

SBC – Dec. 8, 2024

Psalm 55 (NKJV)

“Trusting God with Treacherous Friends”

Psalm 55 (NKJV)

To the Chief Musician. With Contemplation of David.

We have yet another Psalm authored by David. He wrote at least half of the 150 Psalms. And yet again, it was intended to be used in the worship life of Israel – being addressed to “the Chief Musician”. The word translated “Contemplation” is the Hebrew word “Maskil” – probably with the idea of “instruction”.

This is a Psalm that has as its setting David’s life being threatened and involved was the betrayal of a close friend who, so to speak, “stabbed him in the back”. Most commentators think that the occasion most probably relates to Absalom’s rebellion and the betrayal of David’s trusted advisor named Ahithophel (cf. 2 Sam. 15-18). We cannot be dogmatic about this – but it seems probable.

Ahithophel is a type of Judas as is clearly shown by comparing Psalm 41:9 and John 13:18. Some also see Ahithophel as a type of Antichrist who will pretend to be the friend of Israel only to betray them.

Slide # 1

Psalm 55

“Trusting God with Treacherous Friends”

vv. 1-8 - David’s Cry of Distress

vv. 9-15 – David’s Cry for Judgment

vv. 16-23 – David’s Trust in God

1 Give ear to my prayer, O God, And do not hide Yourself from my supplication.

2 Attend to me, and hear me; I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily,

David’s intense prayer is that God would answer him at this point. His supplication is his specific plea for help. David voices this prayer as a form of complaint in his state of misery.

What a comfort that we may be thus familiar with our God! We may not complain *of* him, but we may complain *to* him.

– **Charles Spurgeon**

There is a type of reverent complaint that is very open and honest with God. It just spells out to God how you are feeling. This is where David was.

3 Because of the voice of the enemy, Because of the oppression of the wicked; For they bring down trouble upon me, And in wrath they hate me.

The cause of David's prayer is what his enemy is saying. They are wicked and the cause of his oppression. They bring trouble upon him being motivated by wrathful HATRED. These were not nice people!

4 My heart is severely pained within me, And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.

This situation brought great mental anguish and emotional turmoil to David. He was scared to death experiencing the "terrors of death" which is to say great dread (cf. Gen. 15:12).

5 Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, And horror has overwhelmed me.

Note David's experience is characterized by fear, trembling, horror, and being overwhelmed. It drove him to what seemed like the breaking point. This was unbelievable pressure. This was sheer misery!

6 So I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.

7 Indeed, I would wander far off, And remain in the wilderness. Selah

This is so human! This is often our first impulse! When you have incredible fear and pressure and are totally overwhelmed, the most natural thing in the world is to just want to fly away from it all. We just want to escape. We just want out!

Doves were known for their ability to fly off to remote and obscure places where they would take refuge in the high rocks (cf. Jer. 48:28).

Years ago we had a lady in our church who was going through some real trauma in her life. She said as she took a little trip somewhere she wanted to just keep going. She said it seemed the farther she went the more she felt like she wanted to just keep going.

That is very human. Even David had those feelings on this occasion.

Slide # 2

“It is some comfort to us to know that there are spiritual giants who have had this urge, whether they have succumbed to it like Elijah ([1 Kings 19:3ff.](#)) or withstood it like Jeremiah ([Jeremiah 9:2; 10:19](#)).”

- **Derek Kidner**

AT the end of verse 7 is a “Selah” which involved some sort of pause – probably a meditative pause. Stop and think about this. Is this really the answer? Is this really what God wants? Let’s stop and think about this. What is the godly thing to do here?

8 I would hasten my escape From the windy storm and tempest.”

David just felt like he wanted to escape from this storm he was going through. Again, it is very normal to have this “escapist” mentality – especially when things are overwhelming.

When we find ourselves in the midst of trouble, our first thought is: “How can I get out of this?” But the dedicated believer needs to ask, “What can I get out of this?” – **Warren Wiersbe**

Of course, Wiersbe is right but we are all very human as was David. Now, as we work our way through the Psalm David is going to realize FLEEING is not the answer, but rather looking to God to answer prayer. God often doesn’t remove you from a situation but rather sustains you through it. The answer is not to run away but rather to TRUST God – which is where David ends up going. We can try and run away – or we can run to God!

9 Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues, For I have seen violence and strife in the city.

Destroy is often translated as “confuse” – confuse and divide their tongues. There evidently was some sort of whispering campaign going on against David and it was causing havoc in the city – evidently in Jerusalem.

David in this Psalm repeatedly refers to the speech of his enemy (v. 3, 9, 11, 12, 21). When he speaks of dividing their tongues many think this is very possibly an allusion to the confusion of tongues at Babel in Genesis 11 (Gen. 11:1-9).

If indeed, this Psalm relates to the rebellion of Absalom and Ahithophel then perhaps this would relate to David's prayer in 2 Sam. 15:31.

