



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Chris Splawn

Psalm 57

Summer 2023

"Our Refuge, God's Glory"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning to you all. We're in Psalms chapter 57.
Please turn with me to Psalm 57. A Psalm of David; and the title is:

For the choir director; set to Al-tashheth. A Mikhtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

57 Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me,
For my soul takes refuge in You;
And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge
Until destruction passes by.

² I will cry to God Most High,
To God who accomplishes *all things* for me.
³ He will send from heaven and save me;
He reproaches him who tramples upon me. *Selah*.
God will send forth His lovingkindness and His truth.

⁴ My soul is among lions;
I must lie among those who breathe forth fire,
Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows
And their tongue a sharp sword.

⁵ Be exalted above the heavens, O God;
Let Your glory *be* above all the earth.

⁶ They have prepared a net for my steps;
My soul is bowed down;
They dug a pit before me;
They *themselves* have fallen into the midst of it. *Selah*.

⁷ My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast;
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises!

⁸ Awake, my glory!
Awake, harp and lyre!
I will awaken 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 lovingkindness is great to the heavens
And Your truth to the clouds.

¹¹ Be exalted above the heavens, O God;
Let Your glory be above all the earth.

Psalm 57: 1-11

This is the Word of God.

Let us go to Him in Prayer and ask that He would feed us this morning.

Dear heavenly Father, we come before You humbled and bowed low, resting in the shadow of the Almighty, resting as chicks under Your wings as a refuge, for You have gone before us. You've sent from heaven Your Son, You've sent forth Your loving-kindness and Your truth and displayed that love in full perfection in the Person and work of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. May He be glorified here this morning.

And as we study Your words together, and then as we observe and remember His work at the Supper, following this meeting we pray that Your people would be encouraged and blessed in the midst of various circumstances and trials that they find themselves in, and Your divine providence. You are the One who works and

accomplishes all things for Your people. We pray that You would strengthen our feet and fix our minds on Christ—not just in this hour, but even as we go from here, day to day, that we would look for Your providence in each day and find, and rest, our faith in You who works all things for our good. And it's in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

(Message) “Duck and cover”: Depending on your generation, these words may bring back some memories. In 1949, the Soviet Union tested its first nuclear bomb, and the United States lost its standing as the only nation with nuclear capabilities. The Cold War began; and with that so did the fears of the nation.

To educate Americans on nuclear preparedness, the Civil Defense initiated *Alert America*. ‘Duck and cover’ was the mantra. And Burt the Turtle was the mascot. At the height of the Cold War, in 1962 during the Cuban missile crisis, *duck and cover* drills were practiced in schools across America. Children were trained to duck and cover under their desks as a refuge, in case of a nuclear attack. Would those desks have provided a sufficient refuge to save children's lives in the midst of a nuclear disaster? Thankfully, we didn't have to find that out.

The Cuban missile crisis came and went, and yet threats of impending calamities still abound. My generation ran tornado drills and fire drills. And during the Cuban missile crisis your generation would have never imagined that your grandchildren would be running ‘Active Shooter’ drills in the schools...and we can't help but wonder if a barricaded door will be sufficient refuge, and provide safety.

King David faced a different crisis when he was required to seek refuge from impending destruction. That's the occasion of Psalm 57, and we see the context in the title of the Psalm: “For the choir director; *set to Al-tashheth*. A Mikhtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.”

Al-tashheh is likely the tune, but the word means *destroy not*, or *do not destroy*. There are four ‘Destroy Not’ Psalms; chapters 57, 58, 59, and then fast forward to chapter 75. Each has a clear declaration of destruction for the wicked, but it also has a

distinct declaration—a special preservation for God's people; the judgment of God to come to the wicked and the mercies and lovingkindness that the LORD shows His covenant people.

You can read about this occasion in 1 Samuel, chapter 24: The presently reigning King Saul has chosen 3000 men of war to pursue the anointed young David. David had already escaped from King Saul's grasp multiple times. But here David has 400 men with him; they are highly outnumbered and we find them hiding in the inner recesses of the cave.

In 1 Samuel 24, (vs2), this cave is described as, "...in front of the Rocks of Wild Goats", which could be referring to the same cave as 1 Samuel 22, (vs1), where David and his men hid from the Philistines. And if that's the case, then the cave is "the cave of Adullam." And if you take a trip to Israel, you can find these caves today; but if you ask them, they may tell you, 'It's rather difficult to locate.'

