

Psalm 57

Introduction – In Psalm 56 we learned “*whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.*” When we trust in the faithfulness of God whenever we are afraid, we find the fear subsides and praise ensues (Psalm 56:3-4). But troubles still come. We still live in a world of trials and temptations. In Psalm 57 we learn what the Psalm singer, now trusting in God, does when those troubles continue to come. So this Psalm is for the one who, last week, turned from fear to faith and a deeper trust in God, and then woke up on Monday morning only to find those gnarly problems still staring you in the face.

Setting the Stage with Some Context and Some Hebrew Poetry – The inscription tells us that this Psalm was written when David fled from Saul into a cave. The first is when David hid in the cave of Adullam (1 Sam 22) and the second is when David and his men were hiding in the recesses of a cave near En Gedi (1 Sam 24). That was the time that David snuck up on Saul when Saul was relieving himself in the cave. David cut off a piece of Saul’s garment but did not kill Saul (1 Sam 24:4-7). This incident may fit better with the instructions given to the Chief Musician in Psalm 57, “*set to ‘Do Not Destroy.’*” There are four psalms that are given that setting, Psalm 57, 58, 59, and 75, and interestingly, they all in some degree deal with pleadings to God to judge the wicked. We are not to return evil for evil; rather we are to give place for God’s wrath (Rom 12:17-21). This is only possible when we trust in God Who says, “*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.*”

The Psalm can be broken down into two parts, each with three stanzas and then a chorus. James Boice suggests we see an A-B-C-chorus – C-B-A-chorus structure. Stanzas C deal with David’s enemies and the danger he is in (vv4, v6). Stanzas B deal with God’s faithfulness to David (vv2-3) and David’s steadfastness of heart before God (vv7-8). Stanzas A begins with a cry for mercy (v1) and ends with loud, vibrant praise to the nations of God’s mercy (vv9-10). The chorus is the theme: “*Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; Let Your glory be above all the earth*” (v5, 11), a theme we sing each Lord’s Day, “*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*” (Matt 6:9-10).

My Soul Among Lions (vv4-6) – David is in a dark time and not just a dark cave. His enemy wants him destroyed. The devil is a dragon and a lion, seeking whom he may devour (Prov 28:15, 1 Pet 5:8) and we are to resist him by faith (1 Pet 5:9). He is more than David can handle, and so he sings from the cave (v5) and, in the Psalm, such singing changes everything. He is hiding in that cave, and yet, God is his refuge and his enemy falls into the net prepared for David (v6, 1 Sam 24:4). Seeing God’s sovereign care, David then steps out of the cave and confronts Saul (1 Sam 24:8-13).

Daniel must have known this story and must have sung this Psalm (Dan 6:22).

Crying Out to God Most High (vv2-3, 7-8) – This cry for mercy is urgent, sincere, and repeated, for David’s situation is dire (v1). But listen to David’s confidence in God and in the effectualness of prayer (vv2-3). Why does he cry out to God? First, “*God performs all things for me.*” Second, “*He shall send from heaven and save me.*” Third, “*He reproaches the one who would swallow me up.*” Fourth, “*God shall send forth His mercy and His truth*” (there they are again).

The Psalm singer’s trust in God’s faithfulness to him produces a confident and steadfast heart in the Psalm singer who must “*sing and give praise*” (vv7-8). To “*awake my glory*” is to open up his tongue with elevated words of the glory of God (Henry). David tells his glory to wake up, the instruments as well – and to sing and play such that the darkness is awakened and dawn comes forth (2 Cor 4:6). Singing with a steadfast heart in a cave brings forth glorious light; it parts the clouds and reveals the heavens. This is what the preaching and receiving of the gospel produces: peace with God, grace to stand, hope of the glory of God, and glory in tribulations, that is, in the cave (Rom 5:1-5).

Mercy and Truth (vv1, 9-10) – David is in a cave, but he sees himself in the shadow of God’s wings. He will stay there, “*until these calamities have passed by.*” Like a chick in danger running under the wings of the mother hen, so we seek God’s protection (Luke 13:34). In crying out for mercy, David is also remembering the mercy seat of the ark of the Covenant, covered with the wings of the mighty cherubim. Note though, with such confidence in God, David is not silent in his troubles. With such confidence in God’s sovereignty, he prays for mercy in his latest trial, because he believes that God is merciful and gracious.

Where does this nation turn when there is a great disaster? FEMA or some other Government Agency? When a crisis hits, your savior (false idol or true God) is revealed. When you find a cave to hide in, do you realize God has provided His sovereign, merciful wings? Where do you turn in great disasters and minor troubles? Is Your God that sovereign? Is He that merciful and gracious (Psalm 103:11)? Under the mercy seat was housed the law of God, the ten words, and so this is where mercy and truth meet (Psalm 85:10). His mercy and truth covers every corner, every nation, and reaches unto the clouds of heaven (vv9-10).

Where Praise Begins – It begins in the dark, in the back of the cave, when God gives a steadfast heart that trusts Him. And every tough situation you have or ever will be in is swallowed up by the greatest tough situation – your approaching death. If we learn to praise God for the resurrection before we have died, we will live and die in faith. That prepares us to praise God in all troubles (Eph 5:20). *“Praise and worship are not built on the foundation of sentiments; they are built on the bedrock of trust and faith”* (Wilson).

Understand that mercy and truth are in Jesus (John 1:17) and that is where we find refuge. How great is that mercy and how powerful that truth? When our hearts are anchored, steadfast in Christ, then our praise needs to be louder and greater than His mercy and truth. It must reach the heavens (v5, 7-8, 10). It must reach the nations (v9, Rom 15:9). That is what has happened, is happening, and will happen (Hab 2:14).

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