

May 9

Scriptures: Read Psalms 54, 55 & 56

Key Verse: “Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.” (Psalm 55:22)

Overview

From the title of Psalm 54, we learn that David wrote it when the Ziphites betrayed his whereabouts to Saul (1 Samuel 23:15,19-29). Although the Ziphites were a clan within the tribe of Judah (David’s tribe), they were ungodly, and thus David referred to them as “strangers” who rose up against him. The “oppressors” were Saul and his men, who were seeking to kill David (54:3; 1 Samuel 23:15). Both groups of adversaries had not set God before them; so David describes their actions as an evil for which God would bring retribution (54:3b, 5).

With assurance of deliverance from his divine helper, David declared that God would uphold his life; this gave him peace and rest in the midst of trouble (54:4; Isaiah 41:10; John 14:16-18). His great faith permitted him to speak as though the future deliverance of God had already been accomplished, and he vowed to offer unto the Lord the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise (cf. Psalm 50:14, 23; Hebrews 13:15).

As the historical records show, the Lord was indeed faithful to deliver David from the evil plans of Saul and the Ziphites. Just at the time when David’s capture and death seemed inevitable, the Lord intervened by raising up the Philistines to attack the country, thus causing Saul to leave his pursuit of David to fight the other battle (1 Samuel 23:26-29).

David’s faith and dependence upon God’s help endured, even after he became king, as is evident in Psalm 55. The occasion for writing was most likely when he was confronted with the rebellion of Absalom (2 Samuel 15:7-13). The treachery against David by his own son affected him so deeply with emotional hurt that he groaned and felt physical pain (55:2, 4). He wished he could flee like a bird to a safe place of refuge in the Lord and be far from his enemies and the dangers all around him, for they were busy night and day in his city spreading lies and strife. What made it worse was that among those who turned against him was his close friend with whom he had a covenant and with whom he worshipped God (55:12-14, 20-21). This is likely a referring to Ahithophel, David’s former companion and private advisor (2 Samuel 15:12). David came to understand that Ahithophel was a hypocrite who spoke words full of deception and guile. David prayed for God to “divide their tongues” (55:9) which is reminiscent of God’s judgment upon the people of Babel in bringing confusion, division, and a stop to their evil plan. God answered this prayer through Hushai, David’s true friend, who infiltrated Absalom’s inner circle as a spy and foiled Ahithophel’s plans against David (2 Samuel 15:34-37; 17:7).

David found that place of refuge through constant prayer, (55:17) casting his burden on the Lord who sustains him. When troubles give us a heavy heart, the wisest action is to unburden ourselves upon the Lord, for He truly cares for us and will sustain us through any circumstance. David prayed that God would bring quick retribution and that his enemies would perish in their prime (55:15, 23). He was confident that the Lord would answer this prayer, because he had faith

that God would redeem him and that He punishes those who do not fear Him (55:19; cf. 2 Samuel 17:23; 18:7).

In Psalm 56, David once again laments over his treatment by his enemies, and this time it is the Philistines who he asks God to punish in His wrath (56:7). The occasion for the psalm given in the title was when David was captured by the Philistines in Gath. There were two occasions when David went to Gath, but it is most likely referring to the first time when he fled there from Saul, was captured, feigned insanity, and was thrown out by the king (1 Samuel 21:10-21:1); the second time, he and his small army went there voluntarily, yet because he was in exile, he was in a sense a captive (1 Samuel 27:1-7).

It is only natural that the malicious plots against David caused him to fear. However, through much prayer and supplication in entreating God for mercy, he trusted in God and overcame his fear. No matter how difficult the circumstances, David resolved to trust God and “praise His word” (56:4, 10), and thus he stood strong upon the Word of God without fear. He took comfort in knowing that God watches over him, and his tears touched the heart of God. He knew that ‘if God was for him, who could be against him?’ (Romans 8:31). Therefore, he had no fear. He could proclaim with faith that when he was safe and delivered from his enemies, he would keep his vow to the Lord by offering Him the sacrifice of praise. Once God had saved and preserved him from falling, then he could be confident that he would walk in the light (have new life) (56:13b). When Jesus saves our souls from destruction, we too can walk in His Light (John 8:12).

Prayer

We cast all our burdens upon You, dear Lord, for You care for us and are touched with the feelings of our infirmities. We praise You for the supernatural peace You give which is beyond our understanding.