

## Psalms: Book Two (Part Three)

A Survey of David's Trials

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As we have gone through book two of the Psalms, we have seen the internal organization of the psalms. We also saw this in the other series of sermons I gave on Book Five of the Psalms. But for those of you who have not heard them before, what I have been teaching is that there is a clear origination of the Psalms in five books. Book One begins in Psalm 1, Book Two begins in chapter 42, Book Three begins in chapter 73, Book Four begins in chapter 90, and Book Five goes from 107-145, and that obviously leaves five psalms left which are the summary psalms of the five books (one for each book).

We also found that these sets of five parallel the five books of the Torah, (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), and there are five festival scrolls as well (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther). These were scrolls read around the various feast times and seasons of the year. Then we found also that the year can be divided into five separate seasons. We normally cut the year into four equal seasons, but the Hebrews did five seasons and based them around the holy days (Passover season, Pentecost season, Summer, Fall festival season, and Winter).

Those sets of five (five sets of five) parallel one another. So Book One parallels Genesis, Song of Songs, Psalm 146, and the Passover season. Here in Book Two we are looking at something a little different. Book Two consists of thirty-one psalms (chapters 42-72), summarized in Psalm 147, and it is thematically linked to the book of Exodus, Ruth, and the Pentecost season.

We find that when we look at these things together (the thirty-one psalms, Exodus, Ruth, Psalm 147, and the Pentecost season) we find various themes that pop up consistently among those five things. Those themes are: law and spirit. Pentecost is a memorial of the giving of the law and the giving of the spirit. We have God's covenant, and of course the most intimate covenant is between two people—the marriage covenant. Redemption and deliverance tends to be a very big theme as well as the idea of escaping as in Exodus, or exile as the Jews were exiled after the Babylonians came and destroyed Jerusalem, and you have the wilderness wandering, to which there are both physical and spiritual parallels.

So we have all of these things happening when we go through Psalms and Book Two is the one we are going to focus on again today. I want to mention here that David is the

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author of most of the psalms in Book Two. There are several psalms (chapters 42-49) that are done by or to the sons of Korah. Asaph wrote Psalm 50 and Solomon wrote Psalm 72, all the rest were by David.

One more fact that I need to mention here is that Book Two, different than Book One of the Psalms, uses the divine name Elohim more frequently than Yahweh. In Book One Yahweh is used predominately and Elohim is used only a handful of times. But in Book Two, this is flipped, Elohim is used 164 times to Yahweh being used only 30 times.

This brings out a very significant idea that is expressed through these psalms and that is that God is being shown as our powerful Creator. He is the one who has the smarts, the might, and all the abilities to make the great creation that we are living in. There is also another thought in the back of this that He can create in us what He wants because He is so powerful and strong. So He will use His power, omniscience, and His providence to fashion us into His image.

Today is the day of Pentecost, the day that Book Two is looking toward in its teaching. This day is also called the Feast of Harvest, we find that in Exodus 23:16. It is also called the Feast of Weeks, which we find in Deuteronomy 16:10-16. And in Numbers 28:26 it is also called "the day of first-fruits." So these ideas are also there. It is a harvest, it is a harvest of first-fruits, and of course the idea of weeks in there is that we count it from the time of Unleavened Bread seven weeks and it is the day after the seventh week ends. All of these ideas are wrapped up in the day of Pentecost.

So what I want to do from here on is to highlight the parallels between Book Two of the Psalms and Pentecost and I want to do this specifically by looking at the psalms of David that are superscript with an event. The event is usually a trial. It is not always a trial, but *usually* a trial. David's psalms reflect what was going through his head while these trials were taking place.

Now it is always good to touch base with the holy day itself and the instructions that are given so let us go to Leviticus 23. This shows us what we are to be doing and how our minds are should be focused.

**Leviticus 23:15-20** 'And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. [which I just mentioned] Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord. [I am going to be emphasizing certain things in this and the new grain offering is one of them, mostly the new grain. Just keep that in

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the back of your mind.] You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the first-fruits to the Lord. [So now we understand what the fine flour made into loaves is all about, that represents the first-fruits.] And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord. [Now we have this idea of an offering being made and it is consumed in fire and God considers that a sweet aroma, it is pleasing to Him.] Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a peace offering. The priest shall wave them with the bread of the first-fruits as a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the Lord for the priest.

Now notice here: They are holy to God (these first-fruits) and they are for the priests, meaning that they are for His use. That is very important when you start overlaying the spiritual understanding of who the priest actually is, who the first-fruits are, etc. This offering that is being made is for the use of Christ and it is therefore holy to God.

