

# The God of Glory

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[ 0 : 00 ] Some songs just baffle me. I don't know how anybody in the world could possibly write them and believe them and then sing them.

The song on the top of page six of your service order sheet that we're just singing is one of those songs. It utterly baffles me. The guy who wrote it, Horatio Spafford, in the 19th century, he was a man whose family was traveling by boat, by ship, from Europe to North America.

They were going ahead of him and he was going to follow them a couple months later. And his family got caught in a storm. Ship sank and he lost his daughters in the midst of the storm.

And he received a telegram saying, your daughters have died at sea. And so he got on the quickest boat that he could to cross the ocean.

And it's when he got to the point where his daughters died at sea that he penned these words. He said, when peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say, it is well with my soul.

[ 1 : 25 ] And he goes on to say, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh my soul. how is that possible? I don't understand songs like that.

And Psalm 58 is the same way for me this whole week. I read it and I don't understand it. David is running for his life. He's hiding in a cave, fearing that he will be killed by King Saul at any moment. And he writes words, not only of lament, but of praise. You see, Psalm 57 is all about walking with God through the storms of life.

And it combines two sorts of responses that we normally don't put together in our own lives, nor do we ever think they should go together very often. It's the response of deep, heartfelt lament over the horror and darkness of a given situation.

And deep and heartfelt thanks and praise for his goodness, and his mercy, and his steadfast love, and his faithfulness. And somehow, in Psalm 57, I don't understand how, David takes lament, and he takes praise, and he weaves them, and stitches them together, and offers them up to the Lord in one song.

[ 2 : 46 ] Psalm 57 speaks to a very personal and practical question that we all have to ask at some point. And it's how in the world do we handle times of danger, and disaster, and distress?

What do we do? And so in Psalm 57, David speaks to us from the center of the storm. He's not out of it, he's in the middle of it.

And in verses 1 to 6, we see a movement of lament. And then in verses 7 to 11, we see a movement of praise. And so we're going to look at those two movements together.

The movement of lament. There are two aspects of lament here. David takes refuge, and then David describes reality. He takes refuge first.

If you just look at verse 1. Be merciful to me, O God. Be merciful to me. And note the earnestness and the urgency of his words. For in you my soul takes refuge.

[ 3 : 53 ] In the shadow of your wings I will take refuge. Till the storms of destruction pass by. Notice how David repeats his cry for help.

He's saying, I'm really in need here, God. And he says that he takes refuge. Taking refuge is the vocabulary of trust. He's saying, Lord, I'm trusting my life into your care in the midst of very uncertain and very threatening times.

And notice how the imagery is not of taking refuge in a cave, or in a house, or in a fortress. It's taking refuge under the shadow of his wings. Wings.

Wings. A bird. A hen. I was at a zoo on Vancouver Island, a petting zoo about a month ago, showing my daughter animals for the very first time.

She was discovering horses, and pigs, and bunnies, and emus, and all that good stuff. And we took her to the chicken coop. And there was this hen sitting there, and it looked like not many chicks around her.

[ 4 : 58 ] And as we got closer, the hen moved and disturbed, and she got up, and literally 20 chicks came sprawling out from underneath the hen. And then the hen sat down somewhere, and the chicks quickly went right back under, and we couldn't see them anymore.

And it was this amazing thing, that wherever the hen went, the chicks would just take refuge under her, and I couldn't believe how many of them could fit under there. And one of the things I realized in that moment, as I'm showing Annabelle, and she's just like, doesn't know what's going on, is that this refuge language is, it's about protection, and it's about rescue, but it's about so much more than that as well.

It's about intimacy, and nearness, and care, at the same time. You see, God is both strong, and tender, in this passage.

And he uses his strength, and his tenderness, and his wings, to take his children, into protection.

And so David comes to him, and takes refuge in the midst of the storm.

And notice how God's strength, and tenderness, does not keep David, from ever encountering storms in his life. That's not what God promises here. Rather, it's in the midst of the storm, that God will be his refuge.

[ 6 : 16 ] And so David takes refuge. But he's not happy, with just vague notions of God, as a sort of hen, with wings. He goes on in verses 2 to 3, and gets very specific, about who this God is.

He says in verse 2, I cry out to God most high, a reference to his power. To God who fulfills, his purpose for me. Reference to his purpose.

He will send from heaven, and save. He will put to shame, him who tramples on me. He will send out, his steadfast love, and his faithfulness.

Do you notice, what David is doing, in the midst of the storm? He's not just taking refuge, in the God, and saying, have mercy on me God, oh have mercy on me, help me. He's doing that.

But he is also, reminding himself, of who this God is, that in whom he takes refuge. He's consciously, remembering who this God is.

[ 7 : 16 ] He's merciful, and he's powerful, and he's full of steadfast love, and faithfulness. And all those words, if you actually look at, where they come from, you realize, that the time, that they show up first, in the Bible, is all around, the Exodus event.

