

Handling Life's Difficulties

Psalm 55

Introduction:

1. This is a Maschil psalm - it is a teaching psalm - instruction
2. This psalm was written early in Absalom's rebellion
3. David was still in Jerusalem and the revolt was gathering momentum
4. We live in a world that is full of burdens to bear
 - a. Sorrow and trouble come to all
 - b. They are not respecters of persons
 - c. The rich have their share of trouble like the poor do
 - d. Job 5:7 – Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward
 - e. Job 14:1 – Man that is born of woman is of few days / full of trouble.
5. There are so many burdens.
 - a. Burdens that have to do with the home and family
 - b. Burdens that have to do with work or business
 - c. There are burdens in connection with the Lord's work
 - d. There are physical burdens and health problems
 - e. There are burdens of disappointment, fear, anxiety, depression, despair
6. Difficulties reveal what is inside a person
Consider the behavior of some passengers aboard the doomed luxury liner Titanic. As the great ship was sinking and the few lifeboats were being filled, the command on deck was "women and children first." According to one survivor, most of the men and older boys obeyed the order. But some men ran back to the ship's staterooms and changed into women's clothing in an effort to gain a seat on a lifeboat. The crisis brought out the worst in these men. What about us? When trials come our way, do we respond in fear or in faith?"
7. The psalm reveals four possible approaches to handling the painful problems and battles of life.

I. WE CAN LOOK WITHIN AT OUR FEELINGS – VS 1-5

A. David Felt Abandoned by God – vs 1-2

1 Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication.

2 Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;

1. This is the language of earnestness – “give ear / attend unto me”
2. It is a dreadful thing when the heavens seem as brass
3. When we have a lurking fear that our sins have separated us from our God
4. David felt abandoned by God

B. David Felt Abused by Men – vs 3

3 Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.

1. David was cornered by his circumstances and he could hear the clamor of the hounds
2. “Oppression” means crushed by a heavy weight and is only used here
 - a) *Absalom wanted the kingdom and he didn’t care if his father was killed in the process*
 - b) *Probably the death of David was essential to his plans*
3. “Enemy” can also be translated “lawless one”
 - a) *How often we are chased by the “lawless one”*
 - b) *The “lawless one” here was Absalom*
4. His son cast iniquity upon David
 - a) *David was charged with sin by his son*
 - b) *Absalom tried to justify himself by accusing David of wrong doing*
5. It was Absalom, David’s beloved son, who was raising the outcry against David

C. David Feared What Might Happen – vs 4-5

4 My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. **5** Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.

1. David's heart writhed (sore pained) within him
 - a) *David is still haunted by the ghost of Uriah and by the horror of his past sin*
 - b) *When will he stop paying for those sinful days?*
 - c) *Sin is such a terrible thing*
 - d) *He thought he would just have a "little fling" but it didn't end there*
 - e) *David is now reaping the whirlwind*
2. David had been forgiven of those past sins, but he must live with the consequences of those sins

We can look within and dwell on our feelings or....

II. WE CAN LOOK BEYOND FOR A SAFE REFUGE – VS 6-8

- It is as though David withdrew into a dream world

A. He Dreamed About Flying Away – vs 6

6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! *for then would I fly away, and be at rest.*

1. Maybe David looked up and saw a dove take flight from a branch near by..
2. "If I just had wings like a bird, I could fly away from the trouble and be at peace."
3. That Jerusalem mob, egged on by Absalom is more than David can stand – he must get away
4. He was sick of the slander, lies and the gossip
5. David took off to leave Jerusalem before he was killed

B. David Dreamed About Hiding in the Woods – vs 7-8

7 Lo, *then* would I wander far off, *and* remain in the wilderness. Selah. **8** I would hasten my escape from the windy storm *and* tempest.

1. The worst troubles David had in his fugitive years when he ran from King Saul were nothing like this
2. He longed to be in a hideout in the woods

We can look within at our feelings / beyond for a safe refuge or...

