

## The Chaos of Life

Psalm 55

Studies in the Psalms #56

**J**ESUS said, *all* the Scriptures “bear witness about me” (John 5:39) and “everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44). Sometimes we’ve read explicit verses in the Psalms that are quoted by Jesus and the apostles. Other times there are more implicit allusions and even feelings that we can see Jesus. Psalm 55 is one of these more subtle prophetic prayers of Jesus.

Psalm 55 is also a good Psalm to remind us that it’s not enough for us to see Jesus in the Psalms and go home. There’s a scene in the 2003 movie *Luther* where Martin Luther is in Rome; he’s paid money to get in line to see a relic of some saint to get time out of purgatory. The line is massive but when he finally gets to the relic, he pauses and touches the glass; a priest tells us him to move along but Luther kneels and begins to pray; then the priest rushes him along. I fear we can so emphasize the Christ-centeredness of Scripture that as long as we get a glance at Jesus in the Old Testament we’ve done our duty. Jesus prayed Psalm 55 and because we’re united to him by faith and he to us by grace we can pray it too when we experience THE CHAOS OF LIFE. I want you to know that whatever you’re facing or feel you’re facing tonight, there’s hope.

## A CRY FOR HELP (vv. 1–5)

The chaos of life leads to A CRY FOR HELP. The Psalm opens with four verbs: *give ear...hide not...attend...answer* (vv. 1, 2). True prayer arises out of true desperation: **I am restless in my complaint and I moan. Why? Because of the noise of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked** (vv. 2b–3b).

David had Saul’s men as enemies. Jesus was tempted by the Devil and was sought out by the Pharisees. How about you? Paul tells us in Ephesians 6 that our enemies are not carnal but spiritual. The spiritual forces of the world, our own sinful flesh, and especially the devil constantly make **noise**. What does their **noise** sound like? **Trouble...anger...they bear a grudge** or “are at enmity” **against me** (v. 3b). Out of desperation David cries out for help: **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** (vv. 4–5). We know Jesus prayed this way: “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me” (Luke 22:42). How about us? Our sinful flesh can manifest itself as an enemy in depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and all kinds of emotional and mental struggles. I read that 1 in 5 college students consider harming themselves or others. There’s hope, though! Cry out to God!

## AN URGE TO RUN AWAY (vv. 6–8)

Sometimes in the chaos of life do you also feel AN URGE TO RUN AWAY?

**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.**

Children, when you see a flock of birds on the beach and you run towards them what happens? They get frightened and fly away as quick as possible! What if you were to do the same to a bear or a lion? Don't even try! Way back in Psalm 11 we read, "In the LORD I take refuge"—listen to that confidence—"how can you [my enemy] say to my soul, "Flee like a bird to your mountain?" (v. 1) But that's exactly how we feel even though we know Jesus is King, Jesus is Lord, Jesus is alive from the dead!

#### THE REIGN OF VIOLENCE (vv. 9–11)

Why the urge to run away? It's explained in verses 9–11: THE REIGN OF VIOLENCE. He cries out an imprecation or calling down of a curse: **Destroy, O Lord, divide their tongues** like at Babel. Why so serious? **For I see violence and strife in the city** (v. 9). He doesn't tell us the name of the city so that it's applicable in all situations. But his description is the same as it would be if he said "Oceanside" or "New York" or "Kampala" or "Shanghai":

**Day and night they go around it on its walls,  
and iniquity and trouble are within it;  
ruin is in its midst;**

**oppression and fraud do not depart from its marketplace.** (vv. 10–11)

If you're anything like me, you dive into the news, see how bleak things are, then you engage; then after a while of feeling things are so bad and that you're of no use that you disengage and throw your hands up. The Psalmist feels this way. It's all evil; let it burn.

THE BETRAYAL BY A FRIEND (vv. 12–15)

But it's more specific for David. Look at verses 12–15 and THE BETRAYAL BY A FRIEND. David's not speaking of theoretical evil: **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** (v. 12). No, David's personally felt this evil: **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** (vv. 13–14). Getting stabbed in the back no doubt kills; but to turn around and see a friend hurts worse. In Shakespeare's play, *Julius Casear*, Caesar utters those famous words as he's murdered, looking at his friend who led the plot: *et tu, Brute?*

THE CALL OF CONFIDENCE (vv. 16–19)

*Finally* comes the good news and THE CALL OF CONFIDENCE. The cry of verses 1–5 is expressed here in confidence: **but I call to God and**

**the LORD will save me** (v. 16). David calls out **evening and morning and at noon**, meaning, constantly. Again note the confidence: **I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice** (v. 17). Our call is to ask; it's God's to answer. In answering **he redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage** (v. 18). **God will give ear [to me] and humble them [my enemies]**. Who is this God who hears? **He who is enthroned from of old** (v. 19). Think about that. How many troubles has the Lord seen in this world? How many cries in the midst of them has he heard? Does he know how to help?

#### THE BETRAYAL BY A FRIEND AGAIN (vv. 20–21)

Briefly note verses 20–21. Right after his high point of confidence David is *so* affected that he brings up his pain of THE BETRAYAL BY A FRIEND *AGAIN!* First, it's not easy to forgive and forget, is it? Second, it's "normal" to carry around pain in your mind and soul. So what's the solution?

#### THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION (vv. 22–23)

THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION is in verses 22–23. Whenever we recall our pain we are to recall the Lord: **cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved** (v. 22). And in contrast to his enemies he says, **but I will trust in you** (v. 23).

Life is full of chaos, isn't it?

It's depicted here as enemies outside who **bear a grudge**, as those who make **the noise of the enemy** and **the oppression of the wicked**, as those who **drop trouble**, as those who act in **violence and strife in the city**, as those who engage in **oppression and fraud** in the **marketplace**, as **many...arrayed against me**, and as those who **do not change and do not fear God**.

It's depicted as close friends who become enemies: **my equal, my companion, my familiar friend** with whom we **used to take sweet counsel** and **walked in the throng** at the tabernacle and temple.

It's depicted here as struggle within: **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.**

What's your chaos? Jesus experienced it. He cast his anxieties upon the Lord and experienced ultimate upholding by the Lord. Let's do the same...