

From Problems to Praise

(Psalm 57)

I. Introduction

A. There are times in our lives when worship just comes easily

1. James says, “*Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.*” (**Jam 5:13**)
 - a. Praise comes easily after you get that big promotion or raise or both
 - 1) When the tests are negative and the cancer is in remission or tests
 - 2) Or when the tests are positive and you’re finally having a baby!
 - b. Worship is easy at Pepperdine with thousands led by Hallal or Zoe!
 - c. Worship is easy today with our Denbigh family and our praise team!
2. God is good! But sometimes we can’t see His goodness as clearly.
3. We don’t live only on the mountaintop; we all spend time in the valley
 - a. What if you lose your job and have few prospects for another?
 - b. What if the marriage for we desperately pray continues to unravel
 - c. What if the tests are positive and you are really sick?
 - d. What if the tests are negative and you are still not having a baby?
4. God is good all the time, but sometimes what we see is not so good.

B. How do we worship during those times when hearts are heavy?

1. Solomon suggests there are times songs aren’t appreciated (**Prov 25:20**)
²⁰*Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.*
 - a. William Congreve said, “*Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast*”
 - b. David played music to soothe the afflicted King Saul (**1 Sam 19:9**)
2. Can it be annoying when someone else seems so happy when you are not?
 - a. You are having a bad day and a co-worker is whistling? Or humming?
 - b. You come to church burdened and we sing those happy-clappy songs
 - c. What do you do? Pretend everything is OK? Zone out? Stay home?
3. The most common type of Psalms in the Psalter is the LAMENT.
 - a. Psalmist complains of some struggle or difficulty in their life (or nation).
 - b. Interesting factoid about the laments— they almost always end in praise.
 - c. Many of our praise songs come from the laments—look at **Psalm 57**

II. From Problems to Praise: The Text

- A. David begins with a cry for help to God in a difficult circumstance (**57:1-3**).
1. That is a common way for David to begin his psalms (**55:1, 56:1, 59:1**)
 - a. The difference in **Psalm 57** is David's confidence that God will save.
 - b. He will take refuge in God's shadow until the crisis is past (**v. 1**)
 - c. David is certain God will fulfill all of His purposes in David's life (**v. 2**)
 2. The superscription sets this Psalm in a cave as David is running (**1 Sam 24**)
 - a. Saul's men are all around, and David the warrior is cowering in a cave
 - b. Saul goes into the cave to relieve himself not knowing David is there
 - 1) For the second time, Saul accidentally places his life in David's hand
 - 2) For the second time, David refuses to lift his hand against God's king
 - c. David is determined to entrust himself to God alone (**1 Sam 24:12-13**)
 3. So David begins this psalm by expressing certainly that God is in control
- B. But is he that certain? David also clearly sees his enemies (**Psa 57:4-6**)
1. David's real faith does mean that he doesn't feel real dread, despair or fear
 - a. When you go through hard times, it's hard to focus on anything else
 - b. **Note:** His cries for help (**vs 4, 6**) are bookends if a cry of worship (**v 5**)
 - 1) Why do some people whistle in the dark? Because they are unafraid?
 - 2) Just the opposite—you whistle in dark to help dissipate fear
 - c. That's what David is doing here—he worships because of the darkness.
 - d. In worship, David reminds himself of who is on the throne.
 2. Worship is easy when you feel both safe and saved—God is good to me.
 - a. But worship may be more important when you don't feel so safe!
 - b. It is in the struggles and darkness of life that you most need to see God!
 - 1) David needs to be reminded that God is on His sovereign throne.
 - 2) The way that he does that is to place God on throne in worship.
 - c. When better to worship than when you need God to rule
 3. So amid the complaint, David breaks out in raucous praise (**Psa 57:7-11**)
 - a. Not raucous—he's hiding in a cave! (*Likely writes this later looking back*)
 - b. In the darkness and danger of that cave, David's hearts soars to God!
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III. From Problems To Praise: Today

