

A Painful Betrayal

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Well, I'm so happy to see you all here this evening. One of the things that I love about the Bible is that it takes life seriously and you don't have to live too very long before you want something that is dealing with life in an earnest way. The frivolity and the silliness of life and of entertainment and the different things that occupy the minds of men soon lose their appeal and you see through the glitter of it all when your heart is troubled, and that things are happening, and you need something that you can really base your life on. And one of the ways that that manifests itself and you don't have to be around too long to realize that, is that there are times where relationships disappoint you, where people that you trusted betray you and turn against you and abandon you even in your time of need. We all know something about that and when that happens and when the consequences of that start to develop and start to unfold, there is a lot of inner turmoil to that, sometimes there are external consequences that you have to deal with when that takes place, you know something about that and something about even being betrayed by those that are closest to you. Well, at a time like that, you want something meaningful to respond to it. You don't need a comedian at a time like that when life has really fractured on you. You need something that you can turn to and say, "Oh, I find help here that strengthens my soul. I find assistance in these things that can give me the strength to go on."

Well, Psalm 55 which Andrew read for us earlier, is a Psalm like that. Psalm 55 is David's prayer, an extended prayer at that, in response to the betrayal of a friend and this betrayal has had a lot of consequences in his life, and not only in his life, in the people who were living in the capital city of Jerusalem. So David comes to God in this prayer and basically he asks God to help him through the difficulty and he expresses trust in God and in the God who saves his people and in the process, as you're going to see, David expresses feelings that are very familiar to us. We can identify with some of the things that David says, how he wants to run away, he wants to escape the trouble and just leave it all behind and go someplace else as if he could leave it behind. But, beloved, as we're going to see in the exposition of the text, that's never a godly response to your troubles to just run away from them, to just abandon everything and just flee in panic away from what is going on. The answer to trouble and even the answer to betrayal is to take that as an opportunity for you to turn in trusting faith to your God, remember who he is, ask him for his help and – watch this – and to wait for him to work it out and to deliver you in it. Psalm 55 in part teaches us and admonishes us not to give into that desire for escape but rather than running away from it, to take that as an opportunity to draw near to your God

and that's in part what we're going to see this evening. I'm very delighted to be able to open this Psalm with you. It's a privilege, really, any time that we open God's word together, isn't it?

So with that in mind, this Psalm breaks down in three main sections and in the first 8 verses we could say that we're seeing David's oppression. David's oppression in the first 8 verses. So let's just follow along and see what David has to say to us here as he opens this Psalm and, more importantly, what God has to say for us and to us because this is the word of God that we are reading, not ancient human literature of only a human origin. This comes from God and it's his word to his people and so we approach it with a sense of reverence, a sense of awe, a sense of great and deep respect to realize that our Creator has spoken to us in his word, and we approach it with that sense of respect but also with a sense of desire, a sense of longing, a sense of earnest receptivity because for those of us who are in Christ, we are receiving the word not only of our God but of our Redeemer, of our Savior, the one who has loved our soul enough to give himself up on a cross for us. So this is a very precious time every time we open God's word together and I'm delighted that you're here with us to do that here this evening.

So this first section, David's oppression, records his prayer to be saved from his plight. Look at the first two verses of Psalm 55, and obviously with a Psalm of 23 verses, we're going to, at best, just skim the surface of what this Psalm is saying here this evening. David prays,

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,

Already in those first two verses, beloved, you have something that's of great encouragement to you as you see David's example as he prays. First of all, you see him calling out and as he often opens up his prayers, "God, pay attention. Listen to me. Hear me. Respond to me. Give an answer to me as I pray to you." David opens many of his Psalms in this manner and it is sort of an invocation for God to hear him and he acknowledges the one that he is approaching. But for those of you that know something of what it's like to have trouble weighing on your mind so hard that it's sometimes even difficult to think straight, you have a friend in the Scriptures here as we read what David has to say.

