

Mother Love is God Love

Psalm 57:1-11

preached @ Hawkwood Baptist Church
by Shafer Parker, Jr.
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Psalm 57

For the choir director: "Do Not Destroy." A Davidic Miktam. When he fled before Saul into the cave.

1 Be 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. 2 I call to God Most High, to God who fulfills His purpose for me. 3 He reaches down from heaven and saves me, challenging the one who tramples me. God sends His faithful love and truth. 4 I am surrounded by lions; I lie down with those who devour men. Their teeth are spears and arrows; their tongues are sharp swords. 5 God, be exalted above the heavens; let Your glory be over the whole earth. 6 They prepared a net for my steps; I was despondent. They dug a pit ahead of me, but they fell into it!

7 My heart is confident, God, my heart is confident. I will sing; I will sing praises. 8 Wake up, my soul! Wake up, harp and lyre! I will wake up the dawn. 9 I will praise You, Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to You among the nations. 10 For Your faithful love is as high as the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches the clouds. 11 God, be exalted above the heavens; let Your glory be over the whole earth.

The cave

It is important to understand that the headings in the Psalms are part of the original text. These headings are as old as the Bible and they are there to help us understand what the psalm is about.

This would be the cave mentioned in I Sam. 24, and it can be visited to this day. It is found on a mountain side high above the western shore of the Dead Sea. David was hiding from King Saul who wanted to kill him to prevent him from becoming king. Sure David had 600 men with him, but Saul had 3,000. Now ordinarily you wouldn't think that David would be afraid. He was a mighty warrior who trusted in God and never measured the odds. You could even say that the man who killed Goliath as a teenager was a man without fear, and it had not been so very long before this moment that the women of Jerusalem were singing, "Saul has slain his thousands, but David has slain his ten thousands."

But in his war with Saul David faced an unusual problem. He knew that Saul was the king of Israel, anointed by God. And even though God had assured David that he would someday be king, he had made up his mind that he would not rebel against the current king. He had learned the lesson that *"those who would defend authority against rebellion must not themselves rebel"*, and therefore he would not kill King Saul under any circumstances. If it came down to it, he would not even defend himself against the King. Now can you see why David felt himself in need of God's protection?

Thus we hear David's cry, "Be gracious to me, God, be gracious to me, for I take refuge in You." David is saying, "This cave is not my security. God alone is my safety. God alone must be my refuge." God help us to know that truth today as well as David knew it then.

But then David says something that should surprise us. "I will seek refuge in the shadow of Your wings until danger passes." Why is that surprising? Well think of this. God's inspired word always uses masculine pronouns when talking about our Creator. Two persons of the Trinity are specifically described as masculine: God the Father and God the Son and even the Holy Spirit is referenced with masculine pronouns in Scripture. Yet here David uses an image that is specifically related to mother birds, and therefore to motherhood.

It is the mother hen who gathers her chicks under her wings in time of danger. Mr. Rooster may strut around the barnyard like he owns the place, but when danger comes he legs it for the chicken coop and leaves the mother bird to gather her young underneath her wings and defend them against the foe, no matter how overwhelming.

Don't you think it kind of wonderful that when mighty warrior David was faced with an unsolvable dilemma he ran to God exactly like a child would run to its mother. When he felt most helpless he expected from God a mother's love and protection. And that's exactly what he got because all love comes from God, mother love as well as father love. Actually, it is amazing how often the Bible uses feminine imagery to describe God's love for us.

- Isaiah 49:15 says that just as a woman would never forget her nursing child, God will not forget his children.
- In Isaiah 66:13 we read that God comforts his people like a mother comforts her child.
- Deut. 32:11 says God watches over His people like a mother eagle hovering over her young.
- In another place God experiences the fury of a mother bear robbed of her cubs (Hosea 13:8)
- Three times (Ps. 22:9-10; Ps. 71:6; and Isa. 66:9) God compares Himself to a midwife caring for the infant she has just delivered.
- And in the New Testament Jesus longed to gather the people of Jerusalem, like a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings (Luke 13:34)
- We haven't even mentioned that besides Ps. 57, there are eight other times in Scripture when God is asked to cover his people with His wings. (Ruth 2:12; Ps. 17:7-8; Ps. 36:7; Ps. 61:4; 63:7; Ps. 91:1, 4; Luke 13:34)

I say again that mother love is God love. But we haven't even touched on the greatest proof that God's love for His people is both masculine and feminine. That proof is found in Genesis 1.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth." Genesis 1:27 So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; *He created them male and female.*

There is no doubt that in His primary relationship with humankind God is like a father. And in relating to His special called out people, the church, Christ is the husband and collectively we are the bride. But it is fascinating to me that according to Genesis God is fully imaged in our race only when He has created us both male *and* female.

Somewhere Henry Morris has argued for the existence of an intelligent Creator on the basis that an effect cannot be greater than its cause. For example, a baseball pitcher cannot move his arm at thirty miles per hour and expect the ball to cross the plate at 100 miles per hour.

Here's how this relates to creation . . .

- Impersonal forces cannot create persons. Whatever caused us to be persons must Himself be an even greater person.
- Nor can love be derived from mere chemical and electrical reactions. The source of all love in the world must be the world's greatest lover.
- Life cannot come from death or from dead things. If there is life on earth then it was put here by Someone Who is alive!
- Nor can intelligence, ethics or morality arise from the accidental collisions of various atoms and molecules. Only the greatest mind and the purest heart could give rise to the universal knowledge of right and wrong.

Therefore . . .

- When we discover that father love and mother love combine to make the human race we must conclude that both kinds of love are found within our creator.

What this means

- First of all it means that whatever the world may say about male and female, we accept the description of the human race as given in the Bible and we reject all other descriptions of human kind as false. God has made us what we are, male and female, and that means we reflect the image of God only when we recognize and honour the uniqueness and special contributions made by both sexes.
- We honour mothers as mothers, not as temporary baby incubators. And when we do that we are honouring God! We glory in the unique contributions women and mothers bring, as women and mothers, to the family, the community and the race.
- We believe that if women are designed with heightened capacity for nurture, for care and for relational tenderness it is because God wants all His children to know that His capacity for nurture, care and relational tenderness is even greater.
- Like David, each of us needs to know that when danger threatens, we can run to God for shelter. And when we do, we will find that God receives His children like a mother. That is, it doesn't matter what we've done or haven't done; when we run to Him, He receives us. More than that, He defends us with the fierceness and protective love of a mother hen—or a mother bear, depending on what is appropriate.

The Lord's Supper

- We've already been reminded that Jesus compared His love for Israel to that of a mother hen, loving and protecting her chicks. But let me remind you of this; a hen gathers her

chicks only when they are threatened by an enemy.

- What enemy, then, was Jesus thinking of when He longed to gather His people under His wings? He was thinking of judgment. He was thinking of the death that all sins deserve. He longed to protect his children from death and judgment!
- But when we would not run to him of our own accord and burrow beneath His wings to hide ourselves from our just punishment, Jesus did something even greater. If we would not let Him cover us with His wings, He willingly covered us with His own blood.

Ps. 32:1 How joyful is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! 2 How joyful is the man the Lord does not charge with sin and in whose spirit is no deceit!