

Psalm 57

Morning Prayer Thursday Week 1
Prayer during the day Thursday Week 2

The psalmist is taking refuge in God's presence (verse 1) till a calamity passes. It seems he is being falsely accused (verse 4). But he is at peace, awaiting the dawn, when the judgment will take place, trusting that God's faithful covenant love will dispel the darkness with the rising sun (see refrain verses 5 and 11). Compare the following:

There will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

– Isaiah 9:1 (quoted in Matthew 4:15)

O send forth your light and your truth; let these be my guide.

– Psalm 43:3

Justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us; we wait for light, and lo! there is darkness; and for brightness, but we walk in gloom.

– Isaiah 59:9

Note that the beautifully confident conclusion (verses 7 to 11, repeated in Psalm 108:1-5) comes out of a lot of suffering, and profound trust in the 'kindness and faithfulness' of YHWH (verses 3 and 10).

Saint Augustine sees this psalm as celebrating the passion of Jesus. In his commentary on verse seven, he speaks of Jesus' heart being ready for suffering (PL 36,671). We think of the innocent Jesus trusting in God and confident in the resurrection.

The title reads: 'To the leader: Do not Destroy. Of David. A Miktam*, when he fled from Saul, in the cave. 'Do not Destroy' would appear to be the title of the song which supplied the tune for the psalm. The scene to which the title refers is found in 1Samuel 23:4ff.

¹Be gracious* to me, O God, be gracious to me, for in you my entire being* takes refuge; in the shade of your wings I take refuge, until the destructive storms pass by.

²I cry to God Most High, to God who fulfils for me his loving designs.

³He sends from heaven to save* me, frustrating the desires of those who are hostile to me.

[Selah*]

God sends forth his kindness* and his faithfulness.

'My entire being' translates the Hebrew *nepeš*. See the article 'Being' in the Introduction. Compare the following:

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of YHWH never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning: great is your faithfulness. 'YHWH is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him.' YHWH is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of YHWH.

– Lamentation 3:21-26

If we are faithless he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

– 2Timothy 2:13

If the psalmist is to find rest it will have to be through God's action, for he is surrounded by violence.

The refrain (verse five) is repeated in verse eleven.

His accusers will be caught like animals in the trap they have set for him. 'My whole being' translates the Hebrew *nepeš* (see verse one). He is already confident that God has heard his cry.

His unflinching heart is the fruit of his trust. He remains vigilant. Rather than await the dawn, he hurries it on with his expectant hope.

Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of
YHWH! ... Rouse yourself, rouse yourself!
Stand up, O Jerusalem!

– Isaiah 51:9,17

He stirs himself. It is not God who needs awakening, it is our own hearts.

Verse nine is found also in Psalm 108:3, except that Psalm 108 has YHWH not 'Lord' (^a*dōnāy*).

God's faithful covenant love lights up the heavens like the first rays of the rising sun.

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn
from on high will break upon us.

– Luke 1:78

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the
glory of YHWH has risen upon you.

– Isaiah 60:1

The ultimate dawn is when we share in Jesus' risen life. Since the way passes through death we are invited to contemplate the pierced heart of Jesus on the cross.

When you have lifted up the Son of Man,
then you will realise that I am he.

– John 8:28

**⁴I have to lie down among lions
that greedily devour human prey;
their teeth are spears and arrows,
their tongue a sharpened sword.**

**⁵Rise up, O God, above the heavens.
Let your glory* fill the earth.**

**⁶They set a net for my steps; my
whole being* was bowed down.**

**They dug a pit in my path, but
they have fallen into it them-
selves.**

[Selah*]

**⁷My heart* is steadfast, O God,
my heart* is steadfast.**

I will sing and make melody.

**⁸Awake, my soul! Awake, O harp
and lyre! I will awake the dawn.**

**⁹I will give thanks to you, O Lord,
among the peoples; I will sing
praises to you among the nations.**

**¹⁰For your kindness* is as high
as the heavens; your faithfulness
extends to the clouds.**

**¹¹Rise up, O God, above the heavens.
Let your glory* fill the earth.**