

Be Exalted, O God, in My Lament

Psalm 57:1–11

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Introduction.

In sorrow and grief our hearts **don't** follow a neat, step-by-step instruction manual to return to rejoicing. Sorrow is messy while God is glorified in our laments of faith.

Mitch Everingham describes biblical lament in four movements in a Gospel Coalition article, "Learning to Lament: A Guide to Praying in our Hardest Moments." They are:

1. Turn to God
2. Cry out Your Complaint
3. Appeal to God to Hear and Respond
4. Confess Your Trust

This morning we continue to look at biblical lament and will consider these movements not as a checklist. One movement flows naturally into the next, and they all work together to create a single, beautiful masterpiece of lament. This means that, while lamenting, we may experience all four movements at once.

As God's children lament, we must bring our grief before Him and wait for His assurance as we face whatever comes next in His sovereign will—even when what lies ahead appears impossible.

He showed me that lament occurs at the foot of the cross, where we find the shelter of His wings. In Sandi's illness and death in 2013, lament became God's gracious way of leading me through grief. Through the Psalms, He taught me to see Him as He is: the LORD God Almighty. He also taught me that being alive in Christ is marked by these vital signs:

1. Thanksgiving before God
2. Trusting in God
3. Waiting in obedience to God

He turns our grief into rejoicing that becomes a new and glorious part of our life,

I am grateful for Michael and Dean's sermon series through Book I of Psalms, The Epistle of James, and now into Book II of Psalms. We have been reminded that lament is vital to our life with God in Jesus Christ.

From their teaching, I learned, and I hope you have as well, that lament is not a story we write for ourselves. God is its Author, weaving our cries, complaints, appeals, and trust into a story that ultimately exalts Him.

As we study Psalm 57, we will trace these overlapping movements in David's prayer and see how God leads him from danger and distress into refuge, steadfast trust, thanksgiving, and praise.

Let's pray.

Bible Exposition.

Psalms 52–56 have shown David turning to God with complaints of fear, betrayal, injustice, and danger; appealing for God to hear him; and confessing his trust in God.

Psalm 57 testifies to God's provision in David's distress: David takes refuge under God's wings; God makes David's heart steadfast and turns his suffering heart toward praise. God's work in David ultimately points David's faith beyond his escape from Saul to the cross of Jesus Christ—the rejected King of Israel who entered suffering, conquered death, and became the refuge of everyone who trusts Him.

Psalm 57 does not merely teach us how to survive a crisis; it teaches us how the gospel informs and emboldens the heart that exalts God in the midst of lament. Lament does not lead us away from suffering, but through it toward refuge, confidence, and praise fulfilled in Christ.

Christopher Ash¹ helps us see two sections in this psalm, each finish with David's refrain of praise. Let's dive in, beginning with the introduction to Psalm 57.

To the choirmaster: according to Do Not Destroy. A Miktam of David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave.

“according to Do Not Destroy.” Ash² takes our attention to Deuteronomy 9:25 – 29 to explain where this very same phrase was used by Moses, ²⁵“So I lay prostrate before the Lord for these forty days and forty nights, **because the Lord had said he would destroy you.**” ²⁶And I prayed to the Lord, ‘O Lord God, do not destroy your people and your heritage, whom you have redeemed through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²⁷Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Do not regard the stubbornness of this people, or their wickedness or their sin, ²⁸lest the land from which you brought us say, “Because the Lord was not able to bring them into the land that he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness.” ²⁹For they are **your people and your heritage, whom you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm.**’

Ash³ comments that “Do Not Destroy” is a prayer that God would preserve His Messiah and His Messiah's people. Thus, in every sense, Moses' prayer points ahead to Messiah and the role, the covenantal role, God's people have in Messiah's coming into creation. If God destroyed His people, there would never be hope for our salvation through Jesus Christ. The purpose of God's people is for God's salvation to be made available for God's people (Israel and Gentiles). Their destruction would nullify the Abrahamic covenant by whom Messiah would come and bless many nations.

This is like the plea of Isaiah 65:8

Thus says the Lord:

“As the new wine is found in the cluster,
and they say, ‘Do not destroy it,
for there is a blessing in it,’

¹ Christopher Ash. The Psalms A Christ-Centered Commentary. Vol 3, Psalms 51 – 100.

² ibid

³ ibid

so I will do for my servants' sake,
and not destroy them all. (Is. 65:8)

Jesus is the new wine in the cluster known as Israel. He is God's servant in that cluster, Israel from which the new will come. Israel is preserved by God's grace because of the blessing that was in its posterity.

