

# Psalm 57 • In the shadow of your wings I take refuge

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Psalm 57. Now, this title tells us that this was a psalm written when David had fled from Saul and was living in a cave. And that's probably—I like camping as much as the next person, but not in caves, thank you. Just Sue and I, do not do that. I can't imagine what it was like for him to do that. Not only is living in a cave bad enough, but he fled from Saul because Saul wanted to kill him.

I've never had anyone come after me to kill me. I can't imagine what that's like. It's got to be terrible. I mean, not only are you living in horrific circumstances, but somebody is gunning for you. And it's not just somebody who's kind of a nobody; it's the king of the land. Oh, and he's got an army who will do pretty much whatever he says, even if it's bad stuff. What kind of a prayer would you utter? Let's take a look.

And I want you to remember something: David's in a cave. Caves can be—I mean, I'm sure they're very uncomfortable—they can also be a place of safety, and that's why people would retreat to them. And I think once David got in that cave, he started recognizing that this cave presents a sense of safety, but I better not put my hope in this because I need a refuge and a safety that goes way beyond what a cave can provide.

Let's see what he says, “<sup>1</sup> *Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge...*” (ESV)

Notice that. Where does David's soul take refuge? In God. Here I am in the cave. Everybody's telling me, it's okay, David, you're safe. We're in a cave, man. He's never going to find us here. David begins to pray, and he says, Lord, it's in you that I take refuge.

He says, “*...in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by.*”<sup>2</sup> *I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.*”

Would you stop there for just a moment? This is pregnant with meaning: “*...to God who fulfills his purpose for me.*”

I want you to remember where David is. He's in a cave, a very uncomfortable living situation. He's on the run from a madman. It's very, very easy at a time like that to get real angry, to get real disappointed with God. God, this isn't really what I signed up for when I said I wanted to be your child.

But David is recognizing, in the midst of what's happening in his life, that God is fulfilling His purpose for his life. And that's a difficult thing to admit when you and I are going through hard times, and we realize it is those hard times that are fulfilling God's purpose. I don't, I didn't really want these hard times. And yet, Lord, you fulfill your purpose for me, even in this.

He says in verse 3, *“He will send from heaven and save me; he will put (he will put) to shame him who tramples on me. God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!”*

Did you see how in verses 2 and 3, it's just one statement of faith after the next? This is David doing what he does, building himself up in faith. I know that God is fulfilling his purpose. I know that He's going to save me. I know that He's going to put to shame those who are coming against me. I know that God is a God of faithfulness and steadfast love. But where is David right now?

Verse 4: *“My soul is in the midst of lions; I lie down amid fiery beasts—the children of man, whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords. <sup>5</sup> Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth! <sup>6</sup> They set a net for my steps; my soul was bowed down. They dug a pit in my way (in other words, in my path, hoping I'd fall into it), but they've fallen into it themselves.*

*<sup>7</sup> My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast! I will sing and make melody! <sup>8</sup> Awake, my glory! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn! <sup>9</sup> I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. <sup>10</sup> For your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. <sup>11</sup> Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!”*

This is such a beautiful Psalm because David admitted to us in verse 4 that his soul was in the midst of lions. Remember, the soul is the seat of emotions, the seat of the intellect, and his mind and his emotions are feeling the difficulty of his circumstances. He refers to them as being amidst lions, lying down amidst fiery beasts.

He mentions: “... *the children of man, whose teeth are (like) spears and arrows, and whose tongues are sharp swords.*” That's where David is living right now. And yet, this Psalm ends on an upbeat note. It ends with David making a determination: I will praise the Lord; I will sing. I will awake the dawn.

In other words, I'll ring in the morning with songs of praise. I am not going to look at this situation as my doom. I'm going to praise the Lord. I am convinced that if you and I were absolutely certain about God's faithfulness—in other words, if you and I were absolutely sure that God is a faithful God—I think it would be hard for you and me to give in to fear. I think fear would have a hard time knocking on our door. I think fear would have a hard time getting into our hearts if you and I were utterly convinced that God is faithful. I really do.

The fact is, I think we become afraid because we begin to doubt His faithfulness. Have you ever seen a little kid that is fearless because a parent is around? I had a niece that did this, and then I had a granddaughter do the same thing.

I watched my niece when she was little—she's like 40 now—but one of my granddaughters was—when her daddy was around in the pool, she was fearless, even if his back was turned. She just—and this is like when she was about one and a half, or two years old. She would just throw herself into the pool, couldn't swim, and she'd throw herself into the deep end. She just knew daddy was there. And he always pulled her out, sometimes sputtering and spitting, but nonetheless, he'd grab her every time. Sometimes one of the other kids would go, oh, look out, and have to fish her out and bring her up. But it didn't stop her. She'd do it again. She was convinced that her daddy was going to get her out of that water, didn't matter.

