

Psalm Sundays

Text
Psalm 55

Topic
**David cried, wishing he had wings like a dove
so that he could fly away from trouble**

Title
"When Doves Cry"

There are more than a few remarkable mice:

- 🐭 Mickey & Minnie
- 🐭 Jerry (of Tom & Jerry)
- 🐭 Speedy Gonzales
- 🐭 Speedy's cousin, Slowpoke Rodriguez
- 🐭 Pinky & the Brain
- 🐭 Gus (from *Cinderella*)
- 🐭 Fievel Mousekewitz
- 🐭 Mighty Mouse
- 🐭 Stuart Little
- 🐭 Mrs. Brisby (from *The Secret of NIMH*)
- 🐭 Pixie & Dixie

1 of 12
Psalm 55
"When Doves Cry"



(Pikachu is often thought of as a mouse, but the character was originally inspired by a squirrel).

Did I mention Timothy Q. Mouse? One of his greatest moments in the animated feature, *Dumbo*, ended up on the cutting room floor. In the deleted scene, Timothy tells a dejected Dumbo that his grandpa used to say, "Now listen here, you little tyke; lots of things are going to happen that you won't like."

Then Timothy sang the song, *Are You a Man or a Mouse?*

*When the going's getting rough
An' old man trouble's getting tough
Stand right up and call his bluff
Are you a man or a mouse?*

You won't find any mice in Psalm 55, *but there is a dove*. David said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Indeed, I would wander far off, *And remain in the wilderness... I would hasten my escape From the windy storm and tempest*" (v6-8).

David was expressing his desire to *flee* from his troubles, rather than have to *face* them.

As is so often the case, God did not give David "wings like a dove" in his troubles. He instead promised to sustain him in them.

No other animal is directly named. But if you look at verse twenty-two, you'll see the word "burden." The ver word suggests another animal, to the Hebrew mind.

2 of 12
Psalm 55
"When Doves Cry"



The main animal of burden in the Bible was the donkey. In the 74 or so times they are mentioned, they are always depicted as work animals or riding animals. That is their lot. They plow fields and carry loads.

- 🐦 David the dove wanted to escape his lot in life.
- 🐴 David the donkey would be sustained in his troubles.

I'll organize my comments by asking you: **#1 Are You A Dove?**, or **#2 Are You A Donkey?**

#1 - Are You A Dove? (v1-15)

Don't be thinking of "dove" as a symbol of God the Holy Spirit. Or as the symbol of the Democratic Party. Or as a label for pacifists. The dove in our song is a common bird who has the benefit of independent flight in order to escape its troubles; nothing more.

David thought he could fly away.

Psa 55:1 To the Chief Musician. With Stringed Instruments. A Contemplation of David. Give ear to my prayer, O God, And do not hide Yourself from my supplication.

Trivia question: How many guitars on *Hotel California*? Although it varies, the usual answer is 8.

David put his contemplation of his troubles to music, writing it for multiple stringed instruments to perform.

3 of 12
Psalm 55
"When Doves Cry"



“Give ear to my prayer” sounds OK; but “do not hide Yourself from my supplication” seems to diminish God. It doesn’t. Look at verse two:

Psa 55:2 Attend to me, and hear me; I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily,

It’s a repeat of verse one with some insight. He again asked to be heard. Then he described the character of his supplication: It was a noisy, restless, moaning, complaint.

When David asked God to not hide Himself from his supplication, *it was because David knew he was whining.*

In *The Godfather*, a weeping Johnny Fontane complains to Don Corleone about a movie role he wanted. The Don gets up, slaps him, saying, “You can act like a man.” David allowed himself to deteriorate into self-pity. He deserved a slap.

People like to point out that God is OK with your doubts, or complaints. That isn’t the point. The point is this: Are **you** OK with them? Do **you** want to be the kind of believer that doubts and complains? The kind who needs a slap to act like a man or woman of God? No; of course not. Slap yourself.

Psa 55:3 Because of the voice of the enemy, Because of the oppression of the wicked; For they bring down trouble upon me, And in wrath they hate me.

Psa 55:4 My heart is severely pained within me, And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.

Psa 55:5 Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, And horror has overwhelmed me.

4 of 12

Psalm 55

“When Doves Cry”



If you've been to the doctor recently, did they give you a depression screening? These verses we just read were David's answers.

