

How Pain Provokes Prayer that Provokes Praise

Tuesday, June 28, 2022 • Read Psalm 57

Questions from the Scripture text: Into whose hands was this Psalm put (superscript)? Who wrote it? When? What does v1a ask for twice? What is David's soul doing (v1b)? Where will he take refuge (v1c)? Until when (v1d)? What will he do to God (v2a)? For whom does God perform (fulfill/avenge, v2b)? What will God do for David (v3a)? What will He do to whom else (v3b)? In what two great attributes of His will God send forth (act out, v3c)? Where is David's soul (v4a)? What lions (v4b)? What are these men like (v4c-e)? What is David asking God to do to Himself (v5a)? And to His glory (v5b)? What have David's enemies done (v6a, c)? And what effect has that had upon him (v6b)? But what effect does it ultimately have upon them (v6d)? What is the condition of David's heart now (v7a)? And how will he respond (v7b)? How does v8a describe his stirring himself up to praise? How does v8b describe his stirring up of others to praise? How does v8c describe his eagerness for the new day of praise? Among whom, even, will he give this praise (v9a-b)? Which two attributes, especially, will he praise (v10)? How great are they? Again, what is David asking God to do to Himself (v11a)? And to His glory (v11b)?

For what are enemy attacks an opportunity? Psalm 57 looks forward to the opening portion of morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these eleven verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that when believers' enemies think they are taking opportunity to attack, what they are really doing is giving the believer the opportunity to see and praise God's steadfast love and faithfulness.

Evil men plan evil things (v1d, 4, 6a-c). The superscript is Scripture, so we must not forget the situation that was the context for this Psalm (cf. 1Sam 22). Believers suffer "calamities" in this life (v1d). Those who promise otherwise offer a different gospel that belongs to Hell, not heaven. And one of those calamities is especially the violence and scheming of others.

Clustered around the first statement of the Psalm's theme in v5 is the violence of David's enemies (v4) and the scheming of David's enemies (v6a, c). They are violent: like lions (v4a), who burn with their hatred (v4c), whose teeth are spears and arrows (weapons that are more aggressive and strike from long distance, v4d), and whose tongue is a sharp sword (a close-quarter and more lethal weapon, v4e). And they scheme. The preparation of the net (v6a) is meticulous, and the digging of the pit (v6c) requires both persistent effort to get it dug and crafty guile to hide it. The situation has applied so much pressure that it feels to David as if his very soul is bent over with the burden (v6b).

But God will never stop being God (v3c, 10) either to believers (v2b-3a) or to the enemies (v3b, 6d). Do you know Who can never be bent down? God! His mercy (steadfast/covenant love) and truth (faithfulness) are perfectly constant. So, He will "send them forth" (v3c). This means that He will take action in a way that is consistent with His character and His commitments.

His steadfast love reaches to the heavens, and His faithfulness to the clouds (v10). This is one of His repeated (cf. Ps 36:5) descriptions of Himself. When the difficult time comes, we mustn't allow the unbelief of our remaining sin to suggest that there has been some hiccup in the character of God; rather, we must conclude that He has brought us into an opportunity in which we will see that character wondrously displayed!

The consistency of God's character is wonderful news for believers. It means that everything that He performs is in our behalf (v2b) and that one of the purposes in every believer's trouble is that He would ultimately save us out of it (v3a). But that steadiness and reliability of the character of God has the opposite effect for the wicked. It means that the one who hounds the righteous will discover that it is the God of Heaven Who responds in the believer's behalf (v3b).

And when we remember that this is because David is a picture of Christ here, we realize that it is God's love for His Son and God's commitment to His Son that He is acting upon in our lives—even and especially in our troubles!

Therefore, attacks of the wicked are an opportunity to trust in God (v1a-c, 2a). So, what should we do when we are in trouble? Trust in God with our very soul (v1b), with the whole of our being. This isn't just pretending away the pain or theologically scolding ourselves for feeling bent down. It is a particular action. Trusting God sounds like something: crying out. When he says that he will cry out to God Most High in v2a, that is after beginning his prayer-song with an example of that crying out: "Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me!"

This is one reason why "quiet time" may not be a helpful name for private worship. A well-trying believer will know this to be "noisy time"! And he who has given loud cries of the mouth unto God in such times will be well-exercised in vigorous liftings up of the heart to God in other times when noisiness just isn't an option (like when you're hiding in a cave, and the enemy comes in!). To do so is not just to express oneself into the air, but to take actual refuge in God Himself personally, as if He had physical wings under which you could physically hide (v1c).

