

## Psalm 57 ‘Surviving the storms of life’

I heard a great story the other day – it was talking about people who throw the towel into the ring too quickly! They’re like the old farmer’s car. He pulled into a petrol station and asked for 3 gallons of petrol. The petrol pump attendant looked at him, and asked: “Don’t you want to fill it up?” The old man smiled, and replied: “No, it mightn’t go that far.”

It doesn’t take much for some folks to quit. They are praising on a Sunday and pouting on a Monday. As long as things are going good and everything is hunky-dory, they’re ok. However, when things start to go pear-shaped, they’re ready to fly the white flag.

See what David says here in verse 7. He declares with immense confidence: ‘My heart is steadfast (fixed), O God, my heart is steadfast.’ In Psalm 108:1, he echoes the same reality, when he says: ‘O God, my heart is steadfast.’ In Psalm 112, speaking of the good man, he says that ‘his heart is steadfast and secure.’

The verb ‘steadfast’ or ‘fixed’ (KJV) speaks of making firm or getting something established. In other words, David was saying that he wasn’t going to let all that was happening in his life uproot him or cause him to toss the towel into the ring.

He hammered in his tent pegs and he wasn’t moving – he was going nowhere, but forward. He dropped his anchor on certain truths and wasn’t about to chuck it all in.

This psalm is a lament and it was written by David while running for his life from Saul. He was hunted and hounded. He puts pen to paper when all he has are shattered dreams and a price on his head. This is real life. You can read all about it in 1 Samuel 24, where we read that Saul took 3,000 chosen men to seek out and destroy David. So, David is on the run – no palace for him, no living it up for him, he’s hiding in a cave.

Let’s shine the spotlight on the psalm and try to unpack its message ... it’s important that we see all that David said in light of the context. It was the C H Spurgeon who said: ‘As sure as God puts his children in the furnace, he will be in the furnace with them.’

This psalm is all about God - there is the protection of God in verse 1; the providence of God in verse 2; the promise of God in verse 3; the power of God in verse 4; and the praise of God in verses 5 and 7-11. So, for you and me this evening, there are 3 things worth noting when we find ourselves in a cave, or in a furnace, if we’re going to survive the storm. One, David was resolute, and said:

### **I WILL NOT QUIVER**

We read in verse 1: ‘Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.’ You can see what’s happening – he’s baring his heart and giving us the inside story on his experiences. Enough to shake any man to the core! Look closer at his words and see ...

### **The Calamities He Describes**

He’s talking here about ‘the disaster’. That’s when something comes rushing in and upon someone with a destructive force. It wasn’t just a single isolated incident – it was more like a build up of everything being hurled in his direction. It was as if life had come crashing in on top of him, overwhelming him.

He cries out for God to have mercy on him. One writer translated the words: ‘Show thy most tender affection to me.’ So dark is the hour, so severe is the trial, so bleak is the future, he repeats his cry a second time! That shows the urgency of the need in his own life. The bottom line, he needed God’s help!

Perhaps you've been where the Psalmist is. Maybe you're there at this very moment. Fair winds do not always follow us as we sail the sea of life. Quite often, our passage is rocked by a Force 10 gale.

The Puritan, Thomas Brooks, said that 'sin has turned the world from a paradise into a thorn bush; there's no getting through without being scratched.'

No one escapes the troubles and trials of life. As in David's case, the calamities of life come rushing in to our life, threatening our stability, threatening to pull out the very pillars upon which we stand.

However, in these calamities that David described, we see:

### **The Confidence He Declared**

David says in verse 1, '... for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.' David said: 'No matter what happens, I will trust in God. In the shadow of his wings, I will find refuge.'

He wasn't just hiding in a cave. He was hiding under God's wings. Some folks think David is thinking of the wings of the cherubim which were spread over the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. I'm not so sure.

These are the wings of God that he talks about here – the eagles wings which carried them to safety in Exodus 19 – the same thought is found in Deuteronomy 32:11 in the well-known Song of Moses. He talks here about 'the shadow of your wings' – you find that in a number of other psalms, and in Psalm 91 it becomes the 'shadow of the Almighty.'

With confidence, he knows that his calamities will not last, but would one day pass. Under his wings he would stay 'until the disaster has passed.' The word 'passed' means to cross over or go through. He knows he'll get through what he's going through for God will bring him through.

David wasn't letting the things happening to him shake his faith in God or in God's promises. Instead of tearing the moorings out from under him, they only drove him to seek God and depend on God's mercy for strength and protection.

A lady who survived the sinking of the Titanic, but lost her husband, was approached by a Christian who began talking to her about God. The lady wasn't best pleased, and sharply replied: 'Don't talk to me about God, he went down with the Titanic.'

If there are not certain truths settled in our hearts, the things that happen in life can shake us causing us to be skeptical of God's love, to question God's wisdom, and to doubt God's promises.

David said, 'My heart is steadfast.' When things are dark, trust in God! When the strong wind of adversity blows with hurricane force and leaves you derelict and devastated, that's the time to hide beneath his wings of tender mercy! In his time, he will bring you through!

