

Take Cover

Psalm 57 March 30, 2025

Certain songs take on new life when another artist covers them. Aretha Franklin's *Respect*. Johnny Cash's *Hurt*. Jimi Hendrix's *All Along The Watchtower*. Whitney Houston's *I Will Always Love You*. Ray Charles' *Georgia On My Mind*. All covers.

Psalm 57 is a cover in more ways than one. In the superscript above verse 1, we read:

Psalm 57:Superscript - For the choir director: "Do Not Destroy." A *Miktam* of David. When he fled before Saul into the cave.

Do Not Destroy was probably a known tune at the time.¹ Four Psalms are set to this melody: 57, 58, 59, and 75. I guess it was the *Ba Ba Black Sheep/Twinkle Twinkle Little Star/ABCs* of it's generation.

We're also told that this is one of David's *Miktam* songs. Just like a band may have a power ballad, an anthem, a love song, and a deep cut all on the same album, there are different *styles* of Psalms.

There are six Psalms labeled as *Miktams* - all written by David - and linguists believe it can mean "a song of covering."² Scholars also suggest that it was a type of song that was particularly precious.³

In Psalm 57, David finds himself in very serious trouble. His life is threatened by Saul, and he has fled to a cave. *From* the cave he authors this prayer to the Lord, trusting not in the limestone that's concealing him for the time being, but in the Solid Rock on which David has anchored his life.

Psalm 57:1 - ¹Be gracious to me, God, be gracious to me, for I take refuge in you. I will seek refuge in the shadow of your wings until danger passes.

David hid from Saul in a cave twice. Strategically speaking, they were *great* hiding places. Strong. Secluded. Secure. That is, unless your enemy *also* comes in the cave! That's exactly what happened in David's case in 1 Samuel 24. Things worked out - *thanks to God's providence* - but it illustrates a very important truth for us when we find ourselves in a time of trouble: The cave isn't going to *solve* the problem. The cave might be able to conceal you for a time, but it can't ultimately deliver you.

David knew the cave wasn't his destination - it was a layover. Deliverance must come from the Lord. The Lord was his true refuge. It wasn't just a naive hope - his faith was anchored in God's word and track-record. As David considered this and wrote Psalm 57, it seems he had Moses' song in mind.

¹ Derek Kidner *Psalms 1-72*

² *Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament*

³ James Smith *The Wisdom Literature And Psalms*

Deuteronomy 32:4, 11 - ⁴The Rock—his work is perfect; all his ways are just. A faithful God, without bias, he is righteous and true...¹¹ He watches over his nest like an eagle and hovers over his young; he spreads his wings, catches him, and carries him on his feathers.

David doesn't just *hope* that God will help him. He *believes* God is Who He says He is. David roots his life choices and his mental perspective on what has been revealed about God in Scripture.

Yahweh as Refuge is the familiar melody of David's life. Our English versions hide how David's past experience with God assured his future hope. What he said was: "In You has my soul *found* refuge; and in the shadow of Your wings *will I* find refuge."⁴

Psalm 57:2 - ²I call to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.

How many people have plans for your life? *You* have plans. Your parents have plans for you. Some of you have friends that have plans to set you up with someone. The Devil has plans for you.

More important than any of the plans anyone has for your life are the purposes God Most High has for you. A life full of good, full of grace, full of growth. A life He describes as "more abundantly."⁵ Do you know what God's purposes for *you* are?

If you surrender your life to this Most High God, your Creator, your Savior, the One Person in the universe Who loves you more than anyone else, then He *will* fulfill His plans for you.

"Fulfill" means to complete or finish. That sends us to Philippians 1 where Paul said, "I'm sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."⁶

But, it's interesting: This Hebrew word for "fulfill" (or your version might say "performs"), when used negatively refers to the abrupt, seemingly permanent termination of that which previously existed.⁷ So, as we walk with God, He not only absolutely will complete the work that He began in us, but at the same time, the old person that we used to be, with all our weakness and all our failure and all our wretchedness will also be wiped away. Replaced with a transformed heart, a transformed mind, a sanctified future, secured and ensured by the power and the promise and the purposes of God.

Psalm 57:3 - ³He reaches down from heaven and saves me, challenging the one who tramples me...God sends his faithful love and truth.

When a fugitive is being chased, we say they're "run to ground." David was quite literally run to ground. In fact, he was *below* ground, deep in a cave. And yet, he will *keep* speaking of the hope of heaven. The power of heaven. Heaven is a focal point for him in this crisis and throughout the song.

