

## Cast Your Burdens on the Lord

Psalm 55:1-23

By [Rob Hill](#)

If you would please open with me in the word of God to Psalm 55. Our reading tonight is going to be from Psalm 55 and all of the verses. Let us pay reverent attention to the reading of God's holy, inspired and inerrant word.

### Psalm 55:

*For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Maskil of David.*

1 Give ear to my prayer, O God; And do not hide Yourself from my supplication. 2 Give heed to me and answer me; I am restless in my complaint and am surely distracted, 3 Because of the voice of the enemy, Because of the pressure of the wicked; For they bring down trouble upon me And in anger they bear a grudge against me. 4 My heart is in anguish within me, And the terrors of death have fallen upon me. 5 Fear and trembling come upon me, And horror has overwhelmed me. 6 I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. 7 "Behold, I would wander far away, I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah. 8 "I would hasten to my place of refuge From the stormy wind and tempest." 9 Confuse, O Lord, divide their tongues, For I have seen violence and strife in the city. 10 Day and night they go around her upon her walls, And iniquity and mischief are in her midst. 11 Destruction is in her midst; Oppression and deceit do not depart from her streets. 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 myself from him. 13 But it is you, a man my equal, My companion and my familiar friend; 14 We who had sweet fellowship together Walked in the house of God in the throng. 15 Let death come deceitfully upon them; Let them go down alive to Sheol, For evil is in their dwelling, in their midst. 16 As for me, I shall call upon God, And the LORD will save me. 17 Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, And He will hear my voice. 18 He will redeem my soul in peace from the battle which is against me, For they are many who strive with me. 19 God will hear and answer them--Even the one who sits enthroned from of old-- Selah. With whom there is no change, And who do not fear God. 20 He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; He has violated his covenant. 21 His speech was smoother than butter, But his heart was war;

His words were softer than oil, Yet they were drawn swords. 22 Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken. 23 But You, O God, will bring them down to the pit of destruction; Men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out half their days. But I will trust in You.

And thus far God's word. Let us look to Him in prayer. *O God in heaven, You who have inspired this word and sent it down to us this day, we ask that You would attend it now in the preaching of it. And we pray that we might receive this preaching of Your word with faith and with love and that we would lay it up in our hearts and practice it in our lives. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.*

Normally on Wednesday nights from about 5:00-6:30, my wife and I and two others supervise four-year-olds to six-graders in the gymnasium. If you ever want a demonstration of total depravity watch about seventy children in the gymnasium for an hour and a half every week. Just last week my wife related to me a story in which one of these young children suddenly ran up to her with his head buried in his hands and tears flowing down his face. So my wife inquired what was wrong, and the child told her that one of the other children, one of his friends had hit him in the face with a ball. And then he looked up at my wife with this look and said, "Oh, I am so angry with him. I'm gonna get him." Well, my wife took that as a cue to give a little explanation on a Christian response to events that make you angry, and said that, "Well, revenge really isn't the proper way to respond in a situation like this, and you ought to go and you ought to have some forgiveness." And in case she was under any illusion that her words were making much difference in the mind of that young person, he quickly as one of the other boys ran by said, "I think it was that one. Oh, I'm gonna get him!"

Well, we laugh at a story like that, but I think it is many ways a microcosm of what often happens to us in a much larger way. Our friends might no longer hit us in the face with a ball, but they can sometimes do things which hurt a whole lot more than that. Maybe you've had a close friend who you've spent a lot of time with and shared many special moments with turn against you and maybe slander you and gossip about you to friends. Or maybe you've known someone who appeared to be a believer and you worshipped with them and you shared your life with them, but they have since turned away from the faith and no longer want anything else to do with you. Or maybe there has been one with whom you shared the marital union, the closest of any earthly union at all, but maybe that person has had an affair or has deserted you and you are left wondering. Or maybe you have had a child who when she was little would draw you pictures and say how much she loved to be with you, but now that she is older has rebelled against you and hasn't said a kind word to you in years.