**Leviticus 23:21-22** And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. [Verse 22 brings in the book of Ruth into the picture.] When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the Lord your God.

So we see tacked on the end of the instructions about Pentecost, that we are to keep the stranger and the poor in mind, we are to leave the corners of our fields unharvested so that they can have something to gather. We find in the book of Ruth that is exactly what she did, she went and gathered grain in the field that just happened to be Boaz's field. Boaz is a type of Christ who redeemed her, and by her he had a child. This child is the one who became the father of Jesse who became the father of David and then suddenly we are right back in Book Two of the Psalms.

There is a neat little parallel there and obviously this boy that was born to Ruth became one of the progenitors of Christ. So we begin to see all these things come together rather

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neatly here.

In going through all of this we see the instructions on the Feast of Weeks. If you flip back and forth in the instructions on these days, the instructions on the Feast of Weeks, especially if we tack on what is said about the wave sheaf, it is one of the longest of the instructions on the holy days. The one on the Feast of Tabernacles is quite long as well. But Pentecost has a lot said about it. There is a lot of good information there and I will just tell you right now, it is because it is about us, it is about what we need be doing, about what is going on in our lives as we prepared to be the first-fruits.

But the Feast of Weeks tends to be a little bit of an oddity among the holy days. They are all unique in their own ways, obviously the Day of Atonement is a day of fast, not a feast, that makes it very different from the rest of the holy days. But the Feast of Weeks is different in two particular ways. The first, you are aware of, is that it has to be counted. It is not supposed to be kept on a given day or date every year. It says you have to count, and the time you have to count from can seem to be a little enigmatic, so you have to study into it, you have to figure out which day you have to count from and then you have to go through this procedure every year of counting fifty days, or seven weeks, and keep it on the next day.

So there is this oddity among the holy days that we count this one. It puts our nose into Scripture. It makes us aware of this time between the Days of Unleavened Bread and now. It is a whole fifty days of remembering that we are counting, that we are moving forward, that we are trying to reach a goal—the fiftieth day. So God makes us go through a bit of an exercise every year to remember that we are marching through time and things need to be happening toward this goal.

We get the understanding from this holy day that this is a parallel to our Christian lives. Fifty years is a pretty good adult converted life. If you are baptized around your twentieth year and you die around the time of most people, around seventy or eighty as it says in Psalm 90, then we get around 50 years (a day for a year principle).

We see this in the season of Pentecost in a real way that we can grasp. We use this time, these fifty days, or fifty years in the case of our conversion, to grow toward the time of our harvest. We are being cultivated by God and prepared by God for harvest. So that is one of the big ideas that come out of this particular day and makes it a little odd among the holy days.

The second oddity is among the offerings that I read, it is the oddity of this grain offering. This grain offering is not just grain, it is made into wave loaves. In Leviticus

23:16-17 you can see kind of see what is going on.

Let me tell you a little bit about the procedure here. If you go to a good Bible dictionary or a book that tells about the Jewish rituals and what they did to make some of these offerings, it extends it out a bit. What we find first is that it was new grain. Verse 16 says: “you take new grain.” So it was new grain that was harvested just in that particular time, because remember that Pentecost is a harvest festival. So they take new grain. This gives me the impression that when we are baptized and given God's Spirit, that we are a new creation; we are new.

The second thing is that this new grain is put through the wringer. When you cut off stocks of wheat and put them in a bundle, you take them where you are going to thresh them. When you thresh them, this means that the stocks of grain are beaten, and in those times, they were trodden underfoot to break them up from the stocks, and then they were ground. So this new grain looks so good on the stock, it look beautiful, but almost immediately it was beaten and trodden and ground down and what comes out of all that process is a fine flour.

But that is not all. After it is ground, it is sifted. We found out that the Jews, for this particular offering, sifted the flour twelve times through twelve sieves. You would assume that each sieve got progressively tighter and had a smaller weave, so that only the finest flour came out and was made into bread.

So you can see a process here of beating down, trodden them underfoot, grinding, and sifting. This a very rigorous process but you end up with some really fine flour that makes some great bread. But then you find in the next step is that they also throw in leaven. This is one of the rare instances where an offering is made with leaven.

