

DAVID'S BETRAYAL IN THE PSALMS

I. OVERVIEW

A. Central theme

1. David's history is written in 1 Samuel
 - a. He endured many extreme stresses
 - b. We can see how these affected him by what he expressed in the Psalms he wrote
2. Most of the Psalms 52 - 59 were written under extreme duress, and reflect his growing dependence on, and faith in, the Lord

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II. STUDY

A. Ps 52,54,55 = Reflections on **Betrayal**

1. Psalm 52

a. Background (~ 1 Sam 21.7, 22.22-23)

- 1.) David was fleeing Saul's wrath after secretly meeting with Johnathan
- 2.) David had stopped at Nob and went to the chief priest Ahimilech, seeking support for a "secret errand" Saul sent him on
- 3.) Ahimelech had allowed him to eat the consecrated bread on the Table of Shew Bread, and take Goliath's sword
- 4.) Doeg the Edomite saw David there and went back to Saul with this news (but not immediately)
- 5.) When Saul learned of this, he was infuriated
 - a.) He ordered his guards to kill Ahimilech and all the Nob priests, they refused to raise a hand against God's anointed
 - b.) Saul commanded Doeg to kill all of the 85 priests under Ahimelech, including their families

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b. Ps 52.1-4: A Very Wicked Man

1.) Note Doeg's wicked character

a.) He was **proud** (vs 1-2)

- The Hebrew word used here means smugness with a self-important secret
- There was some time between his sighting and relating it to Saul
 - .. David left Nob and went to the Philistines at Achish
 - .. He then left for the cave at Adullam, and gathered his supporters
- Finally, Doeg saw his chance to use his valuable information
 - .. (1 Sam 22.6-10) Saul's lament, Doeg's betrayal

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- b.) He loved evil (vs 3)
 - Telling on David + murder of the priests, families, town
 - Attacked those who stood for righteousness
 - c.) He used words as a weapon (vs 4)
 - Shows that words are not morally neutral
 - Reminds us that words can be used for either good or evil (Jam 3.5-10)
 - d.) Christians need to guard against being guilty of these characteristics - or maybe they aren't Christians if they exhibit them

c. (52.5-7) Prophecy of Doeg's end

1.) A common principle in the Psalms

- a.) In a moral universe evil does not triumph and fails in the end
- b.) Righteousness does triumph
- c.) The timing of these often does not come when the righteous expect them, raising the question of why

2.) Note the pointed description of his end

- a.) "break you down forever"
 - He will be torn apart and ended
- b.) "snatch you up"
 - The wording implies tearing something out of the ground by pulling up and twisting
- c.) "tear you away from your tent"
 - He and his family will cease to exist in Israel
- d.) "uproot"
 - Firms up the prior words of ceasing to exist

3.) vss 6-7 shows the reaction of the righteous to this

- a.) They will stand in awe of God's judgement on him
 - b.) They will also laugh at his situation
 - Not a mockery, but an amazement at his folly
 - He chose to bring others down, and is destroyed
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- d. (52.8-9) A caution to the righteous
- 1.) David offers his own attitude as to how to react to God's judgement on a wicked person
 - 2.) Remember the tree of Psalm 1
 - a.) It contrasted the way of the righteous vs. the wicked
 - b.) David is alluding to that here
 - 3.) These verses describe what a righteous person who believes that God will judge the wicked & uphold the righteous will do
 - a.) He praises God > vs 9
 - b.) He trusts God for what He will do > vs 8
 - c.) He tells others of his faith > vs 9
 - 4.) David believed in and trusted the character of God
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2. Psalm 54

a. Background

1.) Ps 54 is the link between Ps 52 & Ps 55

- a.) Ps 52 described David's betrayal by Doeg the Edomite
- b.) Ps 54 is about betrayal by his own tribe
- c.) Ps 55 is about David's betrayal by a close friend

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2.) All three come from the time when David fled Saul

- a.) Ps 54 comes from the point where David confesses to Ahimelech's remaining son, Abiathar, that he is responsible for the deaths of his family > 1 Sam 22.20-22
- b.) David then becomes involved in the rescue of Keilah from the Philistines, at God's direction
 - News comes to Saul that he is in the walled city, so Saul rushed to surround it
 - David asks Abiathar to inquire of God via the high priest's sacred ephod, if the people will surrender him to Saul
- c.) Shown by God that they, David slips out of the city to the desert area of Ziph
 - The Ziphites inform Saul that he is there
 - Saul starts out to Ziph, but then is delayed by a Philistine attack from the north
- d.) David and his men went to hide at Hakilah, still around Ziph
 - The Ziphites again informed Saul of his whereabouts
 - They offered to hold him for Saul

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- 3.) So David is in his own tribal area and is being betrayed by kin
- a.) He felt rejected, and betrayed
 - b.) But in Ps 54, he calls God to his side
 - This is a key guide for those who feel, abandoned, rejected, or betrayed