It hurts to have friends, to have loved ones turn on us. And it is that very thing that David is dealing with in this Psalm. This Psalm, Psalm 55, is closely related to two previous Psalms that we've looked at, Psalm 52 and Psalm 54, in which

David experiences betrayal. In Psalm 52 David is betrayed, if you remember, by Doeg the Edomite, a foreigner. And in Psalm 54 David is betrayed by the Ziphites, his own countrymen. But now in Psalm 55 David is betrayed by a friend. Here he experiences the anguish of desertion by one who was close to him.

And so let us turn to this Psalm tonight to see how God would instruct us to respond when we are in that type of situation. Now I want us to look at this Psalm tonight under three different headings. First of all, to see in verses 1-8 how David expresses his deep anguish. And then in verses 9-15 we will see that David describes his betrayer. And then finally in verses 16-23 that David makes an assertion of confidence and of trust in God.

### **I. David expresses his deep anguish.**

So, first of all, in the first eight verses David expresses his deep anguish. Now David does this in very strong language. He says in verse 2, "I am restless in my complaint and am surely distracted," and in verses 4-5, "My heart is in anguish within me, And the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling come upon me, And horror has overwhelmed me." David is experiencing in his soul that type of anguish which is all consuming. Calvin, in once describing the emotions that are expressed in the Psalms said, "The Psalms are an anatomy of all the parts of the soul. There is no element of human experience that is not described to its fullest measure in the Psalms." And that is certainly what we find here. David's chief problem in these verses is not intellectual difficulty, but it's rather that he hurts in the bowels of his being. The Bible knows something of the depths of human experience.

But this is carried even further in verses 6-8 by David, when he reaches that experience which only comes to us maybe at the rarest of times. He exclaims, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Behold, I would wander far away, I would lodge in the wilderness. I would hasten to my place of refuge from the stormy wind and tempest." David just wishes that he could entirely escape the situation. Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever said, "Maybe, maybe if I just go to sleep I'll wake up in the morning and it will be all better." Or maybe you say, "Boy, I wish I would've really appreciated about this time last week when the events of this last week didn't occur." And you would do anything to go back in time. You would appreciate that moment so much, when you'd do anything to escape that moment. Well, that's the anguish that David here is experiencing in this Psalm. That's what he feels in the depth of his soul.

But I want you to notice what is really the most important verse in this section because it sets this anguish of David in its proper setting, and that is verse 1 where David starts out this Psalm by saying, "Give ear to my prayer, O God; and do not hide Yourself from my supplication. Give heed to me and answer me." Brothers and sisters, we live in a fallen world and these experiences of anguish

that David is feeling here are experienced by believers and unbelievers alike. This world hurts...and all feel that.

But the difference between the godly person and the ungodly person is found right here in verse 1: it's that the godly person brings his anguish and his despair and his distress immediately before God. The person who is not a believer might seek to do any number of things with that distress that they feel. They might wallow in their despair, or they might try to get even with the person that hurts them, or they might try to convince themselves that they are the most mistreated person on the face of the planet, or they might try to get rid of the problem or try to forget about the problem by drowning themselves in alcohol or surrounding themselves with the world's goods. There are about a thousand different things that people try to do to get rid of that anguish and that distress that they feel in their hearts. But David here shows the response that the believer must have. It is this: That he must try to gain an audience in heaven and an answer from his God. And that's what David instructs us to do here.

Oh, Christian, at such times when our tears flow—and there are times when our tears flow. Even a man like David had tears that flowed. But at such times that our tears flow they must *always* be attended by our prayers. Our tears always must be attended by our prayers. Those two things must walk hand-in-hand, never without the other. Taking our anguish, the anguish of our soul, to God in prayer is the first and the absolutely necessary step when we feel that anguish in our hearts. It's the necessary step to responding in a godly way. Are your cries of anguish at times such as this, when you feel a bit like David did, when you want to fly away like a dove—are your cries of anguish, first of all, brought before the throne of the living God? So we've seen, first of all, in these first eight verses that David expresses the deep anguish that he feels.

## **II. David describes his betrayer.**

But, secondly, we see in these verses that David describes his betrayer, and that is brought before us in verses 9-15. It is here that David explains the *cause* of his anguish. Why does he feel this so deeply? And in verses 9-11 he describes in very broad terms the wickedness that he sees in the city. David looks around him in the city that he reigns, the city that is to be devoted to the glory of God, and he sees nothing but wickedness. Look at the words that are brought before us in these three verses: “violence,” “strife,” “iniquity,” “mischief,” “destruction,” “oppression,” “deceit.” The wickedness here that David sees is an affront against him as the king over God's people and it's an affront against God and His reign over His people.

