

An Exalted Refuge

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Psalm 57
Preached on: Tuesday, February 14, 2017

Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

I'm so glad to see you with us this evening as we turn in our Bibles to Psalm 57 for our continued study through the Psalms, 1 through 150, one message per Psalm. Many people are wondering how I'm going to handle Psalm 119 and its 176 verses. It would take an hour just to read that, wouldn't it? Well, that will be a point of interest for us down the road. Psalm 57, 93 to go after tonight, and we have a wonderful encouragement for us here this evening as we read Psalm 57.

Let's look at the text. This is a Psalm written by David when he fled from Saul in the cave as stated in the inscription at the beginning of the Psalm and he said this,

1 Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, For my soul takes refuge in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge Until destruction passes by. 2 I will cry to God Most High, To God who accomplishes all things for me. 3 He will send from heaven and save me; He reproaches him who tramples upon me. Selah. God will send forth His lovingkindness and His truth. 4 My soul is among lions; I must lie among those who breathe forth fire, Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows And their tongue a sharp sword. 5 Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Your glory be above all the earth. 6 They have prepared a net for my steps; My soul is bowed down; They dug a pit before me; They themselves have fallen into the midst of it. Selah. 7 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises! 8 Awake, my glory! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. 9 I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to You among the nations. 10 For Your lovingkindness is great to the heavens And Your truth to the clouds. 11 Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Your glory be above all the earth.

One of the striking things about this Psalm in its setting is that David is down low in a cave physically as he writes it, and yet it soars beyond the heavens, really, in its praise to God and sets a great tone for us to look to God in the midst of our own difficulties. Psalm 57 is similar to Psalm 56 and what we saw last week. It is displaying trust in the midst of adversity and yet this Psalm is even more triumphant in its mood, in what it says, in what it declares than even Psalm 56 was.

Let me remind you just a little bit about David's life setting as he was writing this. If you go back to 1 Samuel 20, it's important to realize the immensity and the depth of the threat that David was facing as he wrote this Psalm. King Saul had determined to kill David. He was convinced that David was an antagonist toward him and in 1 Samuel 20:30, we read about how Saul made known to his son, Jonathan, that he was going to kill David, or so he thought, so he planned. In verse 30 of 1 Samuel 20 we read this, "Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan," his son, "and he said to him, 'You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?'" speaking of David, of course. "'For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Therefore now, send and bring him to me, for he must surely die.' But Jonathan answered Saul his father and said to him, 'Why should he be put to death? What has he done?' Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down; so Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death." Saul manifested by his actions the hostility that was in his heart toward David and the violent display of his temper made it obvious that he would exercise that against David's life as soon as he was given the opportunity to do so.

So Jonathan warned David to flee. David fled to Gath in 1 Samuel 21, and when threatened again he fled again, and this is where we pick up our context in chapter 22, verse 1 of 1 Samuel, "David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard of it, they went down there to him. Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him." So David, just in general as he writes this Psalm, is in a cave. He knows that the King of Israel is trying to put him to death and a number of malcontents have gathered around him and this was actually the start of his coming back to the position that God had appointed for him and it was likely that it was at this point that David wrote Psalm 57.

Let's go back to Psalm 57 now. Psalm 57, which I read earlier. And under these circumstances, his life is threatened by the most powerful man in the nation who has an army at his disposal to hunt him down, hiding in a cave surrounded by ne'er-do-wells, you might say, you might think that David's soul would be in a place of despair. You know, and if you think of your own response to difficulties and trials and opposition, how quickly we sink into discouragement and, "What if this? What if that? If this person does this, my interests are going to be harmed." So you might think that David's circumstance would lead him to simply long for escape; that his preeminent prayer would be, "God, get me out of these circumstances and help me away from this threat." But what I love about this Psalm and the way that this Psalm beckons us to higher ground in our spiritual lives, to transcend our concern about our own well-being and our own incidental circumstances, what Psalm 57 does is it shows us the greater preoccupation that was on David's mind and the depth of his love for God and the depth of his trust and the perspective that he brings to this is unparalleled, really.

