

# Psalm-55-Where-will-you-hide

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 01 July 2019

Preacher: Dave Bott

[ 0 : 00 ] Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not yourself from my plea for mercy. Attend to me and answer me.

I am restless in my complaint and I moan because 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.

My heart is in anguish within me. The terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling come upon me and horror overwhelms me. And I say, oh, that I had wings like a dove.

I would fly away and be at rest. Yes, I would wander far away. I would lodge in the wilderness. I would hurry to find a shelter from the raging wind and tempest.

Destroy, O Lord, divide their tongues, for I see violence and strife in the city. Day and night they go around it on its walls. And iniquity and trouble are within it.

[ 1 : 01 ] Ruin is in its midst. Oppression and fraud do not depart from its marketplace. 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. But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to take sweet counsel together. Within God's house we walked in the throng.

Let death steal over them. Let them go down to shoal alive. For evil is in their dwelling place and in their heart. But I call to God and the Lord will save me.

Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaints and moan. And he hears my voice. He redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage.

For many are arrayed against me. God will give ear and humble them. He who is enthroned from of old. Because they do not change and do not fear God.

[ 2 : 06 ] My companion stretched out his hand against his friends. He violated his covenant. His speech was smooth as butter. Yet war was in his heart. His words were softer than oil.

Yet they were drawn swords. Cast your burden on the Lord. And he will sustain you. He will never permit the righteous to be moved. But 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. Well, good morning, everyone.

My name is David. I'm one of the pastors here. Would you pray with me as we come to God's word? Our Father in heaven, you know our weakness.

You know how dangerous this world is. And that we are constantly under threat. But Lord, we know that you have compassion for us.

[ 3 : 20 ] Father, we know this because of Jesus. We just pray that you would speak to us again this morning. Through your word. And assure us again that we are safe in you.

Please speak to us. Please give us hearts that want to hear you. And respond to you. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Well, to say this world is dangerous is an understatement, isn't it?

I don't know about you, but I check the locks in my house when we're going to bed twice. I don't know why I do that.

Not trusting myself there, maybe. In the car or when we're crossing the road, I grab Emma's hand as if she's a child. And she hates it.

Drives her nuts. I did it on the way to church this morning. I was like, be careful. You've got internet security on your laptops.

[ 4 : 24 ] But we expect strangers to be dangerous, don't we? We expect to be attacked by strangers. We're ready for it. But what about people we know, like our work colleagues?

And what about our chosen friends and our local church family? What about our biological family? What about our parents, our spouse, children, siblings?

Surely, surely we are safe with these people to let our guards down and be vulnerable. In fact, we all know to get close to each other, we have to let our guards down.

We want to be close. We need to be known and accepted. We want to walk together through life.

Psalms 55 is King David's prayer and lament. And it touches a nerve in all of us that is uncomfortable. But I think we can all easily relate to it.

[ 5 : 39 ] The closer people are to us, the more completely rattled and shaken we are when they let us down and intentionally harm us.

But let me quickly clarify what Psalm 55 and the rest of what I'm saying this morning is not referring to. We live in a culture that believes all pain is bad.

But Proverbs 27 verse 6 says, Faithful are the wounds of a friend. If those closest to you love you enough to say hard things when you need to hear them, remember, faithful are the wounds of a friend.

Treasure them. But still, with this clarification, there's still many times that we feel beaten by those closest to us.

We're not told what the exact situation is for King David. But talk of the city suggests that this was after he was settled in Jerusalem.

[ 6 : 52 ] The neighbouring enemies have been quashed. His days being hunted by Saul are over. God had given David's kingdom peace.

And we can relate to this. We are now in Christ. In God's covenant community. We have peace with God and one another. But we can also relate to David when he cries out, My heart is in anguish.

It's whirling within me. The terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling come upon me. And horror overwhelms me.

We feel like who we are and the protection of close relationships are headed for disaster. We're not going to recover. Did they ever love me?

Do they still care about me? Did anything I did have any value? Do you? People were talking and making noise against David.

