

## Psalm 55-56

The exact scenario surrounding the 55<sup>th</sup> psalm is uncertain though it seems to lend itself to the time of Absalom's insurrection. Which would tell us again that more than likely this was the result of something that happened a little later in David's life; and all of the fall out between him and Absalom was really more ramifications ultimately from the situation that took place between him and Bathsheba. Because one of David's sons had raped Tamar (Absalom's sister) and David didn't really respond to it or deal with him in any disciplinary way. But David had violated Bathsheba so it's like he felt like he would be a hypocrite or something, we don't really know the exact reasons that David took a non-responsive approach. But the bottom line is that after he sinned with Bathsheba he was a different man, he never really recovered totally from that fall. O he was forgiven completely, but he never seemed to be quite the same guy after that. and Nathan told him that the sword wouldn't depart from his house, that his sin would bring ongoing ramifications. and After Amnon raped Tamar Absalom killed him, then he ran into hiding, he fled for his own life. But over time David began to miss him, invited him to come back into the kingdom but wouldn't pursue reconciliation; and ultimately it led to Absalom beginning to seethe against David, so he plotted how he might take the kingdom from his dad.

Absalom would wait by the gates and when people would come to David for judgment Absalom would intercept them and say, "You know the king is too busy for you today, but man if I were king I'd make this right for you, because it's obvious that you've been wronged... unfortunately I'm not in that place, but you should know you have my support." and He began to steal the hearts of the people, making them think that they weren't important enough for his dad to give them the time of day, but they were his main concern. and He mounted a massive insurrection, took part of David's cabinet and the whole thing, came against his dad and his dad fled the city for his life. Again David being a man of war could've easily killed Absalom but he wasn't going to come against his own son in a warfare kind of way, so he just fled and prayed that God would work it all out. and It's believed that that event inspired this psalm.

You know the bible declares David to be an incredible man of God, he was used in a way that really no other person had been before nor after. God even promised the Messiah would come through him and that he would have a Son who would sit upon the throne forever (in the person of Christ who would be a physical descendant of his). and Sometimes we read of these guys, or see other guys (even in our day) whom God is using in tremendous ways and we think, "Man, I want God to use me like that; in great ways for His glory." Then you begin to research or find out their back story, what they've been through, things they've had to endure, the hardship, and heartache that's been utilized in their lives to bring them to such a place of humility that God could use them like that. and You begin to think, "I don't know, maybe I don't want to be used like that, I don't know if I'm willing to be taken that far down in order to be lifted that far up." Because I have discovered (and I've shared this with you before) that as a general rule (I won't say with out exception because God can do what He wants as He searches the hearts of men) God will take a person as low as He will lift them up.

That the higher He lifts one up, He 1<sup>st</sup> allows them to be brought to that same degree low. The bible says, “The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, And before honor is humility.” Prov 15:33 How high do you want to go? Think about it, because 1<sup>st</sup> you’ll be brought low; David says...

### Vs1-3

We speak occasionally about the parallelism of the psalms and how the psalmist will seek to communicate his heart through building upon a thought, expressing it in different ways. and Here you can sense the urgency in David’s heart as he cries out to the Lord, pleading with the Lord to hear him and to tend to him. He says to the positive (in Vs 1) “Give ear to my prayer, O God...(Vs 2) Attend to me, and hear me.” “God, please turn your ear toward me, tune in to me, and respond positively on behalf of me.” To the negative he says, “...do not hide yourself from my supplication.” “Don’t be non-responsive in this situation.” There’s a sense of desperation here where David feels like he doesn’t have the time to wait and watch to see if God will move, he needs to know that God’s going to move and that He’ll move soon.” and There are times when we feel this way, something comes up suddenly in our lives and it catches us unexpectedly and seems to have the propensity to have some major sort of fall out. and We need to God to respond (at least as far as we can understand) sooner rather than later, we’re in a panic (for lack of a better way to say it).

