

Psalm 56 • When people trample on your life

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Psalm chapter 56. You'll notice, as you look at the beginning of the Psalm, that there's some title information that is given to you there. It starts off by saying:

“To the choirmaster: according to The Dove on Far-off Terebinths. A Miktam (and we're assuming that is probably a melody that might have been connected to the psalm; and then it tells us that it is a psalm) of David, (and then it gives us a little informational background of when this was written; it says) when the Philistines seized him in Gath.”

Just before we get into this Psalm, it might help you to know a little bit of that backstory in the sense that this was a point in David's life, in his young life, when he became so tired of running from Saul, who, of course, wanted him dead, that he eventually decided, there's no place I can go that Saul won't find me; eventually he's going to find me.

And so, essentially, he said, the only place I can go is to go to the land of Saul's enemies, which, of course, were David's enemies, too. But since David is on the run at this time, he decided to go live among the Philistines, and he knew Saul wouldn't pursue him there. If he did, he'd be looking for a bigger fight than what even David could give him.

The problem, however, once David got to the land of the Philistines, is that his reputation had preceded him, and the Philistine commander started asking questions like, wait a minute, isn't this that one guy that the Israelites sing about? And, of course, they believed him to be a threat to their national security, and it put David in a very tenuous situation.

Here's the point—it's debatable, and we could probably sit and debate it all night if we wanted to, but it's debatable as to whether or not David ever should have gone to live along the Philistines in the first place. It sounds to me like a lapse of faith, to be completely honest with you, because I don't think God was in any dire need as it related to being able to protect David. I don't think He needed David to come up with his own plan of action.

And so, you have a situation here where David probably is in a difficult circumstance because of his own issues, his own problems, at this particular place. I mean, I think he was alone. I think he was afraid. I don't think he was necessarily thinking all that clearly, and it is very possible that this whole thing is kind of David's doing.

Have you ever been there? What I'm asking is: Have you ever been in the midst of circumstances, and you looked at them and realized you were in hot water, but you knew that you knew you got yourself in there on your own kind of idiocy? What does that do for you as it relates to being able to go to prayer once you start seeing the difficulties all around you?

Well, I've talked to a lot of people over the years, and I can tell you that the majority of people, I believe, will withdraw or at least approach God in a very hesitant sort of a manner when they believe that they are in fact to blame for the current problem they are in.

It could be any number of things that we might find ourselves in—like debt, you know; it's like, well, I'm the one who pulled that credit card out of my pocket or purse or whatever and handed it to the person. No one put a gun to my head and said, here, use this credit card. I did it. I racked up all this debt, so how in the world can I go to God now and pray? How can I go to Him and say, Lord, deliver me from this mess that I've gotten myself into.

And of course, that's just one example. You could be—your issue could be marriage problems, where you look at the mess you're in and say, there's nobody here to blame but me. You could be without a job and know that you probably deserved to lose your job. So how in the world can I go to God and say, Lord, please provide when I frittered away the last job that I had. You see what I'm saying?

People have this tendency to find themselves in a difficult situation, blame—and of course, blaming ourselves is easy. We have an enemy who wants to come and corroborate that any way he can. He is the accuser of the brethren and he'll even accuse you to you. I mean, that's not outside of his wheelhouse. So, here's the point: Once we feel accused and responsible for the situation we're in, we back away.

I am continually impressed by the fact that none of that stopped David. Again, I don't think the Lord told him to go live among the Philistines. I think he got himself in hot water. But I like the fact that David never allowed the guilt that would otherwise come upon the rest of us, and perhaps even came upon him.

But he didn't allow that guilt to keep him from approaching God as his deliverer. And the reason David did that is because he had a firm grasp on the mercy of God. We've talked about that before, frankly, and we've even made a point of it.

And so, he begins to pray. He says:

“Be gracious to me, O God, (and by the way, that word gracious, that can be translated merciful; and if you have a different translation on your lap tonight, your Bible may even say, be merciful to me) for man tramples on me;

all day long an attacker oppresses me;

*² my enemies trample on me all day long,
for many attack me proudly.” (ESV)*

And again, this is when that voice props up in your own mind, and it comes back says, yeah, of course they are. Of course they're trampling you. You got yourself into this. You made your bed, now sleep in it. Right?

But that's not the voice of your Father; that's the voice of the enemy. We need to learn to discern the two, and we understand the difference by understanding the character of each. One is an accuser and one is a merciful, patient, tender-hearted God. So, understand that.

Understanding God's character is what allows us to come into a place of prayer and to know what we're going to see, what we're going to meet up with once we get there. Am I going to meet up with a brick wall? Or am I going to meet up with the mercy of God?

