

A PASSION FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

PSALM 57

Introduction:

Stressful circumstances tend to expose the contents of the heart. Just as the strength of material can be tested by putting it under pressure, so the human heart can be tested by putting it under the pressure of adversity. God knows this and uses this method regularly.

When you read a psalm like this one, understanding the circumstances under which it was written, it is easy to understand why God declared King David to be man after his own heart. The pressure of his circumstances was enough to cause him to be bowed down emotionally and to become extremely discouraged. Yet it became clear that the thing that drove David was a passion for the glory of God.

But what was the circumstance of the moment when this psalm was penned?

Actually the psalm was written before David ever came to the throne. He had been anointed by Samuel to be the King of Israel, but he was actually hiding in the cave at Adullam. He was a fugitive from a demented King Saul, and from those who sought to gain favor with Saul by handing over David. At the moment it appears that he will never know what God has

promised, but will rather die by the hand of Saul or some of his henchmen. It is out of this circumstance that we hear this moving prayer.

We need to be clear about the burden of the prayer. It was not a passion to see the glory of God, like Moses, as much as it was that the whole world sees the glory of God. He was ready to accept any earthly circumstance as long as he could be sure that the world was seeing the glory of God. He indeed was a man with a passion for the divine glory.

It is fairly easy to pick up progression in this psalm. In his approach to God, David begins where he is and with the threats that surround him. He is like a man lying in the midst of a pride of vicious lions. But as he prays, he moves above the threatening circumstances until the real passion of his heart bursts forth in a petition for the glory of God to fill the earth.

I. THIS PASSION SUSTAINS UNDER PRESSURE.

If we can understand the passion expressed in this exclamation, we will know one of the secrets of David's life. This is the reason that he can so confidently declare: "My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast."

The old version translated the word steadfast as "fixed". Most translate it as "steadfast", but some use the word confident. The root idea in the Hebrew

word is that of standing erect, to be in a state of readiness. He is ready to fulfill the purposes of God. The dreadful circumstance in which he finds himself has not deterred him from his life purpose—he is ready to be used in the manifestation of the glory of God in the earth—regardless.

The New Testament provides us two notable examples of this. Paul is one, and our Lord is the other.

Paul expressed it in his letter to the Philippians. Like David, he too was in a terrible circumstance. He wrote this letter while confined to a Roman prison.

Yet he writes:

Philippians 1:20—“According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.”

Do you understand what he is saying? The passion of his heart is that Christ will be magnified, be seen in His glory through the body of the Apostle, and to the apostle it does not matter whether it is by living or dying. The only thing that matters is that the glory of the Lord spread in the earth.

If you understand this passion, it will explain a lot about the autobiographical sections of the letters of Paul. He did not live an easy life—rather it was filled with pain and privation. But it was not a plight forced upon him, but one rather that he chose. He could have lived a fairly

comfortable life as a Rabbi in Jerusalem or Tarsus. But once he met the living Christ on the road to Damascus, he was consumed with a passion that the whole world, especially the world of the Gentiles, know what he knew. This passion kept him going when weaker men would have turned back.

Our Lord lived with this passion. He expressed it just hours before His death at the hand of Rome:

John 12:27, 28—“Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. ‘Father, glorify Your name.’” Then a voice came from heaven saying, ‘I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.’”

When the inevitability of the Cross became apparent to Jesus our Lord, in His humanity He was deeply troubled. It was not just the inevitability of death, but the nature of the death, the death as one bearing the sins of the world. But instead of praying for deliverance from the approaching death, He cried out to God, “Father, glorify Your name.” The only thing that mattered was that the glory of the Father be manifest in the earth, and if His death was necessary for this to happen, so be it! Just the knowledge that the name of the Father would be glorified, made everything else worthwhile.

It is this passion that has sustained the spiritual trailblazers throughout history. They have been moved by a single passion—that the glory of God shine throughout the earth.

II. THE PASSION EXCITES EARNEST PRAYER.

The psalm opens with passionate prayer and it soon becomes obvious that the burden of the prayer is the manifestation of the glory of God. It rather quickly moves beyond the painful context of his life to the greater purpose of his life.