This example describes us perfectly. We have been through a lot, we have been beaten down, ground, sifted, but we still have leaven, we are still sinful. We still have a nature in us that wants its own way—thatwants to do its own thing. Even though we are given God's Spirit (the oil that holds the bread together), there is still corruption that is in us. We try hard throughout our entire conversion to get this leaven out, which is what we see every year in the Days of Unleavened Bread, but as hard as we try, as much as God works on us, we are still human, we still sin. We still have the corruption in us, so God decides that this is what He has got and He will bake the “bread” with hot coals and make it into something that can be used.

We go from being on the stalk—beingnew grain—putthrough this process, and even though we still have leaven God still works with us and He makes something useful out

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of us. Then the final step after the bread is finished and ready, it is waved before God. It is like the priest is there after all the work has been done in making these loaves and he says, "God, what do you think? How'd I do? Does this suit you? Will you eat it?" That is what the altar is all about, the altar is all about God's table and if He will take it into Himself and make it a part of Him.

This is the whole process then, if we understand the symbolism of what is going on here. I tried to give it to you, that this pictures us, all of us. Did you notice that it is not the fine flour of one grain, it is all of us put into one bowl, as it were, and baked into one loaf? So, all of us are going through this, we are all going through the same trials. We all have to overcome the same kind of sins, we are given God's Spirit, we are all being prepared together into a loaf, something that God can use.

The priest—Jesus Christ—is the one who does this. He is the Head of the church and He has been charged with preparing us for the Kingdom of God, but in the end, He has to offer us up to God for acceptance and God is the one with the final say of yes or no. The good news is that in the offering here it is always yes, at least in the offering and hopefully it will be for all of us too. That is what we hope, because Christ does not make mistakes. He does a good job when He creates and He is creating in us a clean heart which we will see in just a moment.

So this is the work being done which we are supposed to think about every year. I just wanted you to remember here right before Jesus and the disciples had the last supper and they go out to the garden of Gethsemane and He turns to Peter and says, "Peter, Satan has a desire to sift you as wheat." There we have an example of how some of these things happen. I just wanted to throw that in so you can think about that.

What did Satan try to get him to do? He tried to get him to deny Christ, to turn against Him. That is part of the sifting process that we all go through. I noticed that he was called wheat there. Also you can go to the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. God is the one that sows the wheat and He is the one that sends the angels to harvest it in the end. So it is really interesting things that come out of this particular scripture in Leviticus 20:3. All of this happens so that we can be prepared to be acceptable children of God in the end.

This is what we read about in Psalms Book Two. David is the prototype, developing into a child of God. He is constantly undergoing severe trials. He has to trust God when these trials come upon him, even though he is alone, outcast, hunted, and hiding, oppressed, and depressed and everyone wants his life it seems. But he knows that God, Elohim in this particular book, will give him the victory. So we see him, throughout

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these psalms that we are going to go through, growing in character and learning to rely on God's sovereignty. We see him learning to rely on God's faithfulness and on His providence to get him through.

It is interesting that the first of these psalms that we look at in Book Two, written by David, is Psalm 51. Most of us know that Psalm 51 is talking about David's great prayer of repentance and it is the first psalm that comes from his pen in this particular book. The previous nine psalms are from the sons of Korah, and Psalm 50 is from Asaph.

Now what I think, and this is my own supposition here as to the way this book was put together by the editor, whoever that was, that he wanted us to ease into the psalms of David in this particular book by first going through this prayer. It is this prayer that sets the tone for the rest of David's psalms in this section.

This psalm shows the right attitude that one has to have in dealing with trial. You have to have a humble and contrite attitude because that is what is going to get you through the bad times. If you have the proper understanding, the proper humility to know that God is sovereign, that God is there, that He is a God of forgiveness, and that He does not want us to be bereft of His Spirit.

He does not want us to have these troubles, He is rooting for us, He is in our corner, but we slip up. We slip up and we do make a great many mistakes, but God is always there to pick us up and put us back on the path and even though things may not be completely right as we might think about it, we know that God has given us this day, this perspective, this situation, and in His sight, all is well. He wants us to continue to prepare because He is in control.

So this is the true starting point of the growing child of God. Remember it was new grain, new wheat. This is where we should start when we are baptized. We are in our first love, we have first blush of the truth, we really feel like we know God because we have been studying about repentance and we really believe Him. We have gone to be baptized and have had hands laid on us and God's Spirit is in us and we are ready to go, but we also have this feeling of humility because we have just had to face all of our sins, at least the ones that we know about, and we are contrite. We realize that we have let God down and that we need His help and His forgiveness to move forward. This is the attitude we find in Micah 6. This is sort of a parallel in terms of feeling, or thought. Micah writes here:

**Micah 6:6-8** With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a

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year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? [What can I pay to God in order for forgiveness? The answer is nothing. He will not be pleased with any of that stuff in terms of forgiveness, that is not what is going to save us. That is not what gives us justification before Him. So he says in verse 8] He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

That is the attitude that we have to start with as we study these psalms and we see this in Psalm 51 as well. Let us read the first nine verses and see David's heartfelt repentance and seeking of forgiveness.

