

I Will Awaken the Dawn

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bible with you this morning, please open it up to Psalm chapter 57. Psalm chapter 57. David writes this psalm about the time, as it says in the superscription at the very beginning, when he had fled from Saul into the cave.

How many of you have ever been into a cave? Okay, we've got a few people. When I was down in Montana on a family vacation a number of years back when I was younger, we went to a family camp there and part of the activities were going on hikes in kind of this mountainous area in southern Montana, just north of Yellowstone National Park there.

And on several of those hikes, we came across some caves. One of them was an awesome cave. It was just this huge opening and kind of angled up at the sun.

And so the whole thing was just lit up and bright inside. It was kind of a neat place to be. But on another hike, we came across a very different cave. And it kind of had a small opening and it was kind of shaped like a tunnel that just kind of went back into the mountain and kind of curved a little bit.

And I remember as some of us went into that cave, just that feeling, the further we got into the cave, I was surprised at just how dark it got.

[1 : 36] The light from the entrance didn't seem to be penetrating into the darkness in the cave. And before long, when we went around that little bend, it was pitch black.

I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. And you could just almost feel the darkness. It was cool. It was damp and humid. And even talking to one another in the cave, our voices were just kind of swallowed up by the earth around us.

And I kind of had this feeling like, I don't know how much further I want to go into here. Like, this is kind of crazy. I mean, I don't know. Is there bats in the back of this?

Is there some large predatorial animal just kind of having a nap back here? Is there, you know, if I keep going, am I going to find this massive hole and fall down into who knows where?

And the people that I'm with, they don't really know me that well. They're just kind of other campers. And so, you know, if something happened to me, would they even notice? And would they ever find me if I was lost back in here?

[2 : 45] It was kind of an eerie feeling. And I remember thinking, caves are kind of fascinating. It's not really the place that I want to be or spend my time. But that's exactly the situation that we find David in as in the time that he writes about in this psalm.

He's in a cave. Of course, David has been on the run. He's been fleeing from King Saul. King Saul is, he sees David as a threat, as someone who is trying to take the throne from him.

And so he is hunting David and chasing him all over the land of Israel. And we're kind of, as we read the story in Samuel, wondering how long is this going to go on before Saul finally catches up with him?

And gets his hands on him. And Saul has got the whole army with him. Not the whole army, but a good chunk of it. He's got 3,000 armed men with him.

And they're combing the countryside looking for David. And in the psalm that we're looking at this morning, it's about the time when, at a place called En Gedi, Saul and his men kind of close in on David.

[3 : 55] And they corner him and the 400 men that are with David. En Gedi is kind of right, it's in the hill country, and it's right against the Dead Sea.

And so there's nowhere for David and his men to run. And so with their backs up against the wall, they kind of do the best that they can. And they find a large cave.

They go in there, and they lay low, and they hide. Can you imagine what this would have been like for David and his men in this moment? I mean, here you are in the back of this dank, dark cave. And you're waiting. And then all of a sudden, one of your guys comes running in the entrance. Quick, guys, put out the lights. Put out the torches. Everybody hit the deck. They're coming this way. Be quiet. And everybody just kind of hits the deck and goes silent. And your heart is racing.

[4 : 57] You can feel the cold earth against your face. And you're focused on trying to control your breathing and relax it so that you can achieve utter silence.

And then the moment happens, and you hear voices outside the cave. Come on. Let's have a look at this one.

And you hear footsteps as men walk into the cave. And they kind of shine the torch around. You can see the light a little bit. And you're trying to be absolutely still and quiet. And then you hear the voice of King Saul himself. You guys stand watch at the door. I've got to do my business in here.

And you hear footsteps of one man coming even closer. Everybody's holding their breath.

[6 : 00] This is the situation about which David writes this psalm. And we get the chance to see what is he thinking? What is he feeling in this moment?

And so let me read for you from Psalm 57. Psalm 57. Have mercy on me, my God. Have mercy on me.

