

“Betrayal”  
Psalm 55  
(Preached at Trinity, January 23, 2011)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we come to **Psalm 55** we find a superscription that has been fairly familiar in the Second Book of the Psalter.  
“To the chief musician” – it is a psalm written for use in Israel’s worship  
“On Neginoth” – it was played on stringed instruments
2. It is designated as a Maschil—a psalm intended for instruction. Israel was taught by what they sang.
  - A. We can’t stress enough the importance of depth in our music  
Spurgeon wrote of Psalm 55: “It is not a mere personal hymn, there is teaching in it for us all, and where our Lord shines through David, his personal type, there is a great deep of meaning.”
  - B. The chief musicians were theologians.  
In **1 Kings 4** we are told that Solomon was a musician, writing 1005 Psalms (which have been lost). We are also told and that he was wiser than the musicians, Ethan and Heman. This implies that except for Solomon, two of the wisest men who ever lived were musicians.  
**1 Kings 4:30-32** - “And Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. <sup>31</sup> For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. <sup>32</sup> And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.”
  - C. The same is true for the church today. Our music must have a function of teaching.  
**Colossians 3:16** – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”
3. The subject matter of this psalm gets to the heart of the matter of the betrayal of a close friend. We aren’t given specifics. Only that it caused David great grief.  
**Psalm 55:12-13** – “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: <sup>13</sup> But *it* was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.”
4. David had many such occasions of grief.
  - A. In Psalm 52 he was betrayed by Doeg the Edomite  
In Psalm 54 he was betrayed by the people of Ziph  
But these were strangers. They can’t compare to being betrayed by someone close to him.
  - B. We don’t know the specific details of this betrayal. We know that he was betrayed by his own son Absalom and his own counselor, Ahithophel.

5. History has revealed innumerable examples of such treachery  
We all know the famous words "*Et tu Brute?*" spoken by Julius Caesar to his good friend Brutus.  
And of course, we can only imagine the sorrow that Jesus felt at the betrayal of Judas.  
**Luke 22:48** – "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"
6. As we are drawn into the sorrows of David in this psalm we are also drawn into the sorrows of our Lord.  
**Isaiah 53:3** – "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."
7. The Psalm can be divided up into four parts:
  - I. David longs for escape from his sorrows – **Verses 1-8**
  - II. David languishes over the situation of the betrayal – **Verses 9-15**
  - III. David lays his burdens upon God – **Verses 16-24**
- I. David longs for escape from his sorrows – **Verses 1-8**
  - A. David begins with prayer – "Give ear to my prayer, O God"
    1. This was David's life-blood. Of the 114 times the word "prayer" is found in the Bible 34 are in the Book of Psalms.
    2. Although prayer was the common course of David's life he never approached God presumptuously  
**Psalms 55:1-2** – "hide not thyself from my supplication. <sup>2</sup> Attend unto me, and hear me"
    3. It wasn't merely the act of prayer that David was concerned with – he was not satisfied unless God was present in his prayers.  
David was a man who craved God.  
**Psalms 42:1-2** – "As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for Thee, O God. <sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. . ."
    4. David's prayer was full of passion because his need was great. His heart was stirred over his situation.  
"I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;"
      - a. The phrase "make a noise" speaks of the inner turmoil  
ESV – "I am restless in my complaint and I moan,"  
NAS – "I am restless in my complaint and am surely distracted,"
      - b. We've all been there when our heart is sorely distracted by the extent of our situation. Sometimes we can only groan  
<sup>NAS</sup> **Romans 8:26** – "And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words;"

- B. David clearly lays out his situation – **Verses 3-5**
1. David’s friend turned enemy had become very vocal in his slander of David
  2. The assault upon David was horrible  
He describes it: “terrors of death” “fearfulness and trembling and horror”
  3. David’s very life was in jeopardy and he was trembling with terror
  4. David was affected mentally, physically, spiritually  
This is often the effect of our trials – They affect every aspect of our lives.  
They can rob us of our sleep, of our comfort, of our health.
- C. David wanted to escape from it all
- Psalm 55:6** – “Oh that I had wings like a dove! *for then* would I fly away, and be at rest.”
- Psalm 55:8** – “I would hasten my escape from the windy storm *and* tempest.”
1. David was weary of it all. He wanted it to be over. He longed for peace
  2. David was surely no coward. He was a mighty warrior.
  3. He could only find rest in God  
NASB **Philippians 4:6-7** – “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
  4. Spurgeon – “It is cowardly to shun the battle which God would have us fight. We had better face the danger, for we have no armour for our backs. We amid all our sorrow may find rest in Jesus. We need not depart; all will be well if we trust in him.”
  5. God alone gives us the wings to fly above our trials  
**Isaiah 40:31** But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.”
- II. David laments over the situation of the betrayal – **Verses 9-14**
- A. First, David goes on the offensive
1. “Destroy” – literally it means to swallow or devour
  2. “Divide their tongues” – carries our minds back to Babel  
Bring them confusion
- B. David laments the effect their treachery was having upon Jerusalem – **V. 9-11**
1. **Verse 9** – “I have seen violence and strife in the city.”  
**Verse 10** – “mischief also and sorrow *are* in the midst of it.”  
**Verse 11** – “Wickedness *is* in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets”
  2. Wickedness has a way of spreading like a cancer in the body or leaven in a piece of dough. This is particularly true when the leaders are wicked.  
**Proverbs 29:2** – “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.”

