

Psalm 57-59

The only context we're given concerning the 57th Ps is that David wrote it when he fled from Saul into the cave. Which cave exactly this is speaking of we're not sure, Dave spent a lot of time in a cave fleeing from Saul. There were years and years that went by whereby Saul was seeking to end David's life, God taking David, and making David a broken vessel, humbling him that he might exalt him in due time. It would seem that either the cave of Adullam or the cave of En Gedi is in view.

It was there at the cave of En Gedi when Saul and his 3,000 men went after David and while they were on the hunt Saul stepped into a cave to take care of some business and it "just happened" to be the cave that David and his men were hiding in. and So here's Saul stepping into a cave by himself where David and hundreds of men are in the shadows watching his every move. One of the guys leaned over and said to David, "The Lord has delivered Saul into your hands today!" David snuck up and cut a piece of Saul's robe, the hem of his garment off (unbeknownst to him) and let him go. When he rejoined his troops David stepped out of the cave and said, "Hey Saul, see what I got here? Today the Lord placed you right in my hands and I could've killed you, but I let you live so that you might know that there's no wicked agenda in my heart, I'm not looking to take the throne from you." and Saul had a momentary lapse of insanity and said, "David I've sinned, and I won't pursue you anymore..." Of course that's a paraphrase but it's the general gist of the conversation, but it wasn't long before Saul was back on his trail.

It's interesting isn't how that when we're busted out over something it seems so easy in that moment to say, "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have done that, I'm not going to do that anymore..." But then a day or a week, or a month goes by and those feelings of sorrow and regret begin to fade away as the temptation unto the flesh begins to creep up on you again. I've seen it happen over and over again; I'm not saying that you're not repentant if you ever repeat offend, however it seems to me that one of the differences between regret and repentance is just that. Has there been a legitimate lasting change in my life, or a momentary time of sorrow whereby I was doing the right thing as long as I felt bad because of it but when that faded away I went right back to doing what I was doing before? Most people are repentant in prison, but the true test is when they're released, has their life legitimately changed or is it right back to the same scene? Saul went right back to the same scene. Be that as it may we read beginning in Vs 1 of Ch 57

Vs1-3

In Vs 1-3 we find David's Cry, in Vs 4-6 we find his Calamity, and in Vs 7-11 we find his Confidence. and You might simply make a mental note of the common theme of God's mercy that's woven throughout this Psalm.

David says, "Be merciful to me O God, Be merciful to me!" Or in the words of my Nigerian brother Bernard, "Show mercy here!" It's interesting how we want God to deal with others according to justice but deal with us according to mercy... What is mercy?

It's getting what I don't deserve. Grace is not getting what I do deserve, I deserve justice and judgment. God in His grace doesn't give me those things. Mercy is getting what I don't deserve, I don't deserve God's kindness, His patience, His compassion, and His favor, but out of mercy God sheds those things upon me, shares those things with me... But there's a bit of an interesting "twist" (if you will) when it comes to God's mercy. Because He loves to pour it out yet He's restrained Himself in a certain context.

He allows you to determine how much of His mercy He'll pour out on you. He allows me to determine what degree of mercy will be measured to me. Jesus said it like this, "Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy." Matt 5:7 He said, "...love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." Luke 6:35-38 Now often times the application to the measure that's made there is concerning money, and no doubt it's a legitimate application (you can't out give God). However the context lends itself more toward mercy than it does money. If you dole out mercy God will dole it out to you pressed down, shaken together, and running over. I don't know about you but that's the kind of mercy I need! and David having had the opportunity to take Saul's life, yet showing mercy, cries out to God that He might show him mercy in being a shield about him and a strong tower for Him.

David says, "Be merciful O God, Be merciful..." You can sense the desperate nature of his cry in the repetition of the phrase. Now some times people are concerned about repetitive prayers, because Jesus warned about vain repetitions. It's true that we need to be careful to avoid falling into the rut of saying the same thing in our head so much that it loses any real meaning in our heart. However we shouldn't refrain from manifesting ourselves emotionally before God. Jesus prayed the same thing over and over and over again, Paul did as well. Jesus encouraged us to ask and keep asking, and keep asking, don't be dissuaded from a determined prayer life. At the same time don't think that repeated petitions owe you God's ear, His ears are open to our cry. I think that often times how determined we are to pray about something bears out the sincerity of our hearts toward the petition. and If we don't really care about it, why should God respond to it?