Notice in verses 5 and 11, the refrain of this Psalm. The point of his prayer here is not for deliverance, it is for the exaltation of his God. In verse 5 he says, "Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Your glory be above all the earth." Look, let's just be honest with one another and say that when we realize what David is doing and the circumstances under which he is doing it, this is very convicting to us because when we are under the press of circumstances, we are far more likely to say, "God, get me out of here! God, help me! God, deliver me!" and God graciously hears that prayer. That's all well and good as far as it goes but to find that under such a severe threat to his well-being David soars to a prayer that says, "God, be exalted over all the earth. That's my prayer in this circumstance," shows us something about the nature of the truly godly heart. That refrain in verses 5 and 11, look at verse 11, the note that it ends on, "Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Your glory be above all the earth," shows us that even in the midst of our most difficult circumstances, that our heart and mind can be preoccupied with the lofty theme of the glory of God. There is no reason for us to slip into an anxious mode of preoccupation and self-absorption with our troubles when we know this glorious God and we can seek the back magnification of his name in all that occurs.

One writer, one commentator says this, he says, "The experience that is enshrined in this Psalm speaks to anyone struggling to come to terms with dangers which seem to threaten all that makes life meaningful." I'll say that again. I'll read it again because it's a good entrée into the Psalm. "The experience enshrined in this Psalm speaks to anyone struggling to come to terms with dangers which seem to threaten all that makes life meaningful." And beloved, at the risk of waxing poetic as I say these things, we all know that sense of the weight and the downward pressure that trials can bring. What Psalm 57 shows us is that that is actually an opportunity to turn that pressure and let it become, as it were, wind under our spiritual wings that would take us to higher heights; take us to a different place and let the lowliness of earthly circumstances turn our attention to the loftiness of the character of God and to seek the magnification of his name, and to not simply view God as the one who can deliver us from our problems, not simply to view him as a means to an earthly end, but to let it cultivate in us greater spiritual aspirations and prove by the desires of our heart that we desire his glory even in the midst of the depth, and in that way show forth the surpassing greatness and worth of his name; that even in the depths of circumstances like that, that our heart would preeminently desire the glory of God to be known among men. In other words, Psalm 57 gives us perspective on what ultimately matters. David prays for the glory of God to be advanced and proclaimed when his life is in danger, and if David could do it in the greater circumstances, the greater threat, then you and I can do it in the lesser threat, can't we?

This is the right way to be. This is the way the people of God should be. This teaches us that we are to subordinate our concern over our earthly circumstances to the greater theme of the glory of God. You know, in 50 years, in 100 years when all of our trials are forgotten and over and no one remembers them or knows anything about them, God will still be on his throne, he will still be great and high and majestic, and his glory will still be the preeminent theme of the universe. Well, in that regard then, let's aim for that higher theme as we contemplate him in our being. And beloved, it ultimately comes down to a heart commitment of your own; that this is what you will treasure above all

else, this is what you'll desire above all else: to know God rather than the answers to your questions, to know God rather than relief from your trials, that this would be the preoccupation of your heart, that God is an exalted refuge to his people and the keyword there being he is exalted.

Well, let's see how David develops this theme. We'll break it down into two points this evening. First of all, that God is our refuge. God is our refuge and in this first section going from verses 1 through 5, in this first section, David is clinging, as it were, to God despite the threats that are against him, and the repetition of what he says manifests the urgency that is on his heart. Remembering that he's in danger at the anger at the hands of the anger of an angry king, David opens up in verse 1,

1 Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, For my soul takes refuge
in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge Until
destruction passes by.

You know, I have no way of knowing how the different things that we speak on and teach on from week to week and month to month really play out in your own heart, but I know that I find in my own heart and in my own life appealing as we've gone through the Psalms, it just seems like I'm learning to just appeal to the grace of God more than anything and to frame prayer, "God, be gracious to me in this situation. God, be gracious to me in this sorrow. God, be gracious to me. Be gracious to me. Be gracious to me." And to approach God and to appeal to him on the grounds that he is a good God to his people, who is predisposed to be kind to us and to be gentle with us. And to appeal to that and to simply appeal to him for favor in the midst of our crises, and to even appeal in the sense of grace being that which is unmerited favor toward us. Saying, "God, I don't deserve anything from Your hand. I'm just asking You to be gracious. Act toward me like You are in Your character, not according to what I deserve. Just be gracious to me, God."

