

PSALMS

Chapter 57

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. ² I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me. ³ He sends from heaven and saves me, rebuking those who hotly pursue me; *Selah* God sends his love and his faithfulness. ⁴ I am in the midst of lions; I lie among ravenous beasts— men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords. ⁵ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth. ⁶ 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. *Selah* ⁷ My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make music. ⁸ Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. ⁹ I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples. ¹⁰ For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies. ¹¹ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.

Ps 57 A prayer for deliverance when threatened by fierce enemies (it has many links with Ps 56). The psalm appears to reflect the imagery of the night of danger (v. 4: “I lie [down]”) followed by the morning of salvation (v. 8: “I will awaken the dawn”). For other instances of these associations see 30:5; 46:5; 59:6, 14, 16; 63:1, 6; 90:14. Verses 7–11 are used again in 108:1–5. The psalm is composed of two parts, equal in length (vv. 1–5 and vv. 6–11) and alike in structure—both contain three Hebrew couplets and end with an identical refrain. (For the use of refrains elsewhere see introduction to Ps 42–43.) (CSB)

Do Not Destroy. May be a popular tune; also mentioned in Ps 58; 59; 75. Associated with prayer to God to save someone and bring blessing out of trouble (cf Is 65:8). *Miktam.* See p 841. *cave.* In 1Sm 22:1–2, David found refuge in the cave of Adullam. King Saul was after him (cf 1Sm 24), and he had only narrowly escaped from the Philistine city of Gath (1Sm 21:10–15; cf Ps 56). Since his life was in danger from a variety of enemies, David turned to God for help. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–3, confident plea for God’s mercy; v 4, in the midst of lions; v 5, a refrain exalting God; vv 6–10, praise to the Lord; v 11, a refrain exalting God. (TLSB)

This psalm was written when David hid from Saul in a cave. This happened at least two times – first in 1 Samuel 22:1 and later in 1 Samuel 24, when David had an opportunity to kill Saul but refused to do so. It is likely that the second of these two incidents is the one referred to here. (PBC)

57 title See note on Ps 56 title. (CSB)

Do Not Destroy. See Ps 58; 59; 75 titles. (CSB)

When. For the event referred to see 1Sa 24:1–3; see also Ps 142 title. (CSB)

57:1–5 The prayer. (CSB)

57:1 Initial cry for God’s merciful help. (CSB)

The danger is great and the cry to be delivered is urgent, for it is twice uttered. (Leupold)

my soul. Or “I,” as in v. 4, where the first “I” is lit. “My soul” (see note on 6:3). (CSB)

shadow of your wings. See note on 17:8 (Metaphor for the protective outreach of God’s power.). (CSB)

When storms come, a bird gathers her chicks under her protective wing until the danger is past. Using this vivid picture, the psalmist portrays God’s secure love and powerful protection (cf Mt 23:37). (TLSB)

The figure of wings conveys the impression of both soaring majesty and power as well as intimate shelter. (PBC)

At some point in the past the writer cast himself upon God; he continues to do so until the rescue is complete. (Leupold)

57:2–3 Confidence of being heard. – Already in the second verse confidence begins to assert itself. (Leupold)

57:2 *Most High.* See note on Ge 14:19. (CSB)

who fulfills (his purpose) for me. See 138:8. God will not let David’s enemies thwart his divine purposes for anointing him king (see 1Sa 16:1, 12; 2Sa 7). But the Hebrew can also be translated “who makes an end (of troubles) for me” (see 7:9). (CSB)

David submits to God’s will, knowing that God works for his good (cf Rm 8:28). (TLSB)

57:3 *He sends.* God sends his love and faithfulness (here personified; see note on 23:6) as his messengers from heaven to save his servant (see note on 43:3). (CSB)

As a king sends powerful servants to help his people, so God sends His mercy and faithfulness, more powerful than any other force in the universe. (TLSB)

his love and his faithfulness. See note on 26:3 (David keeps his eye steadfastly on the Lord's love and truth (faithfulness), which are pledged to those "who keep the demands of his covenant,"). (CSB)

A common word pair in the Psalms, epitomizing the Lord's care for His people. (TLSB p. 843)

love. See note on 6:4 (Appeal to God's "(unfailing) love, kindness, mercy" is frequent in the OT since it summarizes all that the Lord covenanted to show to Israel as well as to David and his dynasty.). (CSB)

SELAH – Hebrew; untranslatable. Mainly in the first two books of Psalms. Probably refers to the accompaniment of the harps during the psalm. (TLSB p. 993)

This often occurs in the middle of a psalm and which apparently signals an interlude. "The Sela indicates that one must be still and quickly think through the words of the psalm; for they demand a quiet and restful soul, which can grasp and hold to that which the Holy Spirit there presents and offers" (Luther). (Psalms – The Prayer Book of the Bible – Dietrich Bonhoeffer p. 23)

Selah may be a musical notation. It could also be a point where a pause is desirable for the singer or reader of the psalm in order that the statement last made or the thought as a whole just developed may be reflected upon before the next turn of the thought appears. (Leupold)

