

## PSALM FIFTY-SIX AND FIFTY-SEVEN

(vs. 8). This verse offers tremendous insight into the nature of God. Discuss.

5. Supposing God does *not* deliver us from our enemies? Does this mean our enemies are in the right? That we are wrong? That there is no God? Discuss.

## PSALM 57

### DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Reminiscence of David's Early Troubles when Pursued by Saul,  
Subsequently Adapted to Brighter Times.

### ANALYSIS

Stanza I, vers. 1-5, Prayer for Deliverance from Outward Trouble, marked by Resignation during its Continuance. Stanza II, vers. 6-11, Further Reference to the Trouble speedily gives place to Joyful Praise. A *Refrain*, vers. 5, 11, of Comprehensive Beauty Lights up the Whole Psalm.

(Lm.) By David—A Tablet—

When he fled from the face of Saul into a cave.

- 1 Be gracious unto me O God be gracious unto me,  
for in thee hath my soul taken refuge:  
yea in the shadow of thy wings do I take refuge,  
until the storm of ruin shall pass.
- 2 I will cry unto God Most High—  
unto GOD who is carrying through my cause for me.
- 3 He will send out of the heavens to save me,  
he hath given to reproach<sup>1</sup> one who would trample upon me.  
God will send forth his kindness and his truth.
- 4 My soul is in the midst of lions,  
I must lie down amidst such as consume the sons of men:  
their teeth are spears and arrows,  
and their tongue is a sharp sword.
- 5 Be exalted above the heavens O God!  
above all the earth be thy glory!
- 6 A net made they ready for my steps  
bowed down was my soul:

1. So Sep.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

- They digged before me a pit,  
they fell into the midst thereof.
- 7 Steadfast is my heart O God, steadfast is my heart:  
I would fain sing and would play!
- 8 Oh awake my glory! oh awake lute and lyre!  
I would fain waken the dawn!
- 9 I will thank thee among the peoples Sovereign Lord,  
I will celebrate thee in psalm<sup>1</sup> among the races of men;
- 10 For great unto the heavens is thy kindness,  
and unto the skies<sup>2</sup> thy truth.  
Be exalted above the heavens O God!
- 11 above all the earth be thy glory!

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician. (CMm.) "Do not destroy."

## PARAPHRASE

### PSALM 57

O God, have pity, for I am trusting You! I will hide beneath the shadow of Your wings until this storm is past.

2 I will cry to the God of heaven who does such wonders for me.

3 He will send down help from heaven to save me, because of His love and His faithfulness. He will rescue me from these liars who are so intent upon destroying me.

4 I am surrounded by fierce lions—hotheads whose teeth are sharp as spears and arrows. Their tongues are like swords.

5 Lord, be exalted above the highest heavens! Show Your glory high above the earth.

6 My enemies have set a trap for me. Frantic fear grips me. They have dug a pitfall in my path. But look! They themselves have fallen into it!

7 O God, my heart is quiet and confident. No wonder I can sing Your praises!

8 Rouse yourself, my soul! Arise, O harp and lyre! Let us greet the dawn with song!

9 I will thank You publicly throughout the land. I will sing Your praises among the nations.

10 Your kindness and love are as vast as the heavens. Your faithfulness is higher than the skies.

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1. Or: "make melody unto thee."

2. Or: "fleecy clouds."

## PSALM FIFTY-SEVEN

11 Yes, be exalted, O God, above the heavens. May Your glory shine throughout the earth.

### EXPOSITION

It is with confidence submitted that the early portion of this psalm abundantly sustains its ascription *To David*. The latter part was probably added at a later period: hence its duplicate appearance as the early portion of Ps. 108,—a conclusion confirmed by the unshadowed brightness of vers. 7-10. The singular reappearance of trouble in ver. 6, after the first occurrence of the joyful refrain in ver. 5, raises some doubt as to the preservation of this part of the psalm. But, for the moment, it seems fitting to give ourselves up to the undisturbed persuasion that in vers. 1-4, not excluding ver. 6, we have a genuine Davidic fragment. It is just like David; and, by several delicate strokes, exactly reflects the peculiar position he occupied in those early days when he was harassed by Saul. He is not in a fighting mood; but is hunted, seeks refuge, is prepared to wait for deliverance. His cause is in God's hands, who (ver. 2) will *carry through his cause for him*: an expectation which finds fitting use for the unusual word *gmr*, which has given the critics trouble—it is exactly the happy word. Then, too, ver. 3 vividly reminds us of Ps. 18:16; and the allusion to Saul himself in ver. 3b is so unmistakable, and yet so delicate, as to sustain the conviction that it was conceived just to suit such a reference; 3c being almost as vivid an assurance that the breastplate of the high-priest would not fail him (Cp. I Sam. 23:9-12); while the *spears* and *tongues* of Saul's warriors, in the midst of which he now was, formed a closely compacted series of dangers, which David was the last man to underrate. Even the awkwardly recurring danger of ver. 6 is too apt not to have originally belonged to the Davidic representation. Although it may, plausibly, be alleged that this part of the psalm fitted the troublous days before Nehemiah's arrival at Jerusalem, yet that does not stop us from saying that here, in David's own unique situation and experience, we discover the actual genesis of the words. Their subsequent adaptation to a different set of circumstances, bearing some resemblance to the original, was a comparatively easy matter.

## STUDIES IN PSALMS

With respect to the latter half of the psalm—namely, the joyful portion of it,—it is quite natural to conclude it to have been of later origin than the former half. This, however, is no reason why David himself should not have written it, after his position was secured. Or Hezekiah may have penned it. Even Isaiah may have supplied it. It is of small importance; and the evidence is perhaps too scanty to warrant a conclusion. This may be said: That ver. 9 reminds us of 18:49 and vers. 5 and 11 are similar to vers. 1 and 9 of Ps. 8. We may be sure that in the earlier days of David's reign over all Israel, a great joy filled his heart; and congenial influences would predispose him to just such an outburst of song as here delights us: when the sweet singer would anticipate the *dawn*, *awaken* it with song to the accompaniment of *lute* or *lyre*, give expression to his messianic hopes for the *nations* of the earth, and mount to the *skies* in his grateful recognition of the *kindness* and *faithfulness* of his God.

With all those memories and hopes of his noble ancestor to inspire him in the dark days of Sennecherib's invasion, HEZEKIAH could most appropriately commit this psalm to his *Chief Musician* with the injunction to associate it with the sentiment *Do not destroy*.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The subjective element is such a strong factor in the thought that only half of this psalm belongs to the pen of David. Discuss the reason for the use of the subjective element.
2. Read these words from Spurgeon concerning this psalm: "When he fled from Saul in a cave. This is a song from the bowels of the earth, and, like Jonah's prayer from the bottom of the sea, it has a taste of the place. The poet is in the shadow of the cave at first, but he comes to the cavern's mouth at last, and sings in the sweet fresh air, with his eye on the heavens, watching joyously the clouds floating therein". How could two men read the same psalm and come to so wide a difference in understanding? Discuss.
3. This is one of the "golden psalms"—the title also contains the admonition: "destroy not".—What golden truth can you discover in this psalm? (As an example consider the twenty-one times God is referred to in the eleven verses of this psalm.) If this psalm was destroyed what would we lose? Be specific.