And David repeats it twice for emphasis in the midst of his crisis and look at what he says there in verse 1, "For my soul takes refuge in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge Until destruction passes by." "God, I'm going to place myself under Your protection until this threat goes away." And notice the alternating verb tenses, even, in what he says. "God, I take refuge in You. My soul takes refuge in You." And then it speaks in a still to come sense, he says, "And I will take refuge in You. God, I take refuge in You now and it is the commitment of my heart that I will continue to take refuge in You going into the future. God, I shut myself up to Your grace. I close myself up. I have no other alternatives. I make no other appeal except that You would be gracious to me and I take refuge under the shadow of Your wings."

Now, David is using a metaphor there as he speaks about taking refuge under the shadow of God's wings and many scriptures explain this imagery and give us a sense of exactly what it means. It's important, especially in the Psalms as the writers speak in metaphors and word pictures in so many different ways, to not simply be content with the general impression of the word picture but to identify exactly what that word picture is expressing and to get to the principles that underlie the poetry that is being expressed.

When David says, "God, I take refuge in the shadow of Your wings," we find scriptures that in the prior history of Israel that help us see what that means.

Go back to Exodus 19, the wings of God, as it were. In Exodus 19, this is after God had delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, led them through the Red Sea, and in chapter 19, verse 3, as Israel was camping in front of the mountain, we read this, "Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself.'" That there was an element of deliverance associated with the use of "wings" as the metaphor that expresses the care of God for his people. Deliverance in a great and a powerful way.

Go to Deuteronomy 32 for a similar picture. In verse 9, Deuteronomy 32:9, you read this, "For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance. He found him," meaning that God found his people, "in a desert land, And in the howling waste of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, That hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions." So Scripture speaks of the care of God for his people in terms of placing them under his wings; that it is a place of care, a place of protection, a place of deliverance. And David under threat from a king who wants to spill his blood calls out to God and says, "God, in the shadow of Your wings, I take refuge. Be gracious to me there." It's an appeal to God to care for him, to deliver him, and to protect him. "As a mother bird protects its young and gathers them under its wings, God, protect me like that because the threat against me is greater than I am able to handle on my own."

So he prays, as it were, "God, bring me to Yourself. Draw me close. Protect me and care for me." You see this attitude expressed from God's perspective in what the Lord said to Jerusalem in Matthew 23. Look at Matthew 23 with me, if you will, and you get a sense of the love that animated the Lord Jesus Christ even as the Jews of his day rejected him. In Matthew 23:37, he looks out over the city and he says, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!" Interesting how they turned against the very people that God had sent to declare his word to them, isn't it? They were hostile to the very ones who were messengers of God to them. Incredible. Jesus says, "How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling." Christ says so often, "I just wanted to place My wings over you. I just wanted to lay My protection on you and you would not have it." And they rebelled against the very care of God that would have provided their deliverance.

So we just get the sense, all of that just to give us a sense of the wings of God being a place of protection, of care, and of deliverance, and when David is under this threat, he appeals to that caring nature of God, that aspect of the gracious nature of God: that he is a deliverer, he is a champion, he is a warrior for his people. "God, help me according to the power that You have and the love that You have do just that." And that's his appeal.

