

The Anguish in Betrayal

Psalm 55: 1-23

Words of false-accusation and betrayal are never easy to endure, especially when coming from one trusted as a friend. No doubt, we all have experienced such an attack at some point in life, feeling as if we had been stabbed in the back, and betrayed by one we trusted.

Such is the setting for our psalm today. Like many others, this is a psalm of David. It is believed to have been written during Absalom's rebellion. The rebellion of one's son would be difficult enough to endure, but David soon discovered that Ahithophel, one of his trusted advisors, had conspired against him in support of Absalom. [2 Sam.15:12 – And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.](#)

The fifty-fifth psalm has two unique features. First, it is what is known as an *imprecatory* psalm – one in which the author prays for God to defeat his enemies. It is also a *maschil* psalm – one written to provide instruction and guidance. Hopefully, none are facing a similar situation today, but this psalm provides truth that is relevant in any situation. As we examine the [concessions](#) of David, I want us to consider: [The Anguish in Betrayal](#).

I. The Pain He Felt (1-8) – In the opening verses of the psalm, David expressed the great pain he felt due to being betrayed. Consider:

A. David's Supplication (1-2) – David began this psalm pleading with the Lord, seeking the favor and grace of God in his situation. He will reveal the magnitude of his need in a moment, but David had learned that he needed God in every situation of life. He wasted no time calling on the Lord.

- While this reveals what most consider a simple truth, it has profound implications. I fear too often we seek a resolution to our problems, exhausting every possible effort, before we take the need to the Lord in prayer. Like David, we need to learn to immediately take our needs unto the Lord, not matter how big or small. Prayer should be our first inclination, not a last resort!

B. David's Oppression (3-5) – David faced a direct and unwarranted attack from those who sought to bring him harm. If in fact he wrote this during Absalom's rebellion, these attacks would have been particular injurious. Their words had no restraint, and they grieved David. They caused great sadness, as well as fear. He knew they were committed to overthrowing his authority, seeking to take the kingdom, at any cost. David knew this was a targeted attack.

- We do not rule over a kingdom, but likely we have dealt with similar attacks at some point in life. Slander and hatred are never easy to face, but they are especially difficult when brought by one we loved and trusted. Such attacks grieve our hearts, and even create fear in our lives. After the initial shock of betrayal, we wonder how far the aggressor will take the attacks. [Psalm 61:2 – From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.](#)

C. David's Desperation (6-8) – As David faced the attack of those whom he loved, he found himself in desperation. His love for Absalom was without question. He had no desire to fight with his son, and he was confused by the betrayal of Ahithophel. In his time of great need, David wished he were a dove, so he could take flight and flee the situation. He simply wanted to escape the struggle he faced without having to suffer harm or bring harm to anyone else. David wished to depart from the situation until the storm passed.

- David expressed sentiments to which we all can relate. How many times have we wished to have the ability to depart from our current situation and leave our troubles behind? That is exactly what David desired in this situation. Maybe like David, we don't desire to suffer additional hurt, but we have no desire to bring harm to others. We long to be removed from the storm we face.

II. The Problem He Faced (9-14) – As David prayed for the Lord to deal with his enemies according to their wickedness, he revealed the problem they had brought to his life. We discover:

A. A Violent Encounter (9-11) – David declared his enemies had been violent, causing damage through cruelty and unjust oppression. They were relentless in their pursuit to bring harm to him, engaging day and night in their oppressive ways. They were wicked men who sought to deceive and harm David's reputation among those who may have been sympathetic or supportive of him.

- Unfortunately, most have encountered situations similar to this. We may not have been faced with physical violence, but harsh and condemning words can do as much, or more damage, than a physical blow. Often those who become angry are consumed with their anger and will stop at nothing to debase and slander those who are the object of their anger. They feel no remorse in spreading vicious lies in an attempt to mar one's reputation, seeking to weaken support for those with whom they are angry. Bitterness and anger are strong emotions that drive men to extreme measures.