That's the occasion, David is fleeing from Saul. For an outline of our Psalm, in verses 1 through 5, we see David's prayer. And in verses 6 through 11 we see David's praise. And there's some wonderful poetic beauty in the Psalm as David methodically memorializes this specific occasion of his deliverance.

The flow of David's prayer works its way into verse 5—and then from verse 6 it works its way back. The scheme is an 'ABCCBA' structure. Think of it as looking into a mirror: David's prayer is cast before the LORD in verses 1 through 5. And then in verses 6 through 11, we see David's praise for the result that the LORD has accomplished for him.

In verse 1, David pleads for mercy; and then in verse 10, we see that the LORD provides endless lovingkindness—or, in response to the plea of mercy, He gives endless lovingkindness.

In verses 2 and 3 we see David crying out to "the God Most High" in faith, with every confidence of deliverance—and then in verses 7 and 9, the response: David's "heart is steadfast", and his cries have turned to 'praises among the nations' at the deliverance that the LORD has accomplished for him.

In verse 4 David is among a hostile enemy—and helpless in and of himself. But in verse 6, it is the LORD who delivers and brings about a form of justice where the enemy falls into the very pit which they have dug for themselves. And the apex of this mountainous Psalm is found in the chorus; and it's repeated in verse 5 and then again repeated in verse 11. Like a mountain cast in pure gold, the psalmist declares, "Be exalted among the heavens, O God; *Let Your glory be above all the earth.*" Truly, our refuge is God's glory.

David opens in prayer; Verse 1,
"Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me,
For my soul takes refuge in You;
And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge
Until destruction passes by."

He opens with that plea, "Be gracious to me", or, 'be *merciful* to me.' In David's repetition we see his intense urgency. There's no punctuation in Hebrew, so David's repetition is the exclamation mark for his plea; "Be gracious to me, O God be gracious to me."; whereas the King James renders it, "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me."

This is a prayer of genuine faith grounded in a full dependence—a fully dependent relationship with the LORD. It comes from a heart of one who recognizes their own inability; and desperate need for salvation; one of full dependence upon the LORD for salvation, which can be found in nothing else that this world has to offer, no schemes of men, nothing but the sovereign grace of God. It is the soul bowed down to the LORD in full trust and dependence—recognizing that He alone is the only efficient source, and effective source, of true refuge.

Hebrews chapter 4, verse 16, the author writes, "Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." It is here where David's soul takes refuge. While David is hiding in the recesses of the cave, his refuge is firmly planted in the cleft of the rock. And David

continues, "For my soul takes refuge in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge Until destruction passes by." (vs1b).

In John Bunyan's allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress*, the opening scene shows a man who is living in 'the City of Destruction'. He is clothed in rags. He has a burden on his back. He has a book in his hand warning of the coming destruction. And he cries out, "What must I do to be saved?"

Bunyan is pointing the reader to the condition of all mankind. We have no goodness of our own; even our best deeds are as "filthy rags" before a righteous and living God. (Isa 64:6). We are burdened with the great weight of our sins and guilt before God. They cannot be removed by any effort of our own. And due to our sin, we stand guilty before a perfect, righteous, holy God—and His perfect righteousness demands justice. And we will all stand before Him one day to give an account for our lives: "It is a terrifying thing into fall in the hands of the living God." (Heb 10:31).

The Pilgrim meets Evangelists who points to a gate in the distance that is 'shining with light'. And thus begins the great journey of *Pilgrim's Progress*, where Christian finds the same refuge where David, here, is resting, in the person and work of the LORD. David takes refuge in the only source of salvation available from the destruction to come. It is the LORD Himself. He is a refuge for David; and in the shadow of His wings he finds refuge, just as a helpless chick finds refuge under the wings of its mother hen.

David uses that imagery, (it's a beautiful image), and he uses it often. For example, in Psalm 91,

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress, My God in whom I trust!'

For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper And from the deadly pestilence.

He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wing you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and a bulwark."

(Psa 91: 1-4).

Matthew 23, verse 37, Jesus uses the same imagery as He laments over Jerusalem: "Jerusalem, O Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I have wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling."