Look at what he says there at the end of verse 2, he says, "I am restless in my complaint and I am surely distracted." David's mind and his thoughts are going back and forth, tossing to and fro like a restless ocean wave crashing on the seashore only to crash again and again. And you can identify with that, can't you? You know something about understanding that your Christian life is not always an easy bed of rose petals that you walk along in utter serenity.

One of the things I should have posted it to the choir group on Facebook but I didn't do this, I thought about it at the time on Sunday as our choir was singing and I was looking

into their faces as they sang so well and were an encouragement to us all. One of the things that struck me is looking at each individual face, I know from just relationships that everyone that was up there was going through a serious or has in the recent past, gone through serious life issues that were a test to their faith and yet they were up singing and serving Christ in that way.

Well, we understand that and what I want you to draw encouragement from in the midst of this Psalm here when David says, "I am restless in my complaint. I am distracted here," is to draw encouragement from and to trust your God for what this is telling us. God hears us even through the noise of the battle. God is able to hear the cry in the midst of the booming canons of trial. God hears us even when it seems like we are praying out of utter weakness and even with a divided voice. Beloved, your God, the same God who gave himself on Calvary, who shed his blood in order to save you from your sins, your God receives you even when trouble is plaguing your mind; even when it seems like you get three words out and you're distracted and your mind is running someplace else because the trouble is so close and so pressing and so difficult and so disappointing. God hears us even in the midst of our distracted prayers.

Isn't that a sweet comfort to your soul? Isn't it wonderful to know how merciful, how compassionate, how gracious God is? And how wonderful it is that he would record something like this in the Psalms to encourage us and to invite us and to bid us to pray even when it seems like we have trouble even giving our full attention to it because the battle is so strong? I don't know about you but I love him for that. I don't know about you but I often need that. You're praying and the problem, you're expressing your concerns to God and then the trouble crashes in again and you're thinking in human terms and you're back and forth. David says, "God, I'm restless in my complaint. I'm distracted. Hear me." It's an appeal to sheer grace and mercy from a loving God to the one who is praying.

Well, David voices the reason for his plight. Look at verse 3. Why is it, David, that you need God to answer? Why are you distracted? He says in verse 3,

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.

It's like a bookshelf that has been tipped over and it has just fallen on him and different aspects, things off the shelf are falling. All of this trouble has just landed on him in a heavy crash upon his life and there are multiple dimensions to it as we'll see as we go along. He says, "God, there are wicked people who are after me. They have a grudge against me." And it hurts him in his inner man. It's not just the external circumstances. And again, every one of you who is here in Christ, I know that you know something about this. When you have external problems that are affecting you, it's not just the external manifestation of circumstance, is it? You feel the weight of it inside. You agitate on it and it hurts in the inner man. Well, David expresses that. David gives voice to it. Scripture gives voice to us and teaches us how to approach God and what to say to him in those times.

Verse 4, look at it with me. David says,

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.

Look at the words there. Look at the terms he uses: fear and trembling, horror and anguish and terror and death. He's praying from a pretty dark place in his heart. And the combination of all of these different terms just give us kind of a comprehensive sense of how great his anguish is. All of the different words, the related synonyms and things like that are all just kind of multiplying in order to give us a sense that this is dominating his mind as he comes before God and he is overwhelmed in the midst of it.

Well, it's at this point where David continues in his transparency. As we alluded to earlier and you can probably identify with David's initial response, he just wants to run away. He just wants to escape. Look at verses 6 and 7 where he says,

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.

He wants to escape. He wants to run away. One writer said this about the nature of the bird, a dove, he said, "It is characteristic of the dove to fly great distances quickly, resting among boulders and in gorges where hunters cannot follow it." David says, "I want to be like that dove that can just fly away from the people that are after it and hide someplace where no one can find me." That's what's going on in his heart. And the word "Selah" there at the end of verse 7 calls attention to that understandable emotional response.