David says, "God, I'm looking for mercy from You, not because I deserve it, or am worthy of it but because my soul trusts in You, it's in the shadow of Your wings that I make my refuge until these calamities pass by." David in essence is looking to the Lord to be his hiding place, he's in the cave, but he's trusting in Christ. and We're refreshed by his faith in that even though he's in the midst of tough times (and would be for years) he knew that as he looked to and trusted in the Lord one day his problems would pass.

That's the hope that we all have in Christ, no matter what we're going through in this world, even if it lasts for years, or the rest of our days on this planet, the day will come when our problems will pass because we have placed the trust of our soul into the care of our Savior. We've made our refuge in Jesus, our Redeemer and because of that the day will come when our calamities will pass by.

Vs2-3

There toward the end of Vs 3 David says, "Selah." Or "pause for a minute and meditate on that, think about that," about what? About the fact that he can cry out to God, and the God of the universe will turn toward him, respond to Him and act on behalf of Him. He will send from heaven and save him and reproach (or deal with) the one who would swallow him up. David puts his pen down for a minute, thinks about that and just lets it blow his mind and encourage his inner man. That God should send forth His mercy and His truth and rescue him; he knew the characteristics of God, and because of that he knew He could count on the Lord to be there for him and take care of him.

That's what he means there in Vs 2 where he says, "I'll cry out to God Most High, to God who performs for me." That doesn't mean that God entertains him, or does a juggling act for him or something. It means that God is faithful to and follows through on His word, He performs all His promises and sees His word through to the end and the purpose for which it's sent. We read in Num 23:19, "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" The point being that God isn't like you and me. He doesn't say one thing and then do another, or perhaps only fulfill part of what He's said He would do. If He says it He'll do it, He performs His promises for you. You can cry out to God and He will hear you, He'll pay attention to you and He'll take care of you. Now that doesn't always translate into what we perceive as ideal, or what needs to happen, but don't think that God turns a deaf ear to the cry of your heart. "He shall send forth His mercy and truth."

Vs4-6

This is obviously the calamity, there are people who are prowling and pursuing him. His soul is among lions, people whose teeth are like spears and arrows, their tongue is like a sharp sword, and they're seeking to ensnare him as with a net. But David trusted that in due time God would turn the tables on his enemies, "They have dug a pit before me, in the midst of it they themselves have fallen." It's the law of sowing a reaping, sow to the wind and reap the whirlwind. The world refers to it as "poetic justice" and God seems to deal out a lot of that.

But David felt like he was being pursued as by lions, stalking their prey, waiting upon a moment of vulnerability to pounce upon and destroy his life. The bible is clear that as a believer you're in that same place. Peter tells us, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8 and Don't think that

all his little minions aren't out there with the same agenda, preying upon you, looking for a moment of vulnerability in you to take advantage of so as to destroy you.

But greater is He who is in you than he that is of this world, David knew that he was in a dangerous situation but resolved that come what may, "Be exalted O God, above the heavens, Let Your glory be above all the earth." "God come what may I trust in You, be glorified in me." Like Paul said that whether I live or I die as long as God can be glorified, and Christ will be magnified in my body that's all that matters to me, that's the essence of what David is saying here.

Vs7-11

This is David's confidence; regardless of the situation, no matter what may happen to him personally or practically he will praise the Lord and give God glory. Vs 10 is the key there; he's not praising the Lord because God has answered his prayer, but because of what he knows about God's mercy and truth. and I think this is such an important point to grab hold of because often times our praise is connected directly to our problems being ironed out and remedied according to our understanding and desire. David says, "I'm going to praise You God not because everything is going my way, but for Your mercy and truth."

He says, "My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast;" that is "my heart is fixed upon You and refused to be moved from You." What an incredible and admirable declaration, to have a heart that's fixated upon the Lord, that refused to be moved. He saying that he's centering his whole heart upon the Lord, he doesn't have a divided heart, a heart that's torn between God and something else he really wants, his heart is steadfast. How about yours, what's your heart fixed to, what the pursuit of your heart, the desire way down deep in your heart. Is it a better job? More money? Nicer house or some hobby? Or is to be anchored to the Lord?