⁴ J.J. Stewart Perowne *Commentary On The Psalms*

⁵ John 10:10

⁶ Philippians 1:6

⁷ TWOT

The Bible explains that the eternal God has decided to *reach down* from His throne in heaven so that He can rescue people on earth. And, unlike Zeus or Odin or other man-made gods, He doesn't just "reach down" with lightning bolts. No, He *came down Himself*, put on flesh, died in our place, and rose again so we could be made right with Him and dwell with Him *in* heaven forever.

David knew that his God was a Deliverer - One Who cares about the suffering and struggles and hard times His people endure. One Who gives *real* help to us in our time of need. And, as David points out, the specific help the Lord sent in this situation was: *Faithful love and truth*.

"I don't know God...Saul and his army are *right outside* this cave...*how about a lightning bolt after all?* Send a Samson or something!" But, no - the Lord would save with *hesed* love and truth.

It's hard for us to really believe that the love of God will make the difference in some troubles, isn't it? We're convinced we need some other strength, some other supply, something more substantial. But there is *nothing* more powerful or more effective than the love of God and the truth of God.

With His truth, He sets us free and with His love He covers us, quiets us, and strengthens us.

Psalm 57:4 - ⁴I am surrounded by lions; I lie down among devouring lions—people whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.

His enemies used their words to destroy - teeth like spears and arrows, tongues like swords. David was a fierce warrior, but he was also the Sweet Psalmist of Israel. He used *his* words for prayer, for worship, for the spreading of the good news about God. I often forget that David was, in fact, one of the Old Testament prophets. In that first sermon of the book of Acts, Peter said this about David:

Acts 2:30-31a - ³⁰Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn an oath to him to seat one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹Seeing what was to come, he spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah...

David talked to people about the resurrection! His tongue was an instrument of worship, not a weapon of war. And because he inclined his heart and his mind to the Lord, filling his thoughts with the truth of God's character and purposes, he found *rest*, even in these terrible circumstances.

"I lie down among devouring lions." That's not something we would normally do. But it's a common behavior of Believers who trust the Lord. Instead of fight-or-flight it's nighty-night. Daniel in the lion's den. Peter, on the night before he is to be beheaded, chained between two soldiers, slept soundly - his soul at rest because he knew that deliverance was coming. Maybe not *physical* deliverance, but absolutely, without a doubt, ultimate, eternal deliverance is ours. It's on the way.

David spent his night in this cave writing a song. Not sharpening a sword. Not drilling with his soldiers. He spent it in worship, in prayer, in contemplation of God's power and goodness.

Psalm 57:5 - ⁵God, be exalted above the heavens; let your glory be over the whole earth.

The term “be exalted” has been translated as, “Loom over the heavens and over the whole earth.”⁸ Saul the maniac king loomed large in David’s mind. His threats caused David so much anxiety that, at some points, David reacted with terrible decisions. But at *this* moment, in *this* cave, David reminded himself of what was *true*. It was the Lord Who loomed largest: A God Who cannot be defeated. A God Who cannot be outsmarted. A God Who cannot be thwarted or outdone. If *that* is Who my God is, if an unstoppable God has made me His friend and taken responsibility for my life, then I can stop worrying about my tomorrow and instead concern myself with His glory.

Psalm 57:6 - ⁶They prepared a net for my steps; I was despondent. They dug a pit ahead of me, but they fell into it! *Selah*

Just like that everything changed. In the cave at En-Gedi, David and his men were hiding, hoping to survive. Saul came in to relieve himself and suddenly *he* was at *David’s* mercy.

Saul fell into his own pit. The hunter became the hunted. Not by David’s cunning, but by God’s compassion. A compassion that providentially *works* on behalf of His people.

Here in verse 6, David said, “I was *despondent*.” He was terribly low, like an enemy pressed his neck into the ground.⁹ But in that darkness, David received hope. Not just in feelings, but in reality. His worry gave way to worship. As he exercised his faith in Who God is, David was brought *out* of his despondency and into thanksgiving and excitement and confidence.

Psalm 57:7 - ⁷My heart is confident, God, my heart is confident. I will sing; I will sing praises.

