

Life on the Run

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Date: 04 July 2010

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[0:00] Psalm 57. Psalm 57 is on page 576.

So when you've looked that up, then turn to Psalm 142. Because that's going to be the other one. Psalm 57.

And then Psalm 142. All right?

We all got there? Okay, let's read then Psalm 51. 57 starting at 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. I cry out to God most high, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.

[1:15] He sends from heaven and saves me, rebuking those who hotly pursue me. God sends his love and his faithfulness. I am in the midst of lions.

I am in the midst of the earth. I am in the midst of the earth. I am in the midst of the earth. Men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens.

Let your glory be over all the earth. They spread the nets for my feet. I was bowed down in distress. They dug a pit in my path.

But they had fallen into it themselves. My heart is steadfast, O God. My heart is steadfast. I will sing and make music. Awake, my soul.

Awake, heart and lyre. I will awaken the dawn. I will pray to you, O Lord, among the nations. I will sing of you among the peoples. For great is your love reaching to the heavens.

[2:16] Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be over all the earth. And then turn to Psalm 142.

And Amy's going to read that for us. Psalm 142.

I cry aloud to the Lord. I lift up my voice to the Lord for mercy. I pour out my complaint before him. Before him I tell my trouble. When my spirit goes faint within me, it is you who know my way.

In the path where I walk, men have hidden a snare for me. Look to my right and see. No one is concerned for me. I have no refuge. No one cares for my life.

I cry to you, O Lord. I say you are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need. Rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me.

[3:25] Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name. Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me. As I say, over the summer, we're looking to do the plan.

And we have two speakers today. And next week, Michael is going to be preaching. I'm going to pray for him, and for us, and then we'll be. Listen carefully.

Father, thank you for your word to us. Thank you for the Psalms, for all that they teach us about you, the world in which we live, and about the struggles that we go through.

And we pray that through this morning, we would have a bigger picture of the great God that you are, your faithfulness, and your love. We pray for Michael, help him to communicate well.

And we pray that you would pour out your spirit upon him and upon us, that we may see you and understand you better, and that our lives will be changed as a result.

[4 : 43] We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. It's nice to be back with you once again in Cargilline. And we're going to be looking, as I say, at these two Psalms this morning.

The background of these two Psalms is this. If you look at the title of both of them, you'll have the idea of David being in a cave.

The title of Psalm 57 is When He Fled from Saul into a Cave, and Psalm 142, the title of it, When He Was in the Cave.

And we can identify the time when David was indeed hiding from Saul in a cave.

David left Gath, we read in 1 Samuel 21, 2 and verse 1. He left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adulam. And then in 1 Samuel 24, and verse 2, we read that Saul took 3,000 chosen men to look for David.

[5 : 51] And we read that a cave was there. And Saul went in to relieve himself, and David and his men were far back in the cave. And it's out of these experiences that David writes these particular Psalms.

He's not enjoying a package holiday. He's not at a tourist spot, which he has booked over the internet. He's in one particular place, in a public toilet, hiding from Saul.

He's in hiding. His life is literally on the line. Death stares him in the face. And he writes down his experiences in the words of these Psalms.

And it gives us an idea of what life was like, an insight into what life was like on the run. Life in a cave, which he refers to as a prison.

I'm not going to look at these Psalms verse by verse, but I want us to have an overview, as it were. I want to think that we might learn something of David's experience, that we might also learn for ourselves, how we can be helped in times of difficulty.

[7 : 12] But also I trust these Psalms will enable us to look to Christ, who entered into time for us and knew what it was himself to suffer similar privations.

Now we notice as far as David's circumstances were concerned that there was a physical assault of his life. There were physical repercussions because he was being chased by Saul and his men.

If you look at Psalm 57 and verse 6, he says, they spread a net for my feet. And he goes on to say, they dug a pit in my path.

Psalm 142 in the latter part of verse 2 says, in the path where I walked, men have hidden a snare for me. And he goes on to say in verse 6, listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need.

Rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me. Set me free from my prison. David can understand something of what he is going through even as you read these.

[8 : 27] Many of you have been involved themselves with hunting. You know that there is the stalking of the prey. There's the looking for the creature that is at the end of your sights.

And that's what David is. He's at the end of Saul's sights. He's at that position where he's soon to be taken. He's soon to be held captive or even worse, put to death.

If you look at the 1 Samuel, you discover that 3,000 of Saul's chosen men have been sent out to look for David.

