

Psalms 57

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[0 : 00] Looking forward to seeing you wherever you are. Okay, Psalm 57.! Psalm 57 gives us a strange and wonderful comfort and consolation in this psalm.

! It's one of a couple of psalms that were written in a cave. I want to first run through, first reading of this psalm, it may look like one of our stock, bog-standard prayers.

You know the kind of prayer. Lord, I'm in trouble. Help. I'm very sad. Things are difficult. Help. If you help, I'll go to church and I'll read my Bible.

But please, Lord, don't forget my main point. That is help. And I think we can often read the psalms and we can think that's what it's saying. But that isn't what this psalm is saying.

I hope you'll, as we go through, you'll get a flavour and a taste of the confidence there is in the middle of distress. David is in real trouble.

[1 : 09] But as we go through the psalm, what we see is his horizons open up. And he sees with the most staggering breadth and depth and height the God of heaven, really.

He goes above the clouds, if I can say that. And he goes out and he sees all the nations of the world. Because in this prayer, what we do is we move from the cave to God Most High above the heavens.

And it's that discrepancy between highest heaven and the cave that gives you an eye comfort. So the first point is the view from the cave. The view from the cave.

The second point is the view from the clouds. And then we'll see if we can bring them together. So if you look at the top of the psalm, the writing that's in capital letters is part of the original text. So it's to the choir master.

That is, Psalm 57 was meant to be sung. And it's according to the tune, do not destroy. That's the tune. I'll hum the first three bars after church if you want me to.

[2 : 11] We don't know how it sounds. We can guess how it sounds. It's a miktum. We don't really know what that is. It's some kind of poem or a hymn. But we do know this, that David is fleeing from King Saul.

And he's hiding in the cave. It's one of those psalms where David is on the run. He is a hunted man. And King Saul, with all the armies of Israel, are hunting David south of Jerusalem, somewhere in the hills.

He's in mortal danger. The situation is extreme. The situation is unfair. The situation is unjust. And David hides out of the cave.

And if it's the one that I'm thinking of that occasion, there are probably a couple of hundred men with him in that cave. A couple of hundred other guys. You can only imagine the smell. I can't do that cave.

But I expect none of us here are likely to be being pursued by armies. None of us here are likely to be having generals wanting to kill us.

[3 : 17] But every single one of us knows what it is to be hemmed in by circumstances. Without an easy way out. You will know what it is to be overwhelmed by things which are far more powerful than you are.

You will know what it is to be overwhelmed by the cares of this world. Maybe the deceitfulness of riches. Maybe the desire for other things.

Maybe ill health. Maybe great anxiety. And the Bible is very realistic about the concrete details of everyday life. I hope you know this.

The Christian faith is not nice, inspiring ideas. The Christian faith is not powerful spiritual notions to kind of help you get through and to make you feel a bit better.

If you want a religion that brings you peace of mind and calm and detachment, that's not Christianity. You should join Buddhism. Christianity is real life with the real God of the Bible.
[4 : 25] And it is always awkward and lumpy. And the glory of God is not to make you relax. It's not to make you cope. It's not to make you feel good or have equanimity.

It comes in the most inconvenient times into our lives with the message of the cross in ways that change us more than changes our circumstances.

And so when you come to Psalm 57, David is having it tough. This is the future king of Israel, great King David. And you look at verse 1. He is facing storms of destruction.

He's got enemies that are going to trample him down. Verse 3. He is amongst lions and fiery beasts which are in lies among them. And digging holes that hopefully he will fall into.

There's nothing romantic about being in a cave. And the lovely thing is this. David is not in denial. That's something that Christians we do in suffering all the time.

[5 : 27] We say it's not really happening. Or either that we take the position of self-pity and we wallow. And we say to God, well you are to blame and you get me out of this.

And David does neither of those things. David is open and he is truthful about his difficulty. And he brings it to God most high. He's hemmed in. In the space of the cave.

But he prays to the God who is exalted above the heavens. And that is why he starts as he does in verse 1. Look at the first thing he says. He doesn't say save me. He doesn't say rescue me.

He doesn't say get me out of here. By the way there's nothing wrong with praying about your circumstances. It's a good thing to do. But the essence of prayer. The heart of prayer.

Is not God making my life happy. The essence of prayer. Is knowing God. And taking refuge in him. Coming close to him.

[6 : 25] And that is why David says. Can you see it? Be merciful to me. Oh God. Be merciful. It's the word for grace.

I don't deserve you to treat me like this Lord. Please I throw myself on your kindness. On your grace. And how does he do it? Verse 1. He says in you my soul takes refuge.

Under the shadow of your wings I will take refuge. And it's only in prayer that I think that we come to see. That it's not a cave that gives us safety.

