

The Lord: Our Refuge from the Storm

A Sermon on Psalm 55

by

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1. Introduction

2. Five Lessons to Learn in the School of Betrayal

a. Cry Out to God in Your Time of Need.

i. David's first instinct in the midst of betrayal is to pray. "Give ear to my prayer, O God; and do not hide Yourself from my supplication. Give heed to me and answer me..." (vv. 1-2a).

1. Behind David's prayer is the presumption that God alone is the One who can help him in his time of need.

a. David is not under any illusions that he is able to solve this crisis on his own.

b. In one sense, that is the purpose behind why we pray. Prayer is the recognition that God is the Sovereign King over all things, and He is the only One who actually has the ability to do something about it.

2. David knows this truth intimately, so he requests, four times in fact, that God will actually act in his time of need.

a. He requests, "Bend your ear to me...do not hide from me...give heed to me...answer me. "

b. When true, genuine hardship hits us—our desperation comes right to the surface. Yet from the simple act of prayer, comes confidence.

ii. “As for me, I shall call upon God, and the Lord will save me. Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, and He will hear my voice” (vv. 16-17).

1. Do you see how David’s mind and heart has shifted, even if ever so slightly?

a. In the first two verses you see a broken man crying out to God in sheer panic and heartache because of the situation at hand.

b. But by this point, David just states these things as a declarative reality.

2. The question we must ask then is how David was able to get to this point.

a. In much the same way he started, David continued to pour out his heart before God in prayer, because he saw God as his refuge.

b. David didn’t just learn to pray this way overnight—he had to be brought through the school of betrayal and affliction to learn that God was his only refuge.

b. You Will Be Betrayed—Even By Those You Love Most.

i. The first thing the psalmist draws attention to is that the motives of his enemies are sordid.

1. “I am restless in my complaint and am surely distracted, 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” (vv. 2b-3).

2. His enemies have clamped down on him and put the pressure on—and they’ve spoken clearly to what their intent is.

ii. David’s enemies surround him, so much so, that he looks upon the city and sees that their evil prevails openly.

1. “For I have seen violence and strife in the city. Day and night they go around her upon her walls, and iniquity and mischief are in her midst. Destruction is in her midst; oppression and deceit do not depart from her streets” (vv. 9b-11).
 - a. Notice how he draws out at least seven ways their malice towards him is openly seen.
 - i. They are violent.
 - ii. They cause strife.
 - iii. They sin against him.
 - iv. They create mischief.
 - v. They bring ruin wherever they go.
 - vi. They oppress him.
 - vii. They are fraudulent liars.
 - b. They are always on the prowl, seizing every moment captive to bring him harm.
2. Their evil is so prevalent that David actually takes the ways they sin against him and personifies them.
 - a. He speaks as if violence, strife, iniquity, mischief, destruction, oppression, and deceit are embodied as actual people.
 - b. It doesn't much imagination to apply this same reality for what its like to live in a world dominated by the power of sin.
- iii. David's enemies are those who have made the Lord their enemy.
 1. “He will redeem my soul in peace from the battle which is against me, for they are many who strive with me. God will hear and answer them—even the one

who sits enthroned from of old—with whom there is no change, and who do not fear God” (vv. 18-19).

- a. The way verse 19 breaks out is a little clumsy, but the reference to those “with whom there is no change,” is not referring to God.
 - b. Grammatically, it refers to these men—and when he says they do not change, he is not talking about a moral reformation in their hearts.
2. They are men who do not fear God. Men who do not fear God will not stop in their evil, and they will likewise not fear His children.
- a. This is a reality that so many just don’t comprehend as they should.
 - b. No familial or fraternal bond can keep this reality from happening.
- iv. David’s closest friend, who he counted as a brother, has turned on him.
1. “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 it is you, a man my equal, my companion and my familiar friend; we who had sweet fellowship together walked in the house of God in the throng” (vv. 12-14).
 - a. David knew this man better than anyone else, or at least he thought he did. But when he looks back on their relationship, he can see things clearly.
 - b. “He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; he has violated his covenant. His speech was smoother than butter, but his heart was war; His words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords” (vv. 20-21).

2. The simple principle that David learned in the school of betrayal is that you will be betrayed by those closest to you.

a. The sad reality is that this is not a life lesson only learned outside the walls of the church.

b. Jesus Himself modeled this reality well, and we will follow in the footsteps of our Master. So, how do we deal with this biblically?

c. *Learn to Embrace the Hardship.*

i. Notice how bluntly he speaks to the raw emotional state he is in under the weight of this betrayal (vv. 4-8).

