

Praising God Among The Nations

Psalm 57

Introduction: 1) “I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing to You among the nations” (Ps. 57:9). These words could serve as a life verse, the theme of one’s life, the heart-beat and passion of one’s soul. I will make You known O Lord, O *Adonai*, among the nations. I, will make you known more.

2) What makes these words even incredible is when and where David penned them. Note the superscription that prefaces the psalm: “A michtam (private prayer?) of David when he fled from Saul into the cave.” The background is most likely 1 Sam. 22 and David’s hiding in the cave of Adullam. Saul with 3,000 men is pursuing him like a wild animal. He is driven underground, into a cave, fleeing for his life. The net is set and the pit is prepared (v. 6). As David confessed to his friend Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20:3, “There is but a step between me and death.” And yet this psalm has the ring of hope and confidence. David is convinced that God will see him safely through this trial and time of testing, giving him the opportunity to praise the Lord among the nations. He has obeyed the Lord’s call on his life, he has accepted God’s purpose and plan, he has forfeited safety and comfort, convenience and security, and now he knows of God’s mercy (v. 1), providence (v. 2), salvation (v. 3), and greatness (vs. 5, 11). Therefore there is only one proper response: worship privately (v. 7) and worship publicly (v. 9). “I will praise you O Lord, among the peoples.” There is a missionary pulse running thru the arteries and veins of this wonderful hymn.

3) Psalm 52 began a set of psalms that depict a difficult time in David's life as he is pursued by King Saul.

- Psalm 57 is similar to Psalm 56 in content and structure, but its tone is more hopeful and triumphant.
- Interestingly, vs. 7-11 are almost identical to Psalm 108:1-5, and the latter half of Psalm 108 is taken from Psalm 60:5-12.

4) This psalm may be divided and studied variously: 1) in 2 parts with a closing refrain for each section (1-5, 6-11). Or 2), as we will examine it: in 3 movements (vs. 1-3, 4-6, 7-11). Each step of the way, the goodness, greatness and glory of our God is ringing in our ears and should be trumpeted with our voice. What is it that we declare to the nations about our God?

I. Tell the nations of His mercy. 57:1-3

- Repeatedly in this psalm David affirms the mercy of God (vs. 1, 3, 10). Twenty-one times he refers to God by name or pronoun, and this does not include the beautiful images and figures of speech about God. This is a God-centered, God-focused prayer from start to finish. Because this God is a God of mercy, kindness and compassion, we can herald to the nations 3 great truths.

1) You can trust this God. 57:1

- David knew God to be merciful and therefore trustworthy. The word translated "trust" in the *NKJV* is the same Hebrew word translated as "refuge." David's soul (*nephesh*), his very life, takes refuge in God. "In the shadow of Your wing" (cf. 17:8; 36:7; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4) He will find a haven, a place of security and safety.

- As a little chick hiding under its mother's protective wing, David will hide under the wing of the Lord:

“until these calamities have passed by” (*NKJV*)

“till the storms of destruction pass by” (*ESV*)

“until the disaster has passed” (*NIV*)

“until the hurricane blows over” (*The Message*)

2) **You can talk to this God. 57:2**

David will cry to His God, but this God is not just any God. He is “*Elohim Elyon*,” God Most High. This is an awesome and exalted God who sovereignly rules and reigns over all that He has created. Only *Yahweh*, *Jehovah*, is *El Elyon*.

Psalm 97:9, “For You, Lord, are most high above all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods.”

Such a great God is sufficient for all that we need. He is the God “who works for me” (lit. reading). (*ESV*: “He fulfills His purpose for me.”)

Men may plan and scheme one thing for us, but God will see to it that His plan and purpose will be accomplished. David hides in His God and cries to His God, confident that His mercy will send his troubles on their way.

3) **You can triumph through this God. 57:3**

- David believes deliverance is on the way and from where: “from heaven!”
What can men on earth do when my strength and protection comes from heaven! *El Elyon* is an exalted God but He is also a God who comes down and comes near. He is a God who tabernacles and dwelt among His

people in the person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:14).

- By His powerful word He reproaches (*NIV*, “rebukes”; *ESV*, “puts to shame”) “the one who would swallow me up” (crushes me” *NIV*, “who hotly pursues me”). And how will He do this? He will send His mercy and truth. The word translated mercy in vs. 3 and 10 is different than the word in v. 1. It is the Hebrew word “*hesed*”. It is best translated here as “steadfast love” (*ESV*) while the word truth is best rendered here as “faithfulness” (*ESV; NIV*). God is a covenant keeping God. He does not break His word or renege on His promises. His love is steadfast, constant and abiding. It is a love of volitional devotion and commitment. Out of this love flows mercy/compassion (v.1) and faithfulness. Our God is dependable and trustworthy. When we fail He is still faithful. When we stumble He remains steadfast. When we trip up He is always trustworthy.
 - If He puts you in the cave there is a reason.
 - If people hotly pursue you there is a purpose.
 - If people plot and plan your failure and destruction, you have the promise of His mercy salvation, covenant love and faithfulness.
- Psalm 84:11-12 reminds us, “For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, Blessed is the man who trusts in You!”

Transition: We must tell the nations of our God and what He does for those who trust Him and call on Him.

II. Tell the nations of His glory. 57:4-6

- These verses bracket or sandwich the first of two occurrences of the psalm's magnificent refrain found in vs. 5 and 11. The imagery is both picturesque and striking as David paints a portrait on the canvas of his experience of those (Saul) who would bring his life and ministry to an end.
- The confidence and faith he has in God is surreal. No, it is supernatural, a divine enablement. In the midst of incredible trials and difficulty his major concern is for the exaltation and glory of God. His eyes are in the right place, not on his enemies, not on his trials; they are on God!