III. WE CAN LOOK AROUND AT THE CIRCUMSTANCES

A. Trouble in His Country – vs 9-11

9 Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city. **10** Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow *are* in the midst of it. **11** Wickedness *is* in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

1. Here David's mood changes
 - a) *Now his anger blazes out in white heat*
 - b) *Defeat and despair have now changed to anger*
2. David's guards hustle him safely out of Jerusalem
 - a) *He is forced to leave behind all the gold that he has accumulated for the building of the temple*
 - b) *His wives are left behind in the palace*
3. David prays that Absalom's counselors will disagree and give Absalom contradictory and confusing advice
4. David's friend Hushai came with him, but David sent him back to befriend Absalom and counter the crafty advice of Ahithophel

B. Treachery of His Comrade – vs 12-15; 20-21

12 For *it was* not an enemy *that* reproached me; then I could have borne *it*: neither *was it* he that hated me *that* did magnify *himself* against me; then I would have hid myself from him: **13** But *it was* thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. **14** We took sweet counsel together, *and* walked unto the house of God in company. **15** Let death seize upon them, *and* let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness *is* in their dwellings, *and* among them. **20** He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. **21** *The words* of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war *was* in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet *were* they drawn swords.

1. David here remembers that at the heart of Absalom's rebellion is Ahithophel
 - a) *There is nothing worse than the treachery of a close and trusted friend*
 - b) *Ahithophel was a trusted advisor and counselor for David*
2. David is reminded of the old days when he and Ahithophel went to the house of God together
 - a) *But now Ahithophel counseled Absalom to rape David's wives shamelessly in public*
 - b) *Ahithophel advised Absalom to take the life of David*
3. Suddenly and viciously, he stabbed David in the back and in the end Ahithophel hanged himself
4. The parallel is that Jesus' friend, Judas, betrayed him and later hanged himself

We can look within at our feelings / we can look beyond for a safe refuge / we can look around at circumstances

IV. WE CAN LOOK UP TO GOD AND TRUST HIM

A. David Prayed Courageously – vs 16

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

1. David's confidence lay in the righteous character of God
2. God had chosen David to be king and it was inconceivable that He would remove David
3. David couldn't lead an army at that time, but he knew that God could deliver him

B. David Prayed Consistently – vs 17

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

1. He didn't just pray once about this situation
2. Daily he prayed and several times daily
3. This was the practice of the pious Jew – like Daniel

C. David Prayed Confidently – vs 18-21

18 He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle *that was* against me: for there were many with me. **19** God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah...

1. David's confidence was in God and he saw himself as already delivered from Absalom
2. The battle had not yet been fought, but David was at peace
3. From past experience, David knew that God would deliver David and restore him
4. David's enemies were deceitful men – vs 21

21 *The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.*

- a) *When Judas showed up with the officials he said, "Hail Master"*
- b) *His words were smoother than butter*
- c) *Absalom, by flattery, stole the kingdom*

D. David Prayed Conclusively – vs 22-23

1. God's Defense of the Saint – vs 22

22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

- a) *What a remarkable statement of faith*
- b) *David knew how to rise above his circumstances – he simply looked at them in the light of God*
- c) *Notice that it is “burden” and not “burdens”*
- d) *We are not to let them accumulate – as soon as we have a burden, we are to cast it on the Lord*
- e) *If it is the burden of sin – confess it*
1Jo 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
- f) *If it is the burden of sorrow – grief over wayward children, or the anguish of bereavement, then cry out to the one who wept at the grave of Lazarus*

1Pe 5:7 *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*

2. God's Defeat of the Sinner – vs 23

23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.

- a) *The hymn writer had known hours of pain and loss*
Though Satan should buffet, tho' trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ had regarded my helpless estate
And hath shed his own blood for my soul.

“Why?”

I have heard the white-tipped tapping cane,
Which leads a blinded eye.
And then a darkened, lonely voice
Cries, "Preacher, show me why."

I have caught a fiancée's burning tears,
And heard her lonely cry.
She held an unused wedding gown,
And shouted, "Preacher, why?"

I have heard the cancer patient say,
"Tis gain for me to die;"
Then look into his daughter's face,
And mutely whisper, "Why?"

I heard an orphan faintly say,
Who gazed into the sky,
"Tho mom and dad have gone away,
My preacher will know why.

I have sat beside a tiny crib,
And watched a baby die,
As parents slowly turned toward me,
To ask, "Oh, Pastor, why?"

I tiptoed to my Father's throne,
So timid and so shy,
To say, "Dear God, some of your own
Are wanting to know why."

I heard him say so tenderly,
"Their eyes I'll gladly dry,
Tho they look through faith today,
Tomorrow they'll know why.

And so I've found it pleases Him
When I can testify,
"I'll trust my God to do what's best,
And wait to find out why.