

Psalm 57

To the chief Musician, Altaschith,
A Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

Psalm 57:

The superscription provides a helpful backdrop for the psalm, which was composed after David escaped from Gath (see Psalms chapter 56 and 1 Sam 22:1).

The refrain (of verses 5 and 11), marks the Psalm into two distinct sections: his petition and lament (verses 1-5), and his trust and thanksgiving (verses 6-11).

Verses 1-11:

This is another lament that is expressing supreme confidence in the LORD in the midst of calamitous circumstances.

Though David finds himself hiding from Saul (see Title), he knows that his real refuge is not in the walls of the cave (compare 1 Sam. 22:1, 24:3), but in the shadow of God's wings.

- I. The Plea for Protection (57:1-6).
- II. The Proffering of Praise (57:7-11).

Title:

“Altaschith”:

Possibly the opening words of a known song, implying that this psalm should be sung to the same tune (see note of Psalm 16; Title).

Psalm 57:1 "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until [these] calamities be over past."

“The shadow of thy wings”:

Metaphorically, God cares for His own as a mother bird protects its young.

Symbolically, there may be a reference here to the cherubim wings on the ark of the covenant where God was specifically present (compare Exodus 37:1-16; Psalms 17:8; 36:7; 61:4, 63:7; 91:1, and 4).

“I make my refuge”:

When life becomes bizarre, only one's relationship with his God calms the soul.

David knew that he was not going against Saul to do him any harm.

He would not even defend himself against Saul, because Saul was anointed of God.

If David could not protect himself, his only chance is that God would protect him.

The fact that David asks twice for God to be merciful unto him shows the urgency of the prayer.

Notice, this prayer is joined with an announcement of the fact that David had faith in God.

When we place our faith in God, He will not fail us.

When the rain or storm is coming, the baby chickens run and get under the wings of the mother hen, and no rain falls on them.

These outstretched wings of God that are protecting David here, are available to all who will hide in the shadow of God's love.

Psalms 17:8 "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,"

The enemy would not dare come near enough to God for His shadow to fall on them.

You can easily see the protection provided by the shadow of God.

Psalm 57:2 "I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth [all things] for me."

"God most high":

God is transcendent, elevated far above His creation and all powerful.

"Performeth all things for me":

God's transcendence (in verse 2a), never removes Him from intimate involvement in His people's lives.

David is recognizing in this that without the help of God, he is helpless.

We all are helpless, without the hand of God doing all things well for us.

God never failed him before when he cried out to him, and he will not fail him now.

Sometimes we forget all the things God has already done for us. David is not just praying to God and thanking Him for the things He has done for him, but David is reminding himself as well, that God has done wonderful things for him in the past.

Psalm 57:3 "He shall send from heaven, and save me [from] the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth."

Either his angels, as (Dan. 3:28), or his power and help in some less extraordinary way.

As if he had said, "There are greater armies in heaven than those that here surround me".

And rather than I should perish, he will send them for my deliverance.

"And save me from the reproach of him, etc.

From that shameful destruction which Saul designs to bring upon me.

The Hebrew, may be properly rendered, as that in the margin, he reproaches, or hath reproached.

That is, he will certainly put to shame, or reproach him.

"That would swallow me up":

By disappointing his expectation, and delivering me from his rage.

"God shall send forth his mercy and truth":

Shall discover them by their proper fruits, namely, by affording his gracious help in pursuance of his promises.

"The reader will observe, that mercy and truth are here poetically represented as being ministers of God.

Standing in his presence, ready to execute his pleasure, and employed by him in the salvation of his people."

My help, your help and David's help comes from the LORD of heaven.

The world is the enemy of those who love God.

Why should we find it strange that the world hates us?

Look at what Jesus said about all of this.

John 15:18 "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before [it hated] you."

Matthew 10:25 "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more [shall they call] them of his household?"

Selah above means to pause and think on these things.

Just as God has done in the past, He will send mercy to save David and truth to inform all.

Mercy and truth shall reign in the end.

Psalms 57:4 "My soul [is] among lions: [and] I lie [even among] them that are set on fire, [even] the sons of men, whose teeth [are] spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword."

“Lions”:

The wicked are pictured as menacing animals, ready to destroy their prey with their razor-edged teeth (compare Psalms 7:2; 10:9; 17:12; 22:13).

“Them that are set on fire”:

The wicked are like a consuming fire.

David pictures his adversaries as “lions”, prowling around, waiting to destroy him.

The power of “their tongue” is compared to a “sword” (Prov. 30:14; James 3:1-12).

These are not sons of God; they are sons of men.

A natural lion or a bear, was no problem to David.

These lions are people who have a destructive nature.

Even the words that come from their mouth are destructive “their tongue a sharp sword”.

David had been hunted down like an animal.

They had threatened his life and they had told lies on him, they had even tried to tear him to pieces, but God had protected David.

They were so mad at David, it seemed as if they were on fire with hatred.

Psalms 57:5 "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; [let] thy glory [be] above all the earth."

“Be thou exalted, O God”:

A truly godly person wants God’s glory to be exhibited more than he wants his own personal problems to be solved.

In the very middle of all this terrible danger that David is in, he stops to praise God.

In the verse above, David is saying that he agrees with the following verse:

1 Chronicles 29:11 "Thine, O LORD, [is] the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all [that is] in the heaven and in the earth [is thine]; thine [is] the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all."

Psalm 57:6 "They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen [themselves]. Selah."

They laid snares for him, as the fowler does for the bird, in order to take him.

It denotes the insidious ways used by Saul and his men to get David into their hands.

So the Pharisees consulted together how they might entangle Christ in his talk (Matt. 22:15).