After a grass fire or a forest fire, there have been stories where a quail or a grouse is found burnt to death, but the chicks are found alive, still hiding under the wings of its mother. Is that not a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and what He did for His own—that He laid down His life on the cross and bore the just penalty for our sin—the full wrath of God the Father poured upon Him so that all who would look to Him, and come to Him in faith, would find refuge in Him and live?

This is what David is looking forward to. This is where David rests his faith. And he knows with every confidence, that because he is under the shadow of the LORD's Almighty Wings, that any threat of destruction will soon pass by. He is secure. He is eternally secure in the LORD. David can pray with such confidence, (as we see here), because he knows the One to whom he is praying;

Verse 2,

"I will cry to God Most High,

To God who accomplishes *all things* for me."

David knows the nature and character of God. He is "God Most High". This is the name above every name. We see here with what great reverence David holds for the LORD: "He is God Most High." He is above all things, for He is the creator of all things. Indeed, "...all things have been created through Him and for Him", and, "He is before all things..." (and in all things), "...and in Him all things are held together." That's Colossians chapter 1, verses 16 & 17, pointing us to the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son. He is omniscient; He is omnipotent. —That is, He is all knowing and all powerful; He is self-existent and self-sufficient. He never changes, and the same God that David worships here is the same God that we worship here today.

And because He is God Most High, He alone is able to *accomplish all things* for David. David knows this because he has seen the faithfulness of God in his own life, time after time. It was the God Most High who delivered David from the bear; The God Most High who delivered him from the lion, from Goliath, from the Philistines—and multiple times, already, from King Saul himself. He "*accomplishes all things*", (vs2), for His people for those who find refuge in Him—and to those who He has called to Himself.

Remember, David did not seek God, did he? It was the LORD that pursued David, and anointed him. And so David is secure. And in all these circumstances, David knows it is the LORD who *accomplishes all things* for him. Truly, salvation is of the LORD. And this is true in the life of every saint throughout the ages—and equally true this principle lives for us as followers of Christ today. And we need to remember that; we need to remember that in the midst of divine circumstances in our life that He is working *all things*.

As William Cowper wrote,
"Judge not the LORD by feeble sense,
but trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face."

That's Romans 8:28, is it not?, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose." This is the confidence of David, the One who, "*accomplishes all things*" for him.

The word here, *accomplishes*, can be rendered *completes*, or *finishes*, *performs*, or even *perfects*. Paul writes, in Philippians 1:6, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will *complete* it", (or *perfect* it), "until the day of Christ Jesus."

I like how one commentator put it here; "God's favours, (*plural*), already received, are a pledge that He will complete His work of love upon me. The beginning is the

earnest of the completion. His Word is a guarantee for the performance of all things for me that I need."

Now David shifts his prayer with anticipation of how God will deliver and accomplish *all things* for him. The LORD accomplishes and works in mysterious and inexplicable ways, indeed in miraculous ways.

Verse 3,

"He will send from heaven and save me;

He reproaches him who tramples upon me. *Selah*.

God will send forth His loving-kindness and His truth."

That's how He accomplishes *all things* for His people. First, 'He will send from heaven and save'; 'He will send His lovingkindness and His truth'. The God Most High here, is not a distant God that remains hidden in the heights. No, He condescends and stoops low to intervene on behalf of all who call upon Him in faith. For His people, He condescends to guide, to lead, to protect, and to rescue His people—and to ultimately save. In the midst of danger, and in the midst of hardship, in the midst of various trials of life, the God Most High is not a distant God, but a deeply personal God—and He abides with His people; and He goes before them; and He walks with them.

David's faith and trust on the LORD is not merely based on an intellectual knowledge about God. One could earn multiple doctorates of theology and not know God at all. One can know a lot about God and not even be close to *knowing* Him. David's walk with God is not grounded in a mere head knowledge, nor is it based on tradition or endless ceremony, but it is an abiding walk with an intimate relationship with God. David knows his rescue is assured because he *knows* the very One who will "send from heaven to save".

Just as God has done for him in the past, David is confident in his future. His future is in the LORD, who "will send forth His lovingkindness and His truth." He has every

confidence in this, even in the midst of the most dire circumstances, even in the midst of his enemies that seek his life.

