

Praising God Among The Nations

Psalm 57

Introduction: The background is most likely 1 Sam. 22 and David's hiding in the cave of Adullam. 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. 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). There is a missionary pulse running thru the arteries and veins of this wonderful hymn.

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.

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).

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.

1) You can trust this God. 57:1

- 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).
- David will hide under the wing of the Lord:
 - "till the storms of destruction pass by" (*ESV*)
 - "until the disaster has passed" (*NIV*)

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

David will cry to His God. He is “*Elohim Elyon*,” God Most High (cf. Psalm 97:9). He is the God “who works for me” (lit. reading). (*ESV*: “He fulfills His purpose for me.”) David hides in His God and cries to His God.

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

- David believes deliverance is on the way and from where: “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”). 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*). Our God is dependable and 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 (cf. Psalm 84:11-12).

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.

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 are carnivorous beasts and ruthless soldiers who utilize with military effectiveness the most powerful arsenal in the human person: the tongue!
- 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.
- 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! 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!

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 in the deliverance from death of His servant David, a foreshadowing of the deliverance from death of a greater David, the Lord Jesus!

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

“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.

- David has a response to the greatness of God:
 - “Awake my glory!” (the glorious part of me,” the very core and essence of who I am).
 - “I will awaken the dawn” (A new era, a new day for God’s people)

This new day is inaugurated by a God who saves from heaven and delivers from death and the grave (pit).

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.

Calvin sees a connection with Romans 15:9 and the ingathering of Gentiles into Christ's kingdom (Psalms, 366).
- 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.
- 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."

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. He sent forth His mercy and truth in the One the Bible calls our Comforter and the Spirit of Truth (John 14-16). 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) 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). Could Carey have been meditating on Psalm 57 when he wrote these words to his son?!