For in you I take 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 vindicates me.

He sends from heaven and saves me, rebuking those who hotly pursue me. God sends forth his love and his faithfulness.

I am in the midst of lions. I'm forced to dwell among ravenous beasts, men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.

[7 : 06] Verse 6. They spread a net for my feet. I was bowed down in distress. They dug a pit in my path. David begins this song with a cry of desperation.

He says, have mercy on me, my God. Have mercy. A cry of mercy kind of carries with it a sense of guilt, but there's no indication that David is asking for forgiveness here or that he's feeling guilty. Probably some of the other translations do a better job when they say, be gracious to me, my God. Be gracious to me. I've got my back up against the wall here.

I have nowhere to go. Help me. Intervene. Have favor on me. He says, I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.

Literally, until destruction passes by. If Saul and these 3,000 men find out that David and his men are in the cave, this will be a day of destruction.

[8 : 26] A day of disaster. Slaughter. And so what does David do? He says, I cry out to God most high.

And what does he cry? Be gracious to me. Be gracious to me. It's just as general as it gets. Help me out in this situation, God.

David is in a perilous situation. In verse 3, he describes the men outside the cave as those who hotly pursue me.

In verse 4, he says, I'm in the midst of lions. Creatures that are known for surrounding their prey. He's in the midst of the enemy.

He's in the midst of the enemy. He says, I'm forced to dwell among ravenous beasts. You notice that word forced.

[9 : 24] Literally, I must lie among ravenous beasts. Who are these people? They're men whose teeth are spears and arrows.

David's thinking about the 3,000 men outside the cave. They're armed. They're soldiers. But not just the spears and the arrows.

He says, their tongues are sharp as swords. Most of them are just loyal servants of King Saul. But there are some of them who have been spreading lies about David. They've been slandering him. They've been painting this picture of him as a treacherous enemy. A traitor. Someone who's going to put the whole nation in danger. We must get him.

We must eliminate him at all costs. Their tongues are sharp as swords. Their words are deadly to David. And so David finds himself with his back up against the wall, literally in this cave with his

men.

[10:34] He's in a perilous situation. He cries out to the Lord in desperation. But what amazes me in this psalm is that it's not just desperation that we see and hear from David.

We also hear David's heart, which is full of faith and expectation of what the Lord will do in this situation.

And it starts right from the beginning. In verse 1, have mercy on me. Have mercy on me. For in you I take refuge.

I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed. Do you hear David's faith? Do you hear David's faith? Do you hear the expectation that God will care for him in this situation?

There's another way that he could have phrased this. He could have said, Have mercy on me, my God, for in this cave I take refuge.

[11:42] I take refuge in this cave until the disaster has passed. But he doesn't say that. David's not trusting in the cave. He's not trusting in luck or chance that Saul and his men won't find them in the back.

He says, In you, my God, I take refuge. I look to you to protect me in this moment.

I take refuge in the shadow of your wings. The picture we get there is of a baby bird hiding underneath the wings of its mother.

He says, Until the disaster has passed by. David knows that this is not the end for him.

He has a sense of confidence and faith that God will cause the disaster to pass by. This is not the end. He says in verse 2, I cry out to God, most high, to God who vindicates me.

[12:57] There's a little bit of difficulty with the Hebrew in this phrase. Other translations say, To God who fulfills his purpose for me. But either way, the sense is there that this is not the end.

God will vindicate me. God will fulfill his purpose with me. God has made a promise to me. David's been promised that he will be the next king of Israel.

And God will keep it. And I'm trusting in that. I'm confident in that. In verse 3, He sends, or he will send, from heaven and save me.

Rebuking those who hotly pursue me. God sends, or will send forth, his love and his faithfulness. It's amazing. It's amazing. In this moment, in the situation that he's in. It's a perilous situation. And yes, he has a sense of desperation.