**Psalm 51:1-9** Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

So this is a godly man's reaction to trial that he had caused. It was his sin with Bathsheba that had caused all of this. It was his sin that finally made the baby die. He was heartbroken that he had allowed himself to slip so far from God and that he had waited so long to turn back to God. You think this baby was born? It takes nine months, does it not? So he had been away from God for a good part of a year, and who knows it might have been even longer.

How long did it take for a man like David to get to the point that he said, "There is a beautiful naked woman down there, I think I will go do what we do and then I will kill her husband." How long does it take a man to get to that point? How long had he been drifting from God? He was just thunderstruck when Nathan came and told him that "you are the man!" you are the one who has been sinning in all of this and all of this that has



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been happening is God trying to slap you across face and say, "David, wake up!" He finally did wake up and saw what a horrible person he had become. "I have been sinful from my first breath," he says. A bit of an overstatement, but he had all of those selfish desires that normal people have and he just wanted to be cleaned up, he felt so dirty and awful.

I think probably within all of this is the fact that this was such a horrible sin that he was going to be dealing with the consequences of this for the rest of his life, which is something Nathan basically told him anyway. He said, "because of this you are going to have troubles with your family. You are going to pay." You cannot do something like this and expect to not have consequences. You are going to have to deal with this.

But you know what David does here is go straight to God and says, "I really sinned against you. I have broken that covenant that we had together. These sins are against you and if I get right with you, at least I know that part is taken care of and I will just have to deal with the rest." God will blot those transgressions out and he will be good with God, he will have to deal with his family in the course of time, but at least with God all will be well, as much as it can be well with a sinful person and a pure God. So he asks God then to forgive him and allow him to move forward.

So we start to look at these psalms with the profound realization and conviction of sin. The trials that we are going through, the trials that happen to us, the situations of life that test us, are in many ways a result of our own problems, our own sins, our own wronging of others. Usually trials do not happen where we are perfectly innocent. There are a few and we will actually go through one where David says, "I had nothing to do with this, I'm guiltless, but I'm having to suffer right along through this trial, because someone has brought it on me." But that does not happen all the time.

Most of the time our trials are specific to us and our sins. There is something we need to overcome, something we need to recognize in our own character that is wrong, that is flawed that we need to work on and move through so that we will be better people and more prepared for the Kingdom of God.

This is the proper state to be in when we begin contemplating our reaction to trails. As it says in Isaiah 64:

**Isaiah 64:6** But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

We are like dead dogs in terms of personal character and purity. We have to understand that we have a long way to go. We are far from being like God and God has a great deal to teach us still. That is the attitude we are supposed to have. We can recognize that we have grown, we are supposed to do that every year during the Passover season. We are supposed to see where we have fallen short and where we have grown, to see how things are, to see our State of the Union as it were, with Christ and with the Father, but we know that we have a long way to go and we are not there yet.

So that is where we have to start. We are going to do our best to work through this problem with humility and the understanding that we have to learn a lot. Now let us go to verses 10-13, where he says:

**Psalms 51:10-13** Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.

So he is saying here that he needs what God can give in order to move forward. He needs God's Spirit. He needs the strength of God's Spirit, not only to have the power to go forward, but to also have the understanding to move forward. Just going forward is not enough. We will be just bull in a china shop without the correct understanding of how we are supposed to move forward. A lot of times moving forward is not the aggressive, broad-shouldered way that most of us men try to take.

What we find is that even though David was a mighty man of valor, do you know what we see him doing in these trials? He is either in his bed crying, on his knees praying, or flat out singing praises to God. Notice what I did not say—that he is out there with his sword and buckler and he is slaying dragons. No, he is not doing that. Most of the time he is talking to God and saying, "I'll trust in you. I'll do what I can to be better. I'm going to wait for you God, because you know what you're doing. You're in control and I will cede control. Please do to my enemies as they deserve."

He is not out there trying to fix things, because that does not fix it, it usually just makes it worse. You might get a temporary fix but then it breaks all over again and you have to deal with that. The point is to go to the Maker, the one who can fix things right way. That is how our problems will be solved.