When God delivers, his people, out of oppression, in Egypt. And he says, I am the Lord, the Lord, a God who is gracious, and merciful. Slow to anger, and abounding, in steadfast love, and faithfulness.

And then you see, there's a new dynamic here. Not only is David, thinking about who God is, David is remembering, what God has done, in the past. And that's what is, anchoring him, in the midst of the storm.

He's saying, God, you've done this, in the past. This is who you are, and now, in the midst of the storm, I'm going to trust, that you are that God, now. And I'm going to rest, my life on you.

And so he clings, to who God has been, and who God is, and who God will be. And friends, this is so, important for us.

[ 8 : 30 ] Because if you've ever been, in the midst of a great time, of suffering, or pain, or affliction, or hostility, you know that the first thing, you doubt, when you're in that place, is God's character. We start to doubt, doubt God's power.

God, are you really powerful, to do anything about this? Can you really deliver? We start to doubt, then God's goodness, normally. God, do you even care, to do anything about this?

And what can happen, to us in that place, is we can be led, to a place of despair, and hopelessness, or cynicism, and resentment, if we let that doubt, get too far, and then we have, a very difficult time, taking refuge in God.

And David knows this, so he pauses, and he takes time, to remind himself, and us, of exactly, who this God is, that is his refuge, in the midst of the storm. I will cry out, to God most high, verse 2, to God who fulfills, his purpose for me.

He will send, and he will save, and he will put to shame, him who tramples me, and God will send out, his steadfast love, and his faithfulness. So I take refuge, in you.

[ 9 : 50 ] David takes refuge, and then he encourages us, to describe reality. See one of the wonderful things, about the Christian faith, is that taking refuge in God, doesn't mean we have to ignore, the really difficult, and hard, and dark areas of life.

We can actually face them, head on. And we're actually encouraged, in verse 4 and 6, to express, in vivid, and detailed imagery, what we're experiencing, and feeling, in our given situation to God. God cares about the details. And so you see, in verse 4, he says, my soul, is in the midst, of lions. He's talking to God. I lie down, among fiery beasts, the children of man, whose teeth, are spears, and arrows, whose tongues, are sharp words.

Notice that imagery. It's, David's saying, I'm in the midst, of a lion's den right now, God. I'm surrounded, by ravenous animals, and they are attacking, and devouring me, with their words. And then verse 6, he uses a different image. He says, they set a net for me, for my steps. My soul was bowed down.

[ 11 : 04 ] They dug a pit, in my way. But they have fallen, into it themselves. There, the image, is of him, being an animal, who's being hunted. He's saying, these people, that are coming after me, are hunting me, and they want to use, their power, to destroy, and harm me.

And God is saying, and David is saying, this to God, because he wants God, to know how desperate, this situation is, and how distressed, he actually is, in the midst of it.

So he tells God. And I think this is, very important for us, to recognize, that lament, like this, is very important, in the Christian life.

It's important. Now lament, is very different, from many of the, experiences that we, commonly have, in these situations. We can default, to a place of self pity, and lament, is not self pity.

It's not saying, I'm an irredeemable, victim of my circumstances, woe is me. Lament, is not revenge, saying, this is unjust, I'm going to take charge, and get even.

[ 12 : 13 ] Lament, is not defeatism, this is just the way, things are, I can't do anything, about it, whatever. And lament, is not stoicism, I'm just not going, to let it get me down, I'll be happy, clappy, it'll be fine.

See, lament, faces the facts, but it doesn't, take things, into its own hands, either actively, or passively. It takes things, to God, and says, God, this situation, is not the way, it's supposed to be, in the world.

It's not the way, it's supposed to be, in my life. God, I'm bringing it, to your attention. Not that God, didn't know about it, but David's, engaging God, with it. And this is, so important, to the Bible, that some 47, almost 50%, of the Psalms, over 70, are some form, of individual, or communal, lament. People saying, how long, oh Lord? Help me, oh God, make speed, to save me, do you see, this situation, oh Lord, act. Lament. And so, the Psalm, encourages us, in this movement, of lament, to take refuge, in God first, to remember, who he is, and then, to describe, to him, just how desperate, desperate, and difficult, the situation, actually is.

And that's good, and that's right. And then, the astonishing thing, is that right, next to that, movement of lament, David places, a movement of praise.

[ 13 : 44 ] And there's two aspects, to this praise, he sings, and then he prays. He sings, verse 7 to 10. My heart is steadfast, oh God, my heart is steadfast, I will sing, and make melody, awake my glory, awake, oh harp and lyre, I will awake the dawn, I will give thanks, to you oh Lord, among the peoples, I will sing praises, to you among the nations, for your steadfast love, is great to the heavens, and your faithfulness, to the clouds.