You want to run away and we sympathize with David in that. We know what that feels like. But, beloved, here's a great important point for your spiritual growth, here is a significant thing for you to understand if you are going to live a godly life: when you are a Christian and you know something about the mechanisms, the reality of trusting God as we've learned it so many times in the Psalms, the answer and the response to the difficulties of your life are not flight. It is not to run away. It is to turn instead in faith to God and work out your trust in him in a way that comforts you and gives you strength and helps you find stability in the midst of that trouble rather than to run away from it.

We all know in our personal lives and in other places as well, we all know people who simply run away when trouble comes. And do you know what it is? Do you know what happens when they do that? They're not solving anything, all they're doing is taking more baggage with them to their next stop on the way. And beloved, that is not the way for you to live life. That is not how God calls you to live. And it's so common and I can't tell you how often over the many years of ministry where people will say silly foolish things like, "I've got all of this trouble. God must be telling me it's time to leave." No. No, you have all of this trouble and God is telling you to trust him in it and to mature and to grow in the

midst of it. Don't run away from it. Where is the spiritual victory in that? How do you manifest the strength of God in that when you simply run away every time a problem comes up, every time there's a relational conflict to just run and not talk about it, to go away and not have anything to do with the people that you were previously involved with? This Psalm goes on to talk about that as we will see.

So David is looking for a place out of the storm. Look at verse 8. He says,

8 "I would hasten to my place of refuge
From the stormy wind and
tempest."

The Psalm doesn't stop there which tells us that David did not run, that he did not fly away. Do you know what? Beloved, think about it this way: David says in his moment and in his transparency, he says, "I wish I was like a dove and I could just fly away and get away from this problem." Well, do you know what? A dove might be able to do that but a dove isn't very high on the created order, is it? You were created for more than that, Christian friend. You are called to a much higher response. A dove, a bird, a stupid dumb animal can run away from its problems. No, what you do as a Christian, what you do as one who knows the living God, is you stay and you meet your duty, you meet your responsibilities and you don't run away. Period. That's so important.

James Montgomery Boice says this and I quote, he says, "It is not always possible to escape our problems. David does not have the wings of a dove and God does not always give us leave," meaning permission, "God does not always give us leave to leave either, especially if the problems we face involve continuing responsibilities on our part." Someone in a difficult marriage, running away isn't the answer. Problems on the job, running away isn't the answer. Different aspects, different things, different relationships become difficult, there is no honor in running away. That's shameful.

So the answer is not for you to run and simply try to escape your troubles. Listen, this will change your perspective on it. You believe, don't you – I'm going on a tangent here – you believe, don't you, that God is sovereign over your life, right? You believe that. You believe that God, if you're a biblical Christian, you believe that God is involved in all of the circumstances that come about in your life. You believe that, don't you? Well, if that's the case then, your first response about your life needs to be is that, "This is the life that God has given to me and therefore my response is not to run away from it but rather my response is to trust God and to be faithful to my duty in the midst of it." Running away is not the Christian response, being faithful to duty in the midst of your trouble is the godly response to it. So don't run. Trust your sovereign God and fulfill your duty. I'll say it again: don't run. Trust your sovereign God and fulfill your duty. When you're looking for the way forward in the midst of your difficulties, you ask the question: what is my duty here? What is my responsibility here? Then you go from there.

There may be time in life where after a period of time you realize that it is the right time to move on but that's never the initial first response to run at the first sign of danger. Can you imagine a soldier running every time the first sign of danger comes up? The first time

a bullet whizzes past his helmet and he says, "I've got to get out of here! I didn't sign up for this!" What's that? Where's the nobility of victory? Anyone can be a coward and run away. You live different, beloved. You set your sights higher. You hold your heart to a higher accountability. You set your life in a way that says, "I'm not going to run from the battle. I'll run toward it trusting God as I do." It's a completely different way of thinking than what we are traditionally used to. Scripture leads us in this direction.