And beloved, let's just step back and just think for a moment about the way that we pray in our times of distress, the way that you pray in your times of distress, and to realize that prayer in those times of urgent need is more than simply saying, "God, help me!" It's fine to cry out like that, Peter was sinking in the water and said, "Lord, help me!" Great. Fine. But the Lord would have us think more deeply and more broadly and to have us grow. That simple cry for help that is simply focused on the earthly circumstances, beloved, you need to grow beyond that. You need to grow beyond simply interacting with God on that basic earthly level and to realize on what basis it is that you are appealing to him for your help, on what basis it is that you approach him. And to cultivate in your mind, in your heart, and to cultivate even in what you say in those times of prayer, "God, I am appealing to Your character as I come to You. It is an appeal, Father, that I make to Your gracious nature; to the fact that You're a God to Your people who protects them and cares for them, and I appeal to You in that manner, God, as I bring my problem before You. I am appealing to Your character so that," here's the point of it all – I tend to get into run-on sentences when there is a lot on my heart to say – so that you are framing your prayer and outlining your prayer in accordance with the character of God. As you're praying, it is more than simply a selfish request for relief from difficult circumstances. You are self-consciously and self-determinedly and by choice and by trust and according to the revelation of God that he has made in his word saying, "God, I am coming to You on Your terms in accordance with Your character as I come. You are a loving God. You are a gracious God. You are a good God. You protect Your people. You're a God of loyal love. You're a faithful God. You are true. You have made promises to Your people. On that basis, O God, I come to You and take refuge in You." Do you see the difference? Do you see how that is different than saying, "God, help me! Get me out of my problem!" and rushing straight into your earthly circumstances as that which preoccupies the things that you expressed to God from your heart?

Well, what if we rather than making that our primary focus, what if we adopted the perspective that David says here in the refrain, "God, my heart is preoccupied with Your glory. Let Your glory be manifested through my trials. Let Your glory be above all the earth. God, it is who You are that predominates my thinking." What if? What if we were Christians like that? Wouldn't that be awesome? Wouldn't that be a display of the glory of God that he would have a people that take his word and his revealed character so seriously that that is the predominating motivation of their petitions to him rather than the earthly circumstances? Wouldn't that be awesome if we were like that, you and me? I think it would be.

So David is looking to God for protection until the threat is over and implicit in his appeal is some of the most profound theology that you could ever try to put your mind around. In verse 2 he says,

2 I will cry to God Most High, To God who accomplishes all things for me.

In that verse, David is calling attention both to what theologians call the transcendence of God and the eminence of God. God is high and lofty above his creation. He is God most

high. He is over all. He is beyond it all. He is beyond earth. He is beyond our circumstances. He is beyond time. He is beyond any limitation that anyone could put on him. He is God most high over all. And he says, "I'll cry to that God, the God who reigns. That's the God that I appeal to." And yet God is not just transcendent, he is imminent, by which we mean he is near. He is involved in his creation. He is involved in the lives of his people. So God is high and yet he is near. How God can be so majestic and great, to be both transcendent and imminent is a wonderful majesty for our hearts to meditate on. David here is not engaging in speculative theology, however, he's appealing to God's transcendence as the basis that God has the power to help him and he appeals to the imminence of God, the nearness of God, the purpose of God for his people when he says, "To God who accomplishes all things for me. God, You are high and therefore have power. God, You have a purpose and You are close to me and therefore I can appeal to You based on Your purpose as well. Your power and Your purpose, God, cannot be stopped. They cannot be hindered, and it's on that basis that I come to You." This is great and lofty theology, driving a man in desperate circumstances to lofty spiritual heights. So David says, "God, You have the power and love to care for what affects me. You will fulfill Your purpose in me, in Your people, without fail."

Struggling Christian, discouraged believer under chronic weight of problems that never seem to go away, look at verse 2 with me again and realize afresh who your God is. "I will cry to God Most High, To God who accomplishes all things for me." Beloved, God created you for a purpose. God saved you for a purpose. God will accomplish every purpose for which he established your being in life. That's because that's who he is. That's what he does. Satan cannot stop the fulfillment of the purpose of God. God is able to work through and beyond and overturn the consequences of your own mistakes, your own sins even, and to work through all of that in the majesty and the power that he has as the providentially ruling God over all, God most high. God has the power and has the intention and he will fulfill his purpose for you no matter what.

So we rest in that. We love him for that. And we trust in that. And to the extent that earthly circumstances seem to be a threat against that, to the extent that hostile people would align themselves against you and undermine you, you look at all of that and you look beyond it. You look through it all and say, "No, God has His hand in everything that is happening in my life and He will accomplish His purpose no matter what. Therefore I need not fear the men who oppose me. I need not fear the circumstances that seem to drown me. No, I am in the hand of God most high. He accomplishes His purpose in His people and therefore I will trust Him. God, on that basis be gracious to me. O, be gracious to me." And all of a sudden you're praying from a position of utter serenity, strength, and you are in a position of absolute confidence as you pray to him. This is how mature believing people pray. This is how mature believing people live. It is a position of confidence, of confident dependence and dependent confidence. "God, I can't do this on my own so I appeal to You. God, You are who You are therefore I'm confident." And you should accept nothing less from your heart than that. That's what you should aspire after. That's what you should preach to yourself.