I should also mention here that in verse 13 he says that once I have gained a heart of

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wisdom, as it says in Psalm 90, then I will teach other people what is the best way to go. He does not say that the other way around, that he will teach others first then ask for God's Spirit. No, He says, "let me gain this experience and hopefully by the end of it all I'll be able to teach others and give them a good example of Your way of life."

**Psalm 51:18-19** Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem. Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.

This sounds similar to what we talked about in terms of the Pentecost offering. But what I wanted you to notice here, verse 18 especially, he says: "do good to Zion and build the walls of Jerusalem." Two very important symbols there, but they are actually one symbol in terms of what he is talking about here in the general sense.

Zion and Jerusalem are both symbols of the church. So what he is talking about here is not just his own particular sins that he wants covered and that he wants the training to overcome and to become a good example and good teacher, he is saying, "God, do this for everyone. Build up the whole church, let all of Zion have this good done to them." So it is not just self-centeredness here, which would be the wrong attitude to have, but rather he wants God to work with everyone in the church the same way so that the walls of Jerusalem will be high and strong, that the bride of Christ will be worthy of her husband.

So David not only speaks about himself here, but he broadens this out to the whole church. The ultimate product of that is that God will be pleased with our sacrifices. It is what God wants anyway. That is what we see in Revelation 19, the ultimate end of all of this, that we may all be fit to be the bride of Christ.

**Revelation 19:6-7** And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Through her hard work she has been granted this fine linen by God. His righteousness combined with their learned righteousness, what they have been able to do in their

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period of growth throughout their conversion, makes a fit bride for Christ and there is great praises that come from that.

That is the attitude that we need as we go through these psalms, David's psalms of trial, where he tells us how he faced these certain things. It is an attitude of contrition, an attitude of humility, and attitude of doing whatever is best for the whole body—the church. And of course doing what God wants and helping Him in the producing of His bride.

Now let us move on to Psalm 52. This is what we can call a negative example of the wicked and their end. We see here that this is a contemplation of David when Doeg the Edomite went and told Saul and said to him, "David has gone to the house of Ahimelech." So Doeg had tattled on David. Edomites tend to have this kind of character, at least that is what the Bible shows. Now this is David's response to hearing that.

**Psalm 52:1-7** Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The goodness of God endures continually. Your tongue devises destruction, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. You love evil more than good, lying rather than speaking righteousness. Selah You love all devouring words, you deceitful tongue. [So someone has used their words to hurt David and betray him, so David says:] God shall likewise destroy you forever; He shall take you away, and pluck you out of your dwelling place, and uproot you from the land of the living. Selah [He says, the end of a wicked person is God's judgment and God's judgment is death.] The righteous also shall see and fear, and shall laugh at him, saying, "Here is the man who did not make God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness." [What a foolish person. This is pity laugh of "look at him, he never learned his lesson. What a fool he was."]

The righteous then have a duty to look at this bad example and fear God; to understand the power of God; to understand that when God sees sin His justice requires Him to act. Now sometimes He acts in mercy and does not give the full amount of justice, but in the end, it is given to man once to die. So there is going to be a reckoning at some point and usually God is merciful enough that He gives us time to repent. But he says, "Hey, you people who think you're the children of God, look at this example of Doeg the Edomite who ratted me out. Watch what happens to Doeg and learn a lesson."

Verse 8 is what I wanted to get to here, because this is David's real reaction to this

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problem. He says, "He is a wicked man, he is going to get what a wicked man deserves and I hope that every one that's a child of God is watching because they'll learn a good lesson." But this is what He says:

**Psalm 51:8-9** But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God [start putting the symbols together here]; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever. I will praise You forever, because You have done it; and in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is good.

So what is David to do when this problem comes upon him? Doeg is out there saying, "David is at Ahimelech's house, go get him," and David thinks what a terrible person he is. Then he thinks about it and says "he's going to get it, God is going to make sure that he pays for this." So what does he do? He waits. He praises God for what He has done and he says, "I'm going to wait in the Temple. I'm going to wait among God's saints because it's the best place for me."

The metaphor of the green tree in God's house brings out a lot of things. You probably are not aware, but there were probably trees growing in the Temple courtyards or wherever they set up the tabernacle at the time. So he says, "I'm a green olive tree." He is new—green. Green also means that he is productive, he is growing, and he says, "I'm going to do the very best I can do as a green olive tree right in God's house."