So we've seen the oppression that David was feeling in the first 8 verses. Secondly, having said these things, let's look at David's intercession. David's intercession by which I mean his prayer in the situation. David has honestly voiced his emotional reaction to his circumstances and God has graciously received that prayer but notice that David moves out of his emotion and he pivots from his emotional reaction to start to deal with the situation that is actually in front of him and he recites the impact that these wicked people have had on the people in the city.

Look at verses 9 through 11 with me. David prays,

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.

David here is asking God to intervene and to deal with the people who are causing the trouble and it is crucial for us to see what he is saying and it is so very very important for you to distinguish between some of your personal trials and personal difficulties in relationships and not just interpret and read this Scripture in light of your own circumstance, but rather to step out of your circumstance and see what's going on as David writes this Psalm. This Psalm is not simply about David's private trials. That is not the point here at all. David is writing as the King of Israel and he is responsible for the public welfare of the covenant people and so for wicked people to be running amok in the city with violence, with deception, with theft, with disloyalty, all of those things, it's more than just David's personal life that's involved here. He is praying to God because this is affecting the broader people of God, not just himself, and that informs the way that we understand the things that he asks for. What these men have done, they have brought violence and chaos into the capital city. Beloved, think about it this way: what are the walls of the city in ancient times, what were they designed to do? They were designed to provide protection, to keep the good guys in and the bad guys out so that the good guys inside the walls could have a sense of security as they go about their lives. The walls of the city provided protection to the city. That's what they were intended to do. What was happening in this circumstance, we don't know the full occasion of this Psalm, most commentators will say we don't know exactly what the occasion is but look at what David is saying here.

Verse 9, we'll come back to the start of verse 9 in just a moment. He says, "I have seen violence and strife in the city. Day and night they go around her upon her walls." These violent men, these sinful, disloyal men, going around on the walls of the city, "And

iniquity and mischief are in their midst. Destruction, oppression and deceit do not depart from her streets." Listen, wicked people have overrun the city and rather than those walls being a means of protection to the people of God, they have become the parade route for sinners, for those who have no regard for God or for his people and are actively seeking to bring them harm. They weren't just attacking David, they were attacking the provision of God for his people. They were attacking the people and the purposes of God.

You see, it's more than just a private conflict that's at stake here. That's important for us to understand and to enter into the spirit of the way that David prays. Because these wicked people were like that, because they were opposing the purposes of God like that, they were ripe for judgment. It was time for God to step in and intervene. He's the covenant God, the promise keeping God, who protects his people, who sovereignly exercises care over them, who says that he will be their God and they will be his people. So it's on that basis of who God is and who these wicked people are and what they are doing that David asks God to intervene.

Look at verse 9, he says, "Confuse, O Lord, divide their tongues." That has echoes and harkens us back to the time when God judged the nations at Babel. When they were rising up in rebellion against God, God entered in and brought judgment upon them and frustrated their wicked purposes by confusing their tongues so that they could no longer communicate with one another anymore. In the past, here's the point, beloved, in the past God had judged those who opposed his purposes and brought harm to the people of God. Watch this: that past historical judgment of God is David's warrant for praying this way now. He looks back at the Pentateuch, looks back into the book of Moses and says, "God, I remember how you judged people who opposed your purposes in the past. On the basis of you being like that now, I ask you to again act in a way to judge those who oppose your purposes, who hurt your people and to deliver us from their actions." So David isn't simply praying in a sense of personal vindictiveness, he's praying as a representative king looking out for the welfare of the people of God and seeking to advance the purposes of God.

Well, the worst part of this situation in the midst of all of this is that David could look into the crowd and he saw someone participating in the midst of the rebellion that he knew, and the worst part of the situation is that here is part of the source of the trouble. Look at verse 12 with me and, oh, those of you that have been betrayed by friends can relate to what we're about to see right now. David says,

12 For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, Then I could bear it;

You know, if somebody is my enemy, I could see that coming. I could deal with that. That doesn't bring personal turmoil to me.

Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, Then I could hide myself from him.

But now you see the treachery and he builds to a climax. He says, "It's not an enemy, it's not someone that I've had problems with in the past that is the source of my trouble." Verse 13, it drips with pain, it drips with sorrow.

13 But it is you, a man my equal, My companion and my familiar friend;

Do you see how he builds it up, he's building up to a climax? He walks us through in a way that builds a sense of tension as it grows, as he's using these words, to bring it to a climax that, "What is happening here and the source of my trouble, this is utterly unthinkable that it would come from you." His heart is broken. The first step: it's a man my equal, my companion, my familiar friend.

Verse 14,

14 We who had sweet fellowship together Walked in the house of God in the throng.

David says, "It's not just that we were close friends, we worshiped together. We served God together. We served the people of God together and now you have betrayed me. Now you're bringing harm upon my head without cause." David says, "That's more than I can bear." So what you see here is that there is a two-sided aspect to the trouble that he's describing. Out in the city there is this breadth of violence and evil, it's broad, and the description of the friend shows that the evil is close and it's personal and it hurts in everything that's happening. It's broad and it's close and that is a tough place to be.

So we see what you and I both have known and experienced over the years of life. Sometimes close friends turn on us and become open enemies, sometimes family, sometimes others. And when that happens, beloved, it's no surprise that it brings inner turmoil. It's no surprise that the outward trouble comes with an inner tempest in your soul because it shouldn't be that way. This is not what friends do to one another. This is not what those who share in the worship of God together should do. There shouldn't be that kind of treachery that comes out of a relationship like that, should it? That should not happen. And what I want you to see as we're talking about these things is to realize this: is to realize that there is a certain kind of evil in that that goes beyond even the personal betrayal that you might feel. Remember what God is like. God is the loyal covenant keeping God who is true to his promises and he is true to his people. Well, it's only right for us, especially within the house of God, within the people of God, to deal with each other with a similar kind of loyalty that reflects the character of God. When that is violated, it is not just a personal disruption, it is a violation, it is a sin against the character of God when that happens. There is a wickedness that is embedded in that because it is a spirit that is contrary to the one true Spirit of God. It shouldn't happen. It shouldn't be that way.

So David in verse 15 prays for judgment to come upon them. Look at verse 15 when he says,

15 Let death come deceitfully upon them; Let them go down alive to Sheol, For evil is in their dwelling, in their midst.

Now, let's take a moment to review what was most likely in David's mind here. Turn over to Numbers 16, this picture of the earth swallowing someone alive is pretty vivid and direct and consequential. But again, David is not just venting venomous sinful sentiments when he says this. David is recalling the way that God had previously judged enemies in the past, judged his enemies.

You remember that a man named Korah led a rebellion against Moses and this came to a climax when God judged them in order to vindicate his servant, Moses, and to defend his leadership and in chapter 16, verse 31, of the book of Numbers, Moses, having said in verse 30, "if the LORD brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol," do you see David's language from Psalm 55? "Then you will understand that these men have spurned the LORD." Verse 31, "As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open; and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly." Wow. That'll bring the fear of God upon you, won't it? Don't forget that there was something not that different that happened in the early church in Acts 5 when God struck Ananias and Sapphira dead when they misled the apostles about the gift that they were bringing to the altar.

You see, beloved, here's what you need to see: David's prayer might seem severe but don't run immediately to the question of was David justified to pray this way or to be critical or to condemn his prayer as some would be tempted to do. David here as the King of Israel, is praying according to a prior pattern, a prior incident of divine activity, revelation and judgment, and what David is praying here is, "God, this is a similar situation of wicked people opposing your appointed leader," speaking in Old Testament terms about the king. And he says, "God, in the past when that happened, you vindicated Moses and swallowed them up alive in order to put an end to the rebellion. God, I am asking you to do something similar as I as the covenant leader of the people am under a similar attack from wicked people. Judge them, God. Intervene. Help and vindicate your people and protect them and vindicate your leadership." Wow.

