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Psalm 55: To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Maskil of David.

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Psalm 55

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Maskil of David.

(RSV)

- 1 Give ear to my prayer, O God;
and hide not thyself from my supplication!**
- 2 Attend to me, and answer me;
I am overcome by my trouble.
I am distraught ³ by the noise of the enemy,
because of the oppression of the wicked.
For they bring^(a) trouble upon me,
and in anger they cherish enmity 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, "O that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest;
7 yea, I would wander afar,
I would lodge in the wilderness,** *Selah*
- 8 I would haste to find me a shelter
from the raging wind and tempest."**
- 9 Destroy their plans, ^(b) O Lord, confuse their tongues;
for I see violence and strife in the city.**
- 10 Day and night they go around it
on its walls;
and mischief and trouble are within it,
11 ruin is in its midst;
oppression and fraud
do not depart from its market place.**
- 12 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, my equal,
my companion, my familiar friend.**
- 14 We used to hold sweet converse together;
within God's house we walked in fellowship.**
- 15 Let death^(c) come upon them;
let them go down to Sheol alive;
let them go away in terror into their graves. ^(d)**

- 16 **But I call upon God;
and the LORD will save me.**
- 17 **Evening and morning and at noon
I utter my complaint and moan,
and he will hear my voice.**
- 18 **He will deliver 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;
because they keep no law,^(e)
and do not fear God.**

Selah

- 20 **My companion stretched out his hand against his friends,
he violated his covenant.**
- 21 **His speech was smoother than butter,
yet war was in his heart;
his words were softer than oil,
yet they were drawn swords.**
- 22 **Cast your burden^(f) on the LORD,
and he will sustain you;
he will never permit
the righteous to be moved.**
- 23 **But thou, O God, wilt cast them down
into the lowest pit;
men of blood and treachery
shall not live out half their days.
But I will trust in thee.**

Footnotes:

- a. (v.3) Cn Compare Gk: Heb *they cause to totter*
b. (v.9) Heb lacks *their plans*
c. (v.15) Or *desolations*
d. (v.15) Cn: Heb *evils are in their habitation, in their midst*
e. (v.19) Or *do not change*
f. (v.22) Or *what he has given you*

Psalm 55 is a lament by David, the traditional author of this Psalm, when he has not only been threatened by his enemies, but also betrayed by a friend. He is afraid and cried continuously for help from God. But his pain is the sharper for having been betrayed by someone who had once been his dear companion.

Here, as so frequently in the Psalms, David is a type, or a prototype, of Jesus. Just as David is pained by the betrayal of his friend, so also is Jesus surrounded by mortal enemies, and he too experiences the deep pain of being betrayed by Judas, one of his twelve chosen apostles.

Jesus well knows the treachery that the human heart is capable of harboring, and that he and his message can set such treachery in motion. He warns his disciples that his coming will set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother, when a person's foes will be those of his own household (Matthew 10:35-36). The days are coming, he says, in which many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another (Matthew 24:10).

When we pray this Psalm, we are praying that we may never have to pay the price of treachery and betrayal for our discipleship. But in the world-wide company of fellow Christians we ask that where such suffering is inflicted, our brothers and sisters in Christ may continue to hope for the signs of the LORD God's faithfulness and his final triumph over all such evil.

Prayer to accompany Psalm 55:

Lord Jesus, you were rejected by your people, betrayed by the kiss of a friend, and deserted by your disciples. In our trouble, give us the confidence that you had in the Father and the assurance of our salvation now and forever. Amen.

Linger longer over verse 22:

**Cast your burdens on the LORD,
and he will sustain you;
he will never permit
the righteous to be moved.**