So it's no wonder that David trusts him, right? A God who is most high? A God who accomplishes his purpose? "Of course, I can take refuge there and know that I'm safe, know that I'm cared for, know that nothing will come into my life but what God has preordained to be a part of his purpose for me." And all of a sudden you're turned from fear to courage. From doubt to trust. And our God is worthy of this kind of response from our hearts. This is the only right way to walk with God, is like this, "God, I trust You. I believe You. I believe in Your power. I believe in Your care. Therefore my heart is at rest. End of sentence, end of paragraph, end of chapter, end of book. God, I rest here therefore You be exalted over all the earth."

You know, beloved, there just has to be a time, there has to come a point where that becomes the controlling passion of your heart so that nothing else matters to you by comparison. "God, You would glorify Your name through my weakness? Be glorified. God, You would glorify Your name through prosperity in my life? Be glorified. The circumstances are secondary and irrelevant by comparison. Whatever You deem fit to bring glory to Your name through my life, through what You bring into my life, God, You'll accomplish Your purpose and I will rest in that. I'll trust You and I'll praise You through life, and with my final breath, I will breathe in the praise of God and I'll exhale in glory, and then I'll be really giving You praise and exaltation." So, yeah, we're passionate about this. This is who God is. This is what he deserves in response from the people that he has saved.

So with God being like that, David knows exactly what's going to happen. He says in verse 3,

3 He will send from heaven and save me; He reproaches him who tramples upon me.

Because God is who he is, the enemies of his work will eventually fall away. They will be trampled upon by comparison. As Christians, we live with a great sense of security. There is so much to say about that. I'm going to hold my tongue. We just look at verse 3 and just say,

God will send forth His lovingkindness and His truth.

God operates the universe according to his loyal love for his people. God fulfills his truth and never violates it. He never breaks his promises. Well, then if we come as his people and are trusting in him, then it is obvious that the outcome can only be in accordance with what God has for us, and that somehow in that, everything that occurs in your life will be a measure, will be a furtherance of the loving purposes of God in your life. And we trust him for that. We stake our lives on that. Beloved, we stake our eternal destiny on that, don't we? Don't we stake our eternal destiny on the fact that God has promised eternal life to everyone who believes in Christ? Don't we stake our eternal destiny on the fact that the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross is sufficient to wash away our darkest sins? Don't we trust in the fact that the perfect righteousness of Christ answers every demand of the law of God against us? And by trusting in him, God imputes to us a perfect standing that

can never be violated, never be torn down, that Satan himself cannot dissuade God away from? Isn't that what we believe? Don't we stake our lives and our destinies on that? Well then, whatever comes only works toward one conclusion: the final fulfillment of the goodness of God toward us and the exaltation of his name. Everything else works toward that end and nothing happens in your life that is outside of the purpose of God for you.

So that's why David can say, "I know how this comes out. God is going to save me. God is going to send forth His lovingkindness and His truth." And you know if we find ourselves weak and lying on our deathbed, heaving breathing, difficulty breathing, this happens sometimes at the end, and life is ebbing out and people are gathered around to say goodbye, in that most desperate time, what is God going to do for us but this: he's going to send his lovingkindness and truth and he is going to gather us up at that most desperate moment and he is going to usher us into heaven so that in the moment of our greatest extremity, the greatest loyal love and truth of God will be manifested as he takes our souls in hand and brings us into glory. That's the worst thing that can happen to you in life, physically speaking. That's the end and the end is going to be the maximum display of the lovingkindness and truth of God so that you don't even need to be afraid of death because God will save you even in that hour of extremity. I tell you, I bank on that. I rest everything on that and if you're Christian, ultimately you do too.