Notice something at the end of verse 15 as he prays this way, he gives the ground for the prayer, he has called attention to a prior act of God but in verse 15 he says, "God, evil is in their dwelling, in their midst." He says, "They are committed to this course of wickedness by which they have opposed your people and wreaked havoc upon us. God, evil is dominating them. God, deal with it because it's out of my hands, it's beyond my ability to do so. And for the sake of your truth, for the sake of your purposes, for the sake of your people, intervene and help us just like you have done in the past. God, I'm not asking for anything other than what you have previously done for your people." A pretty strong prayer. Pretty sobering to see these things.

And what we see in this is that God does not deal lightly with wickedness but there is great guilt and great danger to those who oppose the people and the purposes of God. Remember that even the Apostle Paul said, "Alexander the coppersmith has caused me much harm. Lord, deal with him according to his works." To call God down to protect his people in the midst of the opposition, not because it's personal and this is why that's so important, this is not, beloved, this is not the prayer that we go to as soon someone offends us personally. When you are offended on a personal level, you should respond with a spirit of grace, loving your enemies as Christ taught us in Matthew 5 and having a sense of that, and having a distinction in your mind between being the personal things that we deal with, with those things that are connected to the greater purposes of God. David calls upon God to vindicate righteousness, to deliver him from evil. Well, do you know what? Do you know what? That's a prayer that Jesus taught us, "Deliver us from evil." Do you know what? When God delivers us from evil, sometimes there's going to be adverse consequences for the perpetrators of evil and we just commit ourselves to the justice, the righteousness, the wisdom of God in the midst of those times.

But there is something else that it should do for you when you see this in Scripture. I'm glad I remembered what I'm about to say. I hope I don't forget before it comes out. One of the things that you should do when you see wickedness going on and when you've been affected by the betrayal of people, people have wronged you and done badly to you. What you're going to see in verses 16 through 23 coming up, what you should do is 1. you should remember how God views that and be fearful lest you would drift into that same kind of step-by-step and finding yourself in a place of evilly opposing the purposes of God. Don't go there because you don't want to be on the wrong side of the justice of God. You don't want to be on the wrong side of his discipline. But for those of you that have been harmed personally by betrayal, by wickedness, this is somewhat beyond the scope of the text maybe but it is something that I think fits in with what we need to say here. Rather than becoming bitter about that, here's what you need to do: look at that situation, look at what people have done and determine and set your heart, in your heart a holy purpose that says, "They may have done me like this but I am not going to do like that to others." And let their negative example become the force of conviction in your heart that says, "I will live differently even if I feel pain from what others do to me in the process." And you look at that negative example, you learn from it and you learn to detest it and say, "That is wrong. That is not the way a Christian should be and therefore I will separate myself from that. I'll be different in my relationships." That's so critical to understand and that is how one way among many that you can turn that kind of negative thing into a positive in your own character. Do that, beloved, would you?

We've seen the oppression, we've seen the intercession, now we come to the final point, number 3 here as we look at David's confession. David's confession. And in broad terms, David has poured out his heart in the first 8 verses; he has asked God, as it were, to deal with the situation, we might be able to state it as plainly and as generally as that, "God, deal with the situation that is before me." And now in point 3 we see his confession and we come to the high point of the Psalm. David, having prayed his prayer for help, now – watch it, it's the same point that we come to in these Psalms again and again and again – David having prayed now trusts in the answer to come.

Verse 16 he says,

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

"God, they're like this, they're full of evil and a close friend has betrayed me and there is wickedness on the walls of the city. That's what they're like. God, let me give you a contrast. God, I see what they're like, by contrast I am going to be someone different. I will respond differently. God, I will call upon you and I trust you to save me." This is the turning point of the entire Psalm. David moves away from a realm that could lead to bitterness and puts his trust in God to deliver him.

Look at verse 17, he says,

17 Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur, And
He will hear my voice.

