

"These Calamities"

Trusting God Until the Storm Passes

Psalm 57

The superscription of this psalm introduces a term not seen before: "Al-taschith," which literally translates as "Do not destroy." Most likely, this was the name of a familiar tune of David's time, much like we might say, "sing this hymn to the tune of Amazing Grace." Even though, as noted often in our study of the book of Psalms, the superscriptions aren't inspired, God has kept them in the record to help us understand the context.

When David labeled this psalm Al-taschith – "Do not destroy" – he gave it a name that became attached to three other psalms as well. Each of them, in different ways, is a cry for preservation in the face of danger or injustice. Psalm 57 is David's cry from the cave, Psalm 59 his cry from Saul's assassins, Psalm 58 his cry for justice, and Psalm 75 the people's cry for God's righteous rule. So, when we open Psalm 57, we're not just reading a private prayer from a cave – we're entering into a whole family of psalms that say together, "Do not destroy, Lord – preserve your people "until these calamities be overpast."

Psalm 57 takes us into the cave at En-gedi, where David was cornered by Saul (1 Sam. 24). The superscription tells us this psalm was written "when he fled from Saul in the cave." There were other times David hid in caves – Adullam (1 Sam. 22) earlier on, and later again in the wilderness (1 Sam. 26) – but the event at En-gedi in 1 Samuel 24 is the one that matches the best. There, David had the chance to take Saul's life, but he refused, saying, "I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed" (1 Sam. 24:10). The psalm's heading, Al-taschith – "Do not destroy," fits perfectly with that moment. David was asking God not to let him be

destroyed, and at the same time he was determined not to destroy Saul. It's in that situation, hiding in a cave, waiting for God's deliverance, that David prays the words of this psalm: "Until these calamities be overpast." And it's in that same situation that we often live our lives – caught between danger and trust, waiting on God to protect, to provide, and to deliver.

There is a Messianic tone throughout this psalm, and even though it isn't considered technically a Messianic Psalm, there are points that can be clearly applied to Christ, so we will view this psalm from three perspectives: historically (David), prophetically (Christ), and practically (the believer today).

I. OUR HELP DURING CALAMITIES – VS. 1-3

NOTE: This psalm begins exactly as the previous one: "Be merciful unto me, O God..." This shows that the mercy of God is going to be needed often in the life of the child of God.

A. Historically – David

1. David hides under "the wings" of God's protection, calling on the "Most High" to send forth mercy and truth (vs. 1-2).

- a) "In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge" – the picture is of a mother bird with her young under her protective wings. Nothing gets to the young without first going through the mother bird, and since God Almighty ("God most high") is that protector, we are safe under His wings.

The trouble comes when we get out from underneath His wings by not trusting in Him and trying to do it on our own.

- b) "God most high" – **לֵאלֹהִים עֲלִיּוֹן** – the only other

time this phrase is found is in Psalm 78:56.

Psalm 78:56

⁵⁶ Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies:

David is contrasting Saul, the king trying to destroy him, with "God Most High" – the God who reigns supreme over all kings and all nations. In other words, he's saying: "I appeal to the God who is higher than the highest throne."

2. "Until these calamities be overpast"

- a) The word for "calamities" (קָוִיּוֹת) is a term that means disasters or destruction and gives a picture of violent storms sweeping in. David isn't just talking about annoyances in life; he's talking about overwhelming trouble that could undo him completely. And yet he rests under the shadow of the wings of "God most high" until the storm has passed by.
- b) The idea in the word "overpast" (עָבַר) is not of David defeating the storm, but of the storm passing by while he remains safely sheltered. It's the language of temporary trials: the storm doesn't last forever, it moves on.

Based upon the way the word is used in other places, David is describing a storm of destruction stirred up by men.

Psalm 5:9

⁹ For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part *is* very wickedness; their throat *is* an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.

Psalm 52:2

² Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

Proverbs 10:3

³ The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

Proverbs 11:6

⁶ The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in *their own naughtiness*.

3. Verse 3 shows where David was looking to for help. It wasn't his armies or his friends, it was "from heaven." He trusted in God to "send forth his mercy and truth" (we'll come back to this in verse 10).

B. Prophetically – Christ

1. Under His wings (vs. 1) – Jesus applies this imagery to Himself in Matthew 23:37 – "how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." Christ is the true refuge.
2. "God most high" (vs. 2) – In Luke 1:32, Christ is called "the Son of the Highest" (a direct reference to the Hebrew word for "most high"). He embodies God's sovereign rule over all kings, just as David trusted God above Saul.
3. "God shall send for his mercy and truth" – John 1:14, 17 tell us that Jesus is "full of grace and truth." These are the same qualities David depended on which are fulfilled in Christ.

