

## **CAST YOUR BURDEN ON THE LORD!**

### **PSALM 55: 16-23**

Introduction:

This psalm is very personal. It exposes the inner thoughts of King David when he was going through an extremely difficult time. Many scholars relate this Psalm to the Absalom period and the betrayal of his trusted counselor, Ahithophel. Ahithophel was to David what Judas was to Jesus. He was a friend who betrayed him by assisting Absalom in plotting the overthrow of King David. Nothing hurts more deeply than this kind of treachery. For a time it appeared that Absalom would prevail in his attempt to dethrone David.

In the psalm you find a natural mingling of anguish and anger--but he moves through them to anticipation of God's help.

In our text David may be speaking to his own heart. He has already voiced his complaint before the Lord, and vented the despair that he felt personally. He has presented an emotional appeal to the Lord for help. In the end he says to himself, "Cast your burden on the Lord!" Or it may be what he heard the Lord say to his heart in this time of darkness and despair. Whichever it is surely a word for you this morning.

It may be of some comfort to you to realize that it took David a while to get to the place he could do this. There is movement in the Psalm. In verse 6 he says, “I said” and what he said was that he wanted to take wings like a dove and escape. That was his first response, “O God, let me out of this situation.”

Then he said, “I will call upon God”. (V. 16) This was movement in the right direction. He has decided to seek help in the Lord. But he closes the Psalm by saying, “But I will trust in You.” (v. 23) He has finally come to the place of confidence and trust.

What can we learn from David’s experience? What lesson is intended for our hearts?

#### I. BURDENS ARE COMMON TO LIFE. (What is a burden?)

What is the thing that I can cast on the Lord? How did David understand this admonition to his own heart? I find at least three burdens that are common to life. A burden is something that presses life down; something that tests our humanity; that makes us aware of our need of God’s help. It may be of some comfort to remember that the man who was after God’s own heart was not immune to burdens—they come to all of us.

1. An anxiety producing circumstance is a burden.

“Burden” should be related to anxiety. A burden is something that fills your heart with anxiety and care; that bothers you and worries you.

The actual circumstance for David is rather clear. He was growing close to the end of his reign as the king of Israel. It has been made known to him that significant opposition has arisen to his rule as the king. The opposition is being led by his son Absalom. To make the situation even worse, the king’s most trusted advisor has joined forces with Absalom. Ahithophel’s counsel will greatly increase the probability of success for the rebel. David states it like this, “For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has magnified himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked together to the house of God in the throng.” (v. 12-14)

This was a situation David never expected to face! You may be in a similar situation. Others around you have made decisions that greatly complicate your life. Life has taken an unexpected and painful turn for you. I remember a dear friend who came to me with a heart full of anxiety. He had trusted all of his retirement funds into the hands of deceitful people, and his retirement funds were now gone. He faced an uncertain financial future because of decisions made by others, by people he had trusted. He now found his future

and the future of his wife in jeopardy as they came into their retirement years.

The anxiety producing situations are innumerable. You have been divorced. You have a son or daughter in trouble. You are facing a real health challenge, a life threatening disease. On and on I could go! Your life situation has brought a burden to you. What do you do? You cast it on the Lord!

## 2. An anxiety producing responsibility is a burden.

The Hebrew word translated “burden” has an interesting background. It could be translated “gift”, or “assignment”, or “lot.” This lets us know that there is something more than just the anxiety-producing situation going on. The anxiety is heightened by the understanding that David has been assigned responsibility by God for the leadership of the nation of Israel. It has always been important to him to be faithful to this responsibility. Now the very responsibility that God has given to him seems to be threatened. To him it will be the ultimate failure if Absalom succeeds in his attempt to dethrone the king. Yet all of the odds seem to be to favor this rebellion. David is now an older man—not as politically agile as he once was. David has disappointed some along the way which gave them a reason to question his

effectiveness as king. Absalom is young, bright, aggressive, and promises change for the nation. Maybe David is no longer up to the task!

The greatest burden I have ever borne has been the assignment that the Lord gave me. He first settled the responsibility for leading a church upon my shoulders when I was only eighteen. Just the thought of being responsible for a church filled my heart with anxiety then, and I never outgrew it. There was never a day when I felt adequate in myself. Yet in my heart I knew that it was God's assignment for my life.

Have you felt this burden? Your responsibility as a mother, a wife, a father, a husband, an employee, an employer, a counselor—any one of these can fill the heart with anxiety. What do you do when you feel such a burden—David said to his own heart what I hope you will say to yours, “Cast your burden on the Lord.”

3. An anxiety producing memory is a burden. (An anxiety producing disappointment.)

I suspect that the rebellion of Absalom stirred painful memories in the heart of David. It stirred up the memory of when his family troubles began.

