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Psalm 55

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Psalm 55.

Topics.

- Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.
- Day and night violence, oppression, iniquity and strife are in the city.
- It is not an enemy who taunts me, but a man, my friend.
- God will humble the wicked, he who is enthroned from of old.
- My companion stretched his hand against his friend.
- Cast your burden on the LORD and he will sustain you.
- The great faith of David, Habakkuk and Job.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION

Psalms are songs and prayers offered to God by the nation Israel, they cover the range of human emotion, expressing praise, faith, victory, sorrow, despair, depression, frustration and the troubled heart of a mourner. They contrast the righteous with the wicked, and include the wisdom and the treasure of God's word. Psalms were written at the beginning of the 15th century BC and probably collected in their final form in the 3rd century.

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BOOK TWO (PSALM 42-72)

PSALM 55:1-8

To the⁴ Choirmaster: with Stringed Instruments. A Maskil of David.

Oh, that I had Wings like a Dove! I would Fly away and be at Rest.

- **Psalm 55:1-8:** Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not yourself from my plea for mercy! ²Attend to me, and answer me; I am restless in my complaint and I moan, ³because of the noise of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked. For they drop trouble upon me, and in anger they bear a grudge against me. ⁴My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen upon me. ⁵Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me. ⁶And I say, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; ⁷yes, I would wander far away; I would lodge in the wilderness; *Selah* ⁸I would hurry to find a shelter from the raging wind and tempest."

Selah: marks a musical pause.

How encouraging are these words of David, how so some might ask? Simply this, today we hear many messages on positive thinking and positive faith and positive affirmations, but the Bible does not teach that we must always be speaking positively especially when it is denying reality. David tells God he is full of terror and fear of death overwhelms him so much that if he was a bird, he would fly away from the entire situation he is in. He does not come to God with positive confession and

affirmations, but with complaining and moaning telling God his heart is in anguish. Had David approached God with positive confession and affirmations saying that he feels happy and joyful he would be not only lying against his own heart, mind and emotions but also lying to God and acting in a very foolish manner since God perceives our heart and our true state of being. David is aware that he is not without sin (no one no matter how faithful is) so before he even begins to ask God for any favours and help, he humbles himself and prays for God to show him mercy.

PSALM 55:9-11

Day and Night Violence, Oppression and Strife are in the City.

- **Psalm 55:9-11:** Destroy, O Lord, divide their tongues; for I see violence and strife in the city. ¹⁰Day and night they go around it on its walls, and iniquity and trouble are within it; ¹¹ruin is in its midst; oppression and fraud do not depart from its marketplace.

The city in focus here is the city of Jerusalem. As the reader travels through David's Psalms two things become very clear, firstly that David was far from being a perfect man and he knew it and Secondly that David did care about the well-being of those in his kingdom and hated it when he saw the rich and those who had great authority and power cheating the helpless out of what was rightfully theirs by preventing justice and oppressing the poor for their own personal gain. This is one of the reasons God said of David. "

- I have sought out a man after my own heart to be prince over my people. (1 Samuel. 13:14).

Paul after the reading from the Law and the Prophets said:

- God raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, "I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will." ²³Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus, as he promised. (Acts 13:22-23).

Imperfect as David was in his own personal life, he had a heart of compassion for those in his kingdom and for the helpless and the poor. This is why he prays so vehemently against those who abuse them. It is not from a spirit of revenge David is praying but from the hatred he has toward seeing the innocent destroyed by war simply so that a king or ruler gains greater power, property wealth and land and seeing others abused and treated as second class citizens by those who consider themselves superior and elite. This is why he prays that the LORD will cast them down into the pit of destruction.

PSALM 55:12-15

It is Not an Enemy who Taunts Me, but a Man, My Friend.

- **Psalm 55:13-15:** For it is not an enemy who taunts me—then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—then I could hide from him. ¹³But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. ¹⁴We used to take sweet counsel together; within God's house we walked in the throng. ¹⁵Let death steal over them; let them go down to Sheol alive; for evil is in their dwelling place and in their heart.

It is David's companion, and familiar friend one that is equal with David (probably Ahithophel) that has become his enemy. David says, they walked together in God's House and used to take sweet counsel together, but his companion has stretched out his hand against David and his friends and violated his covenant. His speech was smooth as butter and yet war was in his heart and his words were softer than oil and yet they were drawn swords (v20-21).

Ahithophel and Bathsheba: Ahithophel (also spelled Achitophel) was the father of Eliam and Eliam was the father of Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:3) and listed as one of David's valiant men (2 Sam 23:34) so Ahithophel was the grandfather of Bathsheba and Uriah was Ahithophel's grandson by marriage because he was Bathsheba's husband. Ahithophel was a cherished companion of David and his esteemed and wise counsellor (2 Sam. 16:23).

David's son Absalom desired to overthrow David and take his seat on the throne of Israel. When Absalom thought he had adequate support, he declared himself king in Hebron forcing David to flee from Jerusalem. Absalom summoned Ahithophel to him and he advised Absalom to immediately pursue and attack David which may have resulted in David's defeat, but Absalom followed the counsel of Hushai (left by David as his spy in Jerusalem) and waited. Ahithophel being aware that David's would defeat Absalom, because his counsel was not followed went home and hanged himself, and he died. (2 Sam. 17:23). Absalom's delay gave David time to plan his strategy and gather together an army, and David was victorious.

Absalom, when riding through the forest, was caught by his head in an oak tree and was slain by Joab one of David's generals, who was indifferent to David's order to, "Deal gently with his son Absalom." (2 Sam. 18:5). Ahithophel was a trusted friend of David, so what would cause him to turn against the king? Following are the two most common thoughts why Ahithophel turned against David.