His elite, the elite from Saul's army, his commandos, if you like, his SAS. President Obama and other leaders of the war in Afghanistan have ordered a surge.

The desire is to hunt down the Taliban and to destroy their capabilities. And something like that is happening here. Saul has urged a surge.

[9 : 39] And David is the prey. He wants to bring his influence to naught. Remember, people have said Saul has killed his thousands but David is tens of thousands after David had killed Goliath.

And now Saul is at him, snapping at his heels. And David can feel their breath on his back. The nets are there to trap him.

He's been hunted like a wild animal. And it's obviously physically draining. His cave, he tells us, has become a prison.

There's physical discomfort of life on the run. Those are David's circumstances. This physical assault upon his very life.

But it doesn't stop there. It's not just that he's being chased and he's indifferent to what is happening to him. There's also the mental pressure and that's very much part of his experience at this time.

[10 : 47] Psalm 57 and verse 6 I was bowed down in distress. Of course he was. Verse 2 of Psalm 142 I pour out my complaint before him.

Before him I tell my trouble. When my spirit, he says, grows faint within me. Verse 3 of Psalm 142 and verse 4 of that same psalm.

Look to my right and see no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge. No one cares for my life. Do you get the picture? This mental assault.

It's not just physical hurt. He's feeling it inside. Mentally, he's in turmoil. He feels alone.

And if you delve into further into David's background at this time, you discover some of the reasons why he was having this mental pressure.

[11 : 53] It wasn't just the physical assault of Saul and his men, but also he was hearing news from time to time of what was going on out there away from the cave.

In 1 Samuel 22 and verse 6, he discovered that Saul had put to death 85 of the Lord's priests. Not just the priests, but also their wives and their children were put to death.

Because Saul believed that they had sided with David. David had turned up and he'd been handed bread. He'd been given the sword of Goliath.

Therefore, the priests are in league with David and Saul has them all put to death. And a man by the name of Abiathar escapes and tells David what has happened.

And this is what he says in 1 Samuel 22 and verse 22. I am responsible for the death of your father's whole family.

[13 : 04] He's weighed down. You see the mental pressure. He may not be responsible, but he feels he's responsible for the death of all these priests and their family.

So there's a physical assault, there's a mental pressure. death of God. But then there's something else as we consider his circumstances. There was a spiritual battle going on, wasn't there?

A battle is going on between Saul, who at this time has been rejected as king because he disobeyed the Lord's command, and David who has been anointed in his place.

In 1 Samuel 15 and verse 26, Samuel says to Saul, you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel.

And in verse 35 of 1 Samuel 15, it says, the Lord was grieved that he had made him king, that is Saul, over Israel.

[14 : 14] And then we go on to read in 16, 14 of 1 Samuel, that the spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.

So Saul had been utterly rejected. Saul had been put to one side. God has said, no more will you reign over my people.

He had been rejected, cast out, if you like, from God's presence. Saul. And we read in that account that Samuel no longer met with Saul.

That showed that God was not going to talk to him anymore, because he rejected the word of the Lord. And you remember, in his place, David had been anointed.

1 Samuel 16 and verse 13, so Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed David in the presence of his brothers. And from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power.

[15 : 26] So here is the man. Saul, the spirit departed, but David, the spirit had been given, and in power he goes out to do the Lord's business.

So what's happening here? it's not just a physical thought upon his body. It's not just that he's suffering mental pressure. There's this spiritual battle going on between the forces of evil and the forces of God.

And the psalmist David brings it out. In verse 4 of Psalm 57, he says, I'm in the midst of lions. I lie among ravenous beasts, men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.

The imagery is powerful. Spurgeon commenting on this particular verse says, the teeth of these men are canine, leonine, wolfish, devilish, and they are.

And their tongues are sharp swords, no weapon is so terrible as a tongue sharpened on the devil's grindstone. And this was the case, this spiritual battle, the rejected Saul and the anointed David.

[16 : 52] Did David deserve the treatment he was going through? What had he done wrong? Hadn't he served Saul? Hadn't he killed his enemies? Hadn't he sung to him sweet songs when he was in the depths of despair?

Even when he had an opportunity to kill Saul, he had held back. He was the innocent party pursued by the guilty. This was David, the anointed of God, the man from the tribe of Judah, the one that would be the ancestor of the man Christ Jesus according to the flesh, the one who would come into the world as king of kings and lord of lords and all the principalities and powers are at work to destroy David.