The wrong thing to do is to run screaming and be a hermit. The best response is to stay in church, be among the brethren, be close to God. You are in God's house, that is where God dwells. You want to be as close to God as possible and you want to be surrounded by friends and relatives and all those others who are also part of God's church who can give you support. David says, in that position you grow the most, you produce the most fruit, and you are the best protected. How could you not be the best protected with God right there, you are in God's house. Is anyone going to break into God's house?

David's response is not the normal human response. Notice that David did not get his crack suicide squad or ninja warriors and go out and kill Doeg. He went to the house of God and said this is where the problem will be solved. "I'll stay close to God, I'll stay close to His people, and we'll get through this together." It is a very interesting response here.

So when you come across a trial that makes you want to tear your hair out, that you want to just flee into the wilderness, remember the green olive tree in the house of God.

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That is the best place for you. That is where you will get the most support. In the church, in the midst of the rest of the saints, is the best environment in every respect.

He decided that he is going to wait on God's goodness in the presence of the saints because not only is he going to benefit, but Doeg will be taken out of the way, Saul and his lot are going to be removed at some point, but the people of God are going to learn as well. They are going to see the example and this is going to benefit everyone.

We do not think of it often that way, but this parallels Psalm 51, that the walls in Jerusalem are going to be built and those walls are not going to be built with one stone here and one stone there and another stone 30-90 miles away. Do you understand what I mean? You have to bring all the material together to build the walls of Jerusalem. We do our best when we are all unified and we are all pitching in on these problems.

Now we are going to skip Psalm 53. It is another contemplation of David, but it does not give us a scenario, so we will move on to Psalm 54. It says here in the introduction that it is a contemplation of David when the Ziphites went and said to Saul, "Is David not hiding with us?"

So it is happening again. First it was Doeg, now it is the Ziphites. It seems like David cannot win, everyone is trying to turn him into Saul. You can jot down I Samuel 23:14-28 where the Ziphites are tattling on him and you see what David did. But Psalm 54 is one of those places where it directly highlights the name of God. That is one of the main parts of the psalm.

**Psalm 54:1-3** Save me, O God, by Your name, and vindicate me by Your strength. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers have risen up against me, and oppressors have sought after my life; they have not set God before them. Selah

This is another time where we have to think. They are doing this because they have not made God their priority. If they understood God and what He is doing and that David was God's anointed, they would have never given him up.

**Psalm 54:4-7** Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is with those who uphold my life. He will repay my enemies for their evil. Cut them off in Your truth. I will freely sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O Lord, for it is good. For He has delivered me out of all trouble; and my eye has seen its desire upon my enemies.

He speaks with great confidence that God is going to act for him and God is going to save him by His name and of course the name here that is being highlighted is Elohim. We also see in the parallel couplet here inverse 1: "Save me, O God, by Your name," then he says, "Vindicate me by Your strength." So the idea of Elohim that he is pulling out here for us to understand is that God is strong. He is stronger than anyone, any situation, any army, any people—the Ziphites—and God is going to save him by that superior strength.

So what does David need to fear? He has got the Strongman on his side, all the rest are weaklings in comparison, so why does he need to fear, God is on his side. He does not necessarily have to do anything. He knows that God will repay his enemies for their evil, so he says cut them off in your truth. Show them the truth of the matter. It is the truth that comes out that is actually going to be the end of this. He was God's anointed and it was going to be that David would triumph over Saul no matter what the Ziphites did.

But what did David have to do? He had to wait, wait for God to act. He says, "He has delivered me out of all the trouble I've been through before, so I'm just going to wait until He delivers me out of this one." Of course he was probably scuttling away at the time, he was not stupid. He did get out of there and made sure that Saul could not find him, but he did not run with a feeling that God was going to forsake him, he ran with confidence that if I get myself out of this situation right now and go hide in another cave, then God will work things out, I just need to be patient and wait for God.

Strangers can betray us, friends can betray us. It does not matter what it is, if someone betrays us God is going to work it out, we just need to give Him time to make things right. Now we have Psalm 55. I have given a Bible study on this, but Psalm 55 is packed with information on how to face trial, especially a trial in which your brother in the church is a betrayer.

Now notice that we went from Doeg, who was a stranger, he was from another country, then you have the Ziphites, a group I am not exactly sure who they were, maybe they were Israelites, but they were way off in the wilderness and they said, "Hey, David is in our neck of the woods." But now we get to someone who is even closer.

**Psalm 55:13-14** But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng.

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He considered him to be his best bud and they went to church together. They had all kinds of good times and David just told him all of his secrets, that is the sweet counsel that they took together. This man knew everything that David had told him, but then he stabbed him in the back and twisted the knife. What do you do when that happens? And not only that but David had to worry about everything else because Absalom, his son, had just rebelled against him and this man, Ahitophel, took Absalom's side.

