I Will Awaken the Dawn

Psalm 57:1-11

Key Verse: 57:8 “Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn.”

There is no one like David who lived a dramatic life in the Bible. He was a shepherd boy from Bethlehem, a smallest town in Israel, a smallest country in the world. He volunteered for the battle against the Philistine and became a national hero after knocking down Goliath, the giant. He became an Israel idol at the age of 17. Then he was picked up to work in the king’s palace and became a son-in-law of the king Saul. His life seemed to go perfect. But he was hated by the king Saul because of his jealousy, and David became a fugitive. Suddenly his life was changed from a national hero to the most wanted man in Israel. After King Saul died, David became the king of Israel. God blessed his life until his kingdom became the most powerful kingdom in the history of Israel. But he did not keep God’s blessing well. He sinned against God with adultery and murder. God forgave his sin, but David had to pay the price for his sin. There was a prince massacre in his palace. His sons killed each other to become a king after him. Absalom, one of his sons, tried to kill David his father, and David became a fugitive again escaping from his own son. He escaped even to the camp of his enemy and acted as if he became a mad man. Even though he restored his kingship, he lost his lovely son Absalom by the hand of his loyal general Joab.

Today’s psalm was written by David when he was chased by King Saul and escaped in the cave of Adullam. This story is written in 1 Samuel 22:1-2 briefly. Let’s study how David overcame the storms of life and how did God help David in this difficult time.

First, Have mercy on me, God! (Take refuge in the shadow of God’s wings) (1-4) Look at verse 1. “***Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.***” David sought God’s mercy in the time of crisis. When he wrote this psalm, he was in the cave escaping from King Saul. Who was Saul? Saul was the king of Israel and his father-in-law. Saul really loved David because David rescued his country from the hand of Philistine. David was humble and charming. David was a poet and good musician, too. He played harp for King Saul at his palace. So, Saul gave David his daughter Michal and made David his son-in-law.(1 Sa 18:27) But, after David became a war hero, Saul’s attitude toward him was changed. Women in Israel praised David and his success. “*Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands*.” (1 Sa 18:7) Saul was afraid of David because he saw that God was with him. Saul was also afraid that David might take his kingship. Above all, Saul could not sleep whenever he suffered from jealousy. Proverbs 17:22 says, “*A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.*” Fear and jealousy of Saul dried up his bones day after day. Since then, Saul tried to kill David. Saul was out of his mind.

The day when David wrote this psalm, he was in the cave. David might ask to God, “God, what’s wrong with Saul? What’s wrong with you, Lord? Why did he try to kill me? What have I done to him? I served him, obeyed him, and did everything he asked me to do for him. But what is his reward from my loyalty? Why did he try to kill me?” I believe most of us will do the same as David did when we are in the same situation like him. We feel very sad and sometimes become angry when we are treated unfairly or when we are falsely accused. We do not understand our enemies and even God who put us in that situation. We can endure the feeling of hunger, but we cannot tolerate humiliation and false accusation.

What did David do in this situation? Did he complain to God or to Saul? Or did he just lie down and soothe his sorrowful feeling with a deep sigh? No, he cried out to God. He sought God and asked for his mercy. Read verse 1 again. He took his refuge in God’s wings. “*I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings.*” Eagle’s wing symbolizes protection and deliverance. An eagle carries her baby on her wings for its first flight. The mommy eagle also put her baby under her wings for protection. God delivered Israel and protected them like this. God said to Moses at Mt. Sinai, “*You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself*.” (Ex 19:4)

We learn from David who took his refuge in God, especially in the shadow of God’s wings. He called out ‘God’ seven times in the eleven verses. He did not blame Saul, but called out to God. We have tendency to fix our eyes on our opponents or those who give us hard time. Whenever we think about them, we become angry. But David fixed his eyes on the LORD. He called God rather than Saul. God’s wings were his shelter. God’s name was his banner. God’s love and faithfulness was his fortress. So, in verse 3 he said, “***He sends from heaven and saves me, rebuking those who hotly pursue me—God sends forth his love and his faithfulness***.” (3) When we are in trouble, we must turn our eyes to God and call his name as David did. Amen!