57:4 The threatening situation. (CSB)

I lie. As a sheep among lions. (CSB)

ravenous beasts. The psalmists often compare their enemies to ferocious beasts (see note on 7:2). (The use of the metaphor here has no connection with the description of Saul and Jonathan in 2Sa 1:23.) (CSB)

David's enemies are described as ferocious beasts, tearing their prey, and as trappers, trying to catch an animal. These descriptions emphasize both the viciousness and the cunning of David's enemies. (PBC)

tongues. See note on 5:9. (CSB)

Though confident in God for help, David still finds himself in the midst of danger. He characterizes his enemies as lions stalking their prey (cf 7; 22; 35), burning with desire to destroy him. (Cf 1Pt 5:8.). (TLSB)

57:5 A prayer for God to show his exalted power and glory throughout his creation by coming to his servant's rescue (see 7:6–7; 21:13; 46:10; 59:5, 8; 113:4–9; cf. Ex 14:4; Isa 26:15; 44:23; 59:19; see also note on Ps 46:10 – God's mighty acts in behalf of his people will bring him universal recognition, a major theme in the Psalter and elsewhere in the OT.). (CSB)

Refrain; high note of praise (cf v 11). David does not wait for God to deliver him before praising Him; in the midst of his trouble, and confident of God's love, David glorifies God. (TLSB)

This verse is praise rather than prayer. (Leupold)

57:6–11 Praise for God's saving help—confidently anticipating the desired deliverance. For such a sudden transition from prayer to assurance see note on 3:8. (CSB)

57:6 The threat and its outcome: The enemies suffer the calamity they plotted. (CSB)

not ... pit. They hunted him as if he were a wild beast, but the "lions" themselves were caught. (CSB)

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57:7 All cause for fear has been removed. (CSB)

Though these calamities are not entirely over, the writer feels that their end is so near that he may resolutely forget them and give attention to the prayer and thanksgiving that God ever richly deserves. (Leupold)

heart. See note on 4:7. (CSB)

is steadfast. Feels secure (see 112:7). (CSB)

Psalmist confidently expects God to intervene. Repetition surrounds the source of his confidence: God. Luther: “So then, before a person begins to pray, he should examine and probe himself to ascertain whether he believes or doubts that his prayer will be fulfilled. If he finds that he doubts or is uncertain, or that he prays at random, the prayer is nothing” (AE 42:76). (TLSB)

57:8 *Awake ... Awake.* Greet with joy the dawn of the day of deliverance (see Isa 51:9, 17; 52:1). (CSB)

soul. Lit. “glory” (see note on 7:5). (CSB)

Equivalent to “myself” (as also “my heart,” v 7). Hbr has no reflexive pronoun (“myself”), so writers use phrases such as these to refer to their whole being. (TLSB)

harp and lyre. Instruments (here personified) to accompany the praise of the Lord at his temple in celebration of deliverance (see 71:22; 81:2; and note on Ps 4 title). (CSB)

awaken the dawn. With joyful cries proclaiming God’s saving act. (Dawn, too, is here personified—the Canaanites even deified it.) (CSB)

His joy rouses him before the sun; his praise and adoration of God awaken the sun, so great is his exultation. (TLSB)

57:9–10 The vow to praise (see notes on 7:17; 9:1 – The praise of God in the Psalter is rarely a private matter between the psalmist and the Lord. It is usually a public (at the temple) celebration of God’s holy virtues or of his saving acts or gracious bestowal of blessings.). (CSB)

57:9 PEOPLES – David will not limit his public praise and thanksgiving to an audience of Israel alone. He will shout God’s glory to all the world so all nations and peoples know the God who saves. (TLSB)

57:10 *love.* See note on 6:4 (Appeal to God’s “(unfailing) love, kindness, mercy” is frequent in the OT since it summarizes all that the Lord covenanted to show to Israel as well as to David and his dynasty.). (CSB)

love ... faithfulness. That is, love-and-faithfulness (see v. 3; note on 36:5 (Encompasses all the realms of creaturely existence.); see also note on 3:7). (CSB)

reaching to the heavens ... to the skies. See note on 36:5 – Encompasses all the realms of creaturely existence.). (CSB)

God and His mercy are not limited to Israel—they reach over all the earth and as high as the heavens themselves. (TLSB)

57:11 The refrain (see v. 5), but now as praise (see 18:46; 30:1; 34:3; 35:27; 40:16; 70:4; 92:8; 97:9; 99:2; 113:4; 148:13). (CSB)

Ps 57 David turns to God for help. Chased by Saul, his king and father-in-law, David flees for his life and hides in a cave to avoid discovery. He confidently asks God for deliverance and praises God for rescuing him even before it happens (cf 2Sm 22). We often pray with uncertainty and hesitation, doubting God's love and interest in our lives. Trusting in Jesus, we have confidence that God listens to us as a loving father listens to his beloved children. • Exalted Savior, make my heart steadfast in faith and prayer. Amen. (TLSB)