

Psalm 61 is a Psalm of David, written for the choir director that was to be played on a stringed instrument. In other words, this was a Psalm that was designed to be publicly sung and publicly communicated.

Now a key word of this Psalm, which gives us some insight as to the theme of the Psalm, is the word “faint” of **verse 2**. That particular Hebrew word means to be covered or wrapped in darkness to the point where one feels feeble and faint (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 621). So this word describes a very dark, gloomy depression that leaves one weak.

Hank Williams used to sing your cheating heart will make you weep. Well, your fainting heart will make you weak.

When David wrote this Psalm, things for him were very dark and dismal. He felt he was surrounded and covered by dark things to the point where he was feeble, faint and weak.

Have you ever been there? Have you ever been in such gloom that you don't even have the strength to get up out of bed? David knew what this was like and so does God.

I truly love the words of one commentator concerning this Psalm—“Regardless of the original function, any child of God may pray this prayer for himself...” (*Psalms, Expositors Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 418).

Every believer will have times of rest and trouble. Every believer will have times of fear and hope. Every believer will have times of tragedy and triumph. Every believer will face times of light and darkness.

**Psalm 61 is a prayer Psalm made from a fainting heart that was surrounded by dark circumstances.** It is a prayer of a believer who felt all alone and afraid. The main point is:

**WHEN A FAITHFUL BELIEVER FINDS HIMSELF WITH A FAINING HEART SURROUNDED BY THINGS THAT MAKE HIM FEEL ALONE AND AFRAID, HE CAN PRAY TO GOD, KNOWING GOD HEARS AND CARES.**

Sometimes we find ourselves afraid. Sometimes our heart faints and we feel weak. This is the very moment we should pray.

There are four main stanzas that comprise this Psalm:

**STANZA #1** – David prays to God. **61:1-2**

It is clear from this prayer that this is no ritualistic or pharisaical repetition of words. **This prayer was from the heart and it cries out to God for help.**

In fact, the word “cry” indicates this is a very emotional, piercing cry to God. When David asks God to “hear” and give “heed” to his prayer, he is crying out to God asking Him to specifically answer the prayer.

In **verse 2**, David acknowledges that God is the only One who is capable of taking him from his very low state and raising him to a very high state. In other words, David was low and he realized that God was the only One who could elevate him out of his lowly state.

It is possible that David was trying to escape into a rocky wilderness. If so, he is asking God to lead him to a rock that he could not find himself and to a place that would be safe from the discovery of others. Also he certainly wanted God to take him to new heights in his relationship with God.

**One of the lessons we learn from the book of Psalms is that dark times of trouble are permitted by God to bring us near to God.** When we find we are experiencing times of gloom, it is time to run to the Lord in prayer.

Charles Spurgeon said, “faiths greatest triumphs are achieved in our heaviest trials.” God is fully capable of taking us in our lowest condition and raising us to the highest position. He is able to turn our sorrow into joy, our fear into courage, our weak faith into strong faith. When we find our heart is faint, we need to cry out to God. That is what David did and that is what God wants us to do.

There is a principle that we know and that is strength comes by exertion, not by relaxation and sedation. In other words, we get stronger by walking than sitting. So it is in our spiritual lives, we get stronger by praying and crying out to God, not by moping and doing nothing.

The truth is this kind of personal prayer is very rare these days. Not too many people pour their hearts out to God. Many people whine and complain, but not many pray. **But those who purpose to cry out to God will discover their faint heart will become a faith heart.**

**STANZA #2** – David remembers the work of God. **61:3-5**

In **verse 3-5**, David remembered things God had done for David. There were five remembrances that David had about God:

**Remembrance #1** - David remembered that God had been his refuge. **61:3a**

This is a very significant lesson of faith that God’s people need to grasp—our refuge is God.

**Remembrance #2** - David remembered that God had been his tower of strength. **61:3b**

Towers were used for protection purposes (Judges 9:51-52). Not only could one look out a great distance from the top of a tower, but people thought of these towers as being a strong safe haven. Now we may observe that the tower becomes the place of strength when up against “the enemy.” David had plenty of enemies—Saul, Absalom and Satan.

It is clear that there were many times in David’s life when he was afraid. As great a warrior as he was, he was afraid. What he discovered is God was his strong protector. God was the One who gave Him strength to endure and to succeed.

**Remembrance #3** - David remembered that God had been his shelter. **61:4**

David wanted to “dwell in God’s tent forever.” What this means is that David wanted to always have close fellowship with God, no matter what he experienced on earth. He desired to draw near to God and take refuge in the shelter of His wings.

So what David learned is that during threatening times, he could draw close to God and he could depend on God and turn to God. “Selah”—stop and think about it.

**Remembrance #4** - David remembered that God had heard his vows. **61:5a**

David was well aware of the fact that God takes vows seriously. If one made vows to God, one needed to follow through on those vows (Ps. 50:14-15). David had promised God a variety of things and he had followed through on whatever those vows were. As a result, he knew he was in a position to pray and have God answer.

There is no way we can expect God to answer our prayers if we are living some double life. We need to be straight in our relationship with God if we are to expect God to move.

**Remembrance #5** - David remembered that God had given him an inheritance. **61:5b**

David was well aware of the fact that God had appointed him to be king of Israel. He was well aware of the fact that God had given him an inheritance of “those who feared God’s name.”

So David was anticipating that God would in fact intervene on his behalf and would in fact answer his prayers.

**STANZA #3** – David has assurance from God. **61:6-7**

The more David remembered of the Word of God, the more he realized God would take care of him. Remembering what God had done in the past was a great way to be assured of His care in the present.

In fact, J. Vernon McGee said the theme of this Psalm and several others is the “cry and confidence of the godly.” The godly may cry, but they still have a confidence in the God they are crying to.

David had two assurances:

**Assurance #1** - David was assured that God would prolong his life. **61:6**

Now, many wanted David dead literally. In fact, many were trying to kill him literally. Yet in the midst of these threats, he became convinced that they would not succeed. He became convinced that he would have a life that would be long. He would live to an old age.

There is a national anthem that is sung in Britain—“God save the Queen.” Well, David truly believed God would save the king.

**Assurance #2** - David was assured that he would abide with God forever. **61:7**

David wanted to fellowship with God forever and there were two key elements necessary for this—lovingkindness/mercy and truth. God is a merciful God, but He is also a God of truth and David knew that having fellowship with God meant these two elements were needed in his life.

Now it is also important to see that David believed God was the one who could authorize these things for David and He was the One who could permit David to have these things in his own life.

God is a merciful God to anyone who will deal honestly concerning their sin. That is precisely what David did—he was honest about his sin. **He knew that one may only tap into the mercy of God if one was truthful before God.**

**STANZA #4** – David will always praise God. **61:8**

The result of God’s grace is that one may praise God forever. Every day will be a day for praising God for His wonderful deliverances. A good prayer life will lead to a good praise life. Those who prove God will end up praising God.

### **PRACTICAL THOUGHTS:**

- 1) When our hearts are faint, we need to pray.**
- 2) A key to having great confidence in God today is to remember what God did yesterday.**
- 3) No relationship with God will blossom until there is total honesty in the relationship.**