John 1:14

¹⁴ And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John 1:17

¹⁷ For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

C. Practically – for the believer today

1. We find our refuge in Christ, hidden with Him in God (Col. 3:3).

Colossians 3:3

³ For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

2. Nothing can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:38-39).

Romans 8:38-39

³⁸ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

II. OUR HINDRANCE IN CALAMITIES – VS. 4-6

A. Historically – David

1. The Ferocity of the Lion (vs. 4) – David's enemies are like lions, ready to tear apart the weak and unsuspecting.
2. The Folly of Their Net (vs. 6) – They set traps for David, but God turns their schemes on their own heads.
3. The Frame of Praise (vs. 5) – Even in the midst of danger, David pauses with a refrain of worship, anchoring his focus on God's glory above the earth.

B. Prophetically – Christ

1. “My soul is among lions” (vs. 4) – 1 Peter 5:8 warns that our adversary the devil walks about “as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Christ Himself resisted the roaring lion in the wilderness temptations (Matt. 4:1-11).
2. “A net” and “a pit” (vs. 6) – The Jewish leaders plotted a snare for Christ (Luke 20:20; John 18:3), but in the resurrection the trap turned back on them (Acts 2:23-24).

Luke 20:20

²⁰ And they watched *him*, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

John 18:3

³ Judas then, having received a band of *men* and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Acts 2:23-24

²³ Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: ²⁴ Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

3. Refrain of praise (vs. 5) – Christ, even in suffering, glorified the Father (John 12:27-28: “Father, glorify thy name”).

John 12:27-28

²⁷ Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause

came I unto this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again.

C. Practically – for the believer today

1. Satan still seeks to ensnare us, but his power is limited (vs. 4).

Luke 22:31-32

³¹ And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: ³² But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

2. God makes a way of escape from temptation (vs. 6).

1 Corinthians 10:13

¹³ There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

3. Even when enemies scheme, their plans cannot overturn God's purposes for He reigns above all (vs. 5).

III. OUR HOPE AND HAPPINESS BEYOND CALAMITIES – VS. 7-11

A. Historically – David

1. A fixed heart (vs. 7) – the word for “fixed” (כּוּיָן) means established, anchored, unmoved. David's circumstances were unstable, but his heart was steady because it was set on God. It's the picture of a stake driven deep in the ground

– no storm of calamity can pull it up.

2. A fresh song (vs. 8-9) – The word “awake” (עֹרֵר) here means to rouse or stir up. David is saying, “Come on, my soul, wake up to praise! Come on, my instruments, wake up and sing!” It’s a call for his whole being to shake off despair and turn to worship. Even in a cave, David stirs himself to praise God.
3. A faithful God (vs. 10-11) – David says in verse 3 that God will “send forth His mercy and truth.” That’s what’s called covenant language – God’s steadfast love (“mercy” - חֶסֶד) and faithfulness (“truth” - אֱמֶת) coming down to preserve His people.

Notice how the psalm ends in verse 10 (followed by the repeated refrain in verse 11). That same mercy and truth are said to reach unto the heavens and the clouds. What began as a personal comfort in the cave becomes a universal confession for all creation.

B. Prophetically – Christ

1. A fixed heart (vs. 7) – Jesus “set his face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51), showing perfect determination to obey His Father.
2. A fresh song (vs. 8-9) – Hebrews 2:12 quotes Psalm 22:22 about Christ singing praise “in the midst of the church.” Through His victory, our mouths are opened in praise.

Hebrews 2:11-12

¹¹ For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not

ashamed to call them brethren, ¹² Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

Psalm 22:22

²² I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

3. A faithful God, whose mercy and truth reach unto the heavens (vs. 10-11) – John 3:16 and Romans 5:8 both show God's steadfast love displayed supremely in Christ.

C. Practically – for the believer today

1. A fixed heart (vs. 7) – Our joy is found in a fixed heart, anchored in Christ.

Philippians 4:4-7

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice.

⁵ Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand. ⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

2. A fresh song (vs. 8-9) – We wake each day with a song of praise, because His mercies are new every morning.

Lamentations 3:22-23

²² *It is of* the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. ²³ *They are* new every morning: great *is* thy faithfulness.

3. A faithful God (vs. 10-11) – God's mercy and truth aren't just for David's moment; they extend to every believer in every storm.

Conclusion: This psalm begins with David pleading for God to send His mercy and truth from heaven to preserve him (v. 3) and it ends with David declaring that this same mercy and truth reach unto the heavens and the clouds (v. 10). That movement from heaven down to David and from David up to heaven with praise shows us more than just one man's deliverance. Prophetically, it points us to Christ – the embodiment of the mercy and truth that God shows (John 1:14, 17), who came down from heaven to save, and who has now been exalted above the heavens (Phil. 2:9-11). And practically, it reminds us that what began as a cry by David from the cave is our comfort too: when calamities sweep over us like storms, we can rest under God's wings until they be overpast, knowing His mercy and truth will never fail. The refrain that frames this psalm still calls us upward: "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth" (vs. 5 and 11).