To be fixated upon Him, refusing to be moved from Him? David says, "I'll worship you privately/personally, I'll worship you publicly among the people, I will awaken the dawn." Now whether or not he actually got up before the sun in order to worship I don't know, but the idea is that he was going to give God the 1st fruits of his day, the Lord would be his priority even as He needs to be ours.

One more thing before we move on. I'd have you notice the simultaneous distress and trust in the Lord in this Ps. Because it seems that we have this tendency to believe that if we're freaking out at all, or in a situation of stress we're not trusting in the Lord. Is it possible to be concerned for your situation and yet still trust the Lord emphatically, in totality? It would seem to me that it is. It's true that we're to trust in the Lord, worry does us no good, we're to give our troubles to Him and all that. But notice David says, "My soul is among lions" he's sensing danger and demise, yet in Vs 1 "My soul trusts in You, I'm taking refuge in You." That didn't mean he wasn't concerned for his situation. He said his soul was bowed down, which is to say he was heavy laden, burdened by his present plight. Yet he said that his heart was steadfast and fixed upon the Lord; immovable.

You see David isn't pretending that he doesn't have problems, he's sober concerning his situation, but at the end of the day his trust is in the Lord, his heart belongs to the Lord, and his praise will ascend unto the Lord because God is merciful. So it's David's desire that come what may, "God be exalted above the heavens, and let Your glory be above all the earth."

Psalm 58

We're not told the scenario surrounding this psalm, nor do we have any indication that its placement is relevant. Some believe that because it's in the midst of these Psalms that revolved around David's trials with Saul that perhaps this psalm is the result of that as well. and Though I'd be prone to agree that it probably concerns his dealings with Saul I wouldn't say that it's proper to draw that conclusion because of where it is. We've already noted that there's no real chronological flow to the psalms, but I'm not sure it's fair to rule that out either, we just don't know.

If it does deal with David's run ins with Saul it seems that perhaps he was on the raw end of a verdict or something. Or at the very least David is acknowledging the judicial decay of the land under Saul's reign. Evidently rather than ruling rightly and meting out justice in the land as God's representatives on legal matters they were turning a blind eye to justice, perverting justice for personal gain. Much like what happens in many cases in America today, people being bought with bribes, judgment going to the favor of the man with the most money, so on and so forth.

Vs1-2

This psalm really seems to zero in on the power that's held in the words that we speak. Now I'm not talking about positive or negative confessions, I'm not talking about naming and claiming. But the damage that can take place in people's lives because of the words that we speak. and All the more if you're in a position of legal power or spiritual authority, because people (in some cases) are forced to succumb to the words that pour forth from people's mouths. You're standing in a court room situation, when the judge speaks and the gavel falls that's the end of the line. and If you're before a crook in a black robe it could be bad. That's what David is talking about here, men meting out violence, spreading their own agenda in the land for personal gain because they have a legal platform to do so.

In his last words David said this, "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue. The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me: 'He who rules over men must be just, Ruling in the fear of God.'" 2 Sam 23:2-3 That's the polar opposite of what's happening here, and the day will come when we all (all the more those in authority) will give an account for the things that we said, the things that we did and the judgments we made.

Vs3-5

They don't want to hear words of truth, they don't want to reason things through, they want to do what they want to do.

There in Vs 3 David is simply saying what the bible affirms, and that is that we're all born with a sin nature. Left unchecked mankind will continue to careen out of control. You don't have to teach a child to lie in order to try and get out of trouble or get his/her own way. You don't have to teach them to exaggerate a situation if they think it'll do more damage to the person they're mad at. Those things come quite naturally, what we have to be taught is how to do good, how to share and not be selfish, how to tell the truth even if it won't benefit you. Sin comes naturally to the human race, it's righteousness we struggle with.

Now, as we read through these psalms it's not uncommon to read of David praying disaster upon the wicked. Though we kind of dig that, we want to see justice poured out upon the wicked, that's not really in keeping with NT ethics, David never heard Jesus say that we're to love our enemies and pray for those who spitefully use and persecute us. However having said that David never said, "God just let me at them!" He commended the care of his enemies into God's hands, simply added his wish list along with it ;o). Here he divulges a 6-fold imprecation against his enemies, really prayed against them.

