

## Sermon outline notes: Psalm 55 Dealing with Anxiety

### Introduction

We are not sure of the exact situation in which David wrote this psalm, but what we can say is that David was in big trouble. At first sight it is a haphazard psalm— a number of diverse elements thrown together: panic, sorrow, anger, faith and confidence. It's a psalm which shows how prayer made a difference to a man who was in trouble—it's prayer at work in a crisis experience.

#### 1) The Feelings of Fear vv 2-5

- David is suffering a severe anxiety attack. Verse 2, 3 and 5. He longs to escape the situation, verse 6.
- However escape is not an option—Prayer becomes important as it provided a context in which he could verbalise his frustration about being trapped.
- David prayed regularly (vv 16-17) and prayer was a resource in which he could work through his anxiety which was threatening to destroy him.
- A believer is not incapable of anxiety, but he/ she knows what to do with those feelings of anxiety (v22). He/she does not have to repress them or deny them, he/she can express them to God—he/ she can talk them through with God.

#### 2) The Feelings of Hostility vv 9-11,15.

- There are many examples of verses like this in the psalms—cries for vengeance or imprecatory psalms as they are technically called.
- Some confess that such sentiments are a problem, in the sense of what about the commands to love our enemies and forgive them?
- David is calling down judgement on his enemies because they are God's enemies. His enemies were undermining society vv 10-11.
- David is asking God to act in judgement here in a way that is consistent with his judgements against sin down through history. We have echoes here of Genesis 11 v 9 and Numbers 16 v 33.

- David's feelings were justified in the sense that a friend had betrayed him and was being hypocritical v20-21.
- Note David's hostile sentiments occur in the context of David's private prayers, not in the context of his public actions— that's very significant. David finds that prayer is a way to express his anger without fuelling it in the process.

### Conclusion

In his private prayer David could express both his anxiety and anger safely. He shows us how the resource of prayer works in a real life situation.

### Points to Ponder

- 1) Share reactions to the sermon— What points particularly spoke to you ? Why?
- 2) What does v 22 practically mean (see 1 Peter 5 v 7 ). Does it mean that we do nothing?
- 3) Did the part of the sermon explaining the reasons for David's hostile anger convince you? How do you view the imprecatory psalms? Is it right for a Christian to pray God's judgement upon a person? Can you think of any New Testament examples of this?