In Vs 2 David says that he’s even employing the “squeaky wheel gets the grease” method. He says, “I’m restless in my complaint, and moan noisily.” “I just keep crying out, keep seeking your intervention, hoping that if nothing else maybe you’ll just move in order to shut me up...” In Luke Ch 18 Jesus taught a parable showing how that we ought to pray always and not to lose heart. and He said that there was an unjust judge who didn’t fear God or regard man, and there was a widow who kept seeking him for justice in a given situation, and for awhile he ignored her. But then he said to himself, “Even though I don’t fear God or regard men I’m going to avenge this widow lest by her continual coming to me she weary me.” and The Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.” Luke 18:6-8 and The point of the parable wasn’t to say that you can wear God down and get on His nerves. It was to point out that if a wicked man would do the right thing if you bugged him enough, how much more will your heavenly Father hear your plea and do the right thing on your behalf?

David says that he’s feeling the heat of his enemies hate, how they’re talking about him, oppressing him, making trouble for him.

### Vs4-8

I think that this is something that everyone of us can relate to, you’re being pained, you’ve got problems, (or people have problems with you) and your 1<sup>st</sup> inclination is to just want to run away from it all. “Oh that I had wings like a dove I would just fly away and be at rest.”

But in reality the bible teaches us that the answer is never in running away from our problems we need to learn to confront them in a right way. It's not in fleeing from them, but rather facing them. We desire isolation, our need is reconciliation (if at all possible).

Vs9-14

All this hardship, all this heartache (violence and strife, day and night it doesn't seem to end, iniquity and trouble, destruction, oppression and deceit) is magnified and amplified by the fact that it's not someone whom David has considered his enemy who is instigating all these things. But rather it was one of his own friends who had betrayed him. Remember when I told you that some of the people who defected from David to Absalom were out of David's cabinet, David's advisory team? Well, one of the guys who betrayed him was his closest counselor Ahithophel and he's more than likely the one whom David is referencing here. You see Ahithophel was Bathsheba's granddad.

Evidently when David destroyed her family and had Uriah killed so that he could cover his sin and look like a hero; once David was exposed for what he'd done even though God forgave David Ahithophel never did. But rather he put on his "it's all good" face while he just waited for the right time to come along to do David harm. and When Absalom rebelled he seized that as his opportunity.

David is saying, "That's what hurts the most, that's what I'm having the most difficulty dealing with, that the one who has betrayed me was one who was so close to me. One in whom I placed confidence, I confided in you, I thought I had a companion and an acquaintance in you, we went to church together, took sweet counsel together, and then you turned on me, you sought to destroy me." and To a degree I can identify with that, no doubt many of you can as well. But those are the wounds that always hurt the most. People you've served with, you've been friends with, you've vested authority into them, entrusted significant portions of the ministry to their care, you looked at them as someone who was going to go the distance with you and then what seems like out of the blue they turn on you, go out from you, tell lies about you, and for some reason seek to do damage to (if not destroy) you. and You just think, "What happened? and Why are you doing this?" and That's what David is saying here, "I thought things were good between us, but you were just playing me for a fool till you could find the opportune time to betray me." and Of course David's betrayal by Ahithophel would be a foreshadowing of the Son of David's betrayal by Judas. Both of them were betrayed by someone close to them and both of their betrayers once they realized it wasn't going to work out the way they'd envisioned it went out and hung themselves.

As to where Jesus said of Judas that it'd have been better if he'd never have been born, David says of his betrayers.

Vs15

Much like God dealt with Korah when he betrayed Moses, David calls on the Lord to deal with Ahithophel.

Now, I don't think that today when someone betrays us we're to cry out and say, "Let death seize them and may they go to hell." That's probably not the best approach for you and me, Jesus said we're to love our enemies and pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us. The point here is that David is calling upon the Lord to recognize what's happened and deal with the situation accordingly. I don't think there's anything wrong with saying, "God, You see what's happening here, intervene, expose the situation, vindicate me, let the truth be brought into the light." But either way the bible is clear that vengeance is the Lord's, He's the One who will repay, leave it in His hands. and One day He'll right every wrong relationship, maybe you just can't come to the point where you see eye to eye with a brother or sister in a certain situation and it's caused a separation, even some residual negativity. Now our desire should be that things will be made right, but even if they're not, when we're all in the presence of the Lord He'll deal with those things and put them away, the wrongs will be made right. There won't be ill will or awkward encounters in Heaven, our relationships will be right with one another.