1. Nathan the prophet confronted David and told him the parable of the poor man's "one little ewe lamb," then rebuked the king saying, "Thou art the man." (2 Sam. 12:7). Bathsheba was Ahithophel's darling granddaughter, the "one little ewe lamb" of whom Nathan had spoken. It is suggested that Ahithophel had bitterness against David because David had seduced his grand-daughter Bathsheba and later murdered Uriah his grandson by marriage in an attempt to hide his sin (2 Sam 11 & 12) and therefore he could not remain in David's court to be constantly reminded of Bathsheba's shame.
2. Others believe it is more likely that there were two men named Eliam and that Ahithophel's motivation was for his own personal gain for power since Absalom appeared to the stronger force at this time. They feel that the idea of Ahithophel turning against David because of his sin with his grand-daughter Bathsheba has the following two problems, firstly, because it is unlikely that Ahithophel would have been old enough to have a married grand-daughter (Bathsheba) at the time of David's great sin with her and secondly, they feel it is unlikely that Ahithophel's motivation would be to jeopardise the future of his grand-daughter as Queen. (Her first son died; her second son was Solomon).

Whatever the motivation Ahithophel did turn against David and when Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give your counsel, what shall we do?" Ahithophel said to Absalom:

- Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left to keep the house, and all Israel will hear that you have made yourself a stench to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened." ²²So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof. And Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. (2 Sam. 16:20-22).

Repentance and consequences: honest repentance and the acceptance of God's provision for sin results in forgiveness. David acknowledged and repented of his sin (Psalm 51). So did Bathsheba and Jewish tradition assert that she is the virtuous woman of (Proverbs 31.10-31). Though all maybe forgiven where true repentance exists consequences of sin remain. Bathsheba's first child died and caused both David and Bathsheba great grief. Eventually Bathsheba had a second child and named him Solomon. Our testimony as believers is etched deep in time and memory upon the earth. Footprints on the path we walk are irreversibly set and affect others. The lesson we learn as believers from

David's sin with Bathsheba is that though their maybe forgiveness the manner of our sin has consequences and is permanently written in our testimony on earth. (The full story is in 2 Samuel chapters 15, 16, 17) (Psalm 41:4-9 is very similar).

PSALM 55:16-19

God will Humble the Wicked, He who is Enthroned from of Old.

- **Psalm 55:16-19:** But I call to God, and the LORD will save me. ¹⁷Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice. ¹⁸He redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage, for many are arrayed against me. ¹⁹God will give ear and humble them, he who is enthroned from of old, *Selah* because they do not change and do not fear God.

Once again, we see David honestly pouring out his heart with complaints and moaning's before God. Contained within much of the language of David's prayers is the request for an immediate deliverance from his present troubles and the absolute confidence God will redeem and deliver him from death to eternal life. David prayed for victory in battle, but he knew even if he was killed on the battle field God who has been enthroned on high since before time began would raise him up on the great day of the resurrection. David wrote:

- I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. ⁹Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. ¹⁰For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. (Psalm 16:8-10).
- I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! ¹⁴Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD! (Psalm 27:13-14).

The word Sheol means the grave, the words, "You will not abandon my soul to Sheol," means God will not leave David in the grave forever he will be resurrected at the right time and the statement, "You will not let your holy one see corruption," means God will not let the body of Jesus decay in the grave (tomb) contrasting David's body which will decay in the grave and remain there until the glorious day of the resurrection.

For further information concerning the resurrection, see the title: -

- Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

PSALM 55:20-21

My Companion Stretched His Hand against His Friend.

- **Psalm 55:20-21:** My companion stretched out his hand against his friends; he violated his covenant. ²¹His speech was smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.

David's companion who stretched out his hand against his friends again most likely refers to Ahithophel, see the notes following (v13-15) (above). It is one thing to be betrayed by someone that is unknown, but to be betrayed by a friend is emotionally and mentally devastating. The closer we are to someone by love the greater the power they have to hurt us. This is why those who are in a romantic relationship or a marriage are so deeply hurt when their partner betrays them and why those who have been hurt in this way eventually find it almost impossible to allow themselves to be vulnerable enough to let another person beyond the stone walls of protection they have built around their hearts to protect from any further hurt.

Cast your Burden on the LORD and He will Sustain You.

- **Psalm 55:22-23:** Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. ²³But you, O God, will cast them down into the pit of destruction; men of blood and treachery shall not live out half their days. But I will trust in you.

David complained and moaned before God he expressed his true feelings, emotions and thoughts (good and bad) and prays for a positive outcome, but underneath all of this reality is a deep seated faith in God that no matter what does befall him he will continue to trust in the LORD and rest in the confidence that he will not be cast down to eternal destruction, but raised to eternal glory and everlasting happiness. In the meantime, he will continue to cast his burdens upon the LORD as he has done in this prayer and the LORD will continue to uphold him, strengthen him and comfort him by His Spirit, His love and His grace. David had the same great faith as Habakkuk and Job, even though Job suffered great affliction his attitude was:

- Though he slays me, yet will I trust in him (Job 13:15).

Habakkuk begins his prayer saying: "Even though his body trembles at the power of the LORD and he feels weak and feeble because of the enemies who are coming to invade his land, he will quietly wait for the day of trouble." He then ends his prayer with the following great words of faith.

- Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, ¹⁸yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. (Hab. 3:17-19).

We make the Lord our fortress and refuge, in the same way that David, Job and Habakkuk did, which is by making him our greatest love, our best thought and the passion of our heart and mind and rest in the knowledge if everything fails in this life we will be raised to be with the Lord in eternal glory where happiness everlasting dwells and in this life rest in the confidence and faith that the Lord is with us by his Spirit, his love and his grace.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.