It is a spiritual attack. So as we see David's circumstances, we see the physical, we see the mental, and we see the spiritual.

And they're all intermingled, which is often the case. Isn't it true in our own experience? When we suffer physically, it affects us mentally, and we find ourselves at times in a spiritual battle.

Psalm 57 and Psalm 142 are the experiences of a real person who is going through the mill.

[18 : 33] And we can identify with him. We might say with him, Psalm 142 in verse 4 says, look to my right and see, no one is concerned for me, I have no refuge, no one cares for my life.

We may feel like that, but the truth of the matter is that we do have one who knows and who does understand.

One who identified with us, who suffered physically, who suffered mental turmoil, who fought a spiritual battle against the principalities and powers.

And there is a parallel here surely with David's life. David the anointed of the Lord, David's son, the Lord Jesus Christ who was also David's Lord.

And people spread a net for him. And as David suffered all these torments, when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, so our Lord and Saviour, when the Spirit came upon him, also suffered those same torments.

[19 : 59] Think of the Lord Jesus in his suffering physically, when he was here upon earth, perhaps not in a cave, but he says in Matthew 8 and verse 20, the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

God and we begin, when he begins his ministry, he's out in the desert doing battle with Satan himself. And as we go through his life, we see the awful physical suffering of Calvary at the time of his crucifixion, when people plucked out his hair, when they beat him, when they scourged him, when they thrust that crown of thorns on his head, and then nailed him to the cross at Calvary, as Jesus knew what it was for men to spread their nets for him.

The physical suffering of our Savior must never be underestimated. But think also of his mental suffering, as he goes to Calvary, he prays in Gethsemane.

Matthew 26 and verse 37 says, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

What is happening? Why this anguish? Well, he's being hunted down, isn't he? Just like David. Religious leaders have laid their nets.

[21 : 46] They're out for his blood. But much more than that, he was fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning himself, that he was numbered with the transgressors.

He was about to endure the wrath of God against sin. And as David cried out to the living God, so he cried out to the living God.

God, as David was innocent as far as the crimes that Paul was accusing him of, the Lord Jesus was certainly innocent of the crimes that he was being accused of.

And as the psalmist says, I cry out to God most high, to God who fulfills his purposes for me.

Jesus prayed that in a way that no one else could do. He suffered physically, he suffered mentally, and he suffered spiritually.

[22 : 55] Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me, yet not my will but yours be done. There was that spiritual battle.

The greatest battle of all surely took place on that hill far away where stood an old rugged cross. And all the powers of darkness were arrayed against him, and the experience of the psalmist was his, and more so, no one cares for my life.

And the one who died says, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Can we understand that?

No, we can't. But it happened. And as the psalmist overcame, so he overcame. As Saul, as David had the victory over Saul and established his kingdom, so the Lord Jesus conquers the principalities and powers to set up a kingdom that will know no end.

And you and I, if we are in Christ this morning, are part of that kingdom that will know no end. We are found in Christ, and we shall overcome in him.

[24 : 25] But we think of the physical suffering, the physical, as far as David was concerned, his condition his place there as he suffers physically, as he suffers mentally, as he suffers spiritually.

And think of the parallels of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, in his life. But think also of David's confidence. Where is David's confidence through this time of difficulty deep and trial?

Well, his confidence is in the living God. And is brought out again and again in these psalms. Psalm 57 and 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 is past.

And then in verse 3, He sends from heaven and saves me, rebuking those who hotly pursue me. God sends his love and his faithfulness.

[25 : 44] And then in verse 7, My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make music. And if you go to Psalm 142 and verse 1, you will see the same idea coming through there.

His trust and his confidence in the living God. In verse 1, He says, I cry aloud to the Lord. I lift up my voice to the Lord for mercy.

And in verse 2, He says, I pour out my complaint before Him. Before Him I tell my trouble. And verse 5, I cry to you, O Lord.

I say, you are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. The situation is difficult, but David doesn't see the situation as hopeless.

He sees the forces that are arrayed against him as powerful. but there's refuge for him. He has that protection of the wings of the almighty God of Israel, the Lord, Yahweh, the sacred name.

[27 : 02] The Jews were so afraid of using this name for God that they had substituted the name Adame. It is the eternal God, the great I am, the unchangeable God, the covenant God who was and is and will continue to be faithful to his people.

