

Concert in a Cave

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- [0 : 0 0] Turn, if you will, to the passage, part of the Bible that we read together in Psalm 57.
Psalm 57. The title of the psalm is, To the choir master according to Do not destroy a miktam of David when he fled from Saul in the cave.
- Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge. In the shadow of your wings I will take refuge till the storms of destruction pass by.
- I cry out to God, Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. He will send from heaven and save me. He will put to shame him who tramples on me.
- God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness. Concerts are put on usually in places like the O2 Arena or Wembley or places like that.
- And in the past there have been very peculiar venues where concerts, places of praise, have happened. Places of praise have taken place.
- [1 : 2 2] Mumford and Sons, a very famous band, they played a gig on a train at one time. The Beatles apparently played on a rooftop. And Johnny Cash famously had a concert in a prison, in Folsom Prison back in 1968.
- But the oddest place that I ever heard a concert taking place in was about a band called Queen of the Stone Age.
- I never ever heard them. Maybe you know about them. Who played a concert in a salt mine in Malta. And it was two and a half thousand feet below ground.
- So they played this concert in a cave to a very, very small audience. Very, very odd and very, very unusual. Psalm 57.
- In Psalm 57 we have David and it sounds like he is having a concert. He is having a time of praise in a cave.
- [2 : 3 2] He is having this time of praising God in a place that you would never expect. In a cave. The title tells us he is fleeing from Saul.
- He was trying to kill him. And he fled to a cave. How do we know that he is praising? Because verse 7 to 11 tell us. My heart is steadfast, O God.
- My heart is steadfast. I will sing. Remember where he is. He is in the cave. He is fleeing persecution. I will sing and make melody. Awake my glory.
- Awake harp and lyre. He is calling the musicians to play. I will awake the dawn. I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples. I will sing praises to you among the nations.
- David is having a concert, as it were, in a cave. In the most difficult of circumstances. And my question for us tonight is, how on earth can he do that?
- [3 : 3 4] How can he do that? In the face of trouble and persecution and his life is in danger. How can he praise the Lord in such a strange place?
- Well, verses 1 to 3 give the answer. And it's very simple. And it's going to be very simple tonight. He can do so. He can concert in a cave because he knows three things.

He believes three things. He focuses on three things. Three things. He reminds himself of three things. God's protection. God's purpose.

And God's... And I've forgotten the third thing. Promise. God's protection. God's purpose.

And God's promise. And each of these is reflected in the verses. Each of the verses that we're going to look at tonight. And what was true for David is true for you and for me. If it's true for David, it is true for us tonight.

[4 : 36] If we have a cave experience. If we have a challenging experience. If we're in an experience where life is really tough. And life is really difficult. And who isn't in that situation tonight?

Can we praise the Lord? Yes, we can. When we follow David's example. First of all, he reflects on God's protection in verse 1.

Be merciful to me, O God. Be merciful to me. For in you my soul takes refuge in the shadow of your wings. I will take refuge till the storms of destruction pass by.

Where David was in a place of real danger. In a place of real dilemma. He focuses on the fact that he is actually safe. He is safe. He is safe under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty.

Not that God has wings. Friends, you know that. God doesn't have wings. God is not a bird. But it's imagery. It's images that the Bible uses to depict what God does.

[5 : 44] And how God is a protector. Just like a bird protects her young. So God protects all those who will come and take refuge under his wings. And I love that image.

I love that image because it's very much a maternal image. Even though God does not have gender. You know that. God is not male or female. God is spirit.

Infinite, eternal and unchangeable. But he chooses to describe himself in ways that are both paternal, like a father. And also maternal, like a mother.

And he uses that imagery particularly when he describes God as having wings under which he can find safety and protection.

And the Bible uses this imagery again and again. In the image of God's wings and protection and safety under the wings of God. Under the wings of the Almighty.

[6 : 44] In Exodus 19, Moses says, You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians. How I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

A beautiful passage. A beautiful picture of God carrying the Israelites on his wings. Taking them to safety. Taking them to a place of safety under a place of protection.

And in Psalm 91, we sang it together there tonight in verses 1 to 4. The psalmist David talks about being covered under the wings of the Almighty.

Friends, tonight, David was able to sing because he knew God's protection. God's protection surrounding him like wings surrounding the wings of a bird surrounding her little ones.

Doesn't it echo the words of Jesus outside of Jerusalem? Where Jesus in Matthew 23, he's looking at this city that's bound for destruction.

[7 : 57] And he says, Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you. How often I would have longed to protect you.

Longed to save you. Longed to gather you. As a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you would not. But that same protection that the Lord depicts and that David depicts for us is the protection that we are offered tonight.

That we are promised tonight. That we are provided tonight. In our cave. Whatever our cave is. Whatever our challenge is.

