

August 16, 2026

Psalm 55

Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not yourself from my plea for mercy! ² Attend to me, and answer me; I am restless in my complaint and I moan, ³ 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. ⁴ My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen upon me. ⁵ Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me. ⁶ And I say, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; ⁷ yes, I would wander far away; I would lodge in the wilderness; *Selah*

⁸ I would hurry to find a shelter from the raging wind and tempest.” ⁹ Destroy, O Lord, divide their tongues; for I see violence and strife in the city. ¹⁰ Day and night they go around it on its walls, and iniquity and trouble are within it; ¹¹ ruin is in its midst; oppression and fraud do not depart from its marketplace.

¹² 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. ¹³ But it is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. ¹⁴ We used to take sweet counsel together; within God’s house we walked in the throng. ¹⁵ Let death steal over them; let them go down to Sheol alive; for evil is in their dwelling place and in their heart. ¹⁶ But I call to God, and the Lord will save me. ¹⁷ Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice. ¹⁸ He redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage, for many are arrayed against me. ¹⁹ God will give ear and humble them, he who is enthroned from of old, *Selah*

because they do not change and do not fear God. ²⁰ My companion stretched out his hand against his friends; he violated his covenant. ²¹ His speech was smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.

²² Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. ²³ 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.

Scriptures for further
study:
2 Corinthians 4:17



Psalm 55

“’Tis grace has brought
me safe thus far, and
grace will lead me
home.”

-John Newton,
Amazing Grace

BIG IDEA: In a world of overwhelming trouble, let us cast our burdens on the Lord who sustains His people by His grace.

Or to say it more simply – Overwhelmed believers cast burdens on sustaining grace.

OUTLINE

The Cry of the Overwhelmed (vss. 1-2)

The Pain of Trouble and Betrayal (vss. 3-8)

The Plea for God’s Justice (vss. 9-15)

The Hope of Sustaining Grace (vss. 16-23)

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. When was the last time you felt like a circus clown juggling your usual daily challenges, and then a friend intentionally threw you a chainsaw? Betrayal doesn’t just hurt — it disorients, because the pain comes from someone you trusted, not someone you expected. Where do you feel that kind of disorientation right now, and who have you let carry it with you?
2. In verses 1–2, David admits he’s restless — pacing, moaning, unable to settle. Where does your own prayer get honest like that, and where do you tend to clean it up yourself before bringing it to God?
3. David wants to fly away like a dove and escape it all (vv. 6–8) — yet he still brings that desire to God instead of acting on it. When you want to escape your trouble rather than face it, do you tend to bring that desire to God honestly, or do you hide it from Him? What would it look like to bring it to Him this week?
4. Scripture does call us to pray compassionately for those who’ve wronged us — but that’s not what Psalm 55 is teaching. In severe, overwhelming moments, it teaches us not to cry out with our own vengeance, but to cry out to God and seek His justice. Where are you currently carrying anger or hurt that you haven’t handed over to God? What would it look like to bring it to Him instead of holding it yourself?
5. David’s confidence rests on this: ‘Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you’ (v. 22). It’s not that the trouble disappears — it’s that it gets cast onto something bigger than itself. What burden are you still carrying on your own right now? What would it actually look like to cast it on the Lord this week, rather than just saying you have?

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Like many individual laments, Psalm 55 prays for God's help against dangerous enemies who hate the faithful. But there's a unique twist: the danger comes from betrayal by a close friend (vv. 13–14, 20–21), one who had seemed a fellow pilgrim on the path of life. Some deny David's authorship since no clear instance of such betrayal appears in his recorded life — but that misses the point: the psalms are hymns, not autobiography. David gave this psalm to God's people to sing under this kind of duress. And in fact, he did know this betrayal firsthand — through his son Absalom (2 Sam. 15:1–12; 16:15–23) and his counselor Ahithophel (2 Sam. 15:12; 16:20–23).

— adapted from the ESV Expository Commentary

Praise to Jesus –Lord, you alone are worthy of praise. You listen to us no matter how raw our emotions. You care for all Your children in every circumstance of life. You do not chastise us for being afraid but remain with us through the trial. You are a God of justice — no harm, betrayal, or hurt goes unnoticed by You. Our Good Shepherd was betrayed by those close to Him, with no defender or advocate of His own, so that He could defend and intercede for us. Praise the Lord!

Repent through Jesus –Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you in a time of confession and repentance. Confess the times you felt God didn't care about you and wouldn't listen to your prayers. Confess when you took vengeance on someone who betrayed you, rather than trusting the Lord and His justice. Confess the times you were ashamed because you wanted to run away, not realizing that God has a good purpose even in betrayal — He is trustworthy and will never leave you or forsake you.

Consecration for Jesus –Psalm 55 teaches us to cast our burdens on the Lord, and the gospel shows us why we can: Christ carried the crushing burden of our sin, betrayal, and judgment so that we might be sustained by grace. And so, like David, we say with him: “But I will trust in you” (v. 23). In a world of overwhelming trouble, we cast our burdens on the Lord who sustains His people by His grace.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. When you need help, are you more likely to look for help from someone who you know well and who cares for you? Or would rather seek help from someone who you don't know or someone who doesn't care for you? (Talk with your children about how this Psalm is about a situation in King David's life in which he needed help, and he sought help from the LORD because he knew that God cared for him. It is important for us to know the character of our LORD since that will lead us to seek Him in prayer and in His Word.)