Have you felt these ways? Probably; I know I have. In fact, in one sense, I hope you have felt some of these - because then you are equipped to "weep with those who weep," without giving them shallow counsel.

David - the so-called "man after God's own heart" - knew heartache.

Psa 55:6 So I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.

Psa 55:7 Indeed, I would wander far off, *And* remain in the wilderness. Selah

Psa 55:8 I would hasten my escape From the windy storm *and* tempest."

David did not have "wings," and neither do we. Ah, but we sometimes think we can be capable of independent flight. We can look to the so-called wisdom of the world, or to its resources, as our "wings" - attempting flight.

When troubles come upon me... I try to exercise independent flight, to avoid them. I waste a lot of time until realizing I can't escape my lot. We're not doves.

The particular troubles David wanted to fly from are described next.

Psa 55:9 Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongues, For I have seen violence and strife in the city.

Psa 55:10 Day and night they go around it on its walls; Iniquity and trouble *are* also in the midst of it.

Psa 55:11 Destruction *is* in its midst; Oppression and deceit do not depart from its streets.

5 of 12

Psalm 55

"When Doves Cry"



Someone, or someones, were causing serious dissent against David's rule in Jerusalem.

Their "deceit[ful]" "tongues," meaning their lying words, were fomenting "strife," "violence," "iniquity," "trouble," "destruction," and "oppression."

It sounds a lot like the time when David's son, Absalom, was laying the groundwork for his hostile takeover of the kingdom. He did it using lying words.

Psa 55:12 For *it is* not an enemy *who* reproaches me; Then I could bear *it*. Nor *is it* one *who* hates me who has exalted *himself* against me; Then I could hide from him.

Psa 55:13 But *it was* you, a man my equal, My companion and my acquaintance.

Psa 55:14 We took sweet counsel together, *And* walked to the house of God in the throng.

If David was describing the rebellion of Absalom, the "companion" of his he was speaking about would be his court counselor, Ahithophel. He changed loyalties, to Absalom.

Ahithophel's counsel was disregarded. He went home and promptly hanged himself.

We see in this a Messianic prophecy. It very obviously looks forward past Ahithophel and David to Judas and Jesus.



O, what comfort it must have brought our Lord, Jesus, to recall this song. Just as David would go through his troubles and remain king, so Jesus would endure the Cross and reclaim the kingdom.

Psa 55:15 Let death seize them; Let them go down alive into hell, For wickedness *is* in their dwellings *and* among them.

This is one of those “imprecatory” statements, in which people are cursed with destruction and death.

In fact, David did not feel this way about Absalom. He cautioned his men to not kill his son. Jesus certainly did not feel this towards Judas.

These are statements that reveal the ultimate future of *any* and *all* who remain in their wickedness, in sin:

- ☞ “Death” **will** seize them
- ☞ They **will** “go down alive into Hell

Are you a dove? We all try independent flight from our troubles. It’s our natural reaction. We do not want to react naturally; *we want to react supernaturally.*

#2 - Are You A Donkey? (v16-23)

Jesus wasn’t alone in loving this psalm. The apostle Peter borrowed from verses twenty-two, “Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you.”

“Burden” is a word with negative connotations. It’s a heavy load; a grief; an anxiety. It is something that slows us.

7 of 12
Psalm 55
“When Doves Cry”



In this psalm, *we mustn't think of "burden" as a bad thing.*

Derek Kidner says, "The word *burden* is too restrictive: it means whatever is given you, your appointed lot (hence in New English Bible, 'your fortunes'). And the promise is not that God will carry it, but that he will sustain you."

My unscholarly paraphrase: God will sustain you in your appointed lot in life. In that sense, *you are to be like a donkey* - taking on whatever load, sustained by Him to do so.

G. Campbell Morgan wrote, "The experience of suffering was not taken away from the servant of God, but he was sustained, and so made strong enough to resist its pressure, and through it to make his service more perfect. This is how God ever sustains us in the bearing of burdens."

Psa 55:16 As for me, I will call upon God, And the LORD shall save me.

Psa 55:17 Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice.

Big change in David's attitude and approach. Instead of whining, David visited the Tabernacle three times a day, for prayer, as was the custom of the Jews. Instead of crying like a baby, he cried like a man, at the prescribed times.