Whatever our difficulty is. We can be assured of the Lord's protection. Which is maternal and majestic.

Which is personal and permanent. You know, recently we'll have heard. It's been in the news over the last couple of years.

[8 : 59] How Prince Harry, when he stood down from his royal duties. One of the problems with that was that his close protection was removed.

He no longer had the promise and provision of close protection wherever he went. Because he was no longer deemed to be undertaking royal duties. And he complained.

And I think he went to court about that. Because he wanted to be protected. But he didn't have it anymore. That will never happen to you or me tonight, friends. In Christ, we are children of the living God.

And we are children of the King. We are royal children. And his protection will never ever be taken from us. He will never ever remove his close protection.

He will never ever lift off his wings. So that we are not protected. That does not mean to say. That we are not going to go through hard times and difficult times.

[10 : 01] It does not mean to say that we will not be hurt either. But we will not be harmed. There is a difference. We will be hurt. Things will cause us pain.

But they will not be for our harm. Why? Because we are under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty. He has promised never ever to leave us vulnerable in that respect.

It is an amazing story. You remember that story. I am sure the kids here tonight will have heard this. The story of the mother hen. A farm yard went on fire.

And everything in the farm yard was lost. The farmer was at his woods end because everything was burnt to a cinder. And he lost everything. And all his sheep and cattle and stock and barns and everything else was lost.

And as he was surveying this awful scene of just total devastation. He hears the chirping of these little chicks.

[11 : 10] And he was wondering where is this noise coming from? And he sees this burnt to death mother hen. And he realizes the chirping of these chicks is coming from under this hen.

And lifts the dead body of this poor hen. And finds these little chicks underneath. The mother hen refused to move. Even though fire came upon her and upon her chicks.

Refused to move so that she would save her little ones. You see they knew protection under the shadow of her wings. And that friends is the protection that you and I have tonight.

We are protected. It was George Whitefield I think who said that we are immortal until God says otherwise. Believe that. We are absolutely immortal.

Nothing can touch us unless God allows it. And we will never be taken away from this world until God says that is the time. We know the Lord's protection. Do you know the Lord's protection tonight?

[12 : 20] Do you know the protection of Jesus? Which has taken away God's judgment from us ultimately and forever. Because he bore that fire of hell for us.

So that we would never ever suffer that. And promises to be that protective loving presence for us and to us all the days of our lives.

David could sing concert in a cave because he knew God's protection. David could sing or concert in a cave because he also believed in God's purpose.

Look at verse 2. I cry out to God most high. To God who fulfills his purpose for me. So David is in this cave and he believes that he's in this cave according to the purpose of God.

Remember what it is friends. Remember what is chasing him or who is chasing him. He doesn't dismiss the fact that that is all under the purpose of God.

[13 : 27] He attributes this to the purpose of God. Even where he is at that time. He doesn't see it as random. He doesn't see it as accidental.

He doesn't see it as meaningless. He sees this cave experience. This fearful experience as part of a loving, sovereign, omnipotent father who chooses motherly imagery to communicate his deep love.

As well as fatherly imagery as well. To impress upon him, I love you and I'm going to look after you. Stuart Townend's hymn, The Perfect Wisdom of Our God, describes this idea of purpose perfectly and wonderfully.

A line goes, And that's what David is saying.

Lord, I'm choosing your perfect will in your perfect way and I can praise you for that. I'm choosing to believe that nothing happens by accident and everything happens by design and it's all according to your purpose.

[15 : 07] And that gives me stability and strength to be able to praise you in the cave. Even when Saul was trying to kill him, He was able to praise God because of his purpose.

So what is God's purpose? What are we to remember when we're in this cave? When we're in this place of challenge and difficulty?

How are we? What are we to remember so that we too can maybe even move? Sometimes it can't happen immediately. Sometimes we take a time to get to that place. But to, like David, concert in that cave.

Praise from that prison. What is God's purpose in each of our circumstances and situations? There's three things. The first is God's glory.

Everything is for God's glory. That's the supreme purpose of our lives. Remember the shorter catechism opens with what is the purpose of our lives?

[16 : 16] Or it's actually what is the chief end of man? Man's chief end. Our purpose in life is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

That's the whole reason for our living. Everything God does, therefore, is ultimately to display his glory. And that means to display who he is.

His holiness. His majesty. His wisdom. His justice. His love. So that in all that God does in creation or in redemption or in providence, which just means how our lives work out, we need to have God's glory in mind.

So when David says, praying to God who fulfills his purpose for me, for me rather, David isn't saying that God's, God's going to help me achieve my goals in life.

But what he is saying is, God is going to achieve his glory through my life. Even in a cave. Even through a cave, God is going to achieve his glory.