So David here is saying that the attributes of God, who God is, guarantees what he will do with his people. It could be no other way. It could be no other way. If God is who he says he is, he's good, he's loving, he's faithful, he's holy, he's true, he's just; well, if God is who he is, then this can only come out one way. And if God rules, he is most high over all, then there is only one direction for this to go. So what are we worried about except to dependently look to him and say, "God, be gracious to me and as You are gracious to me, be exalted over all the earth." And as we contemplate these things, as we meditate on these things, we remember that God does this from the nature of who is. God acts this way because it is in accordance with his perfect nature to do that. It's not because we deserve it. It's not because he is obligated to us on some way that we have imposed upon him by our merit. This is all at God's initiative. He loves us and we love because he first loved us. This was all God's idea from the beginning.

So I'm just pleading with you, beloved, to know who your God is and to trust him like David shows us the way in Psalm 57 and to manifest it in the greatest extremity even as David did in Psalm 57. And the greater the trial, the greater the challenge, the greater the threat, the greater your level of trust in God rises to meet that. You rise to the occasion and trust in Christ and trust in this God who has revealed himself and say, "God, I know that this is how You will deal with me come what may." So that your heart is steadfast, your heart is immovable, your heart is inflexibly fixed on that point.

Look at verse 7, we'll jump ahead here. Why not? I'm not following my notes anyway. Psalm 57:7. I sent this to a friend this morning who is facing some very difficult trials.

7 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises!

And to the extent, beloved, that you are tossed by waves, to the extent that you linger in doubt, to the extent that you are overwhelmed by your circumstances, beloved, somehow get your mind set apart and focus on these truths of the greatness of God, the greatness of his character, the inflexible fixed nature of his purposes to his people, and grow in the midst of it, and let those challenges be that which stimulate you to growth rather than decay because that is what can happen. You can grow through your most difficult trials.

So as we think about the loyal love of God, there is something that we do need to remember about this, is that his loyal love is not a guarantee or an insulation from all manner of threat or difficulty. Quite to the contrary. David says in verse 4, having started on such a lofty theme of the glory of God, he goes in verse 4 and he recognizes the reality of his human situation. He says,

4 My soul is among lions; I must lie among those who breathe forth fire,
Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows And their tongue
a sharp sword.

David here acknowledges the threat and, as it were, he starts the Psalm and looks at the greatness of God and then from that perspective looks down at the reality of his threat and he says, "In the middle of my everyday life right now, I am under attack and the men that are after me are like wild beasts who have the power and the desire and the ability to just tear me limb from limb like a lion would if it got a hold of me." So he is mindful of this and it's no marginal threat from a small player. This is the king that is after him. This would be like the president sending federal authorities after you to get you. What do you do in that? There is no human response to that, no human defense to that. But David is not cast down. David is not preoccupied with those that are after him.

Look at verse 5,

5 Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Your glory be above all the earth.

Derek Kidner, a commentator, says this at this point. He says, "David wonderfully looks up from his own urgent interests to his overriding concern that God should be exalted."

You see, beloved, God's glory, not our problems, is the most important thing in the universe. Nothing is more important than the glory of God. You and I will pass from the scene one day, one day we'll all be forgotten and the glory of God will still be preeminent, the glory of God will still be the goal of the universe. So we take that into account with what we want and David wants heaven and earth to witness God's display of his power and his loyal love. So even his request that God would be gracious to him, that God would protect him in his trial, is not a self-centered prayer, it's to a greater end that God would display his glory through his ability to deliver and protect his people. "God, be gracious to me. I take refuge under Your wings. Be exalted." Be exalted what, how, why? "Be exalted through the way that You protect me. It's not just protect me, it's not

just help me, God, help me so that Your glory could be put on display." So God is our refuge and David makes it clear that the glory of God is the ultimate end of his prayer for deliverance. I love that.

