

## Pillar Passages – Psalm 57

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Controlled by Fear to Controlled by Praise

Hello and welcome to another one of our Pillar Passages. Today we are looking at Ps 57. This is a psalm of David when he fled from Saul and was hiding in a cave. David is literally hiding in a cave from people who want to get him. Think about that as we think through this psalm.

Think about how David must have been feeling as he hid. How he felt hopeless. How he felt alone. How he felt unable to help himself. Have you ever felt these things before? Have you ever felt threats from circumstances or people like this before? David literally felt this as he hid in the cave.

It is very instructive to us—this is truly a Pillar Passage to us—as we think about how David responds, because his response is so different than ours is often.

Let's look closely at it. He first asks God in verse 1 to be merciful. David knows that he does not entirely deserve God's help, so he asks first for mercy. David is a sinner. He is the great king but he is not perfect. He asks for mercy and for mercy because, he says, in You my soul, my life takes refuge. I'll take refuge in the shadow of Your winds. I look to You for help and for protection until (verse 1) the storms of destruction pass me by.

It's You that I look to. I cry out to You, oh God. In verse 2 we see a stabilizing truth here, this is the God Most High. So I cry out to You, because it is You who fulfill Your purposes for me. You are sovereign. You are the king who is in control of all things. That is the first grounding truth that David reminds himself of. So therefore, that is why I cry out to You. I cry out to You because You are the Most High God. You are sovereign. You can do whatever You want. You are in control of all things. You can change anything that You want, if You would be filled with mercy towards me. So, I cry out to You.

One commentator notes here that, David and the other psalmists are not usually given to referring to God in this way—as the God Most High. It is possible that David is thinking here of Abraham, who was also homeless. A wandering man who often referred to God this way; as the God Most High.

David prays this way and it is very similar to the way David—the greater David would one day pray in Gethsemane. Where the greater David—King Jesus, the son of David—would pray to God. And pray that if it was His will, He might be delivered from what was about to come. But in the end, not My will but Yours be done. Your purposes be done. That is what I want, and that is where I will rest.

David knows God's promises to him. He is the anointed one. He knows that God will send from heaven (verse 3) and save. He will put to shame him who tramples on me.

It is very likely in the psalms, when we see a *Selah*, that this is a pause. A place to reflect, or a place where David simply stopped and reflected upon what he's just said. Here David reflects on the fact that; God's steadfast love, God mercy, is not just sentiment. When God acts in steadfast love and mercy—God acts in the real world and deliverance. This is what David needs because his situation is such that (verse 4) soul—his life—is in the mist of lions. People who are like fiery beasts. Children of men, but whose teeth are like animals. This is what are sins, our lust, and our idolatries do to us. They make us more like animals. That's what these people are like. Their teeth are like spear and arrows and their tongues of lust and slander are like sharp swords.

Is this any different than the culture we live in today? Today, you do one thing; you do one false move, and you feel the same way. Those who speak truth today are often left to feel this way. Feeling like they are surrounded by people who want to do them harm in word and deed. But it is interesting again, and very instructive to us, that David does not babble on about his situation first. Remember we're in verse 4. In verses 1, 2 and 3 he has spent asking for mercy, but reflecting upon God's sovereignty. God's sovereignty even over people who have become like animals and want to do him harm.

David's response is—David's real ask, the central ask of this psalm—is so instructive to us. Verse 5, and this will come up again. David asks that God's character—that God Himself—would be exalted above the heavens. That His glory would be over all the earth.

Has David changed the subject? No. No, not at all because he knows that if God were to do this; if God were to glorify Himself, the way that He would do this is by displaying His glory. And He would do it—He would display His glory—by sending forth His steadfast love and His faithfulness. That's how He displays His glory. That's why the nations will one day, as we will see, rejoice in Him.

David knows he's not changing the subject. He's praying the same thing. It is just like when the Lord taught us—the Lord Jesus—to pray. What is the first ask of the Lord's prayer? It is, Father, hallowed be Your name. Because in every other aspect of that prayer, that is how God would hallow His name. By bringing His kingdom, and by His will—by His purposes being done. By Him being our supplier of daily bread. By Him being the forgiver of our sins. By Him being the one who leads us away from sin and in righteousness.

Verse 6, David can pray confidently that, like Haman in the book of Esther, their schemes will fall back on them. Because of God's deliverance, it's as good as done. You can feel David's confidence building here. Not in himself. Not in his own faith. In God.

As I was reading this, I pray; God would You grant me this kind of overflowing supernatural confidence when I am faced with the sharp teeth of the enemies of God's people in our day.

Thus verse 7, Because of this confidence in God, does David's heart gain steadfastness. He says my heart is steadfast. This is not something he dreamed up himself. This steadfastness of heart did not occur in a vacuum. It did not come by his own strength. It came by thinking deeply about the sovereignty of God and how God brings about His glory on the earth. Thus, David can say I will sing and make melody. What a transformation from being controlled by fear to now being controlled by praise.

Thus, David can say, verse 8, Awake, my glory! Awake, O harp and lyre! (Verse 8) and I will awake the dawn!

Remember, David is still in the cave. While still in the cave, his situation has not changed. And yet, David awakens the dawn with praise.

Now, verse 9, David is able to see past his own situation, to see past his own nose, past the cave, and even past his own kingdom. He says, I will give thanks to you. O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the *nations*. I can see where this is going. As one commentator points out, David's prayer was answered. It was answered. And it is continuing to be answered in the greater David—the Lord Jesus—as the good news of His coming, His death, His burial, and His resurrection, and His ascension to the throne over all the nations. The good news of that has gone forth to all the nations and continues to through and go to all the nations. To all the places where He is currently not praised, the gospel is going out. Then He is worshipped and praised where He presently is not.

We've gone from worry to missions all in the same psalm. Why? Because God's steadfast love is great to the heavens. His faithfulness exceeds even the clouds. It is big enough to encompass all the nations. It goes far beyond just the details of David's life, though it does encompass those. Though God cares very much about the details of your life. When we see the massive scale and extent of God's steadfast love and what He intends to do with it to the nations, we are drawn again to praise, and drawn again to repeat with David the heart of his ask in this psalm.

Verse 11, he repeats verse 5, Therefore—because all of this comes about by You being exalted. All of this comes by You being gloried, so be it oh God. So be it.

The thing that I need most is not a change of my circumstances. What I need most is for *You* to be exalted oh God above the heavens. Let Your glory be over all of the earth. It is in this humble desire that we find rest when we find ourselves hiding in the caves of life from the enemies of God's people, in the pursuit, in the asking, of the glory of God, in the thinking about it deeply.