[17 : 32] Creation displays the glory of God, doesn't it, friends? The heavens, God's glory, do declare. The cross displays God's glory. There's no greater place, I don't believe, that the glory of God is seen than in the cross, where God's justice and love kiss together, where Jesus takes the justice of God, and through that, taking our sins upon himself, we can know the love of God, being kissed by God in mercy and love.

What glory is seen upon the cross? And your life and my life in the cave, our cave experience shows the glory of God.

How can your cave experience tonight reflect God's glory? What is it about that experience that's going to show who God is and show how wonderful he is?

He works in the cave, and he works through the cave at all times. And what we need to do is reflect on that and remember that it is all for God's glory.

So God's purpose is his glory. Secondly, it's our good. God's purpose is for our good. David knew that. We know that.

[18 : 58] We know Romans 8 and 28, that in all things God works. God works all things together for the good of those who love him. It's not that all things are good. Certainly Saul seeking to kill David, you couldn't say that was good.

Certainly wasn't good. But he works all things for good. God takes the worst things of life, the cave experiences of life, the awful things of life, and he will work them out for our good.

Everything. Not just some things or even most things, but all things. God's purposes, friends, are never bare sovereignty, but they are fatherly sovereignty, loving sovereignty.

He loves us. He cares for us. And he will work all of our cave-like experiences, like he did with David, for his glory and for our good.

Think of Joseph in prison. Joseph had a tough deal. I mean, he was in a pit with his brothers who were going to kill him, and then he went to Egypt, and then he was thrown into another pit through no fault of his own.

[20 : 14] He was faithful. And for years and years, he was in a cave, in a pit-like experience. He was struggling, not just day after day or week after week, but year after year. And at the end of it, what was the good in that?

What was the good in that? Well, Joseph's experience meant that he was risen to prominence, and he then fed the world. Remember that song, Feed the World.

Well, Joseph literally did feed the known world because it was in famine. But that was for his good. That was the experience for his good eventually.

Or think of Paul and Silas in prison. Paul and Silas. David is running away. Paul and Silas couldn't run away. They were in Philippi, and they were preaching the gospel, and they were arrested, and they were flogged.

And friends, listen, flogging is not beating somebody up. Flogging was horrendous. You could be flogged to within an inch of your life.

[21 : 19] They were flogged, and mocked, and beaten, and put in the inner stocks, in this most, most, you know, high security part of a prison. Couldn't get any worse.

And what are they doing? They're singing hymns, and praising God. And we might look in this scenario, and say, what are you doing singing hymns, and praising God?

You're in a terrible cave-like experience. Well, look at the good that came out of that. What good came out of that experience, friends? The jailer was saved.

It was through that experience, through Paul and Silas, going into that jail, that the Philippine jailer said, what must I do to be saved? And Paul said, believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.

You might have thought, what was the good in that? And here's the answer. A jailer was saved. And ultimately, I think, think of Jesus. You look at his experiences, a man of sorrow, acquainted with suffering, who plumbed the deepest cave, the deepest depths, who went to hell itself, friends.

[22 : 27] That's what he did. The darkness on the cross is hell. It's been banished from the presence of God forever. He went there. And you might look at that and think, what was the point in that?

What was the good in that? Well, so that you could be saved and that I can be saved. You see, God does work all things together for our good.

And he works our cave experiences together for our good. He does so so that we can, through time, also, with David, concert in the cave.

His purposes are his glory and his good, our good rather, and then our growth. He takes us into these caves as he did with David to transform our lives, to grow us.

Basically, I think it's to save and to sanctify us. That's really why. How many people have come to know Christ through the most difficult and challenging of circumstances?

[23 : 31] Cave-like. Very often, he takes us to fearful pits and mighty clay. He takes us to Woodsen Corner to take us to an end of ourselves. And often, that is where we cry out to the Lord.

Psalms 107 says it again and again as he depicts the experiences of these people. They cry out to the Lord. The Lord uses cave-like experiences to save us.

Maybe tonight you're in a cave, an awful cave, a dark cave, a terrible cave, and you're not saved. And the reason is, that's what God is going to use for his glory and for your good and ultimately for your growth, for you to come to Christ and to believe in him and to rest in him and to know peace and joy in following him and living for him.

He uses these caves like experiences to save us but also to sanctify us. Those of us here tonight who are grey-headed or getting there, you know more than any that the hard experiences of life are the ones that have matured and refined and grown us up in ways that we wouldn't otherwise choose.

Life experience with the Lord teaches us that. And the Lord in cave-like experiences for us is actually, the ultimate purpose for us is to become Christ-like.

[25 : 09] that we will become conformed to the likeness of Jesus who himself suffered like no man suffered. So that he not only walks with us in suffering but he begins to make us like him in suffering.

In suffering in ways we would not choose and we would not ask for but the Lord chooses in his sovereign purpose to bring us to them.

