

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 fulfils his purpose for me. He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. Selah. God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!

My soul is in the midst of lions; I lie down amid fiery beasts—the children of man, whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!

They set a net for my steps; my soul was bowed down. They dug a pit in my way, but they have fallen into it themselves. Selah. My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast! I will sing and make melody! Awake, my glory! Awake, O harp and lyre! 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. For your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!

(Psalm 57:1–11)

Introduction

David, pursued by hate-filled Saul, found himself in a cave. Perhaps it was dark, but for the light of a fire on which he cooked a meagre meal. Bone-weary and emotionally spent, his eyes bloodshot from tears of sorrow—a sorrow bordering on hopeless desperation—David penned this passionate psalm.

The inspired title informs us that it was set to the tune of “Do Not Destroy.” I bet that was a cheery melody! David wrote this in distress, in perhaps very *deep* darkness. And he wrote it, and sang it, to *God*. It was a *heart cry* to his God—to the God who stores our tears in a bottle (Psalm 56:8). Yes, David knew, and we *should* know, that God knows and that he cares.

This heart cry to God was honest, hopeful, and holy. That is, it was the word of God. And because it was the word of God, it is relevant for you and Me (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

You do not live in a cave. You probably are not fleeing an enemy who seeks to *physically* kill you. Nevertheless, there is much here that you can relate to.

The enemy of our souls, and of our church, is pursuing us, seeking our spiritual ruin (Ephesians 6:10–13). The enemy of our souls is hell-bent on destroying godly relationships. The enemy of our souls is hell-bent on destroying Christian families. And because of this evil pursuit, in whatever shape or form, you may feel trapped in a cave of relational loneliness, financial calamity, emotional darkness, physical despair, and spiritual defeat. In this, your heart cries out for help.

Why Does Your Heart Cry?

We must not be naïve. The Christian life puts us in the middle of conflict. Jesus faced opposition for the bulk of his ministry, and we can expect to face the same.

Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

(John 16:32–33)

Our hearts cry because of despair and despondency. That is, things are not as we expected. After all, David had been promised that he would be king of Israel. He was now on the run, soon to flee the Promised Land.

A king in a cave. There is something very incongruous about that. Yet kings who spend time in a cave are equipped to be better rulers.

Perhaps you feel that you were promised, abundant life – grace and peace and mercy and love. Now you find yourself slandered, malicious assaulted by those who, like Saul, should know better. Despair and despondency replace delight.

Perhaps you feel that you were promised God's never-ending love, expressed in his sovereign, Fatherly care (Matthew 6:9). But your body is wracked with pain. The disease will not go away – despite fervent prayer. You find yourself disillusioned, in a cave of confusion. Heart cry is all you can do. And, if you're honest, that is beginning to wear thin.

There may be various other reasons behind your heart cry. But ultimately, it is because you find yourself in what, at times, seems to be a completely hopeless situation.

Perhaps you feel trampled (v. 3). You may feel that your soul is in the midst of lions (v. 4). Perhaps your critics seem to have teeth of spears and arrows and tongues like swords (v. 4). Your enemies seem to be setting a net for your steps and digging a pit in your path (v. 6).

Sister, brother, this is to be expected. Paul was strongly opposed by Alexander the Coppersmith. He was forsaken by Demas. When he was set in trial, all his friends abandoned him. He was beaten and imprisoned in Philippi, and stoned and left for dead in Lystra. And this is only a sample of the opposition he faced.

The apostle John and a local church in Asia Minor had to endure Diotrephes, who loved to have the preeminence – to the point that he opposed showing hospitality to missionaries.

The church in Jerusalem was so persecuted that its members were forced to leave their homes. Later that church would face severe famine.

The churches in Galatia faced the onslaught of a false gospel threatening their very existence.

These stories have been repeated throughout history. They are being repeated today. Our hearts cry. Let them cry. But this brings us to the next vital question.

To Whom Does Your Heart Cry?

Does your heart cry others? That is not wrong. We need others. I will highlight this need below. But crying out to others, though helpful, is not enough. We must cry out to God. To what god does your heart cry? Will you, like Ahaz, be faithless to Yahweh as you cry out to other gods? This will be to your ruin, and perhaps to the ruin of others (see 2 Chronicles 28:22–23).

