

# **“But I Will Trust in Thee”**

## **A Psalm for the Weary and Wounded**

### **Psalm 55**

This psalm has a familiar superscription, so we won't spend much time on it, other than to say this is a psalm meant to instruct.

We aren't told exactly when David wrote this psalm, but the depth of sorrow and the language of betrayal lead many to believe it was written during the rebellion of Absalom, when Ahithophel, David's trusted counsellor, turned against him. While we can't be dogmatic on this, the background fits the psalm well and helps us see how David turned to God when even his closest friend betrayed him.

While Psalm 54 and 55 deal with different situations – one betrayal by political allies, the other by a close friend – they both show us the pain of being turned against. And more importantly, they both show us the right response: turning to the Lord, who never betrays. It may be no accident that these two psalms are placed side by side.

The 55th Psalm is not a psalm of despair; it's a psalm of trust. David is found pouring his heart out, not to people, but to God, the only One who can truly help. As the psalm progresses, so does David's confidence in the Lord. The burden of betrayal and hardship is still there, but so is the promise, found at the end of the psalm: “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee.”

In this study, we will walk through this psalm and see how a weary, wounded heart can still say, “I will trust in Thee.”

#### **I. THE ATTACK OF THE ENEMY – VS. 1-8**

David pleads with God in distress as the pressure of his enemies mount up against him.

**A. The cry for help – vs. 1-2**

“Give ear... hide not... attend... answer me” – this shows a desperate, emotional outcry.

**B. The weight of the enemy’s threat – vs. 3**

1. “Because of the voice of the enemy” – slanderous reproaches; assaults on his character.
2. “Because of the oppression of the wicked” – this Hebrew word for “oppression” is only found here (עָקָה). It seems to imply external pressure that leads to inner distress. It’s understood as unjust pressure; coercion to cave under the pressure. It speaks of psychological attack.
3. “In wrath they hate me” – intense anger aimed toward him.

**C. The agony of his soul because of the enemy – vs. 4-5**

The terms used here – “sore pained,” “terrors of death,” “fearfulness and trembling,” and “horror” – are very intense and speak of the internal, emotional stress this attack was having on him.

1. “My heart is sore pained within me” – this is deep turmoil, like one writhing in agony.
2. “The terrors of death are fallen upon me” – this isn’t just a fear of dying; it’s the overwhelming

terror of the threat of death, as if it's suddenly and uncontrollably come over him.

The word for "terrors" (אִמָּה) is a word that means terrifying dread.

#### Genesis 15:12

<sup>12</sup> And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

#### Job 9:34

<sup>34</sup> Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me:

3. "Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me" – this is to be understood as something actually, literally happening, and not just a metaphor.
4. "Horror [a horrifying shudder, dread, or shock] hath overwhelmed me [literally, has clothed me, or wrapped around me]" – the horror is not just felt, it's like a garment of dread wrapped around David.

### D. The deep desire to escape – vs. 6-8

1. "And I said" (vs. 6) – this doesn't appear to be something David spoke out loud, but something he thought "in his heart."
2. The dove imagery in verse 6 suggests gentle escape, not power or victory over the enemy. He wanted peace, not revenge.
3. Verses 7 and 8 describe a desire to retreat from it all, far from the storm and tempest raging

around him, both physically in Jerusalem, and in his own heart and mind.

## II. THE ACTIONS OF THE WICKED – VS. 9-11

### A. The city is filled with disorder, violence, and deceit.

1. Vs. 9 – seems to refer to civil unrest and we find David asking God to turn the counsel of his enemies against each other (“divide their tongues” – similar terminology used when God confounded the language at Babel).

Adam Clarke makes this observation on this verse:

➤ Let his counsellors give opposite advice. Let them never agree, and let their devices be confounded. And the prayer was heard. Hushai and Ahithophel gave opposite counsel. Absalom followed that of Hushai; and Ahithophel, knowing that the steps advised by Hushai would bring Absalom's affairs to ruin, went and hanged himself. See 2 Samuel 15, 16, and 17.

2. Vs. 10-11 – evil is not just present, it's persistent: “day and night,” “in the midst thereof.”

#### Isaiah 5:20-23

<sup>20</sup> Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! <sup>21</sup> Woe unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! <sup>22</sup> Woe unto *them that are* mighty to drink wine, and men of

strength to mingle strong drink: <sup>23</sup> Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

2 Timothy 3:13

<sup>13</sup> But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

## **B. The world's systems are often ruled by deceit and opposition to the righteous.**

1 John 5:19

<sup>19</sup> And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

## **III. THE AGONY FROM A FRIEND – vs. 12-15**

The deepest wound comes, not from an enemy but from a trusted companion.