Second, be exalted, O God! (I will awaken the dawn) (5-11) Verses 5 and 11 are the refrain of this psalm. Look at verse 5. “***Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.***” Suddenly David’s lament was changed to praise. He praised the Lord and glorified his name. This dramatic change came from his confidence in God’s deliverance and victory. He was still being chased by Saul and hiding himself in the cave, but he saw God’s deliverance and his final victory. Even before he saw the victory, David praised God who would give him victory. Like David we need assurance of victory in our spiritual battle. Our real enemy is Satan, not any person. Satan continues to accuse us and condemn us when we show our weaknesses and mistakes. But we have victory in Jesus. Jesus already gave us victory over our enemy, through his death and resurrection. When he said on the cross, “It’s finished!”, he meant that the game is over! The only day we face now is the day of celebration, not frustration. Do you have trouble in your heart? Are you in the middle of spiritual warfare? Believe that God already gave you victory. What you can do is to celebrate, not frustrate!

David had the confidence and assurance of God’s victory. So, he said in verse 7. “***My heart, O God, is steadfast, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make music***.” What is he going to do when he had assurance and confidence? He wanted to sing and make music. He was in trouble by his enemies. But he was ready to fight against fear and sorrow. He was like a warrior who is ready to fight against his enemies. So, he awakened up his soul first. Let us read verse 8. “***Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn***.” His soul must have been depressed and hit the bottom of the cave. His soul must have been exhausted because of unceasing attack from his enemies. But now David called his soul to wake up and be ready to fight. Waking up harp and lyre means to be prepared for music, songs of victory. David was ready to sing songs of victory. He himself will awaken the dawn. Here dawn indicates new day. He meant that he would face new day, the day of battle and the day of victory. He was ready to face any day for battle. It is amazing to see the dramatic change of David from the spirit of lamentation to the spirit of victory and praise. This came from his assurance of victory in God.

Where can you find the similar case in the Bible? When we read Romans 7, Paul was struggling against his sinfulness. He lamented over his sinfulness and weakness that he did not do what he wanted to do, but he did what he hated to do. He cried out, “*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death*?” (Ro 7:24) Paul seemed to lose his spiritual battle against evil because of his weakness. But how did he change his message? He continued, “*Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord*!” (Ro 7:25) Paul praised God who gave him victory through Jesus Christ. Paul had assurance of victory in the spiritual battle because of Jesus who rose again from the dead. I pray that all of us may sing songs of victory as David did and as Paul did. When we look at our own weakness and sinfulness, we only lament over ourselves. But when we turn our eyes and look at Jesus Christ, we can sing songs of joy, songs of victory.

David’s joy and victorious spirit extended to his people and to heaven. Look at verses 9-10. “***I will praise you, Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples. For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies.***” Amen! William Carrey, the British missionary in India, left everything and went to India to preach the gospel. He even left his sick wife and young children behind and went to India. But his missionary life was not going well as he had expected. For 12 years he made only one Indian native convert. He opened a printing shop to publish Indian Bible. But his printing shop was burnt down by fire. He lost his ill wife and children in India. His missionary life seemed to be failure. But he did not complain to God or go back to England. He trusted in God who would give him final victory. He believed that in all things God works for the good of those who love him. God blessed his ministry in India by building many churches, schools, seminaries and used his ministry as a foundation for Bible India. Later William said, “Expect great things from God, Attempt great things for God.” Amen! Dr. John Angam, a shepherd in India UBF, was assigned to be one of the main messengers in ISBC. But he lost his lovely wife Julie last month. He must have been very sad and depressed. He was like David who was in the dark cave. But Dr. John awakened his soul. He decided to come to the conference. He overcame his situation with resurrection faith. He will testify us how God gave him victory over the power of death! Amen!

We are preparing ISBC 2023. Some of us may stay in the cave of Adullam. Others may join spiritual battle in the battle field. Let us wake up and fight a good fight. Let us get up and come out of the cave, and go out to fight until we sing songs of victory and until our lament is turn to praise for the Lord. Amen!