

“The Steadfast Heart”
Psalm 57
(Preached at Trinity, February 6, 2011)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Psalm 57** is similar to **Psalm 56** in that it finds David trusting God in the midst of adversity. But we find several wonderful truths distinct to this psalm.
2. The superscription provides some initial information about the psalm.
 - A. It was prepared by David and given to the chief musician. David attaches to it the notation: *Altaschith*. This is another one of those words of which we have lost the meaning. Literally it means, “do not destroy.” This is the first of four psalms with this designation. It could be a command to preserve this psalm – “Do not destroy it.” Or it could refer to the situation in the cave. “Do not destroy Saul. Let there be no slaughter.”
Or it could simply be the particular tune that was to accompany the psalm.
 - B. It was a *Michtam* of David. We’ve seen this before in Psalm 56. There are six psalms with this designation. No one knows for certain the meaning of this word. Some believe it comes from a word that expresses something hidden. These are hidden truths that only God’s people can know and experience—truths of which we must be reminded over and over.
 - C. Finally, David describes the context of the psalm:
Psalm 57:1 – “when he fled from Saul in the cave.”
See 1 Samuel 24:1-7
3. In this psalm we find David facing severe adversity – enemies ready to swallow him up. We also find, however, that David’s adversity was by God’s design—nothing happens without purpose. But no matter what the adversity, no matter how severe the trial David’s heart remained steadfast.
Psalm 57:7 – “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.”
4. We’ll see these three truths in this psalm:
 - I. David’s unrelenting adversity
 - II. God’s universal aim
 - III. David’s unmovable affection

- I. David's unrelenting adversity
- A. As we've seen before in David's life his trial was great
1. His urgent need demanded a repetition of cry
Psalm 57:1 – “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me”
 2. The urgency of David's need demanded great trust in God
Psalm 57:1 – “for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge”
- B. David describes his trial
1. His enemies are enraged towards him with anger
Psalm 57:3 – “He shall send from heaven, and save me *from* the reproach of him that would swallow me up.”
שָׂאֵפֶן sha'aph - The word literally means “to inhale eagerly” or “snort.” It carries the idea of anger. The KJV translates it “swallow me up” with the idea of “devour”
NAS - “tramples upon me”
 2. David further describes the ferocity of his enemies.
Psalm 57:4 My soul *is* among lions: *and* I lie *even among* them that are set on fire, *even* the sons of men, whose teeth *are* spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.”
 - a. “My soul *is* among lions” - Lions describe ferocity—beasts that attack without feeling, without mercy
Psalm 22:13 – “They gaped upon me *with* their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.”
Proverbs 28:15 – “As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so *is* a wicked ruler over the poor people.”
1 Peter 5:8 – “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”
 - b. “I lie *even among* them that are set on fire”
ESV – “I lie down amid fiery beasts”
NAS – “who breathe forth fire”
 3. David said these enemies use their mouths as weapons
“whose teeth *are* spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.”
 4. These are terrible vicious enemies. They sought to entrap him to destroy him.
Psalm 57:6 – “They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me”
- C. Such times demand great trust in the God of our salvation
Psalm 57:1 – “my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until *these* calamities be overpast.”