[14:06] But there is such faith, such trust in his God to take care of him. And expectation that he will come through this. Because of the love and faithfulness of God, he will send from heaven and save me, says David.

At this point, the tone of the psalm changes drastically. In verse 5, David erupts in praise. He says, Be exalted, O God, above the heavens.

Let your glory be over all the earth. We're kind of left wondering, what just happened here? In verse 6, he goes on, 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.

Notice how David switches to the past tense.

Hence, probably what's happened here is that the big moment of deliverance that he was waiting for came. And now he's kind of writing, looking back after the fact.

[15:20] He's praising God for this great deliverance. As the story goes, back in 1 Samuel, Saul walks into the cave.

And perhaps, when they think that this is it, we're going to be discovered. We're going to be slaughtered here. Something happens.

Saul, kind of, we don't know exactly how it happens in 1 Samuel. The details aren't there. But this is how I imagine it going. Saul walks into the cave. Then he walks a little further into the darkness just to kind of see, you know, like, is anybody there?

Is there any wild animals in here? He sets his spear against the cave wall. He takes off his robe, hangs it up. He doesn't want to get it dirty in the dirt.

And then he goes a little bit back into the light to do his business. Samuel tells us that in this moment, David crept up unnoticed and cut the corner off of Saul's robe and then went and ran back into the darkness.

[16:32] And Saul left the cave not even knowing that they were there. And the story ends in a very unexpected way.

I mean, if I was David, I probably would have just stayed there and just let them go. But when David realizes what had happened here, I mean, he was so close that he could have taken the life of his enemy.

He realized that God had put Saul in a position where Saul's life would have been the one lost that day, not David's.

And so, I imagine David emboldened by this and seeing what God had done in that moment. He walks out of the cave and he confronts Saul face to face. I've got the corner of your robe here. If I was after you, if I wanted to kill you, I could have, but I'm not. Of course, Saul is David's father-in-law. My father, I'm not trying to take your throne.

[17 : 35] I'm not after you. God works a change in Saul's heart, at least for the time being. And Saul kind of admits that he's been wrong to be chasing after David all this time and he calls the army off and they leave and David and his men are able to go free.

It's an amazing story. And so David just erupts in praise. I can just imagine it. Be exalted, oh God, above the heavens.

Be lifted up as high as you can go, above the stars. Let your glory be over all the earth. Let everybody in the whole wide world know how glorious you are, how good you are, how well you take care of your people.

Why? Because my enemies, verse 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.

Do you hear what God has done for me? He's caused the greatest reversal. I never would have imagined it. I was caught in this cave, in this death trap and God kind of turned the trap on its head and suddenly it was Saul who was almost caught in it.

[19 : 00] And the rest of this psalm is David just going on with his praise. In verse 7, he says, my heart, oh God, is steadfast. My heart is steadfast.

I will sing. I will make music. Awake, my soul. Awake, harp and lyre. No more being quiet in the back of the cave.

No more whispering. Come on out, guys. Let's get the instruments out. It's time to sing. It's time to make music. Look at what the Lord has done for us in answer to my prayer.

Let's sing. Let's praise him. Let's exalt his name. The end of verse 8, he says, I will awaken the dawn. I love those words.

Those are my favorite words in all the Psalms. I will awaken the dawn. The darkest part of the night is over and what remains, let's chase it away with praise.

[20 : 02] We can't wait until the full light of morning to praise. We've got to praise him now and so let's wake up the day itself. Let's wake up the sun. Let's wake up everybody around.

Make music and sing. David says, I will praise you, Lord, among the nations. This is something that not just for us here in Israel, this is something for the nations to hear about.

He says, I will sing of you among the peoples. I don't want to just sing this praise of mine in the quiet of my own heart when I'm in my tent all by myself.

I want to sing among the peoples. I want everybody to hear my words of praise and know that I mean every word of them. This is my God.

for great is your love, verse 10. It reaches to the heavens. It's beyond measuring.