1. Prayer for divine attention. (v. 2)

“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.” He is appealing to the covenant relationship that he enjoys with God. For God to show mercy is for him to be faithful to the covenant. Mercy is the covenant love of God. He will manifest his trust in the Lord by seeking a place of refuge under the care of the Lord like little chickens seek a place of refuge under the wings of the hen.

This is the only comfort that he needs—just an awareness of the nearness and the protection of God. This is important, as the prayer indicates, but it is not the most important thing in his life. The more important petition is the one that he repeats in the psalm.

2. Prayer for divine manifestation (v. 11)

Twice in the psalm the psalmist bursts forth with the same earnest petition—“Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be above all the earth.” In order to appreciate this significance of this petition you must remember the circumstance of the psalmist. Young David is a fugitive from King Saul, and is hiding in a cave at Adullam. Men are looking for a way to betray him into the hands of Saul. His life is in jeopardy. But this is not his primary concern as expressed in his prayer. Rather he prays earnestly that the glory of God will be manifest in such a way that the whole world will come to know His glory.

David is following the pattern that the Son of David would teach for prayer. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come; they will be done on earth as it is heaven.” Regardless of the circumstance of life, our first concern is to be with the name, the kingdom, and the will of the Father. This petition of David expresses the passion of his heart—above all he wants the greatness, goodness, and glory of the God of Israel to be known throughout the earth. He wants all to know, and all to come and bow before Him.

III. THE PASSION ENERGIZES EXTREME SERVICE. (V. 9-10)

David had been anointed to be the king of Israel, but at this point in his life it does not look very likely. Death appears to be a more likely occurrence than his ever being crowned the king over Israel. But his vision for his life is wrapped up in his passion for the glory of God.

“I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing to You among the nations.” To go on a concert tour among the nations so that they could know the glory of God seems like extreme service. It is out of the ordinary. This is not a concert in the tabernacle, or a palace concert, but a witness to the greatness of God among those who do not know Him.

1. The goodness of God. (V. 1, 11)

This extreme service is rooted in a conviction concerning the greatness of God’s mercy. “For your mercy reaches unto the heavens.” He believes that the mercy of the Lord is great enough to include the heathen of the world.

2. The faithfulness of God. (V. 5, 11)

“And your truth unto the clouds.” Truth is God’s faithfulness. It is the trustworthiness of God. David believes that the faithfulness of God is great enough to include the Gentiles. His passion is that they might know the God he has come to know.

David’s knowledge of God was so limited when compared to us. What kind of passion would he demonstrate if he knew what we know? What if he had

known of the Incarnation, the death, the resurrection, and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus? What if he had known of the completed work of redemption for all mankind by the death of Christ on the Cross?

O that we might have some of this passion for the glory of God.

A successful young pastor from West Texas went with a group to serve in Romania. When he was confronted with the need in that part of the world, his heart was forever impacted. He knew he could never be content to serve in a comfortable Texas pastorate when there was a world out there that did not know. He approached IMB and asked about places of need. They pointed him to the Persian Gulf as one of the darkest places on the planet spiritually, and one of the most dangerous.

David concluded after much prayer that this was the place for him, his wife, and their three children. They went to Cyprus and began to learn Farsi, the language for much of Iran. They have such a passion for the glory of God to be heard and seen in the Persian Gulf that they have done the extreme thing. They are living out there on the edge of danger because of this passion.

Some serve in Iraq today—not because of a mandate from our government, or because of high wages paid by some corporation, but rather they have a

passion that the glory of God may be seen and heard in that part of the world.

Larry and Melinda put their business in the hands of an associate and went to Győr, Hungary for two years because of this same passion. They went without salary, but left behind in that University city a little group that now knew of the glory of the Lord two years later. They would welcome the opportunity to go again.

Yea, even more this same passion for the glory of Father brought Jesus from heaven to earth, and took Him to the Cross on our behalf. It will lead to extreme service.

We must not allow the limits of age to dampen our desire for the glory of God to be manifest.

Our prayers can continue to make a difference.

Our gifts can make a difference.

Our lives can make a difference. If you end up at the nursing home, make sure that those who share the place with you know of the glory of God.

So a passion for the glory of God will express itself in the supplication of the person; in their steadfastness; and in their service.