And there's David's confidence in this God. Psalm 57 verse 3, God sends his love and mercy.

He's a God of grace. He couldn't expect mercy from Saul, but mercy could be expected from the God of mercy. so he makes his appeal to him.

He had no strength to deliver himself. His enemies were too strong, but the Lord could rescue him. There was no freedom for him apart from that which the Lord could provide.

He fled to God alone. He hid himself beneath the wings of the eternal. God wanted refuge, not the cave.

[28 : 18] And that was a shore refuge. And we were over in England recently. We stayed in a house and we were looking out on a meadow.

The grass was long, but I gather it had been cut earlier in the season. And when they finished cutting the grass, they noticed that a pheasant was there.

They built his nest in the grass. The mower had gone over it. It was still in the grass, protecting the chicks. The chicks, sad to say, had also died.

It wasn't a shore refuge. The hen had done all that she could to protect, but it was inadequate.

but the wings of the almighty, what protection? We can never be taken away from that protection if we are found in Christ.

[29 : 22] And David knew that. The wings of the almighty, the sovereign God, are a sure refuge. You are my refuge, he says in verse 5 of 142, my portion in the land of the living.

All that he needs is found in the living God. Or as he puts it in verse 10 of Psalm 57, for great is your love, reaching to the heavens, your faithfulness reaches to the sky.

No wonder he can say, my heart is steadfast. Think of that, of a love that reaches and a faithfulness that reaches to the skies.

We cannot measure the heavens, they're too vast. The scientists speak to us of life years because the distance is so great.

Well, in the same way, we cannot measure the love of God. It reaches the skies. Surely, it's what the Apostle Paul was speaking about when he spoke about the height, the breadth, and the length and depth of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

[30 : 45] Is your heart steadfast this morning? Is your confidence in the living God? And when we think of David's confidence in the living God, he is also assured as to his future.

When he says in Psalm 57 and verses 1, the latter part, he says, until the disaster is past. It's not going to be here all the time.

It's passing. The best is yet to be. He goes on to say, I cry out to God most high, to God who fulfills his purposes for me.

Has he not been anointed as king? Will God allow him to be killed by Saul? So he looks beyond the present circumstances to a God who works his purposes out.

Saul's kingdom will grow less and less, and his influence will grow less and less, where David's influence will grow and grow. should we have the same confidence as David?

[32 : 02] Well, of course we should. How can we have that? Well, I urge you to look to Christ. He too was in a cave situation, but his confidence was in God.

He faces the cross, but he looks beyond to resurrection. Hebrews 5 and verse 7 says, During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

And the same God who fulfilled his purposes bringing David to the throne brought David's greater son to the throne of glory, where he sits in throne for you and for me, where he ever lives to make intercession.

Our future is ensured because of him. We shall reign with him. We are more than conquerors through him who loved us and gave himself for us.

And all of this should cause our hearts to rejoice. For as David bears his heart before the Lord, telling the Lord exactly how it is with him, he doesn't forget to praise God.

[33 : 35] Be exalted, he says in verse 5 of Psalm 57, O God, above the heavens, let your glory be over all the earth. And he goes on to say, I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations, I will sing to you among the peoples.

He's not so concerned with his circumstances that he forgets the glory of God. He remembers that that is his chief end, to glorify God.

And that should always be our concern, that God should be glorified, even in our difficulties. and in our trials and tribulations.

Here and now, should be a preparation for that great day, when we shall praise the Lamb who sits upon the throne.

And remember him, when he suffered his physical and mental suffering, and he took on the powers of darkness and triumphed over them.

[34 : 43] he too praised God and longed for the glory of God. Father, he says, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.

So as we come to the end of our time together this morning, may we be enabled to say with the psalmist, my heart is steadfast, O God.

My heart is steadfast. I will sing and make music. Awake my soul. Awake harp and lyre. I will awaken the dawn. I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations.

I will sing of you among the peoples. For great is your love. Reach into the heavens. Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens.

Let your glory be over all the earth. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you and praise you that we have these psalms, a real experience of real people.

[36 : 01] Thank you too that we have a saviour who entered into time and suffered and died in our place. Thank you for all that we enjoy in him.

We pray, O Lord, then, that we will go from this place rejoicing, in all that you are, the great, the almighty God.

Amen. Thank you.