Slide # 3

2 Samuel 15:31 (NKJV)

31 Then someone told David, saying, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "**O LORD, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!**"

And then the answer to that prayer came in 2 Samuel 17 when there was division of opinion among Absalom's advisors on how to pursue David and Ahithophel's wise advise was rejected (2 Sam. 17:1-23).

"Confuse and divide their tongues" is a good prayer regarding those who seek to destroy us with their words. David now enlarges on what they were doing.

10 Day and night they go around it on its walls; Iniquity and trouble are also in the midst of it.

Their whispering attack was constant – day and night. Everywhere in the city this rebellious revolt was quietly taking place.

11 Destruction is in its midst; Oppression and deceit do not depart from its streets.

Note the language here in the surrounding context: Violence, strife, iniquity, trouble, destruction, oppression, deceit. These evildoers were really stirring things up in an effort to completely upend David and his rule.

David recognized that this was not just a problem for him personally, but really for the whole of God's people in general. The campaign against him he knew was really about the destruction of the people. A spirit of lawlessness and rebellion was everywhere.

And here was the worst of it...

**12 For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; Then I could bear it.
Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; Then
I could hide from him.**

David says if it was an outright enemy that was reproaches (taunts – insults) him then he could take it. If it was one who had just outright hated him then he could deal with it. But that is not the case. Rather this was an inside job – this was someone close to him who has risen up against him.

“The psalmist feels that the defection of his false friend is the worst blow of all. He could have braced himself to bear an enemy’s reviling;... [but this], is more than he can bear up against.”

-Alexander Maclaren

13 But it was you, a man my equal, My companion and my acquaintance.

This was someone close to David! I think at this point he is probably taking about Ahithophel. Ahithophel was a trusted advisor – someone that David looked up to for guidance and counsel – and on that level was an equal.

Slide # 4

2 Samuel 16:23 (NKJV)

23 Now the advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. So was all the advice of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

That is really strong. When Ahithophel spoke it was like a message from God. He really spoke with authority that was highly regarded.

Ahithophel was a close friend (a companion) and an acquaintance in the sense of good friend. They were close. David trusted him! David shared intimately with him heart to heart.

“None are such real enemies as false friends.” – **Charles Spurgeon**

Few things are more treacherous, hurtful, and harmful than the betrayal of a close friend. As someone has said, that is the harshest of wounds.

Many of us have had the bitter experience of betrayal. I was a pastor for many years, and during those years I have had some wonderful people on my staff; but one or two of them turned out to be like Ahithophel and Judas Iscariot. They betrayed me.

– *J. Vernon McGee*

That experience goes deep to the very core of a person! This may be one of Satan's greatest onslaughts. It is exceedingly wicked – the very opposite of true love.

14 We took sweet counsel together, And walked to the house of God in the throng.

David explains how close they really were. They talked heart to heart. When you are close you share deeply – you share secrets – you confide in one another. That was the kind of relationship they had.

And it seemed to be a spiritual relationship. They went to worship services together. But then this BETRAYAL came revealing the worst of wickedness!

15 Let death seize them; Let them go down alive into hell, For wickedness is in their dwellings and among them.

How is that for an imprecatory prayer? One thing about David – he was not ambiguous! What he wanted God to do was clear. David felt this so wicked and so over the top egregious that it called for the death penalty and yet note that he is looking to God to do it and not vengefully carry it out himself.

Realize that David saw this situation as being so serious that the whole of society was in jeopardy. He saw this man as extremely dangerous – so dangerous that he needed to be taken out.

“Let them go down alive into Sheol” is a clear echo of Numbers 16 and what happened to Korah and those with him in his rebellion against Moses and Aaron.

Slide # 5

Numbers 16:30–33 (NKJV)

30 But if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go

down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD.”

31 Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them,

32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods.

33 So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly.

Korah’s rebellion stands as a lasting warning against rising up against God ordained leadership and in the flesh trying to take over. Power seems to make people crazy. Even amongst God’s people there are often wicked people who come in and try to take over. These are wicked people who masquerade as “God’s people”. Moses knew this reality as did David. And Paul warned the Church at Ephesus of this as well.

Slide # 6

Acts 20:29–30 (NKJV)

29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, **to draw away the disciples after themselves.**

There are always those that play the part of Korah and Ahithophel. The lesson of history is lost on them – even though many of them are studied in the Bible.

16 As for me, I will call upon God, And the LORD shall save me.

If I read the text aright, we here have David talking to himself; and what we are to endeavor to do is, *to talk to ourselves, just as David talked to himself.*”

“The Psalmist would not endeavour to meet the plots of his adversaries by counterplots, nor imitate their incessant violence, but in direct opposition to their godless behaviour would continually resort to his God.” – **Charles Spurgeon**

David felt like running away, but instead he comes to this resolve – that he will call upon God and look to YHWH to save him. And he has confidence that God will do it.

David could no longer lead an army into battle, but he was able to pray that God would defeat the rebel forces, and God answered his prayer. – **Warren Wiersbe**

God often puts us into a position where all we can do is rely on Him. We must look to Him to take care of us and deliver us. That is where David was. When we have no resources of our own – we have God. And that is where God wants us to be – reliant upon Him.