[ 8 : 05 ] Their words and actions just drop trouble on him. He just feels beaten down. in verses 9 to 11 as David looks around Jerusalem instead of seeing faithfulness and peace he sees violence and strife how can I put myself out there and be vulnerable when I can't trust my very own people not to hurt me if they knew my sin would they stop talking to me if I express a thought will I be shut down and treated like an idiot if I give my time and efforts will I just simply be used if I fail will I be criticized will I lose face in the community then in verses 12 to 14 we hit the deepest source of agony for it is not an enemy who taunts me then I could bear it it's not an adversary who deals insolently with me then I could hide from him but it is you a man my equal my companion my familiar friend we used to take sweet counsel together we enjoyed sweet fellowship together within God's house we walked among the throng he'd opened up with this person this was an ally this was a friend and support someone with whom he had deep bonds of intimacy standing shoulder to shoulder worshipping the same God

I lowered my defences with you maybe we're not told but maybe David wrote this psalm when his very own son Absalom was conspiring to overthrow and kill him his son stood at the gate of the city and intercepted anyone on their way to the king and told them the king's not going to listen to you he won't care about you he won't look after you I'll do that for you and he stole the hearts of all Israel away from God's chosen king and then he goes to the king to his face to his father and asks for permission to go to Hebron to offer sacrifices to the Lord those words sound so sweet and good don't they but all the while he's sending out messengers to rally all Israel to come back to Jerusalem and slaughter his father verse 21 his speech was smooth as butter yet war was in his heart his words were softer than oil yet they were drawn swords can you imagine how David felt?

now not many of us would have had our physical life threatened like this but we can hear people imply by their words and their behaviour you are unfair you are doing a bad job you are not worth respecting you are not worth listening to you are not worth loving you deserve God's punishment we hear these things what do we do in that situation?

how do we try and cope? none of us can stand up underneath that how do we try and cope? you probably do what I try and do I'm guessing don't we complain to those we think will listen to us and say wow they really did the wrong thing to you you are such a victim in this situation you deserve much better instead of talking to the person who wronged us don't we just complain to others to try and get their support but isn't this spreading violence through the city?

don't we just want to run away from the issue and the person we avoid them if we can otherwise we just never raise that topic ever again or we change jobs we change friends we change churches and don't we just justify unleashing our anger either we fly off the handle or we suppress it and just interpret everything they do as utterly evil from that point on and then we try and make them suffer by withdrawing our love or attacking them with our tongue and then don't we just try and find a place to hide we keep them at arm's length from then on because I am not going to be hurt like that again we complain we run away we unleash our anger we find a place we can stay in hiding but David remains unmoved and says that I will trust in you how?

[ 14 : 22 ] how on earth does he do that? how does he get to that point? what does the response of faith look like when you are under attack from those closest to you?

I think Psalm 55 teaches us to complain to run to share your anger and to hide we've been given this Psalm to pray to use to follow the person who prays this along with God's King will complain to the one who truly hears us we will run it by God when we want to run away we will share our anger with the only judge and we will find that our steadfast Lord is a safe place to hide if we follow David in using this Psalm in praying like him we will find that we are actually following the son of David so first let's go through these complain to the one who truly hears you when we are falsely accused or undermined or insulted or intimidated we feel so alone don't we we desperately want someone to listen to us to deeply understand our pain and then to help us put things back in order so we go to our chosen friends we go to our family members we go to pastors we go to psychologists and they all have a good place a helpful place they're a gift from God but who on earth is wise enough to understand your situation in all its detail who has the capacity to have complete compassion for you who is righteous enough to discern and give you justice who has the power to put things right present your case to the one who truly and completely hears you the major change in this prayer comes in verse 16 onwards the change is not in the situation itself but in the praying person in verse 16

David starts calling God Lord in capitals Yahweh the personal covenant keeping name of God David knows and remembers he belongs to a God merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness keeping steadfast love for thousands forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin but who will by no means clear the guilty complain to the one who truly hears you and when someone offers their complaint to you the very best thing you can do for them is bring their complaint before the Lord on their behalf so let's help each other do that I was watching the original