But it's not only this wickedness that he sees, that is the root of why David feels as he does, and David goes on to explain that to us. In verse 12 he says, “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 myself from him.” But the real problem, the real cause of his anguish lies much, much deeper. It is this: it is that he has been betrayed, he has been stabbed in the back by one who was a close friend of his. He describes that relationship for us in verses 13 and 14. He says, “But it is you, a man my equal, my companion and my familiar friend; We who had sweet fellowship together[and] walked in the house of God in the throng.” It is that person that David describes as the one who has betrayed him. This is the reason that David feels the anguish that he's feeling. David had known this person. He had loved this person, whoever he is in these verses. He had shared his life with him. He had spent time with him. He says that he was a close friend. He had “sweet fellowship” with him. It even says that he worshipped God with this person...but now he has betrayed him. Now this person has turned against David and has participated in the wickedness of his enemies. The one who had been a dear friend once to him was now sinning grievously and had turned his back on David.

Have you experienced this? Have you had a close friend, or even a parent or a child or a sibling do this to you? You have shared your life with that person; you have had with him or her what seemed to be an unbreakable connection; you even worshipped God maybe with that person—and then for some reason which you cannot explain that fellowship was broken. And that is the pain which David here describes. And so David in verse 15 leaves these wicked men with the righteous judgment of God. He recognizes the wickedness that is in this world, and he leaves that to God's righteous judgment. This is not a personal desire for revenge when he says, “Let death come deceitfully upon them; Let them go down alive to Sheol, For evil is in their dwelling, in their midst.” This is not a personal act of revenge. This is not a gut reaction of sinful revenge on the part of David, but rather he is leaving them in the hand of God, in the hand of a just God who deals with wickedness as it deserves.

### **III. David makes an assertion of confidence and of trust in God.**

And that leads us on to this third point that we see, and the turning point that we see in verse 16 in this Psalm, that David makes an assertion of confidence and of trust in God. David makes an assertion of confidence and of trust in God. Verse 16 is a turning point in this Psalm, because David is here brought to the only resolution for the depth of his anguish, and that is in the grace of God. You see, he says, “The Lord will save me,” in verse 16; and in verse 17, “He will hear my voice”; and in verse 18, “He will redeem my soul in peace from the battle which is against me.”

David recognizes here that his only hope is in God. It is to God to whom he must go. It is only God who can alternately care for him and provide that rest for his soul. And so throughout these verses here before us his confidence mounts and mounts. And then he gives a final description of his betrayer in verses 20-21.

But then in verse 22 he comes to what could be called “the final resting point of this Psalm,” when he says these words: “Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.” And do you see? That is it, that's the point that David came to. That's the resolution to this. It's this: “Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you.”

Now the word for *burden* here is really very broad. What it is saying is this, ‘Cast your appointed lot on the Lord. Cast all of your situation; cast all of your anguish; cast all of your cares; cast all of your grief upon the Lord *and He will sustain you.*’ David has come to see the right response for the godly man: Give it all to God. Now note the words that are used very carefully in this beautiful statement by David. It is not “Cast your burden upon the Lord and you will never have any more burdens.” It is not “Cast your burden upon the Lord and you will never again feel anguish or grief.” It is not “Cast your burden upon the Lord and your heart will never feel weighed down again.” But it is “Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you.” And you can take confidence in that. This is a promise given to you in the word of God: that when your heart is in the type of anguish that David's is, “Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you. He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.”

And then in verse 23 David leaves God to deal with in justice those who are his enemies. He says, “But You, O God, will bring them down to the pit of destruction; Men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out half their days.” But then he ends with this statement: “But I—” But as for me, David says—“I will trust in You.”

### Application for Today

So what does this mean for you? As I've already said this experience of David is one that touches many of us. A person that you have loved and known and cared for has deeply hurt you. And when this happens we are often tempted to respond most often in one of two different ways. We go through this...the first response that we're often tempted to is to feel self-pity. It is very easy to feel sorry for yourself and the burden that you're called to bear, and to turn inward, radically inward, and let that anguish consume your heart and to let it gnaw away at who you are. And this often will keep gnawing at you and will lead to despair and even to depression. And that is the first response that we're often tempted to.

