



## Daily Devotions in the Psalms

Psalm 55-59

# Monday 15th June - Psalm 55

**For the director of music. With stringed instruments.  
A maskil of David.**

Listen to my prayer, O God,  
do not ignore my plea;  
2 hear me and answer me.  
My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught  
3 because of what my enemy is saying,  
because of the threats of the wicked;  
for they bring down suffering on me  
and assail me in their anger.  
4 My heart is in anguish within me;  
the terrors of death have fallen on me.  
5 Fear and trembling have beset me;  
horror has overwhelmed me.  
6 I said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!  
I would fly away and be at rest.  
7 I would flee far away  
and stay in the desert;  
8 I would hurry to my place of shelter,  
far from the tempest and storm."  
9 Lord, confuse the wicked, confound their words,  
for I see violence and strife in the city.  
10 Day and night they prowl about on its walls;  
malice and abuse are within it.  
11 Destructive forces are at work in the city;  
threats and lies never leave its streets.  
12 If an enemy were insulting me,  
I could endure it;  
if a foe were rising against me,  
I could hide.  
13 But it is you, a man like myself,  
my companion, my close friend,

14 with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship  
at the house of God,  
as we walked about  
among the worshipers.  
15 Let death take my enemies by surprise;  
let them go down alive to the realm of the dead,  
for evil finds lodging among them.  
16 As for me, I call to God,  
and the Lord saves me.  
17 Evening, morning and noon  
I cry out in distress,  
and he hears my voice.  
18 He rescues me unharmed  
from the battle waged against me,  
even though many oppose me.  
19 God, who is enthroned from of old,  
who does not change—  
he will hear them and humble them,  
because they have no fear of God.  
20 My companion attacks his friends;  
he violates his covenant.  
21 His talk is smooth as butter,  
yet war is in his heart;  
his words are more soothing than oil,  
yet they are drawn swords.  
22 Cast your cares on the Lord  
and he will sustain you;  
he will never let  
the righteous be shaken.  
23 But you, God, will bring down the wicked  
into the pit of decay;  
the bloodthirsty and deceitful  
will not live out half their days.  
But as for me, I trust in you.

I wonder what your first response is when others wrong you deeply? Do you respond with: "how dare they!?" Do you meditate on every aspect of their person that is somehow wrong? Do you talk with many people about how hurt you are and seek validation and support for your cause? Perhaps you ask for others to pray but what you're really doing is slander. I wonder how fast (or slow...) you are to pray?

In this Psalm we find David grieving a great betrayal. The Psalm begins with a plea to God to hear his prayer. David is experience deep distress (v. 2) and deep anguish (v. 4) because of his enemies. He's fearful and overwhelmed by horror (v. 5). He wants to run away and forget his troubles (v. 6). He prays that God would bring justice, but as the Psalm progresses, we discover that his enemy was once his companion (v. 13). They worshipped together (v. 14).

I think relational pain is one of the deepest pains we humans can experience. And when it's not just betrayal, but where one who you love does all they can to destroy you (which is the case here), that pain can unbearable. Let this Psalm remind you to first and foremost, pray to the Lord when you feel like David. Don't repay the evil of others with evil. "Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you". So often we are quick to complain and meditate on the evil of others instead of praying and trusting the king. We too can say the right words but harbour war in our hearts (v. 21).

A greater king than David knew a greater betrayal. Which means He understands your sorrows. And His death enables His people to persevere in deep anguish, for he is not just sympathetic, but empathetic. Let his grace and his forgiveness help you to respond with righteousness when you are wronged.

James

# Tuesday 16th June - Psalm 56

**For the director of music. To the tune of "A Dove on Distant Oaks." Of David. A miktam. When the Philistines had seized him in Gath.**

Be merciful to me, my God,  
for my enemies are in hot pursuit;  
all day long they press their attack.  
2 My adversaries pursue me all day long;  
in their pride many are attacking me.  
3 When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.  
4 In God, whose word I praise—  
in God I trust and am not afraid.  
What can mere mortals do to me?  
5 All day long they twist my words;  
all their schemes are for my ruin.  
6 They conspire, they lurk,  
they watch my steps,  
hoping to take my life.

7 Because of their wickedness do not let them escape;  
in your anger, God, bring the nations down.  
8 Record my misery;  
list my tears on your scroll—  
are they not in your record?  
9 Then my enemies will turn back  
when I call for help.  
By this I will know that God is for me.  
10 In God, whose word I praise,  
in the Lord, whose word I praise—  
11 in God I trust and am not afraid.  
What can man do to me?  
12 I am under vows to you, my God;  
I will present my thank offerings to you.  
13 For you have delivered me from death  
and my feet from stumbling,  
that I may walk before God  
in the light of life.

David wrote Psalm 56 while fearing for his life, pouring his heart out under adversity "all day long" (v. 2). King David experienced his fair share of anxiety, sorrow, and pain.