This is not what you would expect from a man running for his life. Instead of whimpers, there was worship. How? While the enemies was setting a trap, David was setting his heart on truth.¹⁰

We *can* take our thoughts captive. It can be incredibly difficult but we *can* do it and we *must* do it if we want to obey Christ and walk with Him and enjoy the transforming work He wants to accomplish in our lives. David was made a *singing* strategy, not just a scrambling strategy.

Psalm 57:8 - ⁸Wake up, my soul! Wake up, harp and lyre! I will wake up the dawn.

John Goldingay writes, “We can stir up our inner beings...to the end that they come alive, like a parent waking a child.”¹¹ Being a Christian doesn’t mean you always *feel* like things are great. It doesn’t mean you always *feel* like you’re at rest or everything is working out the way you wanted. The world is full of trouble. We have enemies. Not flesh and blood, but evil, cosmic powers of

⁸ Robert Alter *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation With Commentary*

⁹ Alter

¹⁰ John Goldingay *Psalms, Volume 2: Psalms 42-89*

¹¹ *ibid.*

darkness.¹² We might *feel* discouragement, anxiety, fear, despondency, and many other painful emotions. But what does the Bible reveal to be true about our lives? About our futures? About God's faithfulness? Psalm 55 says plainly: "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He *will* sustain you."

Sometimes, we need to wake up our souls. Wake them up to pray. Wake them up to worship. Wake them up to truly believe what we say we believe - to believe in *action* and *practice*.

And David wanted others to join him in this wakefulness. He talks about harp *and* lyre. This song is sent to the whole choir. Multiple people on multiple instruments. He wants *all* the people to come together to rest in the Lord, to exalt the Lord, to be invigorated through worship as they exercise their faith. It was *not* time to whimper, but to *worship*.

Psalm 57:9 - ⁹I will praise you, Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations.

David hoped not only all Israel would sing it, but eventually even *Gentile* nations, too. That people who were *currently* his enemies would eventually become part of God's family of faith.

Psalm 57:10 - ¹⁰For your faithful love is as high as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches the clouds.

The God of the Bible is faithful at *every* level. Faithful to His plans, faithful to His creation, faithful to *you*. But He works not only to free you - to unshackle you from your sin - but also to *lead* you. In Psalm 43, the prayer to God is, "Send Your light and Your truth and let them lead me, let them bring me to Your holy mountain, Your dwelling place, Your altar." God is faithful to love you, faithful to help you, and faithful to *lead* you day by day.

Psalm 57:11 - ¹¹God, be exalted above the heavens; let your glory be over the whole earth.

David repeats verse 5. No matter what was going on, his focus was that God's glory be poured out all over the world - on earth as it is in heaven. He closes the song by reminding us *again* that God has eternal, cosmic plans that He *will* accomplish. That *heaven* be more in view than the cave.

Since 1905, Sherwin-Williams has had an iconic logo. It's a globe, and above it is a gallon of blood-red paint pouring out all over it with the words "Cover The Earth." *That's* their mission. Cover everything with *their* paint.

In the midst of terrible circumstances, David chose to fill his mind with the truth of God's power, His purpose, His compassion, and His faithfulness. He prophetically looked to that time when God's glory *will* cover the whole earth. And then David decided to react and behave as if it was not only *going* to be true one day, but as though it was being carried out through *his* life - which it was!

¹² Ephesians 6:12

David was in a *great* spiritual headspace as he wrote Psalm 57. But how quickly our minds can change. Awhile after the famous scene in the cave at En-Gedi, David would change his tune. He said, "One of these days, I'll be swept away by Saul."¹³ And he runs off to hide among the Philistines. It's one of the worst chapters of David's life and almost ends in total disaster.

He needed to cover this song again. To sing it in his own heart and to those around Him. That God is *faithful*. That God's compassionate love is on the move. That God fulfills His purposes. That In Him our souls *have found* refuge; and in the shadow of His wings *we will* find refuge.

It's a song we should cover in our own lives. These precious truths aren't meant to just make us feel better, but to live with hope, with peace in our hearts, with perspective on our circumstances, with minds at rest as we walk with God, Who *is* fulfilling all His purpose for us.

Scholars also think that a *miktam* might refer to a song engraved on a stone slab with gold letters. And so, let's certify this song as gold in our lives. A familiar and beloved melody of confidence and praise in the Most High God, Who is our Rock, Who is with us, working to fulfill all His purpose in us. Our part is to believe, to receive from Him, and to respond in faith and worship.

¹³ 1 Samuel 27:1