Verse 4,

"My soul is among lions;

I must lie among those who breathe forth fire,

Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows

And their tongue a sharp sword."

You younger men here today, I'd like you to consider David for a moment: At the time of this event David is in his 20s. He is the anointed king but his coronation as king isn't until he is age 30. And here we see young David standing bold and courageous in the face of pressure. He rests in the LORD and in the promises of His Word—even while surrounded by enemies who threaten his life, "who breathe forth fire" against him and revile him. Here, today, we may not have men today, hunting us down; however as followers of Christ you can be sure that you are a target. Each one of you in Christ are a target. And we are immersed in a society that today reviles the Lord God—in every way that they reviled Him then.

In fact, this is a picture of every society since the fall of Adam. Natural man is at enmity with Him, (*with God*), and hostile against God, against His Word, and against His people. This is a consistent picture of the nature of fallen man throughout the Scriptures. It is the doctrine of *total depravity*, or *total inability*. Romans 8:7, "The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, nor is it even able *to do so*." You'll remember 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised."

Then how are we to live?...As redeemed from that same condition within this context: I think here we see an encouragement in that David is bold and steadfast. Those who are against David aren't really only against David; they are against the One who

anointed David. So you can say that even though they are reviling David, they are really reviling the LORD who has chosen David as the anointed one. Yet David remained bold and confident in the LORD; he did not waver here.

There is an increasing pressure in our own society for men and women to bend to the wind of social change, to cultural change. You can be assured, as Christian men and women, you are reviled. And even within American evangelicalism as a whole, largely there is a trend to promote the feminization of men, to demonize biblical masculinity, and pressures to compromise biblical truth in the home and in the church; to compromise faith in the workplace, to bend the knee to the 'Baals' and the 'Sodoms' of our own age.

So men and women, dare to be a David here, in this day. Stonewall Jackson wrote, "My religious beliefs, (or my faith), teach me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time of my death. I do not concern myself with that but to always be ready whenever it may overtake me. That is the way all men should live, and all men would be equally brave." Well, that's David's mindset here.

In the midst of all this he concludes his prayer with a chorus and his ultimate chief aim. Verse 5,

"Be exalted above the heavens, O God;
Let Your glory be above all the earth."

Universal and global glory to God is what David yearned for here, and not merely his own deliverance from this trial or for his own acclaim—but that God's glory would ultimately be revealed through his circumstances and His name would be exalted above the heavens and above all the earth. David concludes his prayer with this God exalting request—and in it we see, 'Not my will but Your will be done, Your glory made known.'

Now David shifts from prayer to praise—and he works his way back poetically. He has given his enemy into God's hands, into His sovereign hands, and now he praises

the LORD for the result—which God then accomplishes for David. Now we work our way back; verse 6,

“They have prepared a net for my steps;
My soul is bowed down;
They dug a pit before me;
They *themselves* have fallen in the midst of it. *Selah.*”

In the cave, as David hides from Saul, a rather strange, (or awkward), scene unfolds. Saul, the raging hunter, soon becomes the helpless, vulnerable prey. In the LORD's providence, Saul and his troops have come to the location of a cave that, unbeknownst to him, David and his men were hiding within.

Saul needed to take a quick ‘pit stop’. He enters the cave to use the rest room—and there is now a prime opportunity for David to take matters into his own hands. But David refuses to raise his hand against the current anointed, King Saul. Rather he rests that in the hands of the sovereign God.

He sneaks over and he cuts a piece of Saul's robe. You can read about it in 1 Samuel. (24: 4-5). David remained humbled and bowed low to the will of God. He did not take matters to his own hand. As one once said, "He let the game come to him in the trust of the sovereignty of God." David trusted in the LORD—and the LORD honored him for that. In fact, more than once David had opportunity to take matters into his own hand with Saul, (in this cat and mouse game), and even slay him on multiple occasions. But the LORD deals with His enemies. And the LORD, in His own ways unto judgment; ‘vengeance belongs to the LORD.’ (Rom 12:10).

And in the pit which the wicked dig is the very pit into which they fall, in God's just timing due unto sin. As one put it, "Evil is a stream which one day flows back to its source." Yet ultimately, there is a fiery pit of God's wrath in which the guilty sinner will be condemned for eternity, unless they be turned by the grace of God through faith unto Him.