Jurassic Park this week and who doesn't wish that was a real place it's amazing and you know that famous scene when the power goes out it's in the rain and the electric fence keeping the enormous T-Rex contained to some degree but then the wires just start breaking like guitar strings and then the worst nightmare steps into reality the monster is hunting this one car with two kids and a man inside the horrors of death are overwhelming them and the man just runs away from the vehicle leaving the two kids in the car and the T-Rex destroys the car and having come so close to death the girl is just shaken to the core and she keeps repeating this one line it wasn't I almost died she keeps repeating he left us he left us we all know life is full of threats and dangers and I'm not referring to people here as the

T-Rex okay when you're in an argument for instance the issue itself can just feel enormous you've got no chance it feels unstoppable and it's just damaging everyone around it but what really does the biggest damage is when we feel left alone saying they left us now combine this with the other feeling we all know very very well when someone is saying things against you when conflict just seems to intensify not get better when attempts at doing good are called evil when others are just seeking their own interests and others know about the situation and it feels like they're doing nothing about it as if they're approving of it what is the one desire that creeps up in us and it just feels overwhelming feels like we have to give into it

[ 20 : 30 ] I think it's verse 6 oh that I had wings like a dove I would fly away and be at rest yes I would wander far away I would lodge in the wilderness I would hurry to find a shelter from the raging wind and tempest if we don't run away completely don't we find a shelter that protects us from the raging storm I just won't ever raise that topic with that person again I'm happy to chit chat but I'm not trusting that person again we might withdraw further back in the community maybe in bible study you offer a suggestion and people seem to treat you as stupid or you feel ashamed of your prayer that seemed to go all over the place and you just decide

I'm going to be quiet from now on I'm not really going to share what I need prayer for we find these little shelters to hide behind with one another we're very good at it when we are attacked within our own walls by those we trusted suddenly the city that was once safe and the lonely wilderness that was once dangerous are reversed the desire to run away and find a place to hide is very powerful and it's legitimate it's very reasonable apparently this is the only time in the Psalms King David expresses his desire to run away but imagine if God's king ran away what would this do to the order and security of those he was responsible for what would this do to the public reputation of

God's name the damage of running away is too great but the desire to run away is also too great what do we do we follow David we run it by God when we want to run away God fully appreciates our need for a hiding place but in the end God is the one who should decide if we should run so that's why I've used the phrase run it by God in some cases there are very good reasons to withdraw but don't just go off the emotions run it through God's will to decide and I think also when we express this desire in all its rawness be brutally honest with God he sympathizes with us and he satisfies this desire you might have to express it morning noon and night but he will satisfy the desire when you share it with him directly with him so let me pause and ask is there a false hiding place a shack in the wilderness of your own making that you need to come out from is there a tough conversation you need to have is there a new level of risk you need to need to take do you need to initiate not knowing what the response will be is there a new degree of raw honesty with

God complain to the one who truly hears you run it by God when you want to run away and the third step on the path of faith is a bit unexpected and you might even think it's sinful I did it first our psalm gives us words to express our anger look at verse 9 and verse 15 destroy oh Lord divide their tongues for I see violence and strife in the city verse 15 let death steal over them let them go down to Sheol the place of the dead alive for evil is in their dwelling place and in their heart it's raw intense language it makes us ask the question are we really meant to follow David at this point there's a few factors we need to consider first if you read the story of

David again and again he made every effort to make peace with his enemies secondly remember that David is the king he could have someone's head chopped off in a moment so notice where he's directing his anger third David wasn't just angry for his own sake he was angry for what the person was doing to God's community God's covenant community and fourth we need to factor in that as God's chosen king the words spoken against King David are spoken against God in a more direct way than what you and I can claim so those factors in mind is David just releasing his anger to God as some kind of self therapy he's just got to get it out

[ 26 : 49 ] I don't think so I think he's doing a lot more than that he's really asking God to be God God you be God and judge look at the language divide their tongues the city is corrupt sounds a lot like the Tower of Babel that city's words and actions were desiring to overthrow God ruling their lives so God confused them and limited their ability to do evil and then in verse 15 let them go down to Sheol alive in other words God take their lives early and unexpectedly but listen how similar these words are to Numbers chapter 16 when Korah and many respected men in the community rise up against Moses God's chosen servant Moses says in number 16 if these men die as all men die or if they are visited by the fate of all mankind then the