#### Vs16-19

We're beginning to see David's faith come into fruition and bubble up to the surface as he continues to seek the Lord. People often wonder why hardship is allowed to come into our lives but the reasons are vast. That doesn't mean that we enjoy it, but we should be thankful for what God is able to accomplish through it. One thing hardship does is take us to our knees and get us on our face before God.

Nothing seems to stoke up our prayer lives like a little hardship, or difficulty. and As we turn to the Lord and place our only hope in the Lord, we begin to take confidence in the Lord. That's what David is doing here, he's speaking of what hasn't happened as though it's a done deal. He's on the run, but He's trusting in the Lord to take care of him and defend him in his hour of need. Notice he says that he's going to pray frequently (morning, noon, and night) which would correlate to what Paul said, "...pray without ceasing," 1 Thess 5:17 and he's going to pray fervently, "I will pray and cry aloud." and As James said, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." James 5:16 and that's what David is counting on. "He will hear and afflict them."

The last part of Vs 19 says something interesting there, "Because they do not change, therefore they do not fear God." Or we could understand that, "Because nothing ever comes along to really rattle their cage, or shake things up in their lives, they don't fear God." Or, "They're set in their ways, they won't change, they don't fear God." You see when nothing ever comes along to shake us up we can have a tendency toward lethargy, getting set in our ways. We can take the "If it ain't broke don't fix it" frame of mind when in reality it was broke to begin with. and When people have things good in this world for too long, there can be that tendency to simply settle in and not really depend any longer, or look to the Lord for our care, our provision, our protection. and That's what David is saying here, "My enemies have it too good, they won't fear the Lord, nothing changes in their lives."

We read in Jer 48:11 where God said, “Moab has been at ease from his youth; He has settled on his dregs, And has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, Nor has he gone into captivity. Therefore his taste remained in him, And his scent has not changed.” The allusion being to a process of pouring wine from one vessel to another at just the right time so that it wouldn’t settle in the dregs and take on the flavor the dregs, the impurities or unpleasantness of the vessel itself. The wine would be “sifted” poured from one vessel to another lest it settle in the dregs. and That’s what God does with us, just when things begin to get settled, it seems like here comes another change, something to rock our world or rattle our cage. and We’re being poured from vessel to vessel lest our taste remain in us and our scent not change from the decay of the flesh to the perfume of the Spirit as we settle on our dregs. Change will keep us looking to and relying on the Lord. So as much as we don’t like things to be mixed up and stirred around, the Lord (having our eternal best interest at heart) will keep us from settling on our dregs, He’ll pour us from vessel to vessel. He’ll allow us to be jarred out of complacency, that He might continue to purify us so that we might be a source of refreshment to the lives of others, not leave a bad taste in their mouth.

#### Vs20-21

Another reference to Ahithophel, putting forth his hands against those who were at peace with him. 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. Speaking sweet to your face, but putting a knife in your back. There’ve been times I’ve felt like I’ve had an entire cutlery collection in my back. The bible says, “There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, But the tongue of the wise promotes health.” Prov 12:18 and Again, “A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, And a flattering mouth works ruin.” Prov 26:28

#### Vs22-23

Prov 10:27, “The fear of the Lord prolongs days, But the years of the wicked will be shortened.” Why? Because on a practical level they don’t have anything to act as a check in their spirit before they engage in all sorts of dumb or harmful activity. So they destroy themselves and die prematurely. But the fear of the Lord will make you think twice, it keeps you from being party to otherwise “unhealthy” activity.

The key to this psalm seems to be Vs 22, “Cast your burden on the Lord and he shall sustain you.” Paul said it like this, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Phil 4:6-7 Peter said it like this, “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:6-7

## Psalm 56

We'll sorta blast through Ps 56 here. Again we have here a psalm that was the result of something that happened a little earlier in David's life. Remember Ps 51 happened later, Ps 52 happened earlier, Ps 54 happened earlier, Ps 55 happened later, now Ps 56 happened earlier. So again there's no real chronological order with in the Psalms.