And we're reminded of that here in this text. The day of destruction is coming. The day of God's wrath draws nearer with each passing hour. There is only one refuge sufficient to save from the coming destruction of God's justice. Yet mankind seeks various forms of refuge. Most often, and in common, the hope is that one's 'good works' is enough—that God will somehow overlook our sins. We like to call them 'our mistakes', or maybe 'our errors', these sins before the LORD—because maybe, perhaps, 'our good deeds outnumber our bad ones'. Yet it is missed that even our good deeds before men are but "filthy rags" before God when they are done apart from faith in His Anointed One, the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are many sources that are viewed as a refuge. I have a coworker, who is here today and is aware of this story: One of our coworkers works remotely from Matador, Texas, population 571. As you're aware, an EF3 tornado tore through that small town two weeks ago on June 21st. Tragically, four people were killed and nine injured. Thankfully, my coworker and her family were spared. But she shared a story with our team that came out of that event.

When the threat of the tornado was realized, one family made their way to the back door to seek refuge in a tornado shelter that was in their back yard. They made it to their back door, but they found they were too late; the winds were swirling too violently to make it to the shelter. They then had to retreat back into the inner recesses of their home, (I guess they 'ducked and covered'). The storm passed, and they emerged safely.

But when they examined the tornado shelter—it was completely destroyed. Bricks and rubble had filled it; it was but a rubble. It appeared to be a *sufficient* shelter and they had every confidence that it would be—but in the end, it would have been their demise. Miraculously the LORD spared them from that calamity. And there's a lesson here that I think we should take to heart. It's the lesson of Proverbs 16, verse 25, 'There is a way that seems right unto a man, but its end is death.'

There is but only one refuge sufficient to save. By grace, God answers the cries of all who call upon His name—and He turns their cries into praise. That's where we see David continue in his praise to the LORD for the deliverance that the LORD accomplishes for him. His cries in verse 2, (now we work back), are now turn into worldwide praise;

My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast;

I will sing, yes, I will sing praises!

Awake, my glory!

Awake, harp and lyre!

I will awaken the dawn.

I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the peoples;

I will sing praises to You among the nations.

Psa 57: 7-9

In the midst of this great danger, this trial of danger, David's heart is not wandering; it is not being blown by the storms of circumstance. Rather, it is *"steadfast"*; it is fixed, it is stable. It is held fast and firm in the LORD. And notice that the steadfastness of David's heart is counted in double measure—and with great emphasis; there's an exclamation there. Indeed, it overflows even to exuberant song and praise to the LORD for the work of His hand.

What measure of grace is this that causes the afflicted heart to sing praise and give thanks! It's amazing! It flows from the heart that rests in God's sovereign grace, in His divine nature, and in His character. It rests in the great work of the LORD who has accomplished *"all things"*, (vs2), for those who trust in Him. It is a heart that rests in gratitude to the LORD for all He has done for us.

Psalm 30, verses 3 through 5,

"O LORD, You have brought up my soul from Sheol; You have kept me alive, that I would not go down to the pit.

Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones, And give thanks to His holy name.

For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy *comes* in the morning."

My dear friends, those who are in the LORD, the light of the dawn is always before us, always shining ahead of us. God's grace is sufficient and efficient to see us to full completion, for His lovingkindness is abounding and immeasurable for all who are in Him. And that's where David goes in verse 10,

"For Your lovingkindness is great to the heavens
And Your truth to the clouds."

And it's immeasurable. In verse 1, David prays for mercy and grace. And now, we have come full circle. The LORD answers with His infinite lovingkindness, and lavishes it on His covenant people:

Psalm 103:11-13,

"For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.

As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Just as a father has compassion on [his] children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him."

What a refuge we have in Him! And how this is, to cause His people to praise Him for those whose refuge is in the LORD. The chief end of man is to glorify God, and enjoy Him forever. Our refuge—God's glory.

And that's where we see the Psalm conclude, in verse 11;

"Be exalted above the heavens, O God:

Let Your glory be above the earth."

What a magnificent Psalm! —Is it not?

