

## **Sermon 69: Resting in God's Tender Care: Psalm 57**

**Text: Psalm 57:1-11** "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth. They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah. My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth...."

### **Introduction:**

- **The desperate days after July 4<sup>th</sup>:**
  - On July 2, 1776 the Continental Congress voted on a resolution to formally declare independence from Britain.
  - By the 4<sup>th</sup> the wording was agreed upon and formally signed by John Hancock and Charles Thomson.
  - It was not signed by all 56 signers until August 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - In less than one month, the movement was already in desperate trouble.
  - On August 27<sup>th</sup> the British launched an assault on Long Island, with heavy American casualties. Days later, by God's merciful intervention, Washington and around 9,000 men escaped under the cover of fog without the loss of one life in the retreat.
  - Two weeks later the British had seized New York City, and for the next several months, Washington and his men scrambled for safety across New Jersey and eventually into Pennsylvania.
  - By December, the army had dwindled from 20,000 to a mere 3,000, and morale had reached a desperate low as Washington scrambled to motivate his deflated army to reenlist in the new year.
  - The next winter, Washington's army wintered at Valley Forge where nearly 2,000 died from disease, starvation, or the bitter cold.

- Despite these miserable circumstances several of these men survived these desperate times and lived notable lives after the war.
- We stand here today as a free people enjoying the liberties these men defended with their lives.
- **Psalm 57 was written at a time in David's life when he would have felt similar desperation to the emotions these men felt.**
- **He was hiding from Saul in a cave, after running for his life for months.**
- **Psalms 52-59 are a collection of dark laments from some of the lowest periods in his life and the majority of those Psalms reflect on this short but desperate season of his life.**
- **Psalm 57 breaks into three parts divided by the word "Selah:"**

**Summary: Psalm 57** calls us to cry out to God for mercy and see our circumstances as opportunities to see God display His glory in our lives.

**Part 1: A cry for deliverance: 57:1-3** "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me..."

- **David cried out for God's mercy: 57:1** "Be merciful unto me..."
  - **The Biblical concept of mercy is rich with several layers:**
    - Covenant faithfulness despite another's failure.
    - A gut level compassion for someone in their misery.
    - Withholding what someone deserves when they have stumbled.
    - Giving relief to someone in misery.
- **This cry had four marks:**
  - **Mark 1: He cried out because he walked by faith: 57:1** "For my soul trusteth in thee..."
    - He understood his God's character.
    - He understood his God's promises.
    - He continually walked by faith in God's character and promises.
  - **Mark 2: He cried out because God was his refuge: 57:1** "Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast...:
    - **Scripture regularly uses the image of an eagle or a hen caring for young to describe His care for us:**
      - **Exodus 19:4** "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself..."
      - **Deuteronomy 32:11** "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad

her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings..."

- **Ruth 2:12** "The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust..."
- **Psalm 36:7** "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings..."
- **Psalm 63:7** "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice..."
- **Mark 3: He cried out because he believed God was working His sovereign purposes: 57:2** "I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me..."
  - God is the "Most High" meaning He is the Sovereign over all.
  - He is "performing all things for me" meaning He has a distinct plan for my life and the things going on in it.
  - He is working everything together for His good purposes.
- **Mark 4: He cried out because he believed God would take swift action: 57:3** "He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah..."
  - He knew that God acts when He sees and hears.
  - Those who fight against Him can not stand before Him.

**Part 2: A steady confidence: 57:3-6** "God shall send forth his mercy and his truth..."

- **He was convinced God would act: 57:3** "God shall send forth his mercy and his truth..."
  - **"God shall:"** It is impossible for God to not take this action.
  - **"Mercy:"** He deeply loves those whom He has committed Himself to defend.
    - **Psalm 103:8-13** "The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: Neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, So great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, So far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, So the Lord pitieth them that fear him..."
  - **"Truth:"** He has put His word on the line and cannot break His promises.
    - **Titus 1:2** "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began..."

- **His immediate circumstances failed to shake his confidence: 57:4** "My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword..."
  - David's enemies were vicious.
  - They wanted to destroy his life.
  - Their presence did not shake His trust in the LORD or His confidence that God would deliver him.
- **He saw evidence of God's providence: 57:6** "They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves..."
  - He saw their traps.
  - He was deeply discouraged.
  - He saw their traps beginning to implode.
- **He viewed trials as an opportunity: 57:5** "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth..."
  - **This refrain is stated twice in Psalm 57:**
  - **This theme is repeated often in scripture:**
    - **Moses: Exodus 7:4-5** "Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD..."
    - **David: 1 Samuel 17:46** "This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee...that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel..."
    - **Hezekiah: Isaiah 37:15-20** "Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying...thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries, And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods...Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD, even thou only..."

**Part 3: An opportunity to praise: 57:7-11** "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed..."

- **He set his heart to praise God: 57:7** "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed..."
  - "Fixed" means firmly established.

- David's heart was immovably planted despite everything he had endured.
- **He wanted everyone to know God's greatness: 57:9-10** "I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds..."
  - David wanted others to know God's greatness.
  - He wanted to celebrate it in a very public way.
- **He saw these trials as an opportunity to glory: 57:11** "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth..."
  - Rather than turning from his confidence, he leaned into it.
  - Rather than becoming bitter, He strengthened himself in the LORD.
  - Rather than fretting, he saw this season as an opportunity for God to demonstrate His faithfulness and care.

### **Application:**

- **To the suffering Christian:**
  - **First: Remind yourself that God has not abandoned you:**
    - He is not detached from your suffering.
    - He has not forgotten His promises.
    - He has a purpose for your life and this season you are enduring serves a purpose in what He is doing to shape your life.
  - **Second: Run to Him and rest under the shelter of His wings:**
    - **He is merciful:** Despite our failures, He is tender and faithful to us.
    - **He is dependable:** His word has been put on the line, and His character has been put to the test.
    - **Trust Him:** Trust His heart and His word
  - **Third: Dig into His word and allow the truth to nourish your soul:**
    - Set your heart to trust Him while this season rages.
    - He will move at the right time and show Himself to be faithful and kind.
- **To the confused Christian:**
  - **Hold fast to what you know to be true:**
    - Do not judge your circumstances by your immediate feelings.
    - Do not judge your circumstances by the nature of your current season.
  - **Run to Him and rest under the shelter of His wings:**

- He is a merciful God.
  - He has bound Himself to His word.
  - He is actively working in our lives to accomplish His purposes.
  - He will use what you are facing to demonstrate His glory in your life.
- **To the one not yet a Christian:**
    - You currently have no true hope in life or in death.
    - Turn to Him today for salvation from your sins.
    - You cannot have a steadfast hope in this life outside of Christ.
    - He is calling you to Himself for salvation.
  - **As we prepare for the Lord's Table:**
    - Reflect on His covenant faithfulness demonstrated in the cross.
    - Reflect on the promises we have in Christ which cannot be broken.
    - Rejoice in His body that bore our guilt and was crushed in our place.
    - Rejoice in His blood that was shed for the remission of our sins.
    - Let's rejoice in what we have today in Christ.