- C. Finally, David laments the cause of all these sorrows - **Verses 12-14**
1. David describes the pain and sorrow of being betrayed by one dear to him
    - a. He states if it had been an enemy attacking him he could bear it but not this!
    - b. How painful it is be for parents to turn against a child
    - c. How sorrowful when a husband or wife betrays their mate.  
It's been said that death is easier to bear than for a spouse to fall into the arms of another.
    - d. How grievous when a dear friend divulges something you shared in confidence.
    - e. In lands that outlaw Christianity children have even betrayed their parents.  
**Matthew 10:21-22** – “And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death. <sup>22</sup> And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”
  2. Listen to how David describes him:  
“a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance”
    - a. He was David's equal – David saw him as a true friend  
Even the president has those that he looks to not as their president but as their friend – their equal. His wife doesn't call him Mr. Pres.
    - b. “my guide” – literally means a friend or companion.  
NASB “My companion and my familiar friend.”
    - c. **Verses 20-21** describes him as a covenant breaker, a hypocrite, a backstabber, a flatterer  
**Psalm 55:21** – “*the words* of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war *was* in his heart”
  3. They were closer than brothers  
**Psalm 55:14** – “We took sweet counsel together, *and* walked unto the house of God in company.”  
They were companions in the sacred act of worship before God.  
How vile to pollute the altar of God with hypocrisy.
  4. What sorrow Jesus must have had at the betrayal of Judas. Although his betrayal was decreed of God how the hardness of Judas' heart must have been grievous.  
**Luke 22:48** – “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?”
    - a. Had Jesus ever been anything but gracious to Judas? Did Jesus not allow Judas to dine with Him? Wasn't Judas allowed into the very company of the Apostles?
    - b. And with a kiss!! What a dastardly deed! To betray Christ with a sign of affection.
    - c. Are we not guilty of such a treacherous act—to profess love and affection for Jesus only to betray Him at the earliest convenience?

### III. David lays his burdens upon God – **Verses 15-23**

- A. David makes it his duty to cry out to God night and day  
**Psalm 55:17** – “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.”
1. The NAS translates it “I will complain and murmur”  
 This translation lends itself to being misunderstood  
 The ESV translates it “I utter my complaint and moan”
  2. The KJV is clearest, “I pray and cry aloud”  
 It describes praying in earnest – crying out to God
  3. David did not return their evil treachery with like treatment  
 Remember, he had opportunity to strike down Saul in his sleep. We also must not return evil for evil  
**1 Peter 3:8-9** – “Finally, *be* ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, *be* pitiful, *be* courteous: <sup>9</sup> Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.”
- B. **Verses 15, 19 & 23** describes David’s confidence in God’s justice –  
**V. 15** - “Let death seize upon them, *and* let them go down quick into hell”  
**V. 19** - “God shall hear, and afflict them”  
**V. 23** - “But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction”
1. David cries out for their destruction. He is seeking justice  
 Spurgeon – “Traitors such as these deserve to die, there is no living with them, earth is polluted by their tread; if spies are shot, much more these sneaking villains. They are too bad to be spared, for their houses are dens of infamy, and their hearts fountains of mischief. They are a pest to the commonwealth, a moral plague, a spiritual pestilence, to be stamped out by the laws of men and the providence of God. There is justice in the universe, love itself demands it; pity to rebels against God, as such, is no virtue--we pray for them as creatures, we abhor them as enemies of God.”  
 — “We need in these days far more to guard against the disguised iniquity which sympathizes with evil, and counts punishment to be cruelty, than against the harshness of a former age.”
  2. This was always David’s comfort – “**God shall hear**”  
 Cry out! God hears!
  3. God shall vindicate His holy name. God will always execute perfect justice
- C. In **Verse 22** David gives some final words of encouragement to all who face such times  
**Psalm 55:22** – “Cast thy burden upon the LORD”  
**Psalm 55:22** – “he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved”
1. No matter what the trial, no matter how treacherous the attack upon you may be, God will not allow you to fall.
  2. Cast your burden upon Him!