We must cry out to the true God – the God of the Bible. We must cry out to David's God – to the Son of David's God.

Who is this God? What is he like?

He is merciful (v. 1a). He is a refuge (v. 1b). He is purposeful (v. 2). (This gives perspective to the question, why a king in a cave?) He is covenantally faithful (vv. 3, 10).

All these attributes of God yield a harvest of hope (vv. 2b, 3a, 6b, 7a). And these attributes also produce a hymnal of songs (vv. 7–9) – including this one. The greatest hymnists in church history – Charles Wesley; John Newton; William Cowper; Fanny Crosby; etc. – have known what it is to praise God in the storm.

But an equally important question is, can you? That is, do you have a relationship with the one and only true God? Do you know him?

If Jesus has sheltered you from the storm of God's wrath, if you have repented of your sins and trusted in Jesus Christ as your sin-bearer, because resurrected, Saviour, then you too can be assured that your heart cry will be heard.

For What Does Your Heart Cry?

We must give attention to David's deep and driving desire: He was concerned about *the global glory of God* (vv. 5, 9, 11).

David was being pursued by a fellow covenanted member of the community. It was shameful. Saul had lost sight of the real King and therefore became obsessed with his own kingdom. Thankfully, David didn't. He desired God's kingdom to come. He desired God to be acknowledged as King. This was his true heart cry. It should be ours.

Ultimately, when Christians find themselves in a cave, Satan's objective is to hinder the expansion of the kingdom of God. The attacks by the various sauls opposing us are masterminded by Satan. His goal was to hinder the spread of the fame of God's name. The satanic agenda is to hinder God's global glory. What better way than to attack those whose divine assignment is to do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31)? That is, Christians, and therefore the church.

Our heart-cry must be God's heart cry: *solī Deo Gloria*. A representative of Heartcry missions recently contacted me to express their interest in partnering with our church. This is a great and humbling opportunity. It makes me ask, what is God doing with BBC? It seems that God wants to use our church to further the glory of his name. But this will require a corporate heart cry for holiness, harmony, and humility with a view to corporate helpfulness to the honour of God. We need to pray *for* one another and *with* one another. This brings us to the last point.

With Whom Will Your Heart Cry?

If you read the historical backdrop to David's troubles, referenced here, it's clear that David was not alone. Others joined him. This psalm was perhaps sung, and prayed, with others.

What a gift to have others with you in a cave. What a gift to have others with you with whom your heart can cry. "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear; what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer." Jesus is our supreme friend. But he is not to be your *only* friend. Neither is he to be the only friend of your brother and sister in Christ.

What I am getting at is that we need to cry to the Lord *together*—because we are *in* this together. We should be on our knees together, as the early New Testament church was.

This has been a major motivation, for many years, that we be a church *of* prayer—and that we be a church *at* prayer. But this corporate aspect of praying together has been increasingly the emphasis with our change in our Sunday evening service.

It is our desire to know one another better in the congregation as well to know the ministries within the congregation. It is our desire to help us to be praying together about the same things—things that do affect all of us. It is our desire to have more people praying. Though our evening attendance is not larger than it was before, nevertheless what is true is that more people are now praying together.

Though the transition poorly handled on behalf of the eldership, the change was motivated with what I am persuaded is a *biblical* desire. Some have expressed disappointment that we no longer pray in small groups, but have instead moved to more corporate prayer, there is nothing stopping anyone from coming to the church early on a Sunday and meeting with friends to pray together—or from doing so during the week.

Brothers and sisters, let us pray one for another. Sisters and brothers, let us pray with one another, to the glory of God.

Non-Christian friend. You need God as your eternal refuge from his wrath. You need to be reconciled to God. You can be if you will repent from you sins and trust the Lord Jesus Christ who was in a pit of death (v. 6), who faced the lions of the enemy of his soul, and of ours. He stood against the roar of the lion who walks about seeing whom he can devour (v. 4). But God delivered him. Suffering the wrath of God for sinners, he who was sinless uttered the heart cry, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” But this was not his last heart cry. No, his last heart cry was, “It is finished,” and, bowing his head, he gave up his spirit (John 19:30; Luke 23:46).

Because the Father heard his heart cry, he will hear yours. Let’s do that, together.

AMEN