And I think that when we have the same sort of attitude and we say and we know God is faithful, I think we'd have a hard time letting fear in, opening the door to fear. I think that door would be somewhat shut. And yet the Bible says over and over and over again to you and me that God is faithful. Let me show you 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 9.

**1 Corinthians 1:9 (ESV)**

*God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

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And then 1 Thessalonians 5:24,

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*He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.*

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Question is, do we believe it? I've had the Lord speak to my heart on a few occasions when I had given in to my own fears. And the Lord has this favorite phrase He likes to say to me when He's speaking to me. It's one of His gentle spanking spoons; He has a few of those that He uses with me occasionally when I don't take His word seriously, and I begin to doubt His provision, His care, and His love.

And here's what the Lord says to me every time: Have I not shown myself faithful? He just says it every time in the form of a question: Have I not shown myself faithful? And every single time, I have to look at Him and say, yes, Lord, you have shown yourself to be faithful. And yet here I am, dope-head that I am, doubting your faithfulness again.

Number one, do we believe that God is faithful? And number two, are we living our lives like He is faithful? In other words, are we jumping in the pool, come what may, knowing? And I'm not talking about a recklessness that is foolish. I'm talking about a faith that is fearless, and there's a difference.

Notice again that David says in verse 10, “...*your steadfast love is great (he says) to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.*” I can imagine that David, in his earlier years as a young boy, out in the open field shepherding his father's flocks, would just lay on a warm rock while the sheep were grazing nearby and look up into the heavens as the clouds passed by over him. And just thinking, I mean, it must have been incredible, and then, to liken God's faithfulness to the grandeur and the magnitude of the skies.

And the fact of the matter is, God's faithfulness, as you and I know, exceeds all of that. It exceeds the heavens because it's limitless, right? It makes sense, right? God is without limit.

And so, anything that is true of God is without limit. Are you with me? You follow that? It has to be. Whatever God is, is limitless. Whatever, because if He is limitless, if He is infinite, if He is without end, then anything related to Him, like His love, mercy, and faithfulness, have to also be limitless, without end. The sky has a limit; God's faithfulness does not.

David uses poetic language here to describe the immensity of God's faithfulness. Can I show you a wonderful quote that I found? A. W. Tozer wrote this in *Knowledge of the Holy*.

Upon God's faithfulness rests our whole hope of future blessedness. Only as he is faithful will his covenant stand and his promises be honored only as we have complete assurance that he is faithful. May we live in peace and look forward with assurance to the life to come. —**A.W. Tozer**

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You guys understand it's all predicated on His faithfulness, right? If I make a promise to you, you have to take that promise with a grain of salt because I'm a human being, and I can't always keep my promises. I'm not limitless, right? Things get in my way all the time. Nothing gets in God's way. Therefore, nothing can ever thwart the keeping of His Word or His promises. The reason that we trust in God's promises is because of the One who made them. And God says over and over again, I am faithful. The One who makes the promises is why people struggle.

Can I just be straight with you? One of the reasons people struggle believing the promises of God is they don't know the One who made the promise, okay. If you are convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that the person to whom you are speaking is faithful and will not default on any promise, it's a slam dunk.

It's easy. It's easy. If I get a promise from somebody who I know to be unreliable, I'm going to go, well, we'll see. Time will tell, right? That's what you say when you deal with people who have a bad track record of being undependable. God doesn't have a bad track record; He has a perfect track record. And yet, we struggle sometimes to put our faith in His promises because we don't know the depth of His faithfulness. The faithfulness of the One who made the promise.

How can I tell if my life reflects a belief in God's faithfulness? Well, I'm going to believe His promises. I'm going to long for His promises, right? If I believe that God is faithful, I'm going to be going through the Bible, combing it for promises. And then, I'm going to be trusting Him too. If I believe in God's faithfulness, I'm going to more readily put my trust in Him when I encounter a brick wall in my life rather than getting out my pickaxe and trying to whack away at that wall myself and in my own power.

If I believe in God's faithfulness, I'm going to look at the situation that's in front of me, and I'm going to say, God knows what's going on here, and I'm going to trust Him.

Now, if He tells me to get out my pickaxe, that's different. I'll do it. But for right now, I'm just going to say, God is faithful. God is faithful, and I trust in that faithfulness. That's a great question: Do I, am I seeking to solve my problems in the power of my own strength, or am I waiting, and trusting, and believing that God is faithful?