David says, "I'm going to pray repeatedly throughout the day, naming my prayers and I'm just going to knock and knock and knock on the door of heaven until God opens and answers. 'God, I know you're in there. Hello? Answer me.'" By which he means, "Intervene and change the situation and bring me out of the struggle that I'm facing."

Look at verse 18 and drink in the spirit of confidence that this expresses.

18 He will redeem my soul in peace from the battle which is against me,
For they are many who strive with me.

"God, there is a multiplicity of enemies here, one of them in particular was a man who betrayed me," David says, "but God, I'm looking past all of that and I trust you. I trust my loyal covenant keeping God who is sovereign over all. And it's not just that he is sovereign over all," David is praying, "it's that he is personally concerned for me and he is committed to my protection and welfare and therefore when I commit myself to the care of this God, I can know that the outcome will be good for me. I know that he will help me. I know that he will deliver me. I know that I simply need wait on him to intervene on my behalf."

Verse 19, he rests his confidence in the unchanging nature of God. Verse 19, he says,

19 God will hear and answer them - Even the one who sits enthroned
from of old - Selah.

He says, "God is eternal. God transcends history. God transcends this situation. God never changes. He is the Ruler over all. He has always been that way and he's always faithful to his people. What does that mean for me as his child except that I can run into his presence and know that he will receive me well and he has the ability to work all of this out to his glory and to my good in the end."

Beloved, let me say something to you. There is a "Selah" here. You stop and pause and meditate on it. Do you realize that when a man runs from his problems, when a woman flees from the difficulties that she's facing and just goes someplace else and leaves duty and relationships behind, do you realize that when people do that, they miss the spiritual victory that David is describing here? They laid down their weapons of faith and lost the battle that could have been won. That's sad, isn't it? Well, for you and me, what we look at and say, "Okay, when the trouble comes my way, when the betrayal hits me, I'll just stand firm. I'll just trust God through this and I'll wait and I'll cry out to him and I'll consciously, intelligently, lay hold of his character and say, 'God, I know your character. I trust it. I commend myself to you. I'll wait for your deliverance.'" And then when the deliverance comes, you've got a spiritual victory. You've got a notch of honor for your spiritual belt where you trusted God and he proved himself faithful. Isn't that a great place to be? That's a whole lot better than running, isn't it? Well, the Lord give us wisdom to sort out how that applies in all of our lives.

Go back to verse 19. At this high point of trusting in the character of God, there is kind of a slipping back, not really slipping back but a look back at the enemies that opposed him. God is enthroned over these people and who are these people? They are those with whom there is no change. They're not going to change. Their evil is settled in their minds. They are committed to this course of wickedness and verse 19,

And who do not fear God.

And continuing on speaking of the one who betrayed him in verse 20 he says,

20 He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him;
He has violated his covenant.

And he's kind of rehearsing and now with a spirit of clarity he looks back and he looks on this one who betrayed him and he says,

21 His speech was smoother than butter, But his heart was war; His words
were softer than oil, Yet they were drawn swords.

This man was one who spoke a good game, who spoke words that were designed to look like he was a close friend and supporter, but it wasn't real. And the duplicity and the hypocrisy of it came out over time and when the opportunity for betrayal was there, this betrayer struck and David bring this all before the Lord and commits it to him.

You know, beloved, we all are vulnerable to flattery, aren't we? We all like it when people speak well of us. Be careful about the way that you commit yourself to people like that. Be careful to the one who is always flattering you and commending you and saying great and grandiose things about you. Just look at that and be careful with who you give your heart to. Maybe young people in relationships, be careful with that young man or

that young woman who just flatters and flatters you. That's not always what it seems to be, David says. Speech smooth as butter and I like butter. David says, "Watch out."