It's not a cave that gives us safety and refuge. It is our gracious God. Who stretches out his wings over us. And that is where the place of safety comes.

Until the storm of destruction has passed. And just in case we miss it this too. And David stops. And he turns and addresses you and I. He stops praying. And he speaks to himself.

[7 : 27] And he speaks to us. And he says I'm not just calling out to anyone here. I'm calling out to. Verse 2. God most high. God most high.

Who is not remote. Who is not removed. Who is not somewhere else. But who fulfills. And who literally. Fills over me his purpose.

That's what it says. Working glory for me. Even when I'm in this cave. Even when I'm under threat. Now I think.

One of the things I've learned in Psalm 51. 57. Is this great gift of this psalm. Is that it enables you and I. To see something of the glory of God.

The godness of God. In spatial terms. Alright. In spatial terms. The psalm is a kind of study. In spiritual space.

[8 : 24] I'm not talking about NASA. And rockets and all that sort of things. I mean. We're in a kind of space here. Aren't we alright. So stick with me. Okay. David describes. Spiritual realities.

Using space language. Okay. Let me show you. I am in a cave. I'm going to be trampled down. I might fall into a pit.

So I called. To God most high. Now. I've been so excited about this. I want to pause. And try and really think about it. Alright. Because as I've looked at this.

I've described that we use spatial language. All the time. To describe everything. And we use it so much. That actually it's becoming visible to us. Because we use it all the time.

So most of our fundamental concepts. Are organised by spatial metaphors. You might be thinking. What has happened to me? Like what are you going on about?

[9 : 22] But. Listen to this. Alright. So we talk about our feelings. Don't we? And we talk about our feelings. In spatial terms. We do that.

Are you. Down. Are you on top of the situation. Or is the situation getting on top of you?

I feel like I'm snowed under. Are you feeling high. Or are you feeling low? And we talk about good and evil.

So we might say. Is that person upright? Are they upstanding? Are they high minded? Or are they actually. In the way they behave?

Are they acting in a way. That's beneath them? We talk about close relationships. In spatial terms. So let's imagine. A young man. He says to you.

[10:22] My girlfriend and I. Were on the path. To romance. Spatial language. You understand that. My girlfriend and I. We were on the path. To romance. But we hit a wall.

I went over the. I was over the moon. In seventh heaven. But she brought me down. She threw me under the bus. She said.

We're on a treadmill. She's left me. I was in deep. She said I was too shallow. And a little bit square. And now our relationship. Is on the rocks. Up the creek. And I am beside myself. We use the language. All the time.

Don't we? Good is up. Bad is down. Happy is up. Sad is down. And so when David. Turns to us. And he says in verse two.

[11:19] Just look with me. I am praying to God most high. He's talking about a spiritual reality. That the God of the Bible. Not one amongst many gods. He's not a deity.

He's not the God of a little part of the Middle East. In the first century. He's not just a high God. He is the most high God. Who rules supreme. He's exalted out of the heavens.

He's the God of the world. He's not random. Where the most distressing.

And difficult context. In which you've found yourself in. It will serve his glory. And his exhortation. And so David is saying to you and I.

We are not really enclosed. In a cave. Of our circumstances. If we belong to God most high. There's something bigger in our lives.

[12:18] As Christians. There's something higher. There's something greater going on. That God is filling the world. And he's filling us with his glory. Which is going to extend from earth to heaven.

That is the view from the cave. So let me quickly move to the view from the clouds. How on earth does this help me? I mean if God is most high.

Well the answer to that is in verse 3. Because God sends out doesn't he. Can you see them at the end of verse 3. Two envoys. Two representatives.

Two ambassadors. Do you see them at the end of verse 3. He will send out his steadfast love. Two very powerful missionaries.

One called steadfast love. And one called faithfulness. And they are at the heart. Of the God. That's what makes God.

[13:17] And so remember in the back of verse 3. In verse 34. Moses. He asks God.

He's tasted something of the glory of God. And he asks God. Please show me your glory. And God says to him. No one can survive if I show them my glory. But I'll show you my goodness.

And somehow God protects Moses. And God's glory passes before him. And this is what we read in Exodus. The Lord descended in the cloud.

And stood with Moses. Proclaiming the name of the Lord. Passed before him. And proclaimed. The Lord. The Lord. A God merciful and gracious. Slowed to anger.

And abounding in. Steadfast love. And faithfulness. At the heart. Of the glory of God.

[14:15] Of the Godness of God. There are these two things. Which overflow. They are the source. And they are the fountain. Steadfast love. And faithfulness. What's his steadfast love?