Things had been peaceful in the family of David until the day he disappointed himself, his family, God, and everyone else by having an affair

with Bathsheba. From that day forward things would never be the same. It was one family tragedy piled on top of another. A new born son dies.

Another son rapes his sister. Another son kills his brother in vengeance for raping his sister. The son that killed his brother is banished to a foreign country for years. I wonder how many times David said to himself, “How could you be some dumb? Why did you do it?” The memory was a burden he had to bear.

One thing that may indicate that David carried this burden at this time is the alliance of Ahithopel with Absalom. I had not realized until recently that he was actually the uncle of Bathsheba. Did he carry some secret resentment to what David had done to the husband of his niece? Possibly so.

You may have a burden like that. There is something in your past that complicates life in the present. Yet you feel helpless to do anything about it. What do you do with painful memories of the past? You cast them upon the Lord. He is the only one who can forgive the failures of the past, and the only one who can make something good come out of the failures of the past. Cast your burden on the Lord, and leave it there.

## II. YOU CAN CAST YOUR BURDEN ON THE LORD.

This is a wondrous thought. In paraphrasing this passage in his first letter, Peter added, “For He cares for you.” Another translates it, “You matter to Him.” But how do I do this? Follow the counsel of David!

1. Acknowledge your weakness.

The first step in throwing the burden on the Lord is an admission of your humanity. We were not designed to be sufficient in life without God.

Peter related this to humbling yourself before the Lord. “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:6-7 NIV)

It is all right to be human! To be human means that you are limited. It means that you are finite. It means that there are burdens that are bigger than you are. In the wisdom of God we are called on to face circumstances that are bigger than we are, to carry responsibilities that are bigger than we are, to live with memories that are bigger than we are. Admit it!

But there is also Another Person in this universe that is bigger than your burden, and He cares for you. He has an interest in you.

2. Release it to the Lord by faith.

You cannot “cast” something and hold on to it. You can make a throwing motion, but you have not thrown it until you release it. This is where faith

comes in. David closed this psalm with his final “I” statement—“But as for me, I trust in you.” (NIV)

What does this mean in life? Does this mean that I do nothing about the circumstance that burdens me? No! Rather it means that I do what I can with the firm conviction that the ultimate outcome is in the hand of God. My acts grow out of my confidence in Him.

It means that I go forth to perform my responsibility in complete dependence on Him.

It means that I trust my painful memory to Him with the confidence that He can cause good to come out of all the bad things that have happened in my life. He will not allow any suffering on my part to be wasted.

Whatever your burden, turn loose of it! Let the living, almighty God get under the burden with You.

### 3. Anticipate the Lord’s response.

This is another aspect of faith—anticipation. The Old Testament uses the word “wait” for this. Faith is waiting on the Lord after you have cast your burden on the Lord. You face each day with the sure knowledge that God is at work, even when you cannot see His hand at work. You know in your heart that He will not fail. You may continue to carry on in life, but you do so with the confidence that the outcome will be determined by God.

### III. GOD WILL HELP YOU.

The help of the Lord is sure.

#### 1. He will sustain you.

According to one commentary “sustain” means to supply food, and so all you need. This is interesting! It is not a promise that He will remove the anxiety producing circumstance, or the anxiety producing responsibility, or the anxiety producing memory. Rather it is a promise that He will give you what you need to make it through the circumstance, and to fulfill the responsibility, and to live with the memory.

When David cast the burden of his circumstance on the Lord, Ahithophel was still in alliance with Absalom against him. He still had responsibility for the kingdom. He still had the plaguing memory of past failures, but God brought him through to a better day.

God will bring you through to a better day.

#### 2. He will establish you.

“And he will never let the righteous fall.” (NIV) The KJV translates it “be moved.” This promise rules out the possibility of failure or defeat. When you cast the burden on the Lord, He will be in charge of the ultimate outcome.

What an assurance! This present burdensome circumstance will turn out for my good. I will not go under. I will not be destroyed. My faith will not be destroyed. This surely became true in the life of David. God brought David through the rebellion of Absalom and allowed him to have the privilege of putting the crown on the head of God's chosen successor to the throne Solomon. In the end the will of God was done—but not because of David's ability to manipulate the circumstances, but because of God's faithfulness.

In life it is a continuing experience of the sufficiency of God. Just when you need it, what you need is there. I could write a book and fill it with a testimony to the faithfulness and sufficiency of God. You are listening to a man who had every opportunity to fail, and would have if the Lord had not kept me from falling. Blessed be His good name and sufficient hand forever.

My life experience teaches me that this is not a once in a lifetime experience. Rather it is an experience that is repeated in life often—if not daily. Life with its demands crowds in upon you, and the burden of it begins to press you down. What do you do? Do you run and hide, or seek to escape? Or do you turn to the Lord of love, and cast your burden on Him? Hopefully you

will take the counsel of the Word of God and cast your burden on the Lord.

He will not fail you, nor will He allow you to fail.