It's important, to realize, that in this singing, there's no evidence, in our psalm, that David's situation, has actually gotten, any better. There are a lot of songs, where, all of a sudden, God intervenes, and the lament, turns to praise.

But here, there's no evidence, in the psalm itself, I think, that we can say, that David has been delivered. He's still, in the midst, of the storm.

He's still, in the lion's den. He's still, in the thick of it. And David sings praise, in the middle of it. And his heart, is steady, and firm, and peaceful somehow.

Verse 7, my heart, is steadfast, oh Lord, my heart is steadfast. It's the sense, of being anchored, and firm. And David's words, are buoyant, and confident, and joyful.

[ 15 : 19 ] I will sing, and make melody. Awake, my glory. Awake, oh harp and lyre. I will awake, the dawn. It's the sense, in which he is, orchestrating all of creation, to sing praise to God.

And he says, I will give thanks to you, oh Lord, among the peoples. I will sing praise to you, among the nations. And the question, I want to ask, is how in the world, is that possible?

How can David do that? Why would he sing praise, in the middle of the storm, before resolution, before deliverance, before vindication?

Verse 10 gives us the reason. It says, for your steadfast love, is great to the heavens, oh God. Your faithfulness, to the clouds. Friends, I had tried to think, of a way fancier answer, to that question, how David does this.

And the only answer, I came up with, in the psalm, is that, because David knows, who God is. He knows, God's steadfast love, and he knows, his faithfulness, so deeply, that he can still, praise God, in the midst, of a horrible storm.

[16:35] And I don't think, this is just, vague sentimental hope, or just a, particularly strong will. somehow, this has to do, with the inherent worth, and dignity, and firmness, and consistency, of God's character.

And it's often, one of the last things, that we feel like doing, when we're in the midst, of the storm, and something goes wrong, right? We don't want to praise, that's not our gut reaction. And just think about, innumerable circumstances, that are probably, in this room.

Some of us, probably have kids, that have gone astray, and our hearts are broken, because of it. Family members, who have gotten cancer, and were devastated, because of it.

Friends, who have turned their back, on us, and were wounded, because of it. Co-workers, that have it in for us, and they're after us, and we feel threatened, because of it. And people, who gossip about us, and criticize us, and were alienated, because of it.

And the question is, how do you sing praises, in these circumstances? How in the world, does your soul, cry out to God, great is your steadfast love, and your faithfulness?

[17:48] How do you do it? I don't know. Other than just staring, in the face of God, and saying, God, convince me, that you are full, of steadfast love, and faithfulness, and mercy.

Convince me of it, because I'm not convinced, God. So show me, enlighten my mind, soften my heart, make it genuine, Lord.

Speak to me. I think that's the only way, it's just to beg for it. And David, does this sort of begging, he moves from singing, to praying, and this is the final thing, he does in his movement, of praise, in verses 5, and 11, he repeats, the same thing twice, he prays out, be exalted, O God, above the heavens, let your glory, be over all, the earth.

In verse 5, he says this, in the context, of his lament movement, so it's a prayer, of defiant faith, and at the end, he says it, in the context, of his praise movement, it's a prayer, of grateful love, and one thing, that this shows us, is that, deeper than disaster, and danger, and distress, at the very heart, of David's desires, is a deep desire, for God, to be glorified, for him to be glorified, and lifted up, he wants God's name, to be made great, over all the earth, and how does God, do that?

God makes his name, great over all the earth, for showing himself, to be the one, who he is, the one who delivers, the oppressed, who's a refuge, for the wanderer, who's a savior, for the lost, who's a healer, for the sinner, and who's the gatherer, of the exiles, you see friends, when he cries out, to God in verse 2, and says, God will fulfill, his purposes for me, and then, he prays, be exalted, oh God, above the heavens, let your glory, be over all the earth, that prayer, of for God, to fulfill his purposes, for his people, and for God, to be glorified, is one, in the same thing, because it's as God, fulfills his purposes, for his people, that he magnifies, to the whole world, the beauty of his character, and the consistency, and the constancy, of it, and then, the knowledge, of his glory, gets filled, over the whole earth, and so that's why, verse 5, is most beautifully, and most fully fulfilled, when Jesus, is lifted up, at the right hand, of the father, and the Holy Spirit, is poured out, on the disciples, and in the midst, of great suffering, and great distress, and lots, of hostility, the knowledge, of the glory, of Jesus Christ, is spread, to all the earth, and people, come to know, the wonder, and the beauty, of his name, in the end friends,

[21:07] I think the only way, that we can genuinely, lament, and genuinely praise, as this psalm, calls us to, with any sort of honesty, is if we fix, our eyes on Jesus, who is the author, and the perfecter, of our faith, be exalted, oh God, above the heavens, let your glory, be over all the earth, in the name, of the father, and the son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.