17 Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice.

David commits himself to serious prayer. He has determined to handle this with intense prayer, morning, noon, and night. David mentioned evening first because the Hebrews began their day in the evening. Really, what he is saying, is that he is going to pray about this constantly.

David's confidence in God was rooted in sincere dependence on God, demonstrated by constant prayer. – **David Guzik**

My friend, one good thing your enemy will do for you is to cause you to pray more than you have ever prayed before! – **J. Vernon McGee**

18 He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle that was against me, For there were many against me.

Out of intense prayer comes PEACE – peace in the soul! Redeemed here has the sense of “rescued”. In the midst of the battle, his soul has been rescued from acute misery and turmoil. He now has peace and confidence. But note verse 18 follows the intense commitment to prayer in verse 17.

Philippians 4:6–7 (NKJV)

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

19 God will hear, and afflict them, Even He who abides from of old. Selah Because they do not change, Therefore they do not fear God.

David strengthens himself in the truth that the eternal God is still God. He hasn't changed. He is always totally reliable and He will justly judge these many enemies who are against him.

Here we have another Selah – stop and soak this in.

We had Selah after David saying he would like to just fly away and escape from it all. And now we have another Selah when in peace he commits the whole situation to God. These are two KEY points to ponder.

The answer is not is “escapism” but rather in committing the situation to God! That is where the answer is found.

And then David nails the bottom line problem with his wicked enemies. They are steeled in their rebellion. They refuse to change – that is repent. They are SET in their rebellion! And that reveals that they do not fear God. They have no reverence for God, which is why they have no regard for David as the Lord's anointed.

David also wrote Psalm 7...

Slide # 7

Psalm 7:11–12 (NKJV)

11 God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked every day.

12 If he does not turn back, He will sharpen His sword; He bends His bow and makes it ready.

20 He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; He has broken his covenant.

Again, David addresses the issue of betrayal. This person had made an oath of loyalty, but now they have broken their covenant. This person violated a sacred peace commitment. This is sheer treachery and betrayal of a sacred trust! This is as bad as it gets!

21 The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, But war was in his heart; His words were softer than oil, Yet they were drawn swords.

David here describes the level of deceptive betrayal involved. It was not only dishonorable but exceedingly wicked.

Again, David mentions his words! He sounded so good. He was slick! His words were smoother than butter but war was in his heart. He has a HEART problem! That is the bottom line. They always say, “Look at what the person does, not merely at what they say.” Words can be so deceptive. Actions tell the real story on the heart.

Treacherous people are liars! They deceive. They betray! These are dangerous people!

This person talked really nice to David’s face, but then knifed him in the back. Such a person is not a true friend at all, but rather a wicked enemy.

What are we to do with such a situation?

22 Cast your burden on the LORD, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.

This is the KEY verse in the Psalm.

The high point of the psalm for Christians who have been “stabbed in the back” by a confidant is verse 22. – **John MacArthur**

Give it to God! Cast your burden on the LORD – YHWH – our faithful God! When people try to destroy you with words, when they hatefully betray you – take it to God. Cast your burden on Him.

There are few greater burdens to bear than a one-time friend who becomes a treacherous and dangerous enemy. David knew that ... this was a **burden** that [only] God could and should bear.

– **David Guzik**

Slide # 8

I was a pastor for over forty years, and I feel I can speak about this subject with some experience and knowledge. I have found that the Lord does a better job in dealing with enemies than I can. He knows just how to do it. Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will take care of everything. – **J. Vernon McGee**

Notice David, doesn’t say God will remove the struggle, but rather He will SUSTAIN you. He will see you through it. He give grace to where we are stable in our walk with God looking to Him to sustain us.

God will never permit the righteous to be moved. We are secure in our relationship with God. We are secure in that God will accomplish His purposes and objectives for our life. Nothing can move us from what God has designed for His people!

23 But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction; Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; But I will trust in You.

It is interesting to note the unusual death of Absalom who got strung up by his hair in a tree as his mule when under it and then Joab killed him. He was in his prime (2 Sam. 18:9-15). Ahithophel, was so dejected when his counsel was followed that he went and committed suicide (2 Sam. 17:23).

If indeed, as we suspect, David has the rebellion of Absalom and Ahithophel in view in this Psalm – indeed, it did play out that they did not live out their days – but had their lives cut short. However, as a father David did not want Absalom to die.

God Himself would bring down these bloodthirsty and deceitful enemies of David. But in contrast, David says to God, ***“But I will trust in You.”***

What a wonderful way to end this Psalm. What do you do with treacherous “friends” who betray you? Give it to God. Trust in God! Let Him take care of it.

As with so many things in life – it all comes back to TRUST – trust in the LORD. This is what God wants us to do in all the struggles of life.

1 Peter 5:7 (NKJV)

7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Indeed, He does! Trust Him!