He knew the Lord would "save" him. David understood that to mean the current troubles would not lead to his destruction and death. The Lord would keep His unconditional promises to David.

8 of 12

Psalm 55

"When Doves Cry"



Praying three times a day. Maybe that's what the apostle Paul meant when he said he prayed three times for his affliction. God's answer was to sustain Paul in his affliction. Very similar to what we are learning from David.

We are under no obligation to pray three times a day, either in Jerusalem, or looking East toward it.

Psa 55:18 He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle *that was* against me, For there were many against me.

Psa 55:19 God will hear, and afflict them, Even He who abides from of old. Selah. Because they do not change, Therefore they do not fear God.

These two verses look back on David's trouble. God sustained him; David was now at peace; God would be the One to mete out justice upon those who did not fear Him.

Psa 55:20 He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; He has broken his covenant.

Psa 55:21 *The words* of his mouth were smoother than butter, But war was in his heart; His words were softer than oil, Yet they *were* drawn swords.

This described Ahithophel. What an awful legacy. He definitely did not finish well.

The apostle Paul wanted both he, and us, to finish well:

1Co 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*.

1Co 9:25 And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for* an imperishable crown.

9 of 12

Psalm 55

"When Doves Cry"



1Co 9:26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as *one who* beats the air.

1Co 9:27 But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Double-down on discipline. Don't let your liberty in Jesus turn to something that weights you down. Run, Christian, run.

We said this psalm looked forward, prophetically, to Judas' betrayal of Jesus. It has another, further, fulfillment.

It speaks of violating the covenant and making war with those that were at peace with him. This is where things are leading to for the nation of Israel today. A man is coming who will arise on the global stage with whom the nation of Israel will enter into a covenant - a peace agreement. This man will betray the nation of Israel.

He has more than thirty names in the Bible. We know him best as the antichrist. He is the Beast of the Revelation.

And look at the description given here of this man: *His speech was smoother than butter, but his heart was war. His words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.* When the Bible speaks about the coming antichrist, the most common attribute that it speaks of concerns his speech and words.

Notice also the instruction to "cast your burden upon the Lord for He will sustain you."

10 of 12

Psalm 55

"When Doves Cry"



This will apply to the nation of Israel once, through the terrible Great Tribulation, they turn their eyes again to their Messiah. The Revelation specifically states God will sustain Israel to the end of that terrible time.

Psa 55:22 Cast your burden on the LORD, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.

We're saying that this means something a little deeper than *Footprints in the Sand*. Remember the apostle Paul. He cast his thorn in the flesh on the Lord, Who sustained him.

The Bible version called *The Message* translates the end of the verse, "He'll never let good people topple into ruin." Any ruin - we do that to ourselves. It isn't that the Christian life is too hard. It's that our hearts may harden; we may leave our first love.

Psa 55:23 But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction; Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; But I will trust in You.

David saw both the *ultimate*, and the *immediate*, destiny of the wicked:

- 🧠 Ultimately, eternally, they would be brought to what he called "the pit of destruction." The Bible is progressive in its revelation. We know more than David did about the final destination of the lost. They will be consigned to the Lake of Fire, forever in conscious torment.
- 🧠 Immediately, God would vindicate David. His enemies would be dealt with.

If this was a contemplation of David's upon Absalom's rebellion, his son was killed, "not living out half his days." It isn't a promise to claim against those who might be opposed to you.

11 of 12
Psalm 55
"When Doves Cry"



Your enemies *will* be dealt with:

- 👤 At the Second Coming of Jesus, the antichrist and his cohort, a man called the false prophet, will become the first two permanent residents of the Lake of Fire.
- 👤 Satan will be thrown into something called the Bottomless Pit.
- 👤 After the one-thousand year reign of Jesus on the earth, Satan and the fallen angels will be thrown into the Lake of Fire.
- 👤 All the wicked dead, from all of time, will be raised, and likewise cast alive into the Lake.

Donkey. Not the animal we would ordinarily want to identify with. But if your other choice is a dove, donkey is the spiritual alternative.

It won't catch on... But when our brothers and sisters in Christ are in trouble, we might ask them, "Are you a donkey, or are you a dove?"

Don't ask others until you ask yourself.

12 of 12

Psalm 55

"When Doves Cry"