II. God's universal aim

- A. All of David's trials were by God's decree – they were of limited duration
Psalm 57:1 – “In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.”
 ESV – “till the storms of destruction pass by”
1. David had confidence in God's overarching design in all of these trials. If they were random and without purpose David might have cause to fear, but he knew they were limited to God's design.
 2. The expression, “this too shall pass” is not a Biblical expression but it is based upon Biblical truth. Storms come but eventually blow over. Going through adversity demands patience.
 Athanasius said of Julian furiously raging against God's anointed:
 “He is a little cloud; he will soon pass away.” (Treasury, 480)
 3. Everything in this life is temporary in duration. The worst of trials are for a moment. We must endure patiently until they pass.
 Spurgeon:
 “Blessed be God, our calamities are matters of time, but our safety is a matter of eternity.”
- B. God is the ruler of all things – He works all things
Psalm 57:2 – “I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth *all things* for me.”
1. God is not inactive! He performs, He accomplishes, He rules and overrules. He is working His purpose. Whatever happens we should see God's hand in it.
 2. He is working all things for us – Romans 8:28
 3. God finishes what He begins. This is true with us. He is working.
Philippians 1:6 – “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:”
 4. God has begun a work in you. He will perform it, He will accomplish it. He uses many means to bring it to pass – even the deeds of evil men. Even the deeds of Satan. Look at the life of Job.
 5. This is David's testimony. It is our testimony.
NAS **Psalm 138:8** – “The LORD will accomplish what concerns me; Thy lovingkindness, O LORD, is everlasting; Do not forsake the works of Thy hands.”
- C. As the people of God we must learn to wait upon God
1. His timing is perfect
 2. God works His purpose in due time
1 Peter 5:6 – “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”
 3. What difficulty are you facing today? Know this:
 God has ordained it.
 He has a purpose in it.
 It is of limited duration.
 He will use it to make you more like Christ

III. David's unmovable affection

A. David declared his heart to be steadfast

Psalm 57:7 – “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.”

1. כֹּון {koon} – “to be firm, fixed, secure, steadfast”
2. Just as we saw the intensity of repetition in **Verse 1** here we find it again. “My heart is fixed! My heart is fixed!”
“I am resolved O God” “My heart is resolute”
3. The heart of the natural man is roving, unstable, always stirred and moved in many different directions according to the lusts and affections of the flesh.
As Christians we must guard against distraction of heart, especially during times of adversity.
4. Throughout his ordeal David remained steadfast in his praise of God. He maintained strict control of his own heart. He was resolved – I will praise God!

Psalm 57:8 – “Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I *myself* will awake early.”

David is saying, “With the greatest of my affections, the greatest of my energy, with the fulness of my heart I will praise God—Awake up, my glory. . .” He rose early with the purpose of praising God.

5. David sets his heart to the praise of God – **Verses 9-11**
6. Paul used similar language
2 Timothy 1:6 – “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee . . . “
^{ESV}”I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God”
7. The life of the Christian is work of God that demands great diligence from the believer”
Philippians 2:12-13 - “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. ¹³ For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.”

B. Perseverance is a distinguishing mark of genuine faith

John 8:31 – “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed;”

Romans 2:6-7 – “Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:”

Philippians 1:6 – “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:”

1. David's steadfastness was fueled by his faith in God
Psalm 57:1 Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until *these* calamities be overpast.
2. Genuine conversion presses on
 - a. Does not grow cold during trials

- b Does not grow cold during great prosperity (the problem in the U.S.)
3. Look to the example of the early church:
Acts 2:42 – “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”
- a. This was a suffering church – but they pressed on
- b. Paul spoke of the church in Macedonia
1 Thessalonians 1:5-6 – “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. ⁶ And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:”
- c. Perseverance is the badge of the believer
 He presses on in the pursuit of holiness
 He presses on in the labors of the Kingdom
 He presses on in the love of Christ and of the brethren – etc. etc
4. Faith and steadfastness are inseparable
2 Thessalonians 2:13-15 – “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief (πίστις) of the truth: ¹⁴ Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”
- a. The religious pretender will not, cannot persevere. He does not possess the power.
Philippians 2:13 – “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.”
- b. The lost man is able to continue in religion that makes no demands, but he is entirely unsuited to meet the demands of Christian discipleship.
- c. His counterfeit faith is entirely insufficient to withstand the assaults of the world and the devil. His carnal flesh will demand to be satisfied.
- d. The same grace by which we are saved continues to work in us enabling us to live the Christian life

Conclusion:

1. David's trials were great. His enemies were powerful. But he maintained a strict heart of praise. This is the heart of faith.
2. May God grant us such a heart, especially when it seems like all else has failed. We must remember God is ruling, He is working His purpose, and He is preserving us. He is working all good things on our behalf.
 May we exclaim, “My heart is steadfast!” O that God would grant us a heart of praise.
Psalm 57:9 – “I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.”