And ultimately, attacks of the wicked are an opportunity to "awaken" praise of God (v7-9). It is the very instability of his circumstances that drives the believer to focus not on the circumstances but his steady God. And as we shift our focus onto Him Himself, we find that our heart is steadied (v7a). This realization, that God steadies our hearts, prompts us to praise (v7b). One of the things that trouble those who have known God's goodness and salvation is how, in this life, the heart and voice of praise can seem to go dormant. What a blessed thing, then, is the affliction that wakes up our praising (v8)!

When we are restored to praising God, we begin again to taste the ultimate end for which we were made and redeemed: that with an innumerable, redeemed multitude from all the nations, we would praise the Lord forever and ever (v9).

So, the point of our suffering, just as of all things, is the glory of God (v5, 11). By putting the same words in the middle of the Psalm in v5 and at the end of the Psalm in v11, the Spirit helps us see the main point of the Psalm: that God would be exalted above the heavens, and that His glory would be exalted above all the earth. When beholding His glory is our greatest delight, the display of that glory is our greatest blessing!

What circumstances have had you bent down? How must you expect it to end? What does your trusting in God "sound" like? How have (or should?!) recent troubles awakened your praise of God?

Sample prayer: Our merciful God, who perform all things for our good, we cry out to You. In our greatest troubles, just as at all times, You will send forth Your mercy and Your truth, Your steadfast love and Your covenant faithfulness. So, keep our hearts steadfast upon You, and awaken us to praise You. Glorify Yourself now in this congregation's worship, as You will among redeemed from all nations, forever and ever. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth, in Jesus Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP108A "God, My Heart Is Steadfast" or TPH108 "My Heart Is Steadfast, God!"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Psalm 57. Let us offer to God, our hearing as an act of worship for. These are His words.

To the chief musician, set to do not destroy a McTom of David. When he fled from Seoul into the cave, be merciful to me. Oh God. Be merciful to me for my soul. Trusts in you. And in the shadow of your wings, I will make my refuge until these calamities have passed by.

Oh, cry out to God, most high to God. Who perform Zole things for me? He shall send for send from heaven and save me. He approaches the one who had swallow me up. God shall send forth as mercy and his truth. My soul is among lions. I lie among the sons of men who are set on fire who's teeth are spears and arrows and their tongue.

The sharp sword. Be exalted. Oh, God above the heavens. Let your glory. Be above all the earth. They have prepared a net for my steps. My soul is bowed down. They have dog. A pit before me into the midst of it. They themselves are fallen. My heart is steadfast.

Oh God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and give praise awake. My glory awake, loot and harp. I will awaken the dawn. I will praise you. O Lord, among the people's, I will sing to you among the nations Four, your mercy reaches unto the heavens and your truth unto the clouds.

The exalted of God above the heavens. Let your glory be above all the earth.

So far the reading of God's Inspired and intward.

So Psalm 57 teaches and helps us to connect the eternal truth about God. And the ultimate truth about creation to our present circumstances, he's dealing with his present circumstances up up through verse six or so and he's crying out to God in the midst of it. I'd there are a couple key ideas in his present.

Circumstances one is that what God is doing is actually more significant? Then what his enemies are doing? What is enemies are doing fields nearer because we perceive those things by sight and that's the circumstance that we're in the middle of Now. God is everywhere all the time, and God has ruling and overruling things by his providence.

But because our perception of God and thinking about him tends to be not, just tends to be, is inconsistent and unfaithful. We are not like God, right? We are not said, steadfast like, we ought to be The things that we perceive in our circumstances and experience seemed to us to carry more weight than God himself.

But of course God is infinitely. Waiting. So so he's in his circumstances and he's crying out to God. And as he start cries out to God, be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, his in the cave. Perhaps all is in there already. Perhaps not the verse 6 is either prophetic.

If it happens before Saul gets to the cave, they have dug a pit before me into the midst of it. They themselves have fallen. You can hear the metaphor, right? David's hiding in the cave and Saul comes in, and basically, disables himself for battle. And he remember when we were going through, that section for Samuel, how David's friends us?

Ah, the Lord is delivered him into your hands, you know, this is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and kill Saul in it. So it verse 6 is either responding to the that providence having happened or it's prophetic, but David is, is crying out to God.

And as he cries out to God, that's one of the things that prayer helps us do. Is it turns us from anxiety to praise? Because when you start praying you, you start praying perhaps because of a situation because of a circumstance, that certainly seems to be the case with David here, right?

He's in a circumstance that causes him to pray. And you may find yourself or probably often find yourself in circumstances to which a really wise, and right, and good response. And really the reflex of a heart that believes in the Lord, Jesus Christ, and believes in the Triune God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, right?