B. A Vengeful Encounter (12-14) – David revealed he could have handled the attacks better had they come from a known enemy, those whom he had suffered previous attacks. However, these were men familiar to him, those he loved and trusted. These men had shared bread at his table. He had counseled with them, seeking advice. They had worshipped together at the house of God. Those whom David loved had turned on him in a vengeful attack.

- These attacks are always the most difficult to understand and endure. If you have ever been betrayed by a friend or family member, you understand how David might have felt. Often these attacks come from those with whom we are familiar, those who have visited our homes and eaten at our tables. Unfortunately, they may even come from those with whom we worship, being part of our own congregation. (Consider how Jesus felt being betrayed by Judas.)

III. The Peace He Found (16-23) – As David concluded the psalm, he spoke of the peace he found in the Lord. Notice:

A. The Prayer unto God (16-17) – Although he faced a determined foe, those who sought his life, David rested in the Lord. He knew the Lord would provide for him, delivering him from the hand of his enemies. David was committed unto prayer. He prayed morning, noon, and night unto the Lord. This is the second mention of prayer we find in this particular psalm.

- Again, prayer should always be our immediate pursuit, not a last response to problems. We serve one who has promised to be there for us, closer than any brother. We can rest secured in the promises and provision of our Lord. Like David, we must make prayer a priority, engaging continually in communion with the Lord. He is seated at the Father's right hand, making intercession for us. We can boldly come before the throne of grace with our needs!

B. The Peace of God (18-19a) – As of yet, the struggle was not over. David's enemies remained, and their determination to defeat him had not wavered. While his enemies were many, God gave David peace and rest in the midst of his battle. Although it may have appeared that David was outnumbered by those who sought his life, he knew that being with the Lord constituted a majority. David rested as if the enemy had already been defeated.

- Worry is too often found among believers. I do not say that to accuse, because I too am prone to worry at times. However, there is no need for the believer to worry. Our Lord has already conquered every enemy we could possibly face. He triumphantly rose victorious over death, hell, and the grave. He faced every temptation we do, yet without sin. Victory has already been

secured in Christ our Lord. If Christ be for us, who, or what can possibly come against us? We are more than conquerors through our mighty Lord!

C. The Provision of God (22) – The battle may have continued to rage, yet David rested peacefully in the provision of God. He had faced dire situations in the past and God had always been faithful. David had no reason to doubt God in this situation. He had cried out unto the Lord, making his need known, and now David rested in the Lord. God had sustained him when the enemy sought to destroy him.

- Much too often we bear burdens unnecessarily. The Lord is faithful to provide. We can cast our cares upon the Lord knowing He cares for us and will provide that which we need to endure the trials we face. He has never failed, and I do not plan to doubt Him now!

D. The Protection from God (23) – David was convinced that God would fight this battle for him. Just like with Goliath, the battle is the Lord's. David trusted in God to protect him from the enemy and preserve his life. Those who sought David's defeat had not planned on God fighting the battle for him. David had prayed, giving the burden to the Lord, and he was now going to rest while God took care of his need, defeating his enemies.

- There will be times when we must stand and fight, and there will be times when it is best to give our burdens to the Lord and let Him fight the battle for us. When dealing with betrayal and slander, it is best to give the need to God and allow Him to handle the situation. Those who seek to slander our name, being deceitful, will often twist our words for their advantage. At times it is best to give our burden to the Lord and wait patiently while He works in the situation. This requires restraint and patience, but victory will come in the end.

Conclusion: No doubt, these situations are hard to deal with because of the hurt and confusion associated with them. No one likes to be attacked unjustly, but unfortunately, these attacks will come from time to time. When they do, we must seek the Lord in prayer, resting in His provision and grace, while allowing Him to deliver us from the battle. Sometimes we make things worse when we engage those who come against us. Learn to pray and trust the Lord.

If you are struggling, why not do as David did and bring your cares to the Lord? He is already aware of your need, but He desires you to bring it to Him and allow Him to handle it.