"Do Not Destroy" seems to be David's confident plea for God to remember His covenant with His people. It seems declarative and foundational for David's confidence amid persecution. In other words, he knows God's covenant promise concerning the Messiah will not be broken.

"A Miktam of David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave." There are two passages that refer to David's cave dwelling while he is on the lam from King Saul. First Samuel 22 describes David's family and a company of distressed men gathering to him. First Samuel 24 later finds David hiding with his men from Saul. C. John Collins⁴ notes that Psalm 57 may refer to either or both cave episodes. In either case, David—and those with him—are in grave danger.

The **first point** this morning, from verses 1–4, is: **"The Messiah and His Church Lament in Time of Trial."** First, recall that God welcomes faithful lament and uses it to deepen our trust in Him and His Word. In this case, David begins with his turning to God and crying out his complaint. David's response anticipates Jesus, who faithfully entrusted Himself to the Father through suffering and death and was vindicated in resurrection. Let's look at the text.

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.
² I cry out to God Most High,
to God who fulfills his purpose for me.
³ 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!

⁴ 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.

As David cries out for God's mercy, his trust in God enables David, by the Holy Spirit, to tell God the fears within him. This trust increasingly governs David's fears. David knows he is in the shadow of God's wings, and he has no illusions about his circumstances. They have not changed. **Yet he speaks with new assurance** while he is in God's mercy and providential care in the cave! How do we know? Look at the confidence of David's prayer. See if you agree:

- **God** is David's refuge until the storm passes. **(The Cave)**
- **God** will fulfill His purpose for David. **(The Promised Messiah)**
- **God** will send salvation and vindicate His servant. **(David as a type of Christ)**

⁴ Collins, ESV Expository Commentary on Psalms - Song of Solomon

Nothing has changed amid David's circumstances except David's heart. So much so, that David breaks out in worship with the confident refrain in verse 5!

⁵ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!
Let your glory be over all the earth!

Do you see how God uses lament to deepen our assurance that His grace is sufficient and His salvation is certain? Our circumstances may not change, but our confidence in Him will grow. Whether He delivers us from the crisis or brings us through death into His presence, **our hope rests in God alone.**

Ash's **second point**, from verses 6–10, is: **"The Messiah and His Church Declare Confident Faith in Times of Trial."**

When we lament, God draws us nearer to Himself and His Word and gives us a clear view of our circumstances by the light of His Word.

Listen to **hear** how this happened in David's heart and **see** how this unfolded for Jesus during His trials:

⁶ 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*
⁷ My heart is steadfast, O God,
my heart is steadfast!
I will sing and make melody!
⁸ Awake, my glory!^[b]
Awake, O harp and lyre!
I will awake the dawn!
⁹ I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples;
I will sing praises to you among the nations.
¹⁰ For your steadfast love is great to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the clouds.

During Passion Week, Christ's enemies set a trap for Him, but He was not caught against His will. After lamenting in Gethsemane, Jesus willingly went to the cross. God Himself fulfilled His covenant promise, bearing in Christ the judgment **ALL** sinners deserved and securing salvation for His people.

Jesus' resurrection and His ascension to His throne confirm God's covenant faithfulness. "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13). This promise is summarized by the Apostle John in 1 John 5:12, "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

David repeats the confident refrain for times of trial.

¹¹ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!
Let your glory be over all the earth!

Give glory to God! Under the shadow of God's wings, David's perspective on the persistent storm changes. God does not dismiss the danger surrounding David; his enemies really are setting traps. Yet David's heart becomes steadfast, and from that steadfast heart erupt thanksgiving and praise.

Conclusion

Lament does not always change the danger immediately, but God uses it to steady the heart. In Christ, we can face the crisis with confidence, give thanks before deliverance comes, and exalt God above our circumstances.

Listen to Jesus' teaching: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 16:24–25).

In this cross-bearing, we are signed up and equipped **for lament**. Like David and Christ in their laments, God may not answer lament immediately. But, in our waiting, **He** works **His Word** deeply into our hearts and teaches us to respond faithfully even in His silence.

Lament brings our pain honestly to God in faith, asks for His help, and entrusts us to His mercy. What sorrow, fear, or disappointment do you need to bring before Him today? Lay them at the foot of the cross and rejoice in the salvation Christ has secured for you and pick up the cross He has given to you and follow Him.

As we prepare to celebrate the Lord's Supper, bring your lament to Christ and remember His steadfast love and faithfulness.

If you have never cried out to God for salvation in Christ—or if you have questions about what it means to trust Him—I would be glad to speak with you after the service today.