It seems like David was not as concerned about his own son as he was with his friend. "How could you do this? I expected Absalom to do something stupid like this, but how could you? You're supposed to be the wisest man in Israel. When you speak it is supposed to be the voice of God. How could you betray me?" You find out later that there is more to it behind the scenes, but he is feeling this so deeply. It is almost like he cannot move because he is so emotionally distraught. He needed to get across the Jordan and flee but the fact that Ahitophel betrayed him just weighed so heavily on him that it was like he could not do anything, like he was lingering looking back and saying, "Ahitophel, why!?" But he had betrayed him.

So what does he do? He obviously does get away and eventually he forms up an army and he gives it over to Joab and tells him to put him back on his throne, but not to kill his son. But then Joab goes and kills his son, which is par for the course for Joab. But we see David here kind of standing in the background. He is a little bit older man at this point, Absalom is about in his thirties and in the prime of his strength and thinks he can take over from his dad and David is not fighting anymore and has time to think about this and these are his thoughts. He is just distraught. He says things like in verse 15:

**Psalms 55:15-17** Let death seize them; let them go down alive into hell, for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them. [He is obviously feeling a great deal of emotion, but verse 16 is what he decides to do] As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice.

Did he go after Ahitophel? No, he did not. Do you know what happened to Ahitophel? By his own hand he hanged himself because Absalom's rebellion crumbled. He did not need to do anything. He decided that he was going to place it before God and he was going to talk to Him continually and say "God, I'm going to call on you and keep calling on you to let you know how much this situation is really bugging me and how it's just so horrible and terrible, but I need you to solve this for me because I can't do it by myself. So I'm just going to lay it in your hands and let you work it out. I know You will work it out."



It is kind of like the widow who went before the judge and she just bugged him to death until he acted. In the same way, God will hear our prayer. He will know that we are very serious about this, He will know our perspective about this, and we will learn and grow as we see Him taking care of this problem. He says in verse 23:

**Psalm 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.

He does not try to fix things, he just says that I am going to pray and I am going to have faith. That was his reaction. He did not make it worse, it was not tit for tat, he placed it before God and said I am going to wait until you act and when He did it was solved.

Now in Psalm 56, it says that this is a Michtam of David when the Philistines captured him in Gath. This is the time when he went down there and they captured him and He did not what do, so he decided to act like a mad man. Everyone thought that he had lost his mind. This is what he does then, he fakes madness.

What he says here does not seem to go at all, but we get an idea of how the Gathites were treating him.

**Psalm 56:1-2** Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up; fighting all day he oppresses me. My enemies would hound me all day, for there are many who fight against me, O Most High. [verses 5-7] All day they twist my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather together, they hide, they mark my steps, when they lie in wait for my life. Shall they escape by iniquity? In anger cast down the peoples, O God!

So he is getting it all the time, he cannot escape, people are talking about him, people trying to kill him, he feels unsafe all the time and, as we know from what it says in I Samuel 21, he has to take refuge in the fact that they think he is insane. It is all a show, but that is the only way he can preserve his life for now, but he needs to get out and escape. So we find in verses 3-4 and verses 10-11, the key to his strategy.

**Psalm 56:3-4** Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God (I will praise His word), in God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?

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**Psalm 56:10-11** In God (I will praise His word), In the Lord (I will praise His word), in God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

He said, "This is the mind set that I've decided to have. God is powerful and I will trust His word." What is he talking about? God has made promises to us. He told us that the righteous will never stumble, He has told us that He will preserve us, that He will give us the Kingdom of God. He has given us all kinds of promises and David says here that I am going to trust that what God has promised He will perform. So he is going to trust in God even though all of this stuff has taken place around, all the knives are out, they are talking bad against him, they are oppressing him, he is going to tune all that out the best he can, not be afraid and trust God that He will do as He said.

In this particular case, David had the promise that he would be king over Israel and he had still, up to this point, not become king over Israel yet. So He knew what God's Word said and therefore said "I will not die here, I'm going to trust God. And besides even if they kill me, what can man really do to me. I'm a son of God, I have the promise of the resurrection." Do not think that was not in his mind, because it comes up later in some of these same psalms.

Psalm 57 is immediately after Psalm 56, when David had finally escaped from Gath and he hid from Saul in the cave of Adullam. It is interesting if you go back to I Samuel 22 and read what is going on there, it does not seem negative at all. He flees to the cave of Adullam and all of the distressed people, all the people who liked him and wanted to get away, his family and such, they all came to him.