The Bible says God delights to show mercy. I believe that when I go to the throne of grace, even though I'm at fault in the situation, as I come to Him humbly, broken in my own heart, confessing freely, Lord, this is a big, fat mess, and there's nobody to blame but myself. I know that I'm going to be met by God's mercy, and so was David. He was met with God's mercy, and he knew that he would.

But I want you to see what he says here in verse 3:

“When I am afraid (and he was),

I put my trust in you.

⁴ In God, whose word I praise,

in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.

What can flesh do to me? (That's another way of saying, what can man, what can men do to me?)

⁵ *All day long they injure my cause;
all their thoughts are against me for evil.*

⁶ *They stir up strife, they lurk;
they watch my steps,
as they have waited for my life.*

⁷ *For their crime will they escape?
In wrath cast down the peoples, O God!"*

By the way, verse 7 is a good question to ask. I think it's an important question to ask— when people are coming against you and hurting you and oppressing you— to ask the question, are they going to escape for what they've done? The fact of the matter is, the answer is no, they're not going to escape; and that ought to give us comfort.

See, I don't have to be the one who attacks my enemies when they attack me. I don't have to attack back because I know that my God is going to take care. It might not happen in my lifetime, but I have to be satisfied with the fact that God's going to take care of things where I've been wronged.

The only exception to that, people, is if the person who has so dreadfully wronged me themselves comes to the Lord and finds forgiveness in Jesus Christ. And then, you see, I can't complain about the fact that they're not going to receive justice because I received that same mercy. I received that same forgiveness. I'm the recipient of that same forgiveness.

I once talked to a woman many, many years ago, who admitted to me that she struggled praying for someone who had hurt her for fear that God might just answer that prayer and bring him salvation, and then, where would she be? I get that. I understand. I understand. I mean, my flesh understands. But how can I deny that forgiveness that I've received to someone else, regardless of what they've done, because whatever they did against me doesn't even hold a candle to what they've done against God? And if He's willing to forgive, if He's willing to no longer hold that debt against them because of what Jesus did on the cross, who am I to maintain my position of bitterness and the desire for recompense?

Anyway, he says in verse 7, again, will they escape? So, in verse 8, he says, look at this:

*“You have kept count of my tossings (your Bible may say, wanderings);
put my tears in your bottle.
Are they not in your book?”*

David assumed that God kept a record of his emotional responses to these situations, and he says: *“Are they not in your book?”* In other words, are they not in your book of remembrance? And again, this sounds like kind of a strange thing for David to say, a man who we know to be, to have been a warrior. I mean a warrior! And yet, he speaks often of his tears; and here he acknowledges that God keeps a record of those tears.

He says, verse 9:

*“Then my enemies will turn back
in the day when I call.
This I know, that God is for me.”*

Wow! Okay, can I just stop there for a moment? *“This I know, that God is for me.”* David, I want to remind you of something. God didn't tell you to go live along the Philistines. You did that. You got tired. You got beat. You didn't see a way out, and you took upon yourself your own direction, your own deliverance, and you went to go live among the Philistines, and now you're in trouble. Now they want to kill you, and you're going to sit there, David, and tell me that God is for you? Yes, He is. Because he is absolutely right.

One of the most incredible things that we can come to terms with as believers is that in the midst of our mistakes, God will never abandon us. God is still for us. He still loves us. He doesn't treat us like we treat other people. He doesn't blow us off when we offend. We do— we, maybe, do that to other folks. He doesn't do that to us, and He continues to be for you.

And that, brothers and sisters in Jesus, is grace. It is favor that is undeserved, but it is favor, nonetheless, and it is a beautiful thing. David knew that grace to the point where even after he made his own mistake, he said: *“God is for me.”*

We need to learn from this, you guys. We need to embrace this. We need to see God like David saw God. We need to see his heart like David saw his heart and we need to just run to that heart.

Verse 10:

*"In God, whose word I praise,
in the Lord, whose word I praise,
¹¹ in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.
What can man do to me?"*

*¹² I must perform my vows to you, O God;
I will render thank offerings to you.
¹³ For you have delivered my soul from death,
yes, my feet from falling,
that I may walk before God
in the light of life.*

And again, I am impressed most by David's ability to be in the midst of a very challenging, very scary situation in his life, and still say things that declare his faith in God— such as in verse 3: *"When I am afraid, I put my trust in you."* The only reason we can put our trust in God is because He's faithful. But so, we put our faith in Him. It's based on God's character.

And when he says in verse 4, *"I shall not be afraid,"* I don't think David said that because he was never afraid. I don't think he made statements like that. I don't think he was bragging or saying, I'm never going to be afraid. When he makes a statement like, in God I trust, I shall not be afraid, what can man do to me, and things like that.