Two, David says:

### **I WILL NOT QUIT**

It has been said that you can learn much about a person by what it takes to stop them. David wouldn't let the things that happened to him either shake him or stop him. His heart was fixed. He would not give in or give up. And, let's not forget, all this was going on because David followed the call of God on his life!

As we look closer at Psalm 57, we see:

### **The People That Hated Him**

He says in verse 4, 'I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts – men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp words.' That's rather colourful language, but it's only David telling it like it is – he's describing those who hated him. They are deadly!

Saul and his men were like lions bent on wiping him out – they wanted to tear him apart. A fire of hatred

burned inside them. The taste of his blood was in their teeth and their tongue spat out their venomous hatred. He says in verse 6 that ‘they spread a net for my feet – I was bowed down in distress. They dug a pit in my path – but they have fallen into it themselves.’ A net had been spread and a pit dug with the sole purpose of catching him!

David said that his soul was ‘bowed down.’ He felt that he was in a trap and there appeared to be no way of escape. Both his adversity and his adversaries were enough to make David give up. How easy it would’ve been for him to feel that he was helpless and all was hopeless.

Have you been there? Have you been in a place where there seemed no reason to keep on going? Life can beat us down to where we have no heart to keep on going. We just want to call it quits.

However, David’s heart was steadfast. He would not let what was happening in his life stop him. There were people who hated him, but there was also:

#### **The Purpose That Held Him**

He declares in verse 2, ‘I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfils his purpose for me.’ The Most High God is the one who runs the entire show, the one who has his finger on the pulse – the one who rules over all and the one who overrules all in your life and mine.

The verb ‘fulfils’ means to perfect something or bring it to completion. The idea is the same in Psalm 138:8, where we read: ‘The Lord will fulfil his purpose for me.’

God has a purpose for our life, and in our life, and he will ensure that his purpose is completed. No doubt, David did not understand why all the things that were happening in his life had happened, yet he knew that with God there are no accidents, only appointments. We can look at everything that happens in our life and say: ‘God fulfils all things for me.’ We can be assured

that if it were not according to his plan, we would not be going through what we are going through.

I just find that so reassuring – nothing happens in your life and mine that has not been filtered through God’s love ... and nothing happens to us that is outside of his divine purpose for our lives.

Have the winds of adversity left you feeling breathless and tossed about? Are you at the point of giving up? Drop your anchor on the blessed promise that God is in control and he ‘fulfils his purpose’ on your behalf and for his glory. God is for us, he’s not against us.

David says in verse 3 that ‘He sends from heaven and saves me, rebuking those who hotly pursue me; God sends his love and his faithfulness.’ That means, the Lord will send what you need, when you need it. Not a day early and, thankfully, never an hour late!

When everything was enough to make David quit, he testified, ‘My heart is steadfast.’ He was determined to keep on keeping on. He was going to keep on serving God and living for him.

So, David says in verse 5, ‘Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.’ He was saying: ‘So long as you get the glory that is all that matters.’ His deep longing is for God to be exalted – in a word, his desire is for him to be lifted high.

Three, notice how David’s heart was steadfast. He would not let what was happening to him shake him, or stop him, but he also says:

#### **I WILL NOT BE QUIET**

Look at verse 7, ‘My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make music.’ Then, he goes on to say in verse 9, ‘I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples.’

David’s heart was steadfast. That’s why he is praising the Lord. There’s no other explanation for it. There’s

no way that his circumstances were going to silence him.

That's tremendous, we can praise the Lord no matter where we are or what we're going through.

#### His Praise Was Not Conditional

His praise was not dependent on it being a sunny day. As we have already seen, things were very dark and distressing for David. Times were hard. He wasn't praising God because things were good. Because they weren't! He was praising God because God was good. Some folks only praise God when they are on top of the mountain and there are no clouds in their sky. It seems to me, we can and we should praise God when we're down in the valley. Other folks only praise God when things are good and all is rosy in their garden. However, we can and we should praise God when things are not quite so good!

#### His Praise Was Not Confined

We discover in verse 9 that his praise was not only personal, it was also public. I will sing to God. I will sing about God. His praise was not only felt in his heart, it was seen and heard by all around him.

It speaks of his praise among the people of God. Ah, but it doesn't stop there. 'Among the nations' speaks of his praise among those who do not yet know God. His praise was not confined within the walls of his soul or limited to the cave in which he hid. No. This guy is passionate and he is determined to praise his God to everyone and everywhere.

My friend, don't let the things that happen to you be a wet blanket to smother the fire in your soul. Don't let them shake you, or stop you, or silence you. Keep on trusting, keep on serving, keep on praising. It may be a stormy crossing – but, at least, you're guaranteed a safe landing! The fact is, you can stick it out for a new day will dawn.

I think of the old hymn, for these words say all that needs to be said: *O safe to the rock that is higher than I, My soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly; So sinful, so weary, thine, thine would I be; Thou blest Rock of Ages, I'm hiding in thee.*