### **A. "Not an enemy..." – vs. 12-13**

1. This is in contrast with the previous portion of the psalm, where David was dealing with enemies from without.
2. It was no stranger that David is referencing, but someone David trusted and walked with spiritually (vs. 12-13).

### **B. Sweet fellowship is broken – vs. 14**

Spiritual betrayal is especially bitter.

### **C. A plea for judgment – vs. 15**

David calls for swift judgment and uses terms similar to that recorded in Numbers 16 and the destruction of Korah and his followers.

Numbers 16:30-33

<sup>30</sup> But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that *appertain* unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. <sup>31</sup> And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them:<sup>32</sup> And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that *appertained* unto Korah, and all *their* goods. <sup>33</sup> They, and all that *appertained* to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

If this is about Absalom and Ahithophel, they did die sudden and violent deaths (2 Sam. 17:23). There is an allusion here to the betrayal of Christ by Judas, and the violent death he faced (Matt. 27:5), and to the beast and false prophet, another part of the antitype, who will be taken and cast alive into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20).

#### 2 Samuel 17:23

<sup>23</sup> And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled *his* ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

#### Matthew 27:5

<sup>5</sup> And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

#### Revelation 19:20

<sup>20</sup> And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

## IV. THE ASSURANCE OF PRAYER – VS. 16-21

David turns from pain to prayer and renews his confidence in God.

### A. The persistence of prayer – vs. 16-18

1. Verse 17 uses the expression, “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud...”

- a) This isn’t just poetic, although it is that, it is also to be understood in a literal way – David apparently had a habitual pattern of prayer at those times. This is similar to what is said of Daniel.

#### Daniel 6:10

<sup>10</sup> Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

- b) Hebrew grammar and word order (evening first) align with the biblical view of a day beginning at sundown rather than sunup, as we do today.
  - c) The verbs “I will pray” and “cry aloud” show both that thoughtful meditation seen in prayer in the Psalter and the urgency often needed in prayer.
  - d) This reminds us that while we are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17), it’s helpful, and biblical, to establish intentional times of prayer throughout our day.
2. Vs. 18-19 – God hears and delivers

- a) David recalls how God has already delivered his soul in peace, not just from the enemy, but from the fear of the enemy as well (vs. 18).

Psalm 119:165

<sup>165</sup> Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

Philippians 4:6-7

<sup>6</sup> Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- b) He has this confidence and assurance because he knows “there were many with me.” This is two-fold:

- (1) He had many allies that assisted him in his fighting (600 men mentioned in 2 Sam. 15:18), and eventually God led in Absalom’s defeat and David’s restoration.
- (2) However, I believe there is a greater “army” in view here – an unseen angelic one. The believer never stands alone in spiritual warfare.

2 Kings 6:16

<sup>16</sup> And he answered, Fear not: for they that *be* with us *are* more than they that *be* with them.

2 Chronicles 32:7-8

<sup>7</sup> Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that *is* with him: for *there be* more with us than with him: <sup>8</sup> With

him *is* an arm of flesh; but with us *is* the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

Matthew 26:53

<sup>53</sup> *Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?*

Hebrews 13:5

<sup>5</sup> *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

1 John 4:4

<sup>4</sup> *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

**B. The character of the enemy, both those mentioned in the first portion of the psalm as well as those friends that betrayed him – vs. 19-21**

1. Vs. 19 – God judges those who, because of their prosperity and seeming success in life (“have no changes”), “they fear not God.”
2. Verses 20-21 give more details on the betrayer. He’s described as a covenant-breaker with smooth words and a warlike heart.

**V. THE ACTION OF FAITH – vs. 22-23**

David ends, not in despair but in confident trust and exhortation to cast our burdens to the Lord.

**A. Cast your burden (vs. 22)**

That word “burden” is only used this one time in the Old Testament, but it’s packed with meaning. It refers to everything God has allowed in our path – grief, fears, responsibilities, betrayals. It’s not just what you’re carrying – it’s what’s been placed on you. And David, having carried that weight himself, tells us what to do with it: Cast it on the LORD. He will sustain you.

## **B. Trust God’s justice (vs. 23)**

1. God will bring down the wicked.
2. David contrasts them with himself: “But I will trust in thee.”

Conclusion: This psalm doesn’t promise that there will be no trouble or pain in life. It does promise, however, that the righteous will not be moved by it if our trust is in the Lord. So whatever burden we carry, whether it’s fear, betrayal, grief, or pressure (all found in this psalm), cast it on the Lord.