A second response, though, is that we're often tempted to get even. And maybe sometimes this takes a very small form, a very subtle sort of form. We just want that person who has so deeply hurt us just to experience a little bit of what we feel. And so we might not talk to them, or we might not really listen to them or care for them. We'll seek to do something that in a subtle sort of way will make them experience just a little bit of what we have felt. We like to get even. That is another response that we're often tempted to when this happens.

But when a spouse deserts or a child rebels against you or a friend turns on you—how should we respond? Brothers and sisters, we are to respond in the way that David does. And might we come to that resolution that he comes to here in verse 22, “Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you.” That is the first place that you must go. Don't deal with it in the way that the world deals with it. They feel the same agonies of distress and anguish in their heart sometimes that you feel in your heart, and they try to deal with it in all of these different ways. But your response must be this: To cast your burden on the Lord and to trust what He says in His word, in His promise, that He will sustain you in the midst of that. Look on that in His trustworthy and infallible word. He has said it; it is true.

### Psalm 55 prefigures Christ's experience

But I would like us to see yet one more thing. The Psalm speak not only of the Christian's experience, and that's what we've looked at today. The Psalm speaks not only of the Christian's experience, but in an even more profound way of Christ's experience. Jesus, the One who fulfilled the throne of David, experienced this Psalm. Do you remember on the night in which Jesus ate the Last Supper with His disciples, that night before His crucifixion, He went out to that Garden of Gethsemane, and there He poured out His soul before His Father in heaven? During that time He felt anguish, a depth of experience that we won't begin to ever know, as He looked forward to that next day and what He knew was coming upon Him, when He would bear the sins of this world and suffer abandonment by His God. He was in His hour of deepest need. Even Luke reports for us that “his sweat was as tears of blood.” And then at the end of that time when He was with His disciples, in that hour of greatest need He tells them, “Arise. Let us be going. Behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand.”

And then we're told by Mark that “immediately at that time He saw Judas walking toward Him with others who bore swords and clubs.” It was Judas, one of His twelve disciples. It was Judas, the one whom He had shared intimate moment after intimate moment with the last three years. It was Judas, who He had taken care to disciple and to care for. It was Judas who was one of those who with the other disciples was sent out to preach, sent out two by two to preach the glorious good news of the kingdom of God coming. It was Judas who earlier that same evening had sat down with Jesus at that Last Supper, that Supper which signified more than anything else the fellowship that a person has with his Lord. It was that Judas who walked up to Him at that time and in a mockery of friendship came up to Him and said, “Rabbi,” and kissed Him. And by that very kiss betrayed Him, stabbed Him in the back, handed Him over, delivered Him over to be crucified on the next day.

Do you think Jesus experienced this Psalm? I submit He experienced it in a more profound way than any of us ever will or ever have. But during that moment He threw Himself upon these verses, “Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will

sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.” And He went that next day to the cross of Calvary. He continued in His path and trusted in His heavenly Father that the righteous will never be shaken. And then He rose from the dead and He ascended on high.

And right now we have in heaven Christ Jesus our Lord who experienced this Psalm. And when we like David cry out in verse 1 of this Psalm, “Give ear to my prayer, O God; And do not hide Yourself from my supplication. Give heed to me and answer me,” because we are feeling in our souls the anguish that David felt; we have at that moment, bringing that very prayer before the throne of Almighty God, Jesus who experienced that, who experienced this type of betrayal from a friend but He knew what it was to cast Himself and to cast His burden upon the Lord. Do you not have confidence that God will answer Your prayer? Isn't this an encouragement to us this day to take ourselves and our anguish and the pain that we can feel in a situation such as this, to take it to God and to trust in Him and to know that the righteous will never be shaken? Let's pray.

*Our glorious God and Father in heaven, we thank You for this, Your word. We're grateful for the experiences of David some 3,000 years ago, knowing that they prefigured the experience of the One who would sit upon the throne of David, our Lord Jesus Christ. We are grateful, O God, that you are a God who upholds us and who sustains us in our time of need. Give us the grace to cast our burden upon You. And we pray this now in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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