- A. I'm often surprised by how differently we respond to worship
1. We all sing the same songs, pray same prayers and hear the same sermon, and yet one worshipper leaves uplifted while another is unmoved.
 - a. Some of that may be individual preference (*sing my favorite song*)
 - b. Or the sermon or worship theme connects with my need or life situation
 - c. Or maybe our expectation—did we expect to fulfill a duty or meet God
 2. But some of this has to do with what we bring with us to church.
 - a. An old prayer expression asks that we, “*Lay aside all our worldly thoughts and the concerns of this world.*” Can we really do that?
 - 1) Must someone who is hurting stop hurting before they can worship?
 - 2) Forget your lost job, sickness or failing marriage—time to worship!
 - b. Just the opposite— we humble ourselves & give it to God (**1 Pet 5:7**)
⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.
- B. David certainly does not set aside his problems so he properly praise God.
1. Rather, it is David's problems that set stage for his worship.
 - a. Real struggles are not denied or set aside so that he can worship properly.
 - b. It is precisely David's struggle that drives him to God and to worship!
 2. For David, worship is not some sanitized religious ceremony.
 - a. David saw worship as coming into the presence of God
 - 1) Sometimes worship was raucous celebration as he danced before ark.
 - 2) Sometimes it was fear and distress in a cave in the Desert of En Gedi
 - 3) Most of the time in David's life, worship was someplace in between
 - b. But both the joy of victory and the despair of heartache led to worship.
 3. God is not just Lord over our “decently and in order” worship service
 - a. He is the God of real life served by people in real life
 - b. Further we push worship away from our struggles, the less it impact us
 - c. Job faced unbelievable and overwhelming loss, pain and heartache
 - 1) He worships with tears in eyes and lump in his throat (**Job 1:21**)
 - 2) So as we struggle, we say, “Blessed be your name...” (**Sing Song**)

IV. Conclusion

- A. Friend once emailed me a list of Hallmark moment that will never be
1. These are Hallmark cards we'll never see... at least, we hope not
 - *"Looking back on our years together, I can't help but wonder. What was I thinking?"*
 - *"I'm so miserable without you... It's almost like you're here."*
 - *"You are such a friend that if we were on a sinking ship with only one life vest... I'd miss you heaps and think of you often."*
 2. Definitely not *"When you care enough to send the very best"* sentiments.
 - a. Scarier sentiment—what if your beloved knew everything you thought?
 - 1) Lynn thinks she knows what I'm thinking... and she often does.
 - 2) What if spouse did always know exactly what you were thinking?
 - b. Would that be a good thing for a relationship? Is that a little daunting?
- B. That's our relationship with God, isn't it? (**Psa 139:1-4**)
1. David is a little overwhelmed by the idea that God knows everything!
 - a. There is no way to hide; there is nowhere to go to get away from God
 - b. David feels hemmed in—God is always in front and back! (**Psa 139:5-6**)
 - c. If God is everywhere you can go, then how can you hide? (**Psa 139:7-10**)
 2. Ultimately, David doesn't want to hide—he wants God to make it right.
 - a. So what David does so often in His psalms—He complains to God!
 - b. What does David do when frustrated and frightened? He laments
 - c. God already knows how he feels—so why not just honestly tell Him?
 3. To complain to the One on the throne reminds us He's on the throne!
- C. Faith does not mean we don't hurt or get frustrated or feel like giving up.
1. Faith means that we take all of that to God—to complain to God is faithful!
 - a. As we do that, God somehow takes our struggles and transforms them
 - b. The protest becomes praise—lament is transformed to worship!
 2. We are not to deny our burdens or lay aside our doubts in order to worship.
 - a. Sure, sometimes worship is gratitude for everything that is right in life.
 - b. Sometimes it is a desperate faith in One who can make everything right!
 3. The Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.