Covenant love. But that doesn't help us very much. His steadfast love. Is his stubborn commitment. His stubborn commitment. To us.

His tender. Compassionate. Gracious. Showing. Revealing. Continuing with us. Despite. Our sinful and spotty record. The spontaneous.

Sovereignly. Determined. Overflowing. Love. Of God. God. And his faithfulness. Literally means stability. His reliability.

That when God says something. He stands behind it. He's not open to corruption. God is not open to favoritism. God doesn't wax and wane and change his mind.

[15:17] He is faithful. God. And when David says. He sends out. His steadfast love. And his faithfulness. What he means. Is that God. Sends himself. God himself.

Comes to us. And serves us. In love. And faithfulness. And that is why. David doesn't pray. Lord get me out of here. He is saying.

Isn't he to God. Lord. Send yourself. Into my difficult context. So why is it that the son of God. Came into this world. The glory of Christianity.

That the Lord Jesus. Came into this world. Not to be served. But to serve. And to give his life. As a ransom for many. That is the embodiment. Of steadfast love.

And faithfulness. So you see. The view. From the clouds. Is a view of the goodness. Of God. And the glory of God. And when we think. Of the glory of God.

[16:15] Sometimes we just think. About his power. And ability. And strength. To do stuff. But it's as much. About his goodness. And how it fills. The world. And our lives. So look down. At verse 10.

David says. For your steadfast love. Your stubborn. Committed love. Is as great. To the heavens. And your faithfulness. Goes to the clouds.

The picture there. Is literally. Of a balloon. So the steadfast love. And the faithfulness. Of God. Are increasingly. Blowing into this creation. And filling it.

To the clouds. And to the heavens. And that leads. David doesn't it. To the core prayer. There's one core prayer. In the psalm. And it's repeated. It's the one core prayer. Of the Christian's life. It's verse 5.

And then verse 11. Be exalted. Of God. Above the heavens. Let your glory. Be over all the earth.

Verse 11. Be exalted. Of God. Above the heavens.

[17:15] And let your glory. Be over all the earth. What does that mean? We don't. We don't use. Language. Like that. Do we? I mean Chuck loves it.

When I say. Be exalted. Oh Chuck. It's not. We don't. We don't use it like that. I think it's a little bit. Like the Lord's prayer. You prayed it earlier. You prayed. Our father.

Who is in heaven. Hallowed be your name. Do you make God's name. Any more holy. Than it is. Of course not. But we are praying.

Aren't we? When we pray. Our father in heaven. Hallowed be your name. We are praying. That God's name. Would be seen. As holy. And God's name. Would be treated. As holy. In the lives of others. And just so.

When we say. Be exalted. God already. Is exalted. There's no one higher. There's no one happier. There's no one holier. Than God. And so.

[18:13] When we cry. With the psalmist. Be exalted. Oh God. We're not asking. God to move up a notch. We are saying. Oh Lord.

Let everyone see. How amazing. And how remarkable. You are. And I think. The two parts of the psalm. Belong together. That prayer. Belong together. Being exalted. Above the heavens.

And then. Letting your glory. Spread over the earth. It's as his glory. Covers the earth. Like a table cloth. As he.

Glory. Over the earth. That is how he's exalted. Or to put it. The other way. He exalts himself. To spread his glory. Just think.

About it for a moment. What is it. That makes God's glory. Glorious. What is it. That makes God's. Godness. God. If I can put it on that. God. It's the great difference.

[19:11] Between Christianity. And every other religion. It's the great. Great difference. Between Christianity. What. What is it. That makes God's glory. Glorious.

Is this. It's that he gives it away. He gives it away. He shares his glory. He sends out his love.

And his faithfulness. He sends it out to himself. This is the God. Who is the most high God. And yet. He is the God. Who seeks us. And serves us. And saves us. And who gives himself.

To us. Tribal deities. The other gods. They exalt themselves. They demand your service.

But the God. Our God. He exalts himself. By stooping low. And showing love. And mercy. He exalts himself.

[20:10] In saving those. He sends out his love. And his truth. To meet our needs. Instead of demanding. That you meet his needs. Our God is not needy.

And I think without the exaltation. Of the glory of God. This world is a very. Very empty place. We are not in a world. Without the glory of God.

Our culture fills it. Doesn't it. With all sorts of things. With toys. And trinkets. And trivialities. With money. With achievements. And it leads to great.

Great emptiness. Doesn't it. In our world. That's not how you were made. Do you remember in the first creation. That first chapter. Of the Bible.

God created the world. In six days. And in those first three days. He formed the world. He formed the world.

[21 : 14] And in the next three days. He filled the world. It was empty without void. He formed it. And then he filled it.