Point: It is against the backdrop of the dark clouds and storms of evil men that our God's glory is magnified, especially as He delivers His servants from the lions, fires, spears, arrows, swords, traps and pits of enemies who, most importantly, are enemies of God.

1) God's glory is magnified by those who speak evil. 57:4-5

- David is surrounded by those who are like lions ready to devour him, "those who are on fire" against him.
- These "sons of men" (human persons) have teeth like spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. They pierce, slice and dice at every opportunity.
- These evil men feast on God's servants. On the one hand they are carnivorous beasts who hotly pursue us as their prey, and on the other hand they are ruthless soldiers who utilize with military effectiveness the most powerful arsenal in the human person: the tongue! Given the

chance, they will rip us to shreds and tear us to pieces. They will kill us with their words if nothing else, and take our lives if given half a chance.

- David's response: "Be exalted above the heavens, O *Elohim*, over all the earth your glory" (lit. reading). Even in my troubles, no especially in my troubles, you be exalted and glorified.

2) **God's glory is magnified by those who do evil.** **57:5-6**

- Often our enemies set traps in our path. Here it is a net our hunters hide to catch us. Further, they may dig a pit (his grave?) for us to fall into. Any means and every scheme available is in their bag of tricks.
- David confesses that it really "does him in" and takes him down: "My soul is bowed down." I am humbled, see myself unworthy, I need a refuge, a powerful wing to hide under! What does he need? He needs vs. 5 to be a reality in his life and among the nations! David goes down that God might go up, and deliver him which He will. Indeed his enemies will fall into the very pit they dug for him. He will not do it. God will do it!

Illustration: Charles Stanley in a lady's home seeing a picture of Daniel in the lions den. She pointed out: Daniel's knees were on the ground and his eyes were on God (!), not the lions. Selah. Think about it!

III. **Tell the nations of His majesty.** **57:7-11**

- By faith David has seen the salvation of the Lord (v. 6c). God has shown Himself to be infinitely worthy of exaltation and glory over all the heavens and the earth. Angels and demons, sinners and saints can, at the least, trace His providence in the deliverance from death of His servant David, a foreshadowing of the

deliverance from death of a greater David, the Lord Jesus! What a God! What a gospel! Tell the nations! Tell the nations!

1) **This God is an anchor.** **57:7-8**

- It is important to note the beginning of verse 7 and where God's work in David's life begins: the heart. "Is fixed my heart O God, is fixed my heart" (lit. reading). This steadfast heart grows out of the bowed down heart of v. 6. God is faithful to David and David will be faithful to God. Like an anchor to the soul is this God of mercy and refuge, providence and salvation, faithfulness, exaltation and glory.
- David has a response to the greatness of God:
 - "I will sing and give praise." (worship you in song)
 - "Awake my glory!" (the glorious part of me," the very core and essence of who I am).
 - "Awake, flute and harp (*ESV*, "O harp and lyre"; praise instruments).
 - "I will awaken the dawn" (A new era, a new day for God's people)
- From the depths of His soul David will sing and make a joyful noise among the nations that a new day has dawned for God's people. This new day is inaugurated by a God who saves from heaven and delivers from death and the grave (pit). This God is for His people and will give us victory over our enemies. This God is an anchor for the soul.

2) **This God is awesome.** **57:9-11**

- David's song in vss. 7-8 could be viewed as private, but not the song of vss. 9-11. Verse 9 is set in beautiful Hebrew poetic parallelism.

- “I will praise you among the peoples O *Adonai*.”
- “I will sing to you among the nations.”

Calvin sees a connection with Romans 15:9 and the ingathering of Gentiles into Christ’s kingdom (Psalms, 366). His observation is not without warrant.

- David will praise and sing of this awesome God and why? 2 reasons. 1) Your mercy (*hesed*, vs. 3), your steadfast love originating within yourself and not based upon the object of your affection goes all the way up to heaven. 2) Your truth “skies” to the clouds. Calvin: “How deeply God loves His people, and how true He is to His word—these are experiences that keep growing on God’s children as long as they draw breath here on earth. Surely both are as “high as the heavens” or “as high as the clouds.”
- If His mercy reaches the heavens, and His truth goes up to the clouds... well then, our response of worship is clear! “Be exalted, O God, above all the heavens; Let Your glory be above all the earth.”

The Message: “Soar high is the skies, O God! Cover the whole earth with your glory!”

Conclusion:

- 1) Verse 3 of this psalm is more significant than we might realize on first glance.

You see God did send from heaven and save. He sent His Son the Lord Jesus to deliver us out of the cave-like darkness of sin, death and hell. Further, He sent forth His mercy and truth in the One the Bible calls our Comforter and the Spirit of Truth (John 14-16). God saves from death thru His Son. God delivers us from

- lies, error and false religion by His Holy Spirit. What He has done for us, He will also do for the nations! But we must tell them. Do they want our help? Not always. Do they need our help? Absolutely!
- 2) So let us awake and praise Him, let us come out of caves of hiding and make His Name great among the nations. Let us tell of Him on the streets of Raleigh and Durham. Let us sing of Him in New York and Washington. Let us praise Him in India and China, the Sudan and Turkey, England and Germany. If necessary, let us exalt His Name among penguins and polar bears in the Artic(!) so that His glory will truly be above all the earth. You see, He did not take us out of the cave to be silent! He took us out to exalt His name across the planet.
 - 3) William Carey said it well in a letter to his son Jabez, “God usually gives success to those who seek in the most simple manner his glory; and those who live most in the practice of prayer to him, dependence on him, and meditation upon his ways and works, especially those of redemption and providence, will be likely to seek his honor in all things more than any others do.” (*Selected Letters*, 255). I wonder, could Carey have been meditating on Psalm 57 when he wrote these words to his son?!