On a personal note, I've said this before and I'll say it again because we are all just kind of growing together in Christ, aren't we? You and me together here at Truth Community, do you know what God would have us be like? God would have us be people who don't proclaim our own loyalty, he would just have us be loyal. Don't tell everybody about how faithful you're going to be and what a great friend you're going to be to somebody, just be a good friend. Keep your mouth shut on those kinds of things and just manifest loyalty in your life and let God bless that. That's the kind of people that we need to be. Put a discount on flattery when it comes your way and entrust yourself to God.

Well, David wraps it all up for us here in verse 22. He has committed his cause to God. God knows the betrayal, God knows the insincerity of those that have betrayed David, God knew that their flattering words were worthless, God knew it all and that has an impact for the way that David closes up this Psalm. He kind of rehearses things for himself and yet he also expands it out to instruct others who would read the Psalm as his contemporaries and for those of us who would follow.

Look at verse 22. He says, "Cast your burden upon the LORD," that covenant keeping God, Yahweh, faithful to his people.

22 Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.

What David is saying here to you tonight, beloved, is this: is that in the midst of your sorrow, in the midst of the way that maybe you have been betrayed, what you find is this, is that you can trust God in the midst of it. God is a faithful God. God is a sovereign God. He is a good God to his people. And that means that you can bring all manner of trial, all manner of sorrow, even the personal betrayals that you have gone, you can come and just kind of cast it on him, dump it on God as David has done here in Psalm 55 knowing what the outcome will be. What will God do? He'll sustain you. He'll never allow the righteous to be shaken.

And what is more, you can trust God to work out the consequences of the people that have wronged you. Verse 23,

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.

God will personally tend to the fall of the wicked. God will personally judge them. He by no means will clear the guilty and so that means that we don't have to worry about it. We don't have to have the turmoil. We bring the character of God to bear on these things, we commit our cause to him and we trust him to work it out knowing that wicked people are sowing the seeds of their own destruction and that they will reap what they themselves sow.

Beloved, because of the certain character and the certain rule of God, you can be confident and that's the note that David ends the Psalm on. Look at the end of verse 23. This is what happens to men of bloodshed and deceit.

But I will trust in You.

"God, I bring my emotional sorrow to you, I bring the situation to you and now that I have committed myself to you, I can end this Psalm in peace before I see the answer." David looks on the scene of his betrayal and instructs us. Brother and sister in Christ, God has your situation under control. Suffering at the hands of insolent rebellious people, people in your family, God has it under control. David shows us the pattern to devote yourself to trust rather than further worry about the ungodliness around you.

Oh, beloved, how many times can we say this in so many different ways. God deserves your trust. He will sustain you. He will not allow the righteous to be shaken. He will judge the wicked. The outcome is sure therefore we rest together in him.

Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, thank you for who you are and we bring a multitude of difficult situations and sorrows before you now collectively and individually, verbally and in the quiet of our own heart, and we cast our burden upon you. Father, to each one of us show forth in what follows in the days to come that you are a God who sustains us; that you don't allow your righteous to be shaken; that you know how to deal with the sin of men. Father, for those who would refuse to repent, we understand that you will deal with them. Father, perhaps for those that have wronged us personally or betrayed us personally, Lord, we would be like Christ and ask for your mercy upon them. Forgive them, Lord. Forgive those who have wronged us in a personal way and let not a root of bitterness take root in our heart but, Father, show mercy to them as you did to us at some point in the past. But Father, for those who would oppose your purposes, whose evil is more deeply rooted and they actively oppose your purposes, God, we ask you to protect your church. We ask you to deal with those who would teach falsely, who would teach a false Gospel, who would bring harm upon the true people of Christ, and that you would deal with them, Father, in your wisdom, in your justice, and protect your people. We are small and we are vulnerable, God, we are weak and we need your help. So Father, we ask that throughout the world for pastors and leaders and good Christians who are under the knife from evil men, we ask you to intervene and help with the power that you displayed that David drew upon here in Psalm 55. Bless us as we go, our God. Thank you that you are trustworthy. God, we trust you completely and without reservation. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

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