Lord has not sent me but if the Lord creates something new and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them and they go down alive into Sheol then you shall know that these men have despised the Lord and as soon as he had finished speaking all these words the ground under them split apart and the earth opens its mouth and swallowed them up so they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol verse 19 God will give ear and humble them he who is enthroned from of old because they do not change and do not fear God there's two things we need to learn from this in as much as what someone's done to us is sinful their offense is ultimately against the

Lord so when we cry out in anger for God to judge we are actually handing the matter over to the Lord the only judge if you don't give your anger to the Lord you're setting yourself up as judge vengeance is mine I will repay says the Lord but the other thing we need to learn is that God's chosen king can say this to a degree that you and I can't to speak and act against God's chosen king is to challenge God himself and it's an incredibly arrogant and stupid and deadly thing to do but haven't we all spoken and sung and prayed words to the

Lord Jesus words that are smoother than butter but then try and live with a desire to overthrow him ruling our lives I am the covenant breaking companion others especially those closest to me will have need to pray this psalm about me you are the covenant breaking companion we want to identify with David and we can and we should and we must but to do that we must also identify with those who carry out violence and fighting within God's community this psalm is ultimately about the son of

David the one enthroned forever alone in the garden outside the city rejected by his own people betrayed by his closest friend abandoned by those closest to him no one was praying on his behalf sweating drops of blood the terrors of death overwhelming him he cried out to the father he wanted to run away take this cup from me but instead of running he hid in his father's promises and he stood still silent while being falsely accused though innocent he was swallowed up going down to Sheol alive but God heard him he redeemed his life in safety raising him up he was vindicated though he went down to

[ 32 : 17 ] Sheol the place of the dead he was the first to experience that God never permits the righteous to be moved you can cry out to God and be heard only because our Lord Jesus Christ didn't run away but was swallowed up on your behalf if you don't take your anger to the Lord you will seat yourself as judge and you will be driven to complain to other people spreading the violence you will be driven by bitterness and resentment until you get that vengeance that your verdict demands but if you take your brothers or sisters sin against you to the judge the judge who swallowed up his own son then and only then will you be in a place to have that tough conversation that leads to restored fellowship among the throng of

God's people Paul trip points out something really helpful he says our need for Christ is just as big when we are sinned against as when we sin ourselves so instead of hiding in the wilderness you and I have a much better place to hide verse 22 cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you he will never permit the righteous to be moved how much more this side of Christ's death and resurrection can we say he redeems my soul in safety who shall separate us from the love of Christ and if I'm safe in him there's a limit to how much and how long we can be hurt when our deepest trust is not in our loved ones but in the abounding steadfast love and faithfulness of the

Lord then there's a limit the pain will still be raw and very deep but we have a steadfast covenant keeping Lord and he's given us this psalm to help us bring our complaint to him who truly hears us he's given us these words to pray so that we can run to him when we want to run away to share our anger with him and let him be judge and in doing this we will find we have such a safe place in Christ to hide we're going to sing later in Christ I have a shelter in the storm because he was swallowed up so for yourself on behalf of your brothers and sisters complain run share your anger and you're going to find such a safe place to hide where will you hide will you say that

I will trust in you will you pray with me let's pray now father you know you know the pain we go through each day lord you know the big pain that happens every now and then when those closest to us fail us to a large degree father thank you that you invite us to complain to you lord you know our desire to run away you don't disapprove of us for wanting this you know we need to hide lord thank you that you are judge of all the earth and that you will put things right and we thank you most of all that instead of swallowing us up you swallowed up your son lord thank you that we can hide in you please help us hide in you when every fiber of our being wants to just get angry and run away lord please help us hide in you for the sake of the community that you have died to save and you brought together for the peace in that community please do this for the sake of your name please do this please help us to be a community that brings one another's burden to you we pray these things in

Jesus name amen