

Psalm 57 – Finding Refuge in the Shadow of God’s Wings

To the Chief Musician. Set to “Do Not Destroy.” A Michtam¹ of David when he fled from Saul into the cave.

David wrote this psalm during a time of extreme danger. He was being hunted by King Saul and took refuge in a cave. In this prayerful hymn, David expresses trust in God’s protection and celebrates His faithfulness even in distress.

“Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge, until these calamities have passed by.” (Psalm 57:1, NKJV)

David opens with a double appeal for mercy, emphasizing his absolute dependence on the Lord. He does not turn to his own wisdom, the security of the cave, or the loyalty of his men—his confidence is in the sheltering presence of God. The image of “the shadow of Your wings” is rich with significance. Like a bird covering its young with its feathers, God offers personal, protective care until the storm has passed.

“I will cry out to God Most High, to God who performs all things for me. He shall send from heaven and save me; He reproaches the one who would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth His mercy and His truth.” (Psalm 57:2–3)

In the cave, David lifts his voice not to vent, but to cry out to “God Most High”—a title emphasizing God’s supreme authority over earthly kings like Saul. God is not distant or disinterested; He actively *performs all things* for His servant. David expects divine intervention, trusting that God will act in mercy and truth—not just in judgment.

“My soul is among lions; I lie among the sons of men who are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.” (Psalm 57:4)

Here, David describes the spiritual and emotional warfare surrounding him. The cave may protect his body, but his soul is surrounded by ferocity—people whose words and motives are as dangerous as weapons. Their tongues cut deeper than swords.

“Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth.” (Psalm 57:5)

In the middle of his distress, David breaks into praise. He doesn’t wait for deliverance to exalt God. His circumstances do not dictate his worship. God’s glory transcends David’s situation and all earthly troubles.

“They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down; they have dug a pit before me, into the midst of it they themselves have fallen.” (Psalm 57:6)

¹ *Michtam* or *Miktam* (מִכְתָּם) most likely refers to a **special kind of song**—possibly inscribed, valuable, or containing profound truth. It signals that the psalm is of particular significance, written in times of deep distress or reflection, as many of the *Michtam* psalms are prayers for protection and deliverance.

This verse likely refers to the very trap Saul walked into—literally. When Saul entered the cave unaware that David and his men were inside, David could have taken his life. Instead, David cut the corner of Saul’s robe, choosing righteousness over revenge. The one hunting him had stumbled into his own snare.

“My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise. Awake, my glory! Awake, lute and harp! I will awaken the dawn.” (Psalm 57:7–8)

David’s focus shifts. He goes from describing enemies and danger to declaring his own unwavering trust in God. His repetition—“My heart is steadfast”—shows his inner resolve. He chooses praise over panic. Even in exile, even while pursued, David determines to awaken a new day in worship.

“I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing to You among the nations. For Your mercy reaches unto the heavens, and Your truth unto the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth.” (Psalm 57:9–11)

The psalm concludes as it began—with God’s glory. David expands his vision beyond the cave and beyond Israel. He looks forward to a global testimony—praise among the nations for God’s mercy and truth. The final refrain is a declaration of confidence: though David is still in the cave, his heart has already come out into the light.

Personal Application:

- **When calamity strikes, where do you run?** David didn’t make the cave his refuge—he made God his refuge *in* the cave. We may not hide in literal caves, but we often seek refuge in things like distractions, relationships, or routines. God invites us to find shelter under His wings.
- **Your circumstances don’t determine your song.** David didn’t wait until he was safe to praise God. He worshiped *in* the danger. True faith doesn’t need to see the outcome—it just needs to see God.
- **God’s mercy and truth will always meet you.** When people misjudge, wound, or pursue you unfairly, remember that God will send His mercy and truth. He defends the righteous. Don’t retaliate—trust.
- **Worship is an act of war.** When fear, betrayal, and despair press in, wake up your soul with praise. Let your voice awaken the dawn. Let God’s glory be your highest goal—even in the darkest place.

“Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth.” (Psalm 57:11)