In exile, virtually all your supports are taken away and all the things you depend on get threatened. This is much more than a geographical displacement and more like a loss of home and the world as you knew it. At some level, we are all in denial that this could happen to us, but like David, we are sometimes seized by our troubles.

Psalm 56:3 says, "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you." Notice: it does not say, "I never struggle with fear." Fear strikes, and the battle begins. The Bible does not assume that true believers will have no anxieties. Instead, the Bible tells us how to fight when they strike.

We see David praising God three times (v. 4,10) in this short Psalm, not just when his problems are over but all through his suffering. David's lament and tears are known to the Lord (v. 8) and he rests his case with the assurance that God will hear and respond with justice.

It's amazing that God is close enough to record every one of David's tears and not just his deeds. In Christ God came even closer as Jesus wept over our world as the man of sorrows who came to pay the penalty for our sin and reconcile us to God and bring us out of exile forever.

*Father God help me to calm my fearful heart with what the Scriptures tell me about who you are. Thank you that nothing about our lives goes unnoticed by you. Help us put our hope and confidence in you today. Amen.*

Martin

# Wednesday 17th June - Psalm 57

**For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." Of David. A miktam. When he had fled from Saul into the cave.**

Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me,  
for in you I take refuge.

I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings  
until the disaster has passed.

2 I cry out to God Most High,  
to God, who vindicates me.

3 He sends from heaven and saves me,  
rebuking those who hotly pursue me—  
God sends forth his love and his faithfulness.

4 I am in the midst of lions;  
I am forced to dwell among ravenous beasts—  
men whose teeth are spears and arrows,  
whose tongues are sharp swords.

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;  
let your glory be over all the earth.

6 They spread a net for my feet—  
I was bowed down in distress.

They dug a pit in my path—  
but they have fallen into it themselves.

7 My heart, O God, is steadfast,  
my heart is steadfast;  
I will sing and make music.

8 Awake, my soul!  
Awake, harp and lyre!  
I will awaken the dawn.

9 I will praise you, Lord, among the nations;  
I will sing of you among the peoples.

10 For great is your love, reaching to the heavens;  
your faithfulness reaches to the skies.

11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;  
let your glory be over all the earth.

There is one rule that every dysfunctional family has: whenever something goes wrong, blame someone or something else for the problem. It is never your fault.

But see how David responds to his situation (v. 4,6). Incredibly, David lives in the place of worship. Why? And more importantly how does David do this?

He sees his own need and his own lack of power (v. 1). His lack of power means that in faith He cries out to the one who can save (v. 2,3). He knows the way of restoration from God's goodness (v. 3) and so he is free to worship. See the freedom that he has. I wonder about the lack of freedom in our current circumstances, not being able to meet together. For David, his circumstances don't constrain him, nor does his helplessness, rather they accompany him to worship in the freedom God has for him.

Against this we might say with the old saying the Lord helps those who help themselves. But David would cry against this saying: "this doesn't work!" Rather the Lord is the only help to those who are helpless and who are desperate to find their rest in Him.

How often is our great problem not our situation, but our failure to see the hopelessness of who we are and our desperate need for a Saviour? Desperate to find forgiveness, desperate to find peace in an anxious world, desperate to find joy in a hard place. The place of freedom that comes when we surrender all to Him. But how do we do this? Let these words Psalm 57 become our words as we see our own weakness and the strength and glory of our King and Saviour Jesus.

Phil

# Thursday 18th June - Psalm 58

**For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." Of David. A miktam.**

Do you rulers indeed speak justly?

Do you judge people with equity?

2 No, in your heart you devise injustice,  
and your hands mete out violence on the earth.

3 Even from birth the wicked go astray;  
from the womb they are wayward, spreading lies.

4 Their venom is like the venom of a snake,  
like that of a cobra that has stopped its ears,

5 that will not heed the tune of the charmer,  
however skilful the enchanter may be.

6 Break the teeth in their mouths, O God;

Lord, tear out the fangs of those lions! 7 Let them  
vanish like water that flows away;

when they draw the bow, let their arrows fall short.

8 May they be like a slug that melts away as it moves  
along,

like a stillborn child that never sees the sun.

9 Before your pots can feel the heat of the thorns  
— whether they be green or dry—the wicked will be  
swept away.

10 The righteous will be glad when they are avenged,  
when they dip their feet in the blood of the wicked.

11 Then people will say,

"Surely the righteous still are rewarded;

surely there is a God who judges the earth."

Have you ever heard someone yelling out in a loud voice: "I'M NOT ANGRY"? It may be difficult for us to acknowledge or to express our deep feelings of anger, but the writer of Psalm 58 doesn't struggle with this problem. As he pours out his heart to God we realise how much is at stake. People are being ripped off and exploited. The poor are being oppressed. The innocent are being trampled on.