So, how can David sing or concert in that cave? How can he do that? He can do that by knowing God's protection by knowing God's purpose by reflecting on God's purpose in that experience and I ask us all tonight to reflect on God's purpose for us where we are that we might also like David be able to move forward in praise.

So it's God's protection and God's purpose and the third and final reason that David is able to concert in the cave is because he trusted in God's promise in verse 3.

He will send me from heaven. He will send from heaven and save me. He will put to shame him who tramples on me. God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness and he uses these words steadfast love and faithfulness again throughout the psalm.

[26 : 39] These are very, very important words. David knew and could sing God's praise because he believed that God was going, God's promise was he was going to save him from the cave-like experience.

He says, he will send from heaven. He will save me. There's no may or might or perhaps 90% sure he will save.

How does he believe that? Because that is God's promise. God always promises to save. God always promises to redeem.

And he does so as David says, sending from heaven his steadfast love and his faithfulness. These are two very important words in the Bible.

Chesed and Emet. Two words that describe they're variously translated. But when Jesus comes into the world full of grace and truth, that's what's been echoed.

[27 : 39] David is looking forward to the time when God is going to send forth his steadfast love and faithfulness in the person of Jesus to save us, to redeem us, to take us from a fearful pit and from the mighty clay as Psalm 40 says.

And to set our feet upon a rock establishing my way. And so David could sing in a cave because he knew and trusted God's promise that this cave is temporary.

It's not going to last forever. He believed that God would bring him out into a spacious place because he always and inevitably does.

Do you remember that awful incident way back in 2018? The young boys, the Thai soccer team, this soccer team, these boys, 12 boys of age 11 to 16, they were training football, doing football training and they went into this cave and the caves in that part of the world go kilometers down and deep.

And they went in there and then there was this awful flood and they got trapped. They got trapped in this cave about four kilometers, I think it was, below ground or into the rock and they couldn't get out.

[29 : 12] There was no way that they could get out. They were truly trapped in a cave and then through amazing ingenuity and incredible bravery.

They were there for nine days. They were brought out one by one. One by one in the most amazing way. Check it out for yourselves how it happened. But they were brought out one by one to safety, much to the praise and thankfulness of the world around them.

But it's a wonderful picture of what God does. We're like these boys. We cannot save ourselves. We need a rescuer. We need somebody to carry us out one by one.

And that is Jesus who does that. He saves us individually in our cave-like experiences. He touches our heart individually in our cave-like experiences.

He speaks to us generally and corporately but he will always deal with us individually. Take us one by one out of this cave that we're in.

[30 : 17] and into a spacious place. And one day one day he will lead us into the most spacious place of all.

Into that place without boundary. Into that place without time. Into that place which is the new heavens and the new earth.

When Jesus died he went into the ground. He died. He suffered for our sins. He went down into the grave and then he came up again and he says just as I have died and risen again so you too when you die you will rise again and you will go and be with me forever and forever.

And so tonight on this Lord's Day evening as we begin another week there's one thing for sure friends tonight. We are all either in or going to experience a cave-like experience at some point in time.

And through Christ and in Christ we need to learn that we can concert in that cave. We can sing. We can rise above what the world and the flesh and the devil is pressing in on us to think and to feel and to focus our minds and our hearts on the Lord on his protection and on his purpose and on his promises to us all in Christ.

[31 : 47] And so our Father in heaven we thank you that your word remains true to us tonight. Thank you that though these words of David were written thousands of years ago they reflect our own experiences tonight and we recognize that your word speaks to us for that reason life does not change and the Lord does not change and therefore we can trust in you.

Will you help us Lord? Will you help us to like David reflect his attitude? Will you teach us and help us to encourage one another so to do as well so that in Christ and through Christ we might all grow in maturity.

We might all be led to help others to lift up our eyes to God to lift up our eyes to heaven and to even in the worst cave-like experience to know that we can praise your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing our final item of praise now and this is Psalm 23 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 23. We're singing the whole of the psalm and the tune is Amazing Grace. Page 229. Page 229 in our psalm books.

[33 : 13] Psalm 23. The Lord's my shepherd I'll not want. And it ends in verse 6. Goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me and in God's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be.

Psalm 23. If you can't stand, let's stand and we'll sing this to God's praise. The Lord's my shepherd I not want.

He makes me down to lie. In pastur drink he e Again, I need to walk just there Within the paths of righteousness In far his own things say

Yet though I walk in death's dark air Yet when I fear the death For thou art with me on thy wall Has thou become for still My table high has furnished In presence of my cross My day blower does

With oil anoint And mine above her cross Goodness and mercy all my life Shall surely follow me And in God's eyes forevermore My dwelling place shall be And now may grace and mercy and peace From Father, Son and Holy Spirit

[37 : 05] Be with you all. Amen. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay.

Okay. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.