You know, beloved, when you take the cross seriously, when you view your sin rightly and you realize that a wonderful merciful Savior has come from heaven and has acted decisively to deliver you from the wrath of God and from the judgment of your sin and to deliver you even from your bondage to sin, and that he did that in love, he did that in kindness toward you, then as those things sink deeper and deeper into your heart, they do fix you with a purpose. They do narrow your focus of what's important. The important thing is that, "Lord, my life would become an instrument for You to display Your glory. Everything else is secondary by comparison. Would my finances be lost in the process? God be glorified. Would I lose my reputation in the process of serving You? God be glorified. God, will friends and family forsake me? God be glorified. That's all that matters to me."

So God is our refuge and, secondly, our second point for tonight: God is our joy. God is our joy. It's interesting what happens here. I pointed this out. David starts the first section with a declaration of the character of God and then he works down to the nature of the threat against him in verse 4, and then he goes to the refrain, "Be exalted." Here in the second section, David does it in reverse. He flips it and he starts with the threat from men and then works his way up to the glory of God.

In verse 6 he says,

6 They have prepared a net for my steps; My soul is bowed down; They dug a pit before me; They themselves have fallen into the midst of it.
Selah.

David says, "Yeah, they are after me. They are looking to attack me. They are setting traps for me so that they can capture me and hurt me but the truth of the matter is as they are laying nets for me, they are setting the stage for their own destruction." Just like Haman in the book of Esther erected a gallows to hang Mordecai on, and ultimately was hanged on it himself, as the providence of God inexorably turned in order to accomplish the purposes of God. So as we've said many times, we recognize that Scripture in these Psalms, these Psalms that we've been looking at in the 50s especially, speak of this boomerang effect. As wicked men plan evil against us, we rest in the fact that God will eventually turn that against them and that he will protect us and their evil will come down on their own head, that men will reap what they sow. "Don't be deceived," Scripture says, "God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows, this also he will reap." Well, you know, as we exhort you and encourage you and call you to trust in your God, what are we doing except asking you to sow that which would reap a harvest to the glory of God and the blessing that would come to your soul as a result. Sow toward that. Plant that in your soul rather than worrying about the things that men might do against you.

And once again we see played out for us in another Psalm, one of the overarching themes of the entire Psalter. I've said this so many times. Psalm 1:6, "the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish." David is manifesting his understanding of that principle. "God, they are planning wickedness against me but they will perish in the midst of it. I am unafraid of what they can do."

So we come to verse 7 as David has worked through all of that and he says,

7 My heart is steadfast, O God,

Notice the repetition again. The repetition of things is one of the features of this Psalm. In verse 1 he said, "Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me," promoting the emphasis of what he was saying. Now in verse 7, he emphatically states the unalterable commitment of his heart, "God, I will be steadfast."

7 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises!

Repetition, repetition, showing the emphasis of his resolve of trust and praise saying that, "In the midst of this, I will praise You. Whatever is to come, I will praise You. God, my heart is set, my life stands on this foundation. These are the principles and You are the God that I am committed to and therefore I close the doors to any other possibility other than the fact that I will praise You. I will sing praises to Your name no matter what the circumstances may bring."

So from that position of resolve, beloved, from that resolution of heart that says, "These are the convictions of my heart. This is what I know to be true therefore I will be a certain kind of man or woman in response." He says in verse 8 and he stirs his soul to praise,

8 Awake, my glory! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn.

More of this repetition. Awake, awake, I will awaken. More of the repetition. To awaken his glory is a way of saying that, "I'm going to engage my mind, I'm going to engage my inner man with the fullness of who I am. I am going to awaken that and devote it to the praise of God and I'll beat the dawn to the tape and I'll be doing it before dawn comes." You see, beloved, this is just so important for you to understand. This is just so critical to what it means to be a Christian. David is not going through any kind of external ritual here. He is not going through the motions of what he says. He's not simply saying, "I'll have my quiet time at 6 AM," or whatever. He's not just going through the ritual of Old Testament sacrifices in a mindless way, simply repeating words and in vain repetition saying the same prayer over and over again simply because that's what you're supposed to do. Nooooooo. That's not what he's doing. David's whole inner man is engaged. His mind, his heart, his will is engaged as he throws his whole man into the praise of God.