The judicial system designed to give people a fair hearing was putting honest people in the hands of unscrupulous judges and magistrates who received bribes, distorted justice, practised corruption, and consistently ignored the cries of the poor and downtrodden. David describes these evil people as venomous and cunning, deaf to the cries of the poor and needy.

David pleads to God on behalf of the poorest people who have no advocate, and no one to protect them. He prays for God to confront the evil doer, to break their power, to cut them off and to effectively remove them from the land.

Judgement is not usually something we eagerly anticipate and look forward to, but in this psalm David longs for God's righteous judgement to fall on the corrupt judges and magistrates. As he looks ahead, he rejoices in the day when God will act in judgement, righting the wrongs, punishing the wicked, declaring the downtrodden to be innocent.

The righteous will rejoice when they see vengeance done v.10.

Sometimes it seems as though God is passive while self-seeking people use their influence and position to oppress the poor and trample on those who are powerless. In Revelation 15 the redeemed of God sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb:

Great and amazing are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, King of the nations! Lord, who will not fear and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your judgements have been revealed. (Rev 15:3,4) The song celebrates the Lamb, the King of the nations, who is coming again to set things right.

In Psalm 58 David anticipates a wonderful answer to his prayer: People will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely there is a God who judges on earth." v.11.

*Father, thank you the courage you gave David to stand up for what was right, to speak out against injustice, and to plead for righteousness on behalf of the poor. In the midst of our current crisis, thank you for reminding us of the King (the Lamb) who is coming again to set everything right. Come Lord Jesus. Come quickly Lord.*

John

# Friday 19th June - Psalm 59

**For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." Of David. A miktam. When Saul had sent men to watch David's house in order to kill him.**

Deliver me from my enemies, O God;  
be my fortress against those who are attacking me.  
2 Deliver me from evildoers  
and save me from those who are after my blood.  
3 See how they lie in wait for me!  
Fierce men conspire against me  
for no offence or sin of mine, Lord.  
4 I have done no wrong, yet they are ready to attack me.  
Arise to help me; look on my plight!  
5 You, Lord God Almighty,  
you who are the God of Israel,  
rouse yourself to punish all the nations;  
show no mercy to wicked traitors.  
6 They return at evening,  
snarling like dogs,  
and prowling about the city.  
7 See what they spew from their mouths—  
the words from their lips are sharp as swords,  
and they think, "Who can hear us?"  
8 But you laugh at them, Lord;  
you scoff at all those nations.  
9 You are my strength, I watch for you;  
you, God, are my fortress,

10 my God on whom I can rely.  
God will go before me  
and will let me gloat over those who slander me.  
11 But do not kill them, Lord our shield,  
or my people will forget.  
In your might uproot them  
and bring them down.  
12 For the sins of their mouths,  
for the words of their lips,  
let them be caught in their pride.  
For the curses and lies they utter,  
13 consume them in your wrath,  
consume them till they are no more.  
Then it will be known to the ends of the earth  
that God rules over Jacob.  
14 They return at evening,  
snarling like dogs,  
and prowling about the city.  
15 They wander about for food  
and howl if not satisfied.  
16 But I will sing of your strength,  
in the morning I will sing of your love;  
for you are my fortress,  
my refuge in times of trouble.  
17 You are my strength, I sing praise to you;  
you, God, are my fortress,  
my God on whom I can rely.

We all know that feeling of someone attacking us unjustly. It might have been siblings shifting blame or class mates stitching us up, but I doubt many of us know David's fears as Saul pursued his very life. I imagine that one of the challenges for David was that he never chose this life. Samuel showed up at his house one day, poured oil on his head and told him he was chosen by God to be king. And David responded with faith and faithfulness. He served Saul faithfully. He fought Goliath. He refused marriage to Saul's eldest daughter due to feeling unworthy and then eventually agreed to marry Michal. And after all that, his faithfulness and success put him in the crosshairs.

I can't help but think that God brought these troubles into David's life to enrich the singing of Israel. To give them words of despair and lament. To give them words for desperate times. To remind them that sometimes, perhaps often, according to God's will it is the righteous who suffer. We like to think that being good means life will be easy. But Jesus calls us to take up our cross, not our cushion.

All of which means, as you experience the injustice of this life, and as people spew words against you from lips as sharp as swords (!), don't believe the lie that God is absent or against you. We follow a king who suffered the greatest of injustices. Our King tells us to expect the same.

This Psalm models despair and calling upon God for salvation. It reminds us that begin God for help is an act of faith. And in the midst of trouble it gives us a model of singing of God's strength and love, even whilst in the darkness. Like Paul and Silas in prison. We know justice will prevail. We know God will never forsake us. We know God is at work even in times of great sorrow and injustice. Let this Psalm help you to wait and pray and sing.

*Father, help us to call out to you in our sorrows. Help us to trust you and seek you as our refuge and strength. Help us even to sing, knowing we can rely on you. Amen.*

James