"My soul is bowed down":

Dejected by reason of his numerous enemies, and the crafty methods they took to ensnare and ruin him.

So the soul of Christ was bowed down with the sins of his people, and with a sense of divine wrath because of them.

And so their souls are often bowed down.

Or they are dejected in their spirits, on account of sin, Satan's temptations, various afflictions, and divine desertions.

The Targum renders it, "he bowed down my soul;" that is, the enemy; Saul in particular.

The Septuagint, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, "they bowed down my soul"; the same that prepared a net for his steps; everyone of his enemies.

They all were the cause of the dejection of his soul: the Syriac version leaves out the clause.

"They have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves":

Set a trap, as a hunter might entangle an animal's feet with a net.

Contriving and seeking to find out the places where David's haunt was, Saul got into the very cave where he and his men were; and had his skirt cut off, when his life might as easily have been taken away (1 Sam. 23:22; see Psalm 7:15).

David is saying in this, "They have set a trap for me", and they will be caught in their own trap.

This is the very thing that happens to people today. They try to trap the believer, and they fall into their own trap.

This has been speaking specifically about Saul and his men trying to catch David.

David went into their camp, and did not destroy Saul.

1 Samuel 24:11 "Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that [there is] neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it."

David did not desire to kill Saul, but Saul wanted to kill David.

Verses 7-11: As a lament against tyranny, as the first half of the psalm rehearses a series of charges against wicked leaders and judges; and the second half is an imprecatory prayer that they be obliterated.

In the end, the psalmist is certain that God will act with ultimate justice.

Psalm 57:7 "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."

Firm and sure, trusting in the LORD, believing that he should be saved by him out of his troubles (see Psalm 101:1).

So, in a spiritual sense, a heart fixed and established, or that is firm and sure, is one that is assured of its salvation by Christ.

Rooted and grounded in the love of God, firmly built on the foundation, Christ, and has its affections set on him.

And is unmoved, from the hope of the Gospel, and the doctrines of it, by whatsoever it meets with in the world.

"My heart is fixed":

This is repeated, to show the vehemence of his spirit, and the certainty of the thing.

"I will sing and give praise":

For the salvation wrought for him, and which he was sure of.

And before he had finished this psalm, or while he had composed it, did enjoy it.

David has determined within his heart to worship God.

Though the world seems to be falling down around you, praise God.

The battle is God's and the victory is mine.

We are soldiers in the battle, but it is God's war against Satan.

No weapon formed against me shall prosper.

Isaiah 54:17 "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue [that] shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This [is] the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness [is] of me, saith the LORD."

Psalm 57:8 "Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I [myself] will awake early."

“My glory”:

The mind, that rational, intellectual, emotional part of a person which interacts with and praises God (see note on 16:9).

“I myself will awake early”:

He cannot wait until morning to praise the LORD for all of His blessings.

He must wake up the personified dawn so that he can praise the LORD.

David did most of his praising in song and with his instrument.

Each of us have our own way of praising God.

He loves the praises of His people.

David is saying that he will begin his day by singing praises to God.

Psalm 57:9 "I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations."

“The people ... nations”:

References to Gentiles, nations which would not normally know Jehovah God.

David is not ashamed of his God.

He will sing praises to everyone who will listen, even to the other nations.

He did just that when he wrote the Psalms.

All nations of the world have read the Psalms and heard the praises of David.

Psalm 57:10 "For thy mercy [is] great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds."

Which denotes the exceeding greatness and largeness of it; as it is in the heart of God, who is plenteous in mercy.

As it is expressed in the covenant of grace, where are stores of it; as it is shown forth in the choice of persons to eternal life.

In the mission of Christ into this world to die for them.

In the regeneration of them, the pardon of their sins, and eternal life.

And this mercy is not only extended to persons in the several parts of the earth, but is as high as the heaven above it (Psalm 103:11).

"And thy truth unto the clouds":

The faithfulness of God in performing his purposes and his promises.

Or the Gospel, and the doctrines of it, which contain the deep things of God.

Unless Christ himself should be meant, who is the truth which sprung out of the earth (Psalm 85:11), and is now ascended unto heaven, and is higher than the heavens.

And whose exaltation and glory may be designed in (Psalm 57:11).

Psalm 57:11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: [let] thy glory [be] above all the earth.

David is thinking as broadly (verse 9), and as highly (verses 10-11), as he can.

God's mercy, truth, and glory are immense and unfathomable (compare Romans 11:33; and Ephesians 3:17:18).

There is no limit to the mercy of God.

Truth cannot be destroyed; it will live on forever.

The truth that we see in the clouds is the rainbow that God set in the clouds to remind us of His promise never to destroy the world again with water.

Truth is one of the descriptions of God.

(Verse 11 is a repeat of verse 5; all I can say to verse 11 is Amen).

Psalm 57 Questions

1. Who was after David, in verse one of this lesson?
2. Where did David say, he would take his refuge?
3. Why would David not fight Saul and try to kill him?
4. What does the fact that David asked God twice to be merciful show?
5. What earthly thing shows us the protection under the wings?
6. Without the help of God, David is _____.
7. What is David doing, in verse 2, besides thanking God?
8. My help, your help, and David's help comes from where?
9. What are the Christians called in Matthew 10:25?
10. Who are the people after David in verse 4?
11. Their cruelty causes David to compare them with what animal?
12. What does the statement “their tongue a sharp sword” mean?
13. Who will be caught in the trap they have set for David?
14. Where do we find the Scripture that tells of David cutting off Saul's skirt?
15. How did David do most of his praising?
16. How did David sing in the nations?
17. What do we see in the clouds, that reminds us of the covenant God made with man not to destroy the earth with water again?