By the time this little scenario ends, he has got like four hundred people and he is their captain. Of course they are stressed with that as well. But by that time, he should have been feeling pretty good. He had sort of an army there with him and all this strength and reinforcement. But obviously, from what he writes here in Psalm 57, David feels differently. He feels oppressed by the calamities that he talks about. He says that he feels surrounded by lions and great powerful predators among men.

**Psalm 57:6-8** They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down; they have dug a pit before me; into the midst of it they themselves have fallen. Selah [It is like he is walking into a trap, he is very unsettled and anxious. And what does he do? He pleads for mercy from God banking on his steadfast trust. That word comes up here.] My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise. Awake, my glory! Awake,

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lute and harp! I will awaken the dawn.

That is what he does. You know, sometimes all we can do is trust God and sing praises and that is how he felt. If we go into chapter 58, which seems to take place right after that, he asks God in verse 6:

**Psalm 58:6** Break their teeth in their mouth, O God! Break out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord!

If you go back to chapter 57, he talks about the big teeth of the lions, but here he says break their teeth. He is still on the same subject and he just cries out for God's judgment and vengeance on the young lions. And what he does there in verse 11 is he says:

**Psalm 58:11** So that men will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely He is God who judges in the earth."

It is kind of a challenge to God. He is basically saying here that "these people are besetting me all about, they're giving me no end of trouble, they want my hide, but You're the judge of the earth, act! Prove that you're the judge of the earth. Hear my cry and swiftly answer."

Okay, we will move on to Psalm 59 now. This is when Saul had his house watched and Michal, his wife, Saul's daughter, let him out by a rope through the window. This is the one where he says,

**Psalm 59:3-4** For look, they lie in wait for my life; the mighty gather against me, not for my transgression nor for my sin, O Lord. They run and prepare themselves through no fault of mine.

This was something where he had done nothing wrong but he was still in a pickle and he needed God's help, so he asked God to punish them. That is in verses 5 and 8, where he says to punish the nations, but it is actually to the Gentiles, meaning those who do not have faith in God, and at this point it was Saul. Saul and his men were acting like Gentiles, like heathens perusing David, the anointed of God. So he asks God for help.

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I wanted to get to chapter 71 today because I think this is particularly needful at this time in the church. This is a prayer of David, the senior citizen. He was old by this time, but he still had a lot of the same problems. The problem is that now at old age we do not have the strength or the stamina that we had when we were young. We do not have the time that we may have had when we were young. We see death approaching, we see the end of things and we only have so much we can do, so he says here:

**Psalm 71:9** Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails.

We see David as an old man asking God not to leave him, because he knows that he is not as strong as he used to be and he needs Him now more than ever.

**Psalm 71:16** I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.

We see him here having to rely more and more on God and he does the same thing, he just waits on God. He knows that God will save him and get him through these things. It is the same answer to the problem we had as younger people but it just seems so much worse because we see our strength ebbing and time ebbing. But there is an interesting little piece that David adds here.

**Psalm 71:20** You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, shall revive me again, and bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

There is another little bit added here. "God if you allow me to die, if you allow this trial or test to finally overcome me, I know that it's not finished because, you promised that you'll raise me up in the resurrection of the dead and I have hope that even if I'm not up to the task this time, there is glory on the other side." So what does he do?

**Psalm 71:23-24** My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, and my soul, which You have redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long; for they are confounded, for they are brought to shame who seek my hurt.

That is where his trust is. That he is going to just keep on praising God, keep talking

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about God's righteousness, keep on talking about all the things that God has done and God will take care of things. That is the conclusion. God will take care of all of our enemies.

This is the life of a Christian. While we enjoy the life of a plethora blessings that God bestows upon us so liberally, we do not even understand all the things that He gives us, but really when it comes down to it, the things that really stand out are the series of trials and tests, some of which reach to the point of real suffering that we go through. Those stick out because they hurt so badly. But God is guiding us through these. He is guiding us through them with the purpose of building and strengthening our character until it conforms to the image of Christ.

That is what this day is about. This is the preparation that we have to go through to be ready for harvest. This is the beating, the treading, the grinding, the sifting, the baking. We have to go through that as sons and daughters of God. Now, as a final scripture I want to read I Peter 5:6-11 and hopefully this will put a capstone on it.

**I Peter 5:6-11** Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. [all the rest of the saints of God] But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.