We spoke last week of when David fled from Saul and went to Nob, Doeg overheard his conversation and narked him out... You recall that in that encounter with Ahimelech David received from him Goliath's sword, well once David got that sword he headed to Gath. and Why he went to Gath I'm not real sure, maybe he thought that it was the last place Saul would look for him. The problem is that Gath was Philistine territory and it was Goliath's hometown. So when he came riding into town he was going to go and seek asylum from the king but the servants of the king recognized him and said, "Isn't this the guy who had that song written about him... Saul has slain his thousands, but David has slain his tens of thousands?" (A reference to how many Philistines he'd killed). David suddenly found himself in a dangerous situation so he pretended to be insane, started foaming at the mouth and scratching at the door... The king was all, "We don't need one more madman in the land, get rid of him" So David took off and got out of there. This psalm came from that event.

### Vs1-4

I like this because he resolves to turn God's promises (His Word) into his praises. He doesn't take away from the reality of fear, but he says, "My faith is in the Lord. What can flesh do to me?" It's the "if God be for me, than who can be against me" frame of heart and mind. and Just like hardship can perk up your prayer life, fear can stimulate your faith. Fear can turn our attention to the Lord real quick, "When I am afraid I will trust in you." Fear is a reality that confronts us in life, things come up and they can be scary. That doesn't necessarily indicate a lack of faith, it's what I do with that fear that demonstrates whether or not I'm going to have faith. You can be scared about something and still be placing your hope and your faith in the Lord. David was very transparent about his fears, but he took those fears to the Lord and resolved to trust Him with them.

### Vs5-8

It's interesting the different books that the bible mentions that God has. We're familiar with the book of life, a book we all want our names recorded in. Malachi mentions a book of remembrance, that when you talk with someone about the Lord, His ears perk up and He's listening in and He records that in His book of remembrance. When you're fellowshiping with a friend, enjoying a conversation about the Lord, God keeps record of that, kinda cuts it out and places it in His scrapbook of sorts. Here we see that He #'s our wanderings, are they not in Your book. Maybe your heart isn't exactly where it should be, or it's somehow hurting, God takes note of that, and it could be that eternity will bear out His grace toward us in regard to that. He keeps it in His book, puts our tears into His bottle. That is, God is mindful of our tears, our heartache, the pain we go through, He's acquainted with our grief and is familiar with our sorrows.

There's not a tear that falls from your eyes but that God's not aware of it and somehow (seemingly) making record of it. In the ancient world (and really not even the too distant past) they had literal little bottles that they could use, they were for the purpose of catching their tears. and Often times when a person would die they would catch the tears they shed for them in one of these little bottles and place them in their tomb as a memorial and a display their love for them and the loss they felt regarding them.

There are some who suggest that the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears was actually using one of these bottles from which she'd caught her tears due to her heartache and heartbreak in life. I don't know...

The point here is that God is keeping track of us and He knows what's going on with us. and That's a real key in moving forward in faith, things may be going crazy, tearing us up emotionally but God knows and when we see Him face to face He'll translate our suffering and our sorrow to glory.

Vs9

Do you know that? Do you really know that? That if you're in Christ, God is for you? What an anchor to your soul that should be. No matter what's going on, you need to know that God is for you. That He thinks thoughts of peace and not of evil toward you, to give you a future and a hope, a guaranteed end.

Vs10-13

There is a reason that God has delivered your soul, that He has kept you from falling and that's because He has a plan for you, that you might walk before Him in the land of the living. The bible tells us that we were created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Eph 2). That you might be a witness of Him in the land of the living. and We can't close this out with out making mention of the overwhelming emphasis placed upon the word of God in the psalm. 3x's He says, "I will praise His word." The word of God is so vitally important to our spiritual well being. Feed on it, think about it, take it in and let it permeate through you and have it's way in you. God's word is equivalent to His promise, because God will never go back on His word. Therefore if you've given your word to God, don't go back on it. David says, "Vows made to You are binding upon me." He felt the conviction to follow through on the things he'd committed to as unto the Lord. May God help us to do the same.

Prayer Points:

Father we praise Your word, Your word You have exalted even above Your name, it is life and it is strength to our inner man. Help us that we not neglect it, but that we fall deeper and deeper in love with it, and more and more submitted to it. When we fear may we place our faith in You, and may we continue to cry out to You, being dependant upon You through prayer.

May we not settle in our dregs, but be a source of spiritual refreshing and encouragement to our brothers and sisters and a light in this dark world.