And in verse 9, he gives the content of that praise and he says,

9 I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to You among the nations.

"God, I will speak to an international audience if You give me that platform," David says. The truth of the matter is, God gave it to him, didn't he? Throughout the world people are still reading David's praises to God. "I'll sing praises to You among the nations. God, I am unashamed." Just like the Apostle Paul in Romans 1, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes. And this is who my God is and, yes, His praise will be on the tip of my tongue to anyone that will listen. To any platform that the Lord would give," David says, "I will sing His praises to the broadest possible extent. I will become an instrument to the answers to my own prayers. I prayed, God, let Your glory be over all the earth, and I will lend my tongue to the chorus that sings Your praise."

Why? What's the focus? Verse 10. "Here's why I will praise You among the nations, it's

10 For Your lovingkindness is great to the heavens And Your truth to the clouds.

"God, Your loyal love is immeasurable." If we exhausted all of earth's resources to declare the glory of God, there wouldn't be enough to magnify him for his loyal love and truth.

So David closes with the refrain yet again,

11 Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Your glory be above all the earth.

Incidental point here but important, more for those outside our walls than for those of you that are inside the walls, I suppose. But do you see how David's spirit here utterly rebukes that common statement where people will say, "My worship of God is a private matter between me and God. I am content to go out into nature and I'll worship God in the privacy of my heart and this is just between me and God." David blows that to smithereens. If you really know the true God, if you really know the Lord Jesus Christ, you want to declare him. You want to make him known because your own little soul is not enough to contain the magnitude of his glory and it must get out. It must be somehow expressed. Private worship. What you're declaring with that is that you don't know God at all. You know nothing about his purpose for the church, nothing about the greatness of his glory because when you have tasted of the glory of God, you have to state it. Someone has to know. So we get passionate about these things because God is worthy of our inner man being devoted to his glory. That's why this matters. God is worthy of what David expresses here in Psalm 57. And the earth isn't broad enough and the heavens aren't high enough to contain the praise which is his rightful due. So David says, "God, I'll tell of the rescue that You give me and I'll teach men Your ways."

Beloved, let's wrap it up this way: suffering, threats, difficulties, tend to drive you toward self-absorption and self-pity, tend to promote within you a critical spirit and a judgmental heart and a distrusting attitude because you're so consumed with the circumstances that you think threaten you, that's what tends to happen, but what I want you to see is that that kind of suffering can have a completely different impact on your life. It can transform who you are. It can become the catalyst to drive you to seek the exaltation of God and to luxuriate and to glory in the wonder of his attributes of grace, loyal love and truth toward his people. Danger, beloved, danger makes you look for protection. A threat makes you look for help. When you are feeling the weight of danger, look up. God alone is that refuge for your soul. Christ alone is the one who is worthy of your trust. His love and faithfulness alone are your place of rest. And for that, we give him glory with every ounce of energy, with every fiber of our being from the bottom of our hearts, we declare the greatness of the glory of God and trust him for everything that is still to come.

Let's bow together in prayer.

God, the time is too short, it's too brief. We would spend a mere 60 minutes declaring Your glory, describing Your greatness? We would somehow contain in a single hour what we would say about our trust in You, our love for You in response of the manifestation of Your great glory as You have made it known in Scripture and in the world around us and even in the glories that we find in our own soul as Your Holy Spirit has worked in us and made Christ known to us? In 60 minutes, Father, we would begin and end? O God, the truth is that eternity will not be long enough to praise You. Eternity will not give us sufficient opportunity to explore the infinite reaches of Your great majesty. So, our God, in this meager hour that we have offered up to You with our words and our ears here today, we pledge that it's a mere down payment. It's a simple down payment of more that is yet to come from our hearts toward You. Lord, as we go forth, we go forth with steadfast hearts. We believe these things. We know them to be true. They are guaranteed by the certainties of Your inerrant word. This is who You are and this is who You are to Your people. So yes, Lord, in our struggles, our difficulties, we take refuge under the shadow of Your wings. We know that we are safe and protected there and as a result of that, O God, we will sing. Yes, we will sing praises to You. We will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the peoples. We will sing praises to You among the nations. Why? For Your lovingkindness is great to the heavens, Your truth to the clouds. Be exalted above the heavens, O God, let Your glory be over all the earth. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at thetruthpulpit.com. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.