- b. (Ps 54.1) David knew where to go in these situations
- 1.) He took it to God in prayer
 - 2.) Note that he calls on God to save him by His Name
 - a.) In OT times, the name of a person summarized his or her character
 - b.) When Moses asks God who should he say sent him to the Hebrews in Egypt, God said "I Am has sent me to you"
 - I am is in the present
 - God is eternal, self-existent
 - God also is self-sufficient, dependent on no one

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- c.) This is the One to Whom David appeals for help
- 3.) The Hebrew words allow us to see how David's prayer built up to this full character of the God he was appealing to
 - a.) vs 1 - 4 use Elohim, a common Name for God
 - b.) In vs 4, David adds calling Him Adonai = Lord
 - c.) He finally appeals to the full character of God in vs 6 by using Yahweh
 - d.) David sets the stage of his prayer by crying out to, and placing his trust in, the one true God in every sense of His character

- c. David then asks God to rescue him from this impossible situation
- 1.) (vs 2) First he asks God to hear his plea
 - a.) This is a pause to consider that God may not be open to our prayer due to sin
 - b.) When we open a prayer, we must consider if there is anything we need to confess 1st

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- 2.) (vs 3) He then describes his situation
 - a.) He was specific that evil men were plotting to kill him
 - b.) Even worse, these men had no concern for God's will
 - c.) We must not be reluctant to describe to God what has caused our need for His attention and help
 - Describing the details help us to remember that God knows these details, too
 - God is able to handle any situation if it is His will to do so



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- 3.) (vs 4) David then remembers Who God is
- a.) Rather than bemoaning his situation, he remembers that he is addressing the sovereign God of all
 - b.) He remembers that this Lord has helped him many times before, and has sustained his life
 - c.) We must remember to count on the Lord, particularly in such situations > 1 Pet 5.7
 - Peter got this from Ps 55.22
 - Note the advice is to cast **all** our anxiety on Him, BECAUSE He does care for us

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- 4.) (vs 5) David then makes his specific request
- a.) He asks that God return the evil of his foes back onto them, and that they be destroyed
 - b.) Is this request against Christian principles ?
 - We are to pray for mercy for our enemies
 - But we are also to pray for God's justice against those who work evil
 - We should also remember the number of times that God gave David the opportunity to kill Saul and he spared Saul's life

- d. Finally, David promises to give God a freewill offering (vs 6-7)a
- 1.) It is not a bribe to gain God's support
 - 2.) He anticipates God's answer to his prayer, based on God's prior support of him and love for him and will thank Him

e. A closing thought

- 1.) It is not stretching the theme and lesson of this Psalm to see Christ on the cross, expressing faith in God's plan in the end
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3. Psalm 55

a. Background

1.) A summary of the previous events & associated Psalms

- a.) Psalm 52 - David is betrayed by Doeg the Edomite
- b.) Psalm 54 - David is betrayed by his countrymen at Ziph
- c.) Now Psalm 55 discloses a later time when David is betrayed by a close friend

2.) Some suggest that the betrayer is Ahithophel

a.) He was David's trusted counselor

- During Absalom's rebellion, he sided with him instead of David
- When his advice was rejected by Absalom in favor of another counselor, he hanged himself

b.) But there are some things weighing against him as betrayer

- They were close, but would any king say of his counselor the close words of Ps 55.13-14 ??

13 But it is you, a man my equal,
My companion and my familiar friend;
14 We who had sweet fellowship together
Walked in the house of God in the throng

- David is writing from Jerusalem, but he didn't learn about Ahithophel's betrayal until David had left the city

c.) So it is unlikely David is writing about Ahithophel, but instead the betrayal by some very unidentified close friend

3.) It is likely that this was written during the period of Absalom's rebellion

- a.) David is beset by his son drawing his people away to claim the throne
- b.) He has no idea what of his people are on his side
- c.) His counselor has sold out to Absalom
- d.) His situation is full of dismay, danger, and depression
- e.) We will see this in alternating sections between his description of his wicked oppressors and his state of mind

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b. David's initial description of his anguish

1.) Note the irony here

- a.) In Psalms 52 and 54, he was being pursued by Saul, and not in his destined kingship yet
 - b.) In Psalm 55 he has likely been king for some time, and Saul is dead
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- Things should now be great
 - But we see that he is in even worse agony now

2.) Pay attention to the strong words he uses (Ps 52.1-5)

- a.) vs 2: He is "restless" and "distracted"
 - b.) vs 4: He is in "anguish", "terrors of death" assail him
 - c.) vs 5: He experiences "fear and trembling" and "horror"
- Note how the words escalate as he describes his anguish

