

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

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Psalm 57 — God, Our Refuge

1.0 Introducing Psalm 57

- In Psalms 52, 54, and 56 David is fleeing from Saul. Psalm 57 continues with that same general background. For this psalm, David is hiding in a cave.
 - ♦ 1 Samuel 22:1 speaks of the cave of Adullam.
 - ♦ 1 Samuel 24:3 speaks of a cave near En-gedi.
 - ♦ One of these two caves is the most likely setting for Psalm 57.
- The earlier psalms (52, 54, and 56) express David's sense of desperation. Psalm 57, however, reveals a more settled state of mind.
- Psalm 57:7-11 are employed as the opening verses of Psalm 108:1-5, which also closes with 60:5-12.
- Psalm 57 refers to God 21 times by means of names and pronouns.

2.0 Reading Psalm 57 (NAU)

57:1 A Mikhtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

A 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.

B 57:2 I will cry to God Most High,
To God who accomplishes *all things* for me.

57:3 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.

C 57:4 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.

D 57:5 Be exalted above the heavens, O God;
Let Your glory be above all the earth.

C' 57:6 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.**

B' 57:7 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast;
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises!

57:8 **Awake**, my glory!
Awake, harp and lyre!
I will **awaken** the dawn.

A' 57:9 I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the peoples;
I will sing praises to You among the nations.

57:10 For Your lovingkindness is great to the heavens
And Your truth to the clouds.

D' 57:11 Be exalted above the heavens, O God;
Let Your glory be above all the earth.

For the choir director; *set to* Al-tashheth.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 57

3.1 Outline

- I. Desire for Deliverance (vv. 1-5)
- II. Promise of Praise (vv. 6-11)
 - A Prayer (v. 1)
 - B Trust in God (vv. 2-3)
 - C Enemies (v. 4)
 - D Exaltation (v. 5)
 - C' Enemies (v. 6)
 - B' Trust in God (vv. 7-8)
 - A' Praise (vv. 9-10)
 - D' Exaltation (v. 11)



3.2 Notes

- v. 1 “Be gracious”
 - “Be gracious” is repeated to convey sense of urgency.
 - See Psalm 56:1. David does not claim that he deserves God’s help.

- v. 1 “in the shadow of Your wings”
 - This is a picture of God’s protection. See Matthew 23:37.
 - Compare Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:11; Ruth 2:12.
- v. 2 “God Most High”
 - This is an interesting contrast to David being in the depths of a cave.
- v. 2 “who accomplishes all things for me”
 - Or, “who fulfills His purpose for me”
 - God’s faithful covenant loyalty insures His purpose regardless of the choices made by His people.
- v. 3 “reproaches”
 - In the Hebrew the word is *hereph*. The Aramaic Targums translate this word with *hasad*, which is like the next line’s *hesed*.
 - David makes an intentional play on words.
- v. 3 “Selah”
 - “Selah” here is in the middle of the verse (compare 55:19).
 - It comes just before the mini-refrain at the end of the verse.
- v. 3 “His lovingkindness and His truth”
 - Compare Psalm 138:1-2.
- v. 4 “My soul is among lions”
 - Refuge in God doesn’t mean escape from suffering.
 - David depicts his enemies as kin to the wild animals he faces in the wilderness of Judea.
 - Note the mixing of animal and military metaphors. Saul’s soldiers are as dangerous as the lions in the wilderness.
- vv. 5, 11 Refrain
 - This chorus is the theme of the psalm. Compare Psalm 113:4.
- v. 6 “They *themselves* have fallen into the midst of it”
 - “Boomerang” retribution.
 - See Psalms 7:15-16 and 35:7-8.
- v. 7 “My heart is steadfast”
 - Double affirmation like the double plea for grace.
- v. 8 “I will awaken the dawn”
 - David says that he rises before dawn and sings through the dawn.
- v. 9 “among the peoples . . . among the nations”



- Our praise has international implications.
- International implications indicate a missionary connotation.
- See Psalm 96:1-3; compare 1 Chronicles 16:8 and Isaiah 12:1-6.

- **Musical Subscription:** “*set to Al-tashheth*”
 - Deuteronomy 9:25-26 (Moses’ prayer regarding Israel following the golden calf incident—compare Exodus 32).
 - 1 Samuel 26:9 (David’s instruction not to destroy Saul).

4.0 Singing Psalm 57

Above the Heavens (Be Exalted O God)



I will praise You, O Lord,
I will praise You among the nations
I will sing of You, I will sing of You among the people
For great is Your love, reaching to the heavens
Your faithfulness, Your faithfulness reaches the skies

Chorus

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens
Let your glory be over all the earth
Be exalted, O God, above the heavens
Let your glory be over all the earth

— Words and Music by Helen Green ©1977

5.0 Praying Psalm 57

- O God, let me experience Your grace. [v. 1]
- Thank you, Lord, for accomplishing Your will in me. [v. 2]
- Be exalted, O God! [vv. 5, 11]
- Father, make my heart steadfast and loyal to You. [v. 7]
- Let me sing Your praises even in the night. [v. 8]
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6.0 Applying Psalm 57

- Suffering can awaken us to praise God as we ought.
- God is always loyal and steadfast in His truth.
- We must exalt God for His glory above all else.