1. He piles these words on top of one another, and it gives us a very vivid picture of a man whose pain is unbearable.

a. The way that he describes his anguish in verse 4 is like he is writhing in pain, like a woman in labor.

b. But it is not merely that he is grieved over the betrayal, he is seized with so much fear because this man is trying to kill him.

2. Like many of us, David's immediate reaction is to escape from the trial, which we see in verses 6-8.

a. He imagines the bliss that would come if he could have wings like a dove and simply fly away from it all.

b. He could retreat into the wilderness where no one could find him, and he could place himself on high, free from the stormy tempest that surrounds him right now.

c. If we are honest with ourselves and thinking biblically, escapism is never a genuine option for the Christian.

- ii. What David had to learn through the school of betrayal was that he must come to embrace his hardship.
 - 1. In every way you can think about it, he is pressed in on every side and all he wants is relief—but there is no relief to be found.
 - a. So, what does he do? He prays, and in that simple act, he entrusts himself to God and embraces he can't change things. Only God can.
 - b. What comes with that embrace is a sense of peace—not because the hardship is gone, but that God is with him.
 - 2. If you're honest, the hardest part about facing the hardship of this life is that you can't just push down the emotions that come with it, can you?
 - a. What matters is not so much that you feel real emotions in the midst of hardship.
 - b. You're going to have these feelings—what ultimately matters is how you respond.

d. Leave Vengeance to God.

- i. At various points throughout this psalm, David prays an imprecatory prayer, which is a prayer of judgment.
 - 1. In verse 9a, he prays, “Confuse, O Lord, divide their tongues.”
 - a. Here he is simply asking that the Lord would render them silent.
 - b. He's actually alluding to the Tower of Babel here, asking that God confuse them and break them up.
 - 2. In verse 15, he prays, “Let death come deceitfully upon them; let them go down alive to Sheol, for evil is in their dwelling, in their midst.”

- a. Here, he's alluding to the story of Korah in the book of Numbers, where the ground opens up and the insurrectionists are swallowed whole.
 - b. This is a proper way to pray for the wicked who will not turn from their evil ways.
- ii. In verse 19, he declares, "God will hear and answer them—even the One who sits enthroned from of old—with whom there is no change, and who do not fear God."
 1. The point David makes here is simple: God is the sovereign king of old. He rules with complete perfection, and no evil goes unpunished.
 2. It is just and right that God punish evil, and that is precisely what God will do for those who do not fear Him.
 - a. The presumption behind this verse is not purely vengeance though, and this is important for us to understand.
 - b. If these are men who do change, who do come to fear the Lord, the presumption is that vengeance will not come upon them.
- e. *Make the Lord Your Refuge.*
- i. You can see this principle woven all throughout this psalm, but it rings most clearly through the final section of this psalm (vv. 16-23).
 1. Remember: David did not begin this way, but came to learn his confidence could only be placed in God.
 2. By the end of this psalm though, David has grounded himself in the truth of who God is, not merely as Judge, but as Redeemer.
 - a. In verse 16, David knows that when he cries out to God, the Lord will save him.

- b. In verse 17, David knows that as he prays continually, even as he's complaining and murmuring the whole time, God will still hear him.
 - c. In verse 18, even though David has enemies on all sides, God will redeem him and snatch him from harm's way.
 - d. In verse 19, even though David's enemies pretend as if they don't have to answer to God, God will answer their deeds accordingly.
 - e. After all is said and done, David now turns to the congregation to teach them what he has learned in the school of betrayal.
- ii. "Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken. 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" (vv. 22-23).
- 1. In its simplest form, the instruction of David is that you and I be a people who cast our cares on the Lord.
 - a. The reasons he gives are quite simple: God will sustain us, God will not allow us to be shaken, and God will judge the wicked.
 - b. It is much the same reality that Peter gives us in 1 Peter 5:7, where we are told to cast all our cares upon the Lord, for He cares for us.
 - 2. The idea expressed is that the believer comes to the Lord with what burdens they hold in their hands, and lay them upon the Lord.
 - a. He instead shall be the One to bear our burdens, and meet our every need.
 - b. In other words, it is much the same thing I have said all throughout this psalm, which is that the Lord Himself is our sure refuge and strength.

3. Conclusion

Benediction: May the Lord bless you, and keep you; may the Lord make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; may the Lord lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace” (Nu. 6:24-26).

Small Group Questions:

1. The principles learned in this psalm can be applied broadly to any time of trial. In light of that, how have you seen the Lord bring you through “the school of affliction,” and how did He show His care for you?
2. In what way does knowing that you will face betrayal in this life give you confidence in the Lord’s provisions (He will save, He will redeem, He will sustain, and He will judge)?
3. Do you pray with the frankness and honesty that David does in this psalm? Why or why not? How does this sermon impact your current understanding of prayer?