

Our Refuge

Psalm 62

Watching the debate on Monday night, there was one thing both candidates demonstrated – it's much easier to identify problems than to pose solutions. Sometimes, politicians are vague until they are elected to avoid losing blocks of voters – they know what they want to do, and they know some of the voters won't like it. But lately, you get the feeling that no one really has any answers.

I mean, does anyone really have an idea about how to pay off 20 trillion dollars in debt? That's more than the entire economic output of the entire country for a whole year. How do we stop the flow of poisonous religious and racial ideas that spark homegrown and international Islamic terrorism? How do we tackle the family dysfunctions that explain so much of the freefall in American educational standards and the violence exploding in our inner cities?

So what do we do about all these problems? Well, verse 9 reminds us that we can't trust in leaders just because of their social class or prestige. Our traditional elite institutions, the universities, the media, the think-tanks – they've all let us down. But verse 9 also tells us there's no guarantee that us common folks have any better ideas – we're just as vaporous, as insubstantial as the rich folks are.

And no matter what the politicians think, verse 10 tells us that just getting control of the levers of power can't transform society, either – Hitler and Stalin and Castro tried that. And no matter what the capitalists say, wealth can't transform society, either – we're the richest country in the history of the world, and our problems are just as big as our bank accounts. Oh, and robbery won't help on either a small or large scale. Looting stores only makes it less likely that businesses will offer goods and services in poor areas. And in an era where money easily flows across international borders, punitive taxes aren't the answer – you can't take from one group hoping to lift up another one.

So, is it any wonder that too many politicians resort to lies to gain our votes? Is it any wonder that they spend more time attacking one another than proposing solutions to impossible problems? But verses 3 and 4 remind us that all those who use their power to oppress and to slander will not last long.

Okay, so what is the answer? Or perhaps we should say, Who is the answer? Verse 11 tells us that the real power belongs to God. We saw that this summer in Baton Rouge, didn't we? All that racial unrest, all that striving for power and influence, all that human anger and rage – and then the floods came and destroyed as many homes as Katrina did, and we humans were completely helpless to stop it.

But helplessness is nothing new for us human beings. After failing to shell these fortifications into submission, Admiral David Porter proclaimed, "Grand Gulf is the strongest place on the Mississippi." But even these towering bluffs couldn't stop General Grant from landing at Bruinsburg.

But when we lift our eyes from all the empty arguments, from all our helpless human rage, when we do what David did and gaze upon the greatness of his God, that puts it all in perspective. For instead of trusting in his armies or his own military prowess, David rejoices that God is his rock, his high place, his strong tower, his place of refuge. Because God was defending him, he could be confident that he would not be shaken, no matter what hostile forces assailed him.

And how could David be so confident? He tells us at the end of the psalm. For if God holds tremendous power, He is pleased to wield that power according to His steadfast love. That's why David could be

sure that God would be his place of refuge. That's why David could say that the God Who created these great hills would be his salvation.

And we see that truth even more clearly than David did. For we know how God displayed His faithful love towards us on the cross of Christ, giving His only Son to die for a world of sinners. And we know how God proved His great power as Jesus walked out of that tomb on the third day, conquering the greatest threat, the greatest fear any of us will ever face.

So yes, we can go on putting our trust in our political leaders or coalitions, in our money or in our military fortifications, but sooner or later all of those things will let us down. Or we can look at the cross and take David's advice: "Trust in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us."