[21 : 06] It goes all the way up to the stars. So great that we can't even fully understand or comprehend just how much he loves us.

And his faithfulness too, his faithfulness he says, reaches the skies. His ability to keep his promises knows no limits.

It knows no bounds. It doesn't matter what kind of a situation you're backed into. Nothing can stop God from keeping his promise to you.

Let's sing it again. Verse 11. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be over all the earth. this is David's story.

This is David's song. And I'm wondering this morning where these words of David find you. If I'm honest, the first time I read this psalm this week, earlier in the week, the first thought I had was, how on earth am I going to preach this?

[22 : 20] God, my heart is anything but steadfast. God, it's all over the place. It's wandering here and it's wandering there and today in this moment as I read, it's downcast.

I don't feel like singing and making music. How can I preach my heart is steadfast, oh God, I'm going to wake up the dawn. But the more I sat and listened to David's words, to the sweet melody that comes out of this song, he didn't just wake up his own soul and wake up the dawn, he woke up my soul too.

I don't know what troubles you're going through, I know some of them, for some of you, we all go through all kinds of troubles and face all kinds of difficulties.

And of course, the first thing that we see from David here is that we should take those troubles to the Lord and call out to him for help. But beyond that, what really struck me the most in this psalm is how David, right from the start, has this faith and trust that God will take care of him, even in the midst of all of this.

It's beautiful. I might be surrounded by lions, I might have my back up against the wall here in this cave, but God will send his love and his faithfulness.

[24 : 06] He will send from heaven and save me. The disaster will pass and until it does, I will take refuge in you, in the shadow of your wings.

It's beautiful. Beautiful. Beautiful. Beautiful. Beautiful. Beautiful. Beautiful. Beautiful. Beautiful. Beautiful. Beautiful. Beautiful. So I don't know where you are this morning. Maybe you came in the doors already and ready to just wake the dawn and sing the Lord's praise.

But maybe like I was earlier this week, you kind of feel like, I'm not there. I want to say my heart is steadfast, oh God. But it's not.

It doesn't feel that way. With whatever you're going through, let David encourage you today. Listen to the words of his song.

Call out to him for grace in your situation. Tell him your troubles, but don't stop there. Stretch out your faith and your trust to the Lord Jesus.

[25 : 17] Think about what he can do in your situation. And not just that. Think about what he has already promised to do for you.

Those of you who belong to him. Day by day as we see, as we go through this cycle of calling out to the Lord in our troubles and we see his love and his faithfulness come time and time again, we come to the place where like David, we can't help but sing and make music and praise and worship this God who gives of his love and faithfulness to us time and time again.

And so I want to encourage you this morning with whatever you're going through. David, he had his own unique situation that God worked in his life, delivered him from.

What does the Lord want to do in your situation? are you trusting that the Lord will carry you through? David doesn't want to sing alone.

He wants to sing among the peoples. He wants us to join him in praising the Most High. Let's pray.

[26 : 44] Father, we thank you for these sweet words. We thank you for this song that even though we can't hear the actual music that this was sung to, we can hear something of it in our souls, in what he wrote.

Lord, I'll be the first to confess on behalf of all of us who feel like our heart is not steadfast. We long for that kind of a faith and that kind of a relationship with you, Lord, where we look at our troubles, big ones and small, and we express our faith to you.

We put our trust in you. We look with hope and expectation. Lord, I want that to be me. And so we ask that you would do a work in us, Lord, that you would bring those of us who can't say that our heart is steadfast to that place where we do trust you.

We do look trouble in the face and declare our confidence in you. Lord, we want to join in this song.

And so we ask that you would come in the midst of whatever we're going through, all of our troubles, all of our situations, we ask that you would give us strength, that you would help us, that you would be gracious to us, and that you would enable us to join in with David and sing and make music.

[28 : 14] We ask this in Christ's name. Amen.