With good and wonderful things. He filled that lifeless void. So that. The end of Genesis 2. The world is teeming with life.

And that's God's great purpose. All the way through. To fill the world. With his glory. To fill our lives. To fill our lifeless void. And he fills it with his goodness.

And then you go to the end of the Bible. You go to the last two chapters of the Bible. And you find that God's people. Are back face to face with God. And as you read.

Revelation 21 and 22. What do you find? You find that. God is filling. That new heavens and new earth. With joy. And fruit. And healing. And the blessings of his presence.

[22 : 18] And I think that the richest. Irony of this psalm. If we step back from it. Just a moment. Is that David here. Is prophesying. He's looking forward. And he's standing. In the footsteps of the Messiah.

The coming true Messiah. Who God sent from heaven. And the New Testament tells us. That all the fullness of God. Dwelt in him bodily. And he gives over that fullness.

To death. And God raises. Him from the dead. And gives Jesus. As head over all things. To the church.

Which is his body. The fullness of him. Who fills in all. So let me try and make. A couple of points of application. What does it mean for you today.

And tomorrow. How do you connect the cave. Where you might be living. And the cloud. First thing is this. Okay. Pray in the cave. Pray in the cave.

[23 : 17] It's really obvious. I know. It's very obvious. But Psalm 57 is a prayer. And it's a prayer to God. And he is in distress.

And he's not panicking. And he's not politicking. And he's not strategising. And he's not organising. He's not organising. He's trusting. And he's seeking. The glory of God.

And it is in prayer. That we receive the issue. That God will one day send heaven. It is in prayer.

As we seek God. And take refuge in him. That we learn how to rest. And so if you look in verse 4. I love it. It should be translated. My soul.

Is in the midst of lions. I can lie down. Amidst fiery beasts. Remember Daniel. That time of Daniel.

[24 : 14] Is thrown into the lions den. He'd love to know. What went on that evening. Whether he slept. Kind of leaning on the lions. Like the children's bible shows us. I don't know. But it's not just David.

That lies down with lions. Not just Daniel. Just notice. In verse 4. The lions are still there. Aren't they?

But David says. I'm able to lie down. I'm able to rest. Because I'm praying to God most high. I'm able to lie down. He's still in the cave. He's still in great difficulties.

But in prayer. Because he's taking refuge in God. His heart is filled with God. And the confines. And the constrictions of the cave. Drop away. Because in God. We have something.

That is much greater. If you do refuge in God. You have something. That is greater than life itself. Is greater than your hearts can contain.

[25 : 13] And the mark of that. Is that you have a growing desire. That God would be exalted above the heavens. And his glory would come to the earth. So pray in the cave. And secondly and finally.

Pray out of the cave. Pray out of the cave. If you go through Psalm 57. And now you fully understand about spatial language. You will see that what David used about God.

He also uses about himself. So let's just chase that through. Look at verse 1. He says. For in you. My soul.

Take refuge. I take refuge in God. In the shadow of his wings. And then if you look in verse 6. Verse 6 says. And they. Set a night.

For my steps. And then he says. My soul was bowed down. And the picture there. Is not of being burdened. But of being humbled. Of being humbled.

[26 : 12] Before God. Of being bowed down. It's the picture of. Bowing under. Under. And then in verse 7. My heart is steadfast.

Oh God. My heart is steadfast. You can translate it. My heart is set on God. My heart is steadfast. On God. And so can you see that in verse 1.

In God. Verse 6. Under God. Verse 7. On God. In God. Under God.

On God. And I don't want to pretend this is easy. Because it's not. And I don't want to pretend that this comes naturally. Because it doesn't. Sometimes we pray.

Don't we? And we finish praying. And all we can think of is the cave. And the fire beasts. Around me. But what we do is. We do what David did here.

[27 : 12] We keep. On praying. And we focus on the grace. And the glory. Of God. And we remember that. What is this confining space.

Of greatest difficulty. Can become. The place. Of God's grace. And the space. Of God's goodness. And we set our hearts.

On God. And on God. And under God. And sometimes what happens is. The grace of God. And the kindness of God. And the glory of God. Begins to overflow. In our lives. And I think that's what happens. From verse 8. So let me read. These words to you.

David says. Awake my glory. He's speaking about himself. All that is best about me. David says. Wake up. And he says. Awake my glory.

[28 : 06] Awake. Oh harp. And liar. I will awake. The dawn. I will give thanks to you. Oh Lord. Among the peoples. And I'll send praise to you.

Among the nations. As Jesus does now. For your steadfast love. Is great to the heavens. And your faithfulness.

To the clouds. Be exalted. Oh God. Above the heavens. And let your glory. Be over all the earth. And that was our prayer today. And every day.