Response to the situation is to pray But as David prays his attention gets turned from the situation and from the enemies to what or to whom to God to God. That's right. And as he turns his attention towards God, He realizes God isn't changed. God cannot change, he's still full of what's translated here mercy and truth.

It's Kessen. And it which in God's providence to y'all you get to be in a family where there are two kids named those things. Has steadfast. Love, is covenanted, love is unfortable committed from within himself from all eternity. Love cousin. And his Emmett, his truth, his and his faithfulness, his unchangeableness His perfect reliability, is keeping of all of his promises, his consistency of his character, his Emmett, and so he's thinking about what his enemies are doing.

And he says, he shall sin from heaven and save me. He reproaches the one who would swallow me up. He shall send forth his mercy and his truth. Now the details of the actions of God. What is God going to do here? We may not know the details of the actions, but the principles and the character of God according to which he acts, we always know.

He always acts according to that steadfast loth. He always acts according to that faithfulness. And so when he says, when he's thinking about my enemies are doing this, what will God do? Well he's gonna send forth mercy and truth, he's gonna send forth that's a limit, he's gonna send forth steadfast love and faithfulness.

Now, this is important because his situation and his enemies in particular are pretty fierce. When we learn stuff like this from the Bible, it's not like, what some people think and wicked people teach about the Christian life that it's going to be easy and trouble-free. And if we just believed well enough, you know, if you're faith was big enough or if you just behaved well enough, you know, there seemed to be two different groups.

One group says oh you you really need to to claim it before. God, believe, well enough. And then, there's another group that says that says, you know, if you were just wise and learned the, you know, 783 laws that the theonomists think, you know, sorry not theonymous Pharisees same difference that we if we just implement everything.

So precisely things will go well for us and we will rec dropped the Utopian nation and world. And that's that's not much different than the if you believe well enough people. That's the if you behave well, enough people but both say that that their method the believe. Well, enough for the behave.

Well enough will get us to a place where we will stop having problems. Well, did Jesus believe well enough and behave. Well enough, How about the apostle Paul in his converted life? How about David At this time? Yeah. Before the whole deal with Uriah. Well, this is what it looks like for people who believe in behave.

Well, they have calamities verse 1. They have enemies verse 4 who are like lions sums of sons of men, who are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows and their tongue to sharp sword. This is a nightmare, right? This is a man built like a lion, okay?

So super powerful and perhaps, with the, the aggressive and error aggressiveness, and arrogance, and confidence that you would associate with a lion top of the food chain guy. And now he's a flaming lion on fire. And his teeth are spears and arrows. So they're not just sharp, but they launch out of him and his tongue as a sharp sword.

So after he's launched his teeth into you and hit you, with the arrows and spears, his sword tongue finishes, the job and cuts you to pieces.

That's what the circumstances like to David. If I had a dream like that and I'm at that particular one probably shouldn't have been permitted to watch the old 19 reruns of the old 1970s incredible Hulk, when I was a little boy, because I had horrible incredible hulk dreams, But David was living this nightmare.

And yet, when he turns his attention to God, he gets the shadow of God's wings. It's kind of like when you play with, You're younger sibling everyone but Sophia understands this. She doesn't have a younger sibling, and the younger sibling goes forcefield or whatever, When you guys are actually like, playing and stuff.

You all you guys used to say, daddy shield, right? Because you were not allowed to make a ruckus around me or attack around me. So, if a child was really a danger, they just come be within the vicinity of daddy. And there would be the invisible wings that covered and no trouble could enter there.

Well, I am finite and small and inconsistent and unfaithful, but our heavenly Father is none of those things. He has. None of my weakness, none of my wickedness and you have a daddy shield. Now, the calamity may be there in these burning man's spirit sword. Lion guys maybe there.

But what are they next to the steadfast love? And faithfulness of God. So when we pray, It turns our attention away from the circumstances, which may genuinely be very calamitous. But God is infinitely more good. And that's why prayer. Awakens. Praise says, they have prepared a net for my steps.

My soul is about down. He's not unaffected by his circumstances, his soul's bad down. They have a dug, a pit before me. And I really think this is prophetic. I don't think Saul's in the cave yet. At the time into the midst of it, They themselves have fallen. He realizes, there's nothing the enemy can do.

That will end ultimately in David's harm. There may be pain and temporal significant but not ultimate trouble. Harm pain along the way, but the way it ends is with God's justice vindicated, the one whom God has protected avenged and the one who has attacked him condemned. Punished. And so he says, prophetically into the midst of it, they themselves have fallen.

And that's the point at which the prayer turns to praise. So you have the god shall send forth his mercy and truth verse 3. And be exalted, O God above the heavens, let your glory be above all the earth. I know in the moment that the purpose of this is for the the glory of God and you'll hear the echoes of those two things.