But if we leave it at this, merely a Psalm of David in his current circumstance and we glean encouragement from this event, then I think we miss the Psalm altogether—and we miss the very One to whom David is pointing us towards. This Psalm is a laser beam pointing us to the Person and work of the greater David, the son of David, the Anointed One, with a capital 'A' and a capital 'O'. It's pointing us to the Messiah.

Notice it is the Messiah who was 'sent from heaven to save us', (vs3), the One through whom God has accomplished "*all things for*" us, (vs2),—the One, (with a capital 'O'), who came and dwelt among His very own. But, 'His own received Him not'. (Jn 1:11). Rather they 'breathed fire' against Him; and reviled and scorned Him. This is the Anointed One who endured the full depths of the pit of God's wrath upon Himself. And on the cross He made full atonement for the sins of His people so that all who look to Him, by faith, would be fully justified before God Most High.

Indeed, the Psalm points us to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And indeed, God has sent forth His lovingkindness and His truth in the person and work of His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Is it not the Lord Jesus Christ who said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me." (Jn 14:6).

And God demonstrates that His own love, that lovingkindness, is fully demonstrated perfectly for us in this: "...that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom 5:8). The calamity and destruction of God's wrath has been taken away for all who look to Him and Him alone through faith—and it's by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And His name will be exalted among the nations, will it not? "Exalted above the heavens", and, 'His glory above the earth'. (vs11).

Friends, that's Philippians, chapter 2:6-11, is it not? The great pouring out of Christ, who came from heaven and took on flesh, God the Son became fully man—fully God and fully man, “He humbled Himself”, (Phl 2:8), as a servant of sinful men. And even further to endure the death, “even death on a cross”, (ibid), on behalf of sinful men.

And He is exalted in His effective work. That work is His exaltation. His exaltation goes further in His bodily resurrection where we see the acceptance of God Most High—God the Father accepted that work and resurrected His Son; and exalted Him even further in His ascension, where He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father. And He is given a name above every name; “...at the name of Jesus every knee will bow...and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...” to God's glory. (Phl 2:10-11). This is what the Psalm is ultimately pointing us toward. That's where we glean the meaning of Psalm 57.

We're about to enjoy Independence Day. The year 1776 was 98 years after John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*. And in 1776, John Newton wrote a preface that was widely distributed around the world. He concludes his preface to that book, that allegory, in this way, (and I think it's an appropriate way to conclude our time together), he writes,

"If you are living in sin, you are in the City of *Destruction*! O hear the warning voice! *Flee from the wrath to come*. Pray that the eyes of your mind may be opened and that you may see your danger, and gladly follow the shining light of the Word, till you enter, by Christ, the strait gate into the way of salvation. If death surprise you before you get onto this road, you are lost for ever.

“If you are indeed asking the way of Zion with your face thitherward, (*or your face toward the prize*), I bid you good speed. Behold, an open door is set before you, which none can shut. Yet prepare to endure hardship, for the way lies through many tribulations. There are hills and valleys to be passed, lions and dragons to be met with, but the Lord of the Hill will guide and guard His people. *Put on the full armor of God, fight the good fight of faith*. Beware the flatterer, beware the Enchanted Ground. See

the land of Beulah, (*that is, see the land of marriage*), yea, the City of Jerusalem itself is before you:

There Jesus the Forerunner waits

To welcome travellers home."

That is sovereign grace, is it not? We look to Him; we look to Christ; and we glory in Him. May God grant us the grace to look to Him as we go from here and rest in His refuge, in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

(Closing prayer) What can we say to You, O LORD, but 'Thank You', for Your amazing grace, Your sovereign grace, fully displayed upon the Person and work of Your Son, in whom alone is our refuge, in whom alone is our strength and our guide—our shelter. Thank You, LORD, for Your Son. Turn our hearts to You, O LORD.

We pray for our people here, as they go forth; grant them mercy, courage, and strength in all that they face in this life. Put the light of the dawn ahead of them in Your Son that our mind would be fixed and stayed upon Thee—and that is where true peace and rest is found, where we glory in You.

LORD, we also pray for our nation; for we are concerned when we see the direction in which we are now headed. We pray for revival and know that You are capable—You are God Most High, and the Spirit blows where you lead it. We pray that You would give blessing upon our nation; bend our knee to You in faith and repentance, and bless Your people.

And now as we go forth: The LORD bless you, and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

(End of Audio)