Vs6-9

In all these things what he's really saying is simply, "Let their plans come to naught, just let them drop like a rock." In Vs 1 he states the problem comes from their words, what they say and how it's impacting people. The problem is found in their mouth (which we realize reveals the condition of their heart) so David says in Vs 6 "Break their teeth, break out the fangs of the young lions." Make them harmless and helpless. #2 "Let them flow away like running water" just let them be carried off to no avail. #3 "Let his arrows be cut in pieces" unable to penetrate or do any damage whatsoever. #4 "Let them be as the snail which melts away as it goes" again just ultimately coming to nothing. #5 "Like a stillborn child that doesn't see the sun" the wicked thoughts they conceive in the womb of their heart and mind, may it never come to pass. and #6 (Vs 9) May they be like a flash in the pan, dried out thorns that burn out before they even heat up the pot.

Vs10-11

Don't be taken back by the phrase concerning washing their feet in the blood of the wicked. If you were of a military mindset like David you would realize that all that speaks of is a victory. If you were in a major battle and you won, when you went to claim the spoil from the battle field your feet would get bloody from all the bloodshed on the field. and That's what Vs 11 is pointing to; "let it be known that there's victory and reward in serving the Lord because God will judge rightly (as opposed to the wicked judges) in the earth."

Psalm 59

We read here at the beginning of Ps 59 that this psalm spilled out of the situation when Saul sent his men to kill David in his house but his wife (Saul's daughter) helped him escape.

You can read of it in 1st Sam 19, it was the old “David is sick” routine when in reality she’d helped him escape through the window and had placed something in the bed to make it look like he was laying there.

By the time they realized they’d been duped he was long gone.

Vs1-2

Notice again the parallelism, “Deliver me, defend me, deliver me, save me,” David is crying out to God that He might rescue him from his enemies, those who rise up against him, the workers of iniquity and those bloodthirsty men around him. People that are simply ready to off him.

Vs3-5

“These guys are up to no good God, get em! Be merciful to me, but not to them.” and David says, “I’m innocent here, I haven’t done anything, they’re trying to kill me for no reason, vindicate me God.”

Vs6-10

It may not happen immediately but I know that God is going to sort everything out eventually, ultimately, so Lord I’m going to wait for You and find my strength renewed in You.” It’s a difficult lesson to learn but one that we all do well to be disciplined in and that is to not take matters into our own hands or manipulate a circumstance but let the Lord work things out, wait for Him, renew your strength in Him.

Vs11-15

David says don’t slay them lest people forget about it, rather scatter them as an example, put them in their place because of their pride and the sin of their mouth, for the cursing and lying that they speak. Have you guys noted through the course of our time tonight how much emphasis has been placed upon the things that come from our mouths. In Ch 57 David talks about the sharp sword of the tongue, how it can cut people to the core. Ch 58 is primarily about words, and things that are said and how they impact people. and Now here in Ch 59 he speaks of the sin of their mouth, the words of their lips, the cursing and lying that they speak. James speaks of the unruly evil of the tongue, how that it’s a world of iniquity set on fire by hell. In the multitude of words sin is not lacking. The Proverbs tell us, “There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, But the tongue of the wise promotes health.” Prov 12:18 and Again, “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” Prov 16:32 When you get angry you’re liable to say just about anything, and it’s rarely a healing phrase, more likely a hurting phrase, a cutting phrase, something sinful will issue forth. Over and over again the bible warns us to watch our words.

Vs16-17

Another lesson we all do well to learn is the fact that God does a much better job of defend us than we do of defending ourselves. If you want to defend yourself God will let you, if you relinquish that responsibility over to Him it goes much better.

God is God of mercy, if you can't praise God in the sense that you're not getting what you want, then praise Him that you're not getting what you don't want. The bible says, "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not." Lam 3:22 We deserve to be consumed, yet God in His mercy has compassion on us instead, we can sing to and praise Him for that, He's been merciful to us.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for Your matchless mercy, that You are our defense and our strong tower. Help us to run to You, to take refuge in You and in the shadow of Your wings. Purify our hearts and help us to keep our mouths, the things that we speak, the things that we say in check, that we might use our tongue to be an instrument of encouragement, not discouragement, edification and blessing, not belittling or hurting others. and May we use our mouth to bring honor and glory to You, giving You praise for all that You are, and all that You've done.