And the conclusion, verse 10, 11 for your mercy, your message reaches unto the heavens and your truth, your Emmett unto the clouds, your steadfast love and your faithfulness to the heavens and to the clouds. Be exalted O God above the heavens. Let your glory be above all the earth.

But what happens in the meantime God, delivers his people out of all their troubles. God redeems for Himself and innumerable multitude of people, from all the nations and these redeemed people from all the nations Praise Him. That's how the whole thing ends that's with the whole thing is going towards.

And in the moment that the circumstance that provoked you to prayer, and the moment that that circumstance, turns your attention from what's going on or your enemies to God himself prayer, translates to praise it, wakes you up so that you realize almost like when you wake up from a nightmare and you realize oh it's just a dream, This is real.

It's not just a dream but it is lightened momentary. And if we are not remembering and resting in the character of God, and if we are not remembering and rejoicing over how all this ends, then we're not functioning well in the midst of this temporary thing. And so we need to be awakened to praise, and that's what happens.

Verse 7, through 9, my heart to steadfast. Oh God, my heart to steadfast you know his soul was about down verse ago. My hardest steadfast. Now I will sing and give praise awake. My glory, All of the substance. All of the weightiness of who I am wake up and remember what you were made for to give praise to God.

Awake loot and harp the creation. God's creation, even of music. And here, there's perhaps some prophecy of David who has learned to use the loot and harp and will eventually be the one through whom God gives temple worship. And there will be, there will be divisions of the priesthood that are assigned to lead.

Corporate praise, right. So there there's a dynamic there but just this is what song exists. For he's built into his creation. The reality of music for his praise awake. My glory awake. Looped and harp. I will awaken the dawn. The implication is He's writing this in the middle of the night as often the case when you have nightmares or when you're stressing and everything's both of those things often tend to happen at night and he says I can't wait for dawn to come.

So I can lead my men in a worship service, in the cave, and the recourse of prayer. The ability to turn to God in prayer. Awakens us to our purpose, I will praise you, O Lord. He says, now not just in the cave, not just with the the rabble who will one day, be his mighty men, but are somewhere in between when they started to gather to David and they were, you know, the lowest of the low and the outlaws and the outcasts, and his accumulating.

Yeah, this this group of men, many of whom end up being the mighty man, that get recounted and the great list of heroes at the end. Like a great, you know, epic novel, or or film, but it's reality. He's gonna he's not not only, is he gonna praise not only is he and lead his men and praise.

But now he's especially looking forward to leading or participating with the nations and praise. And remember, David is unto us a type of Christ. A force shadowing picture of the Lord. Jesus, you remember who part of the joy that is set beforehand and for which he endures? The cross is because he is accomplishing a redemption that will most certainly be applied to a multitude, an innumerable multitude from all the nations and the Lord Jesus himself leads us already which we perceive by faith but we will one day see by sight our Lord.

Jesus leading the innumerable multitudes and praise and so he is able to access by faith and by hope to enjoy already by the four. The foresight by remembering what is going to happen. Part of that glorious end to which the redeemed are coming. He says I will praise you O Lord among the people.

I will sing to you among the nation up among the nations. And then the the two things that he's pulled out from earlier. For your tacit reaches into the heavens and your Emmet to the clouds. Be exalted O God above the heavens, that your glory be above all the earth, This is available to you.

One of the purposes of trouble and opposition and people who are nightmarish in their treatment of you. In life is to turn your heart and your mind to the Lord in prayer so that by your attention being redirected to him, You'll remember what he is. Like what he has done, what he will have done, when it all comes to its conclusion.

And so that you can praise. Now, in anticipation of that perfected, praise that we will offer forever so calamities and opposition provoke to prayer in order to turn our hearts. To praise. Praise God. Let's pray Our Father in heaven. We thank you for this Psalm. We thank you, Lord for your word.

Thank you for telling us the truth about our circumstances and not lying to us like the believe. Well, enough or behave. Well enough people, and thank you, Lord. That you are the most significant factor at every point in our lives. We thank you for accommodating our weakness. Our forgetfulness, our inconsistency, by giving us these troubles that turn our attention to you in prayer so that we may be awakened to praise help us O.

Lord, we pray that your Holy Spirit would develop in our hearts and our minds this way of responding to difficulty. Lord, I pray that you would do it early for my children, so that they would build these healthy habits of mind and heart and may walk with you by by this this sort of faith throughout the troubles of this life.

Glorify yourself, will God not only now, but oh, how we long for the day when we come and praise with the innumerable multitude, be exalted above the heavens. Oh God, and let your glory, be exalted above all the earth. We ask In Jesus name. Amen.