2. Why do you think King David asked God to hear his prayer? Is that because God doesn't hear our prayers or is unable to hear our prayers? (David knows that God hears his prayers, but by starting his prayer this way he is speaking into his own heart. Another aspect of this is that when God's people pray for Him to hear their prayer, they are also asking for God to respond with an answer to prayer and asking for God to save them.)

3. What do we learn about David's psalm and prayer from verses 12-14? (We learned that the tough situation for David was brought on by a close friend. Talk with your children about a situation that you faced when you were hurt by a friend.)

4. What does David say in verse 22 will happen when we cast our burden on the LORD? (He says that God will sustain us. This doesn't mean that the LORD will take away all our struggles or troubles. We are reminded that God will give us the strength to get through and to handle this situation.)

Scriptures for further study:

1 Peter 5:6-11

Matthew 11:28-30

Philippians 4:6-7

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

1 Peter 5:6–11

Matthew 11:28–30

Philippians 4:6–7

Romans 12:14–21

Hebrews 4:15–16

1. David is not politely asking God to listen; he is pleading, pacing, moaning. When was the last time your prayer was that raw and desperate? What keeps you from praying like that? What does it tell you that God preserved this kind of honesty in Scripture?

2. David describes wanting to fly away like a dove, to just escape all of it. Have you ever been so overwhelmed that escape felt like the only option? What did you actually do with that feeling? What does it mean that David brings even the desire to run away directly to God?

3. The worst part of David's trouble isn't his enemies. It's a close friend who turned on him. Why does betrayal by someone you trusted hurt so differently than being hurt by a stranger? Is there someone in your life right now whose betrayal you are still carrying?

4. David prays for God's justice, not personal revenge. What is the difference between handing a situation over to God and just hoping God punishes someone? What would it actually look like for you to release a specific anger to God this week rather than hold onto it?

5. Read verse 22. "Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you." The promise isn't that the trouble disappears; it's that God holds what you cannot. What burden are you still carrying on your own right now? What makes it hard to actually cast it rather than just saying you have?

6. How does knowing that Jesus walked through the very kind of betrayal and overwhelm David describes change the way you bring your own pain to God?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. Psalm 55 clearly describes a person (David) who is overwhelmed by the chaotic and troubling situation he is in and desperate for God to help.

Question: In verses 6-7, David expresses his desire to just fly far away from the situation. Have you ever found yourself feeling this same way?

2. Not only is David facing threats from his enemies; even worse, he has been betrayed by one of his closest friends (vv.12-14).

Question: Why does this kind of injury hurt even worse? Can we be honest and admit that perhaps we are the ones who may have betrayed or injured someone close to us? How have you, or how are you planning to rectify this situation?

3. What can we learn from David about praying not for personal vengeance but for God's justice on those who live evil lives? How do we balance the biblical command to pray for mercy for our enemies while also taking comfort in the fact that God's justice and judgment will come to those who do not trust in God?

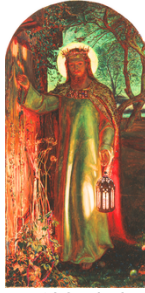
4. In verse 17, the Psalmist cries out in distress, “evening, morning, and noon” (i.e., for long and extended periods of time).

Question: How does this kind of perseverance demonstrate great confidence and trust in God to deliver?

Question: How does the very act of prayer become a means through which God sustains us as we await the arrival of his deliverance?

Question: Have you ever had the experience of praying constantly about something? How did God end up answering your prayers? How did God use that season of prayer to change you?!

The Blessed Life: A Study of the Psalms



"The Light of the World" (1851-1853) by William Holman Hunt

Psalms Introduction

The Book of Psalms is the sacred place where the living God meets His people in the most intimate and personal of ways. He invites them to know Him not merely as an idea, but as their refuge, portion, shepherd, and King. From the opening doorway of blessedness in Psalm 1 to the climactic Hallelujahs of Psalm 150, the Psalter reveals that the truly happy life is one rooted in the person and work of Almighty God, whose steadfast love holds His people through every season of the soul. As the Psalter moves from anguish to adoration, from darkness to dawn, it becomes a mirror of the Christian life itself. It teaches us to pray honestly, to hope stubbornly, and to sing faithfully, even when night seems long. In the deepest valleys, the Psalms give voice to the church's groan; on the highest heights, they train the church's doxology. And in every line, every cry, and every hallelujah, Christ Himself comes near, revealing the light of the world in the dark night of the soul and leading His people into the blessedness that only His grace can give.

– Pastor Bill

About the artwork and artist.

The Light of the World, 1851-1853, is an iconic allegorical painting by William Holman Hunt. The painting depicts Jesus Christ as a regal figure in flowing robes, wearing a crown of thorns, holding a glowing lantern, and preparing to knock on a weed-overgrown wooden door with no external handle. This illustrates Revelation 3:20 from the Bible: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him..." The artist William Holman Hunt is showing us that Jesus is the divine door to the living God who meets His people in the most intimate and personal ways. The closed, overgrown door → representing the human soul or "obstinately shut mind" that has long ignored spiritual calling. There is no handle on the outside → the door can only be opened from within, emphasizing free will and personal invitation to faith. The lantern → Christ as the light of the world (John 8:12), illuminating darkness and offering salvation. The work marked Hunt's deepening Christian faith (from earlier agnosticism) and became one of the most reproduced and devotional images of the Victorian era, inspiring oratorios, hymns, and widespread popular piety. It's often called a visual sermon on personal salvation.