I think he's talking to the Lord in his own remembrance saying, He's enough to keep me from being afraid, and really, there's no reason for me to be afraid if I'm in His hands. He's reminding himself, David's giving himself a pep talk, that faith, that statement that focuses on God's protection rather than the circumstances that he's in.

Faith is always a critical element to David's prayers and his life, and it ought to be for you and I, as well. I've said this before, and I'm going to say it to you again. I believe that when David prayed, he drew faith from that time of prayer. I think David came away from his prayer time built up in his faith.

And so, I have to ask a question of us: When you emerge from your prayer time, do you emerge with your faith built up? Or are you in the same situation as when you went into prayer? Are you still fearful? I really truly believe that David drew confidence from his time spent in prayer because time spent in prayer was an opportunity to express faith in God and say, I choose to trust in God. He has been good to me. I believe that He will continue to be good to me.

So, my question again is: Does your faith grow when you pray? If it doesn't, let me tell you right now, you're going to get tired of praying. And I believe one of the reasons why Christians struggle with prayer is that we aren't built up in our faith through times of prayer. We feel like it's an expenditure rather than an investment.

And in the financial world, you can't go very long putting your money in areas that you think are just nothing but an expenditure when somebody's trying to convince you it's an investment. Eventually, after a period of time, you go, "I haven't seen anything for my money. I've been putting money here with you for a year, and I haven't gotten a dime back. I'm done."

Same attitude as it relates to prayer. If you're spending and spending, and you're not feeling or having any sense that your prayer time is an investment in the kingdom of God in your life, in the lives of others, and if you're not coming away from that prayer time saying, yes, we just did some good today; we just moved a few mountains today; we're going to have an expectation that the Lord is going to do some good things as the result of this time of prayer.

Pretty soon you're going to say, I don't think I have the time to give. That's too expensive. See? Too expensive. I got other things I can do. There's other things I can do. I can build up the kingdom other ways. Ways that I can kind of see things happening. But prayer? It's just too expensive. Takes a lot of time. I don't seem to get any investment out of it.

And this is an important discussion I think we're having here because I think that there is a place where our prayers ought to elicit faith and peace. How many times have we gone to the place of prayer because our hearts were aflutter with fear due to the chaos and all the things going on in our lives, and we went to the place of prayer and emerged just as burdened as when we knelt down? Wow! Been there; done that.

But I've also been to the mountaintop. I've also been to the place of prayer, and it usually happens when I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired, and I basically come to God and say, I am not moving from this spot until You meet with me here and until I know that Your presence is surrounding me and I know that I know that Your peace is mine.

Boy, does that make a difference because we have to be built up in our faith from those times of prayer, as I said, or we're just not going to go back to it. You just can't overstate the importance of being built up in your faith. You just can't overstate it.

When you leave church, I hope every time you leave a service here at Calvary Chapel, I hope you're built up in your faith. I hope you walk out the door stronger than when you came in. If not, we might have to go back and reevaluate what we're doing. But that should be what's going on because faith is everything to a believer. It's not just a big thing. It's everything.

Can I show you what Paul wrote to the Romans? Romans chapter 1 on the screen. He says:

Romans 1:16-17 (ESV)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

We live by faith, guys. We are the righteous, not by our own deeds. I am not righteous because I live a life of righteousness. I am righteous and you are righteous because we have put our faith in the Righteous King who has imputed His righteousness to us. So now, as the righteous, we are to live by faith, right? By faith.

And remember something about faith from Hebrews chapter 11:

Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)

And without faith it is impossible to please God...

And without faith it is impossible to please God...

If you're living a life apart from faith and apart from faith is works, putting your hope in other things, there's no pleasing life along that path. The righteous live by faith because we please God when we live by faith, putting our faith in Him, right?

When Paul wrote his letters to the New Testament churches, he was always concerned about where their faith was at. In fact, he said as much to the church in Thessalonica. Let me show you this. He wrote to the Thessalonians and he said:

1 Thessalonians 3:5 (ESV)

For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

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Paul wrote to them—he didn't say, when I could bear it no longer, I sent somebody over there to meet with you guys because I was really concerned if you had gotten that new building put up yet, or if you bought those new chairs, or if you got that nifty new projector. He was concerned about one thing. He wanted to know about their faith.

How's your faith doing? Is your faith strong? Is it weak? Is it middling? How is it? We're all—we all go through different seasons, don't we? In the song that we're reading, I think David had a lapse of faith. Now, it's just my personal opinion, and David may contradict me one day, but I think that the fact that he went to go live among the Philistines was because he had a lapse of faith.

But he went to the Lord, and there in prayer he knew that was where he was going to build up his faith once again. Lord, you're with me. I believe that You're there for me.

So very important that we see that. So very important that our own prayer times result in the building up of our faith.