ...and the realization that you hurt.

The 3 year old expects to be heard with love, the Psalmist reveals he expects to be cursed. When distrust wins out over trust, when we feel we are being attacked on all sides, when we enter in those moments of our lives when we no longer see anything of God but only the wagging mouths of our enemies, and we know that they have nothing good to say about us, we need saving.

A pastor who left parish ministry confessed at the end of a healing prayer retreat ... I have had so many conversations in my own mind. At that he stopped. There was a long pause as he sought the right words.

We need saving.

To trust is hard. But harder still is to have those around you become the enemy. Harder still is to allow the fear in your heart create conversations that are of your imagination. Harder still is to live a life where your distrust keeps you captive and alone.

In a word to couples, Judith MacNutt, the director of Christian Healing Prayer Ministries says, "Your spouse is not your enemy." Apparently it feels like it way too often. And if it feels that way with the ones

we love, then how much more with those with whom we'd never get naked.

The pastor waited in silence. We waited in anticipation of his next word. His face relaxed, a hint of a smile turned the corners of his lips. He said, "During this retreat, Jesus has helped to still those voices" and he walked back to his seat.

As the Psalmist cries out his distrust, something new appears in his prayer, as nuanced as the small turn in a man's lips. Having spoken out of his pain, he again reaches for God through his remembered prayer... and adds a word.

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.

His soul bared, he still believes, still trusts God will hear, God will come. My hope is from him. Out of hope is born an improvisation...

7) On God rests my deliverance and my honor;  
My mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

No longer are the same words spoken, rather here he expands on the theme, it has become his own. The Spirit has come upon him and he proclaims good news...

8) Trust in him at all times, O people;  
Pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

Trust, pour out your heart, just like the Psalmist has done.

He has just experienced God as a refuge...a place where you are protected and loved...never alone, freely loved. Pour out your heart to him. You don't have to hide anymore, God is not the enemy. God is my rock, my salvation, my fortress, my refuge.

Oh, how we fear letting God in. It is okay if we simply appreciate God's handiwork or talk about God's love...but how hard it is to trust in his hand. We make schemes to get our way rather than believing God is making the way. We try to change another and God is trying to reach us.

Some of you know that last weekend I led the women's retreat for a church I once served in Long Beach. It all began when I invited soulful Cathi to sing for our retreat 3 years ago. In the small group

conversations she found something she had not yet experienced in a church community...women who trusted each other enough to honestly share, trusted God enough to speak about what they are hearing in their prayers. Cathi kept saying “wow!” the whole weekend. The next year, she followed our lead, organizing a woman’s retreat for her faith community, and imported me. Last weekend it was another woman’s first time. She only comes to church because of her 7 adopted children. She only came to the retreat because of Cathi’s determination to get her there. This bright woman, well educated, and successful in all she puts her mind to do, kept saying in wonder, “how similar we all are!”...meaning in listening to the faith of others she was finding her own.

For many of those on the retreat, for many of us here today, it’s much easier to work more, to give to others, to serve family and friends and those in need, than to open ourselves to trusting others...to open ourselves to praying with others...to open ourselves to truly being loved by others...and by God.

People of God, do not ever underestimate what it takes to enter into conversations of trust. Do not diminish the courage it takes to do so or the effect it has on the kingdom. If we have a wall of distrust about us we might still be fit to give out school supplies, but I’m not even sure about that. It is only when we operate out of trust that we are capable of giving another a true reflection of the love of God.

Trust allows love to grow and so part of our church’s mission is to challenge you to enter into such conversations. That’s why it is part of our Bible Studies to allow each person to share deeply. And, that’s why we retreat together. Those of you who have signed up for a church retreat, I know it can seem like an indulgence, but you are doing a service project that builds the kingdom, within, and without. Those of you who are still on the fence, jump over... it is one of the most important things you can do for God. For in such a place, trust is built.

Out of trust, God’s word to you in prayer can finally be rightly heard. While the Psalmist doesn’t use the prophetic pattern...”the Lord said...” you can hear God speaking to him through his own voice, through his own understanding, giving him direction: Low

estate, high estate, it matters not. Those who define themselves as such are lighter than a breath...there is nothing solid in them. Put no confidence in extortion--notice there’s no condemnation just recognition as to what may have been considered--set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them. Scholars note the word for confidence as in put no confidence in extortion is the same word as that which is rendered trust in verse 8. The Hebrew word connects the two and thus speaks loudly as to where trust can rightly be placed.

How respectfully God speaks to us! Sometimes I think we expect we will hear our own worst voice from God...that same accusation that was leveled at others to come back at us...and yet, it never does. You can trust God in prayer to speak truth in a way that gently leads you to see what is right.

Psalm 62 ends with this proclamation:

Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this (that means it felt like a shout): That power belongs to God.

Now note the change of person...Power belongs to God, and steadfast love belongs to you, O LORD.

The Psalm began with an announcement of what the Psalmist is doing to find God: my soul waits... It ends with a word to the God who has found him: steadfast love belongs to you. From memorized words to an intimate meeting.

Before we end our time together...that last sentence, where a word is translated in the NRSV as “repay” rings out harsh, as if God is going to fight all our battles, make our enemies pay. But that belies the movement of the Psalm itself. The Hebrew word, the NIB commentary suggests, that underlies “repay” is akin to the word “shalom,” peace. For you give peace to all according to their work. For peace, like prayer, is always individual. God knows exactly what to give to you.

Trust...trust in God...courageously trust one another...that love has room to grow, that the kingdom might flourish here. For the kingdom needs those who allow God’s steadfast love to move through them. There are a bunch of 3 year olds and 43 year olds and 93 year olds out there who are counting on it.