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Prayer and Praise; Psalm 57
GPBC
8.23.20

Introduction – Psalm 56 was fear and faith. Psalm 57 is prayer and praise.

The psalms are a rich storehouse of prayers. Yes, the psalms are songs. The Psalter is the hymnbook of the Bible. But many of the psalms and many parts of the psalms are prayers. David loved to put his prayers to rhythm and music. The Psalter is not only the hymnbook of the Bible; it is also the prayer book of the Bible. Prayer as praise and prayer and praise.

Those two activities, prayer and praise, are, in their right context and application, solely reserved for those who believe in the one true God. Praying to something up there or to another god is no prayer at all. There is no other god to hear any prayer offered to him. Those prayers are simply words. But not the prayers of God's people. Those prayers are heard, received, and answered according to the wisdom and faithfulness of the Almighty.

The same is true for praise. You may offer encouraging praise to someone for their hard work or accomplishment. But praise, as it refers to God, is a worshipping of God for who He is, what He is like. We thank God for the great and gracious things He does; we praise God for the great and gracious God He is. His great works flow from His greatness.

So prayer and praise are truly activities reserved for and enjoyed by only believers. And because God is so great and does so many great things, prayer and praise are to be constant in our lives. We are to pray without ceasing; and His praise is to be continually on our lips. Therefore, we ought to always be growing and learning in our praying and in our praising. The psalms are the perfect place for us to turn in order to grow our prayer lives and our praising lives. Here in Psalm 56, we find David first praying and then praising.

- I. Exalting God in Prayer (vv1-5)
 - a. David writes this psalm from his experience of fleeing from Saul in the cave. We find this narrative in 1 Sam 24. David and his men are hiding in a cave, and Saul, along with his men, are seeking David in

order to kill him. Saul happens to stop by the cave in which David is hiding, the Bible says, in order to relieve himself.

- b. Imagine being in the same place, just a few paces away, from one whose wants to kill you? In the narrative, David slips up behind Saul and cuts off a corner of his garment to later show Saul he could have taken his life, but he showed him mercy because he was king of God's people.
- c. That was a bold thing to do! In the narrative, David appears to be the same old giant slayer, filled with courage and boldness. In the psalm, we find that David is just like us. He's crying out to God, pleading for God's mercy in this situation. His courage and boldness comes from his dependence on the Lord and His joyful praise.
- d. V1 – When David is hiding in that cave and Saul walks into his hiding place, David cries for the mercy of God. He's hiding in a cave, but Saul has entered the cave. The cave is no longer his hiding place, it's now a place of danger. He needs a better, bigger hiding place; God is his refuge. God is his hiding place. Saul is in the cave with David, but David is in the shadow of the wings of God.
 - i. What a powerful lesson for us. No matter what surrounds us or comes near to us, God is closer and more sure than our own places of refuge. David hid a cave only to find He needed to be hidden in God. The cave couldn't save him; but God could save him, even in the cave.
 - ii. We have our own caves we run to when we're down or frightened or seeking rest. We isolate or eat or sleep or binge tv. Let us remember that our caves are enough. We need God more because He is more.
- e. V2 – David says the reason why he prays to God is because God will fulfill His purpose for David. God meant for David to be king. Saul had a purpose for David too. Both purposes cannot be fulfilled. One will stand and one will fail. Man's purposes fail; God's purposes stand.
- f. V3 – David acknowledges he doesn't know how God is going to save him in this instance; he just knows that He will. He knows that because he knows of God's steadfast love and faithfulness.
 - i. You see, because of who He is, steadfast love and faithfulness, David knows He will save. He does great things (we can pray to Him) because He is great (We can praise Him)!

- ii. We can know that same certainty! God's love and faithfulness toward His people is just as real and certain today as it was for David. We can know He will save us. We can know that He will do great things for us because we know He is great!
- g. V4 – David foreshadows Daniel in the lions' den. These people are like lions, ready to tear me apart. But God who dwells in the heavens is going to send from heaven and fulfill His purpose for me on this earth.
 - i. David's prayer to God was informed by the character of God, steadfast love and faithfulness, and the sovereignty of God, the sureness of His purposes and that He was the God of heaven.
 - ii. Last week observed the greater our view of God, the greater our faith. This week we learn the greater our view of God, the greater our prayers are to God. Nothing is too difficult for God. Nothing is too great for God. He is greater.
- h. In v5 we see just how large is David's view of God.
 - i. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!
 1. We live on a planet, in a solar system, surrounded by other solar systems, that makes up one galaxy. Our galaxy is surrounded by hundreds of other galaxies. All the galaxies of the heavens make up a universe for which we have yet to discover its boundaries. It's as if the universe simply never ends.
 2. That is the magnitude of creation. It's unfathomable, unsearchable, unknowable, incomprehensible, and yet it's still creation. Above it stands and exists the Creator!
 3. If creation is of such wondrous magnitude, and it is finite, how great must God be! He is exalted above the heavens!
 - ii. From that view of how transcendent He is, comes the view of how immanent He is! Let your glory be over all the earth. The God who is exalted above the heavens is the God who's glory then envelopes and surrounds the entire earth.
 - iii. He is far above, and yet, He is right here.
- i. The more we come to know that God, the more our hearts will be filled with prayer and praise.

- II. Exalting God in Praise (vv6-11)
 - a. The character of God informs David's praying, and the character of God informs David's praising. V10. "For"
 - b. God's steadfast love is great to the heavens. His faithfulness to the clouds. Saul may be jealous and vindictive and hateful and murderous. But all his maliciousness only goes so far, only reaches so far. God's love and God's faithfulness is greater and goes farther and reaches higher.
 - c. The short-armed boxer doesn't stand a chance against an opponent with a far reach. The long arm of God's love and the far reach of His faithfulness will overtake man's war against Him and His people and His gospel and His church.
 - d. The faithfulness of God overturns the plans of the enemies of God – that's v6.
 - e. The steadfast love of God is what gives rise to the steadfast heart of David – that's v7. Remember we said earlier 1 Sam 24 shows David full of courage and boldness. Psalm 57 shows us where that courage and boldness came from.
 - f. And finally in vv8-9, David knows he's going to sing again, he's going to praise again because he knows of the love and faithfulness of God.

Conclusion – so we arrive at v11, the last verse of the Psalm. David began the psalm with the plea, be merciful, O God, be merciful to me. Then having reflected on the character of God and the presence of God, having prayed and having praised, in the middle of a near-death experience, he sings – "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!" Saul may have him cornered in a cave, but God stands above the heavens and envelopes the earth. Saul cannot have David because God has Saul.

I wonder if old Daniel thought about Psalm 57 when he thrown into the den of lions. V4 in the midst of lions. V6 – they have fallen into the pit they dug for me – Daniel's accusers ended up in the den of lions. I don't know if Daniel thought about this psalm, but I do know he thought about the God of this psalm.

What about Paul and Silas? Chained and in prison and singing at midnight. I don't know if they thought about this psalm, but I do know they thought about the God of this psalm – and they sang just like David sang.

And we can sing too, in our cave and in our den and caught in our prison, if we will just turn to this God in prayer and praise! We too will sing.