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- 3.) There is now a change unlike previous Psalms (vs 6-8)
- a.) David has always confronted evil head on, calling on God for wisdom and strength in faith
 - b.) Now he describes a desire to get out of it all to a beautiful and safe place
 - c.) This out to look familiar to those of us who are older
 - We plow through work problems, health problems, neighbor problems, family problems when we are young and have the patience and strength
 - We we retire, we expect these problems to go away, but they don't
 - The message from God is clear
 - .. David didn't have the ability to fly away from his problems, and we believers don't either
 - .. God expects His children to persevere to the end
 - .. David's situation is an example of this challenge

- c. David now swings to his description of the evils besetting him (vs 9-11)
- 1.) Who is the "enemy" of vs 3 ? It isn't the threatening countries around
 - 2.) David is describing what is going on within his people, in the streets !
 - a.) Note three pairs of vices he describes
 - (vs 9) "violence and strife" (NASB / NIV)
 - (vs 10) "iniquity and mischief" / "malice and abuse"
 - (vs 11) "oppression and deceit" / "threats and lies"
 - b.) These come from wicked people at work, sometimes a slip by believers !

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- 3.) Applying this to our times in America
- a.) You can apply all of the programs you want, all the regulations you can think of, but they won't change these results
 - b.) America needs a revival and reformation of people led by the Holy Spirit ... nothing else will work, much less stay
- 4.) What do we do in the mean time ? - Note David's prayer in vs 9
- a.) David cited the example of God's work at the Tower of Babel
 - b.) We must pray that God keeps the evil doers confused, not able to fully organize, until He acts in revival...if He does

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- d. David now returns to describing his anguish (vs 11-14)
- 1.) He is like a therapist probing for what is the real root of his anguish
 - a.) With all of the rebellion, and evil doing going on around him, what hurts most is this betrayal by a close friend
 - b.) He has endured years of attacks, fighting, being pursued, personal insults
 - He says that he could deal with the same challenges if that was a part of the evil going on
 - But this betrayal of a close friend is what has really made him feel that he wants to flee to gain rest
 - 2.) David's description of how close this friend had been
 - a.) He was "a man my equal" > a man just like David
 - b.) He was his companion and intimate friend
 - c.) They had fellowship together, worshipped God together
 - 3.) This highlights the depth of the betrayal's effects on David
 - 4.) Spurgeon said "None are such real enemies as false friends"
 - a.) Those closest to us can hurt us the most
- e. vs 15 is easily the low point of this Psalm
- 1.) David longs for his foes' destruction
 - 2.) Note his choice of words
 - a.) "Let them go down alive to Sheol"
 - He is referring to the results of Korah & his followers when they rebelled against Moses and Aaron
 - God judged them , opened te earth, and took all of them, their families, and positions down into the earth
 - b.) David wants the same fate for his foes
 - 3.) Also note that he wants this for his foes, but does not mention the close friend that betrayed him
 - a.) His enemies are cursed
 - b.) His betraying friend is not - no explanation given !
- f. (vs 16) Here is a turning point in the attitude of this Psalm
- 1.) David's call to God in vss 1-2 was one of agony
 - a.) Here the tone is in confidence that God will save him
 - b.) Note the experience he bases this on
 - (vs 16) "the Lord will save me"
 - (vs 17) "He will hear my voice"
 - (vs 18) "He will redeem my soul in peace"
 - 2.) Because of all this, David has faith in God saving him from his foes (vs 19)
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- g. David returns to considering his betrayer (vs 20-21)
- 1.) He agonized over him earlier, but now his faith that God will handle this has returned
 - 2.) Instead, he focuses on the betrayal, itself
 - a.) (vs 20) He betrayed his covenant
 - b.) (vs 21) The reason is that he is a hypocrite
- h. Here's what we learn about prayer from this Psalm in particular
- 1.) Note the pattern of the prayer
 - a.) He cries out to God as his source of relief
 - b.) He passionately describes what is assailing him in detail
 - c.) He cites the evil of his enemies, and asks God to help him against it
 - d.) He does this repeatedly as an example of how we should persevere in prayer for relief from God
 - 2.) But notice the change that comes over David in this
 - a.) The perseverance and recounting the agony in detail gradually bring him to realize that only God is up to handling this
 - b.) He then remembers how God has helped before to deal with these evils, and turns to God in faith

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- i. So at this point, what is a righteous believer to do in the face of evil attacks, frightening circumstances ?
- 1.) (vs 22a) "Cast your burden on the Lord..."
 - a.) Peter was a very worrisome man, full of anxiety
 - b.) But he learned to trust the Lord and wrote (1 Pet 5.7)
 - 2.) Putting our cares on God enables us to stand in the face of them because:
 - a.) (vs 22b) "He will sustain you"
 - It is easy to feel that you can't get up again
 - Count on the promise of (1 Cor 10.13)
 - b.) (vs 22c) "He will never allow the righteous to be shaken"
 - When Peter tried to walk on the water and was failing, he cried out to the Lord and He saved him
 - David is doing the same, in the same faith that God will save him
 - c.) (vs 23a) "But You o God will bring them down..."
 - 3.) (vs 23b) In the end, David puts his trust in God

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