

The Biblical Answer to Broken Relationships

Marian Evans, who wrote under the pen name George Eliot, described the beauty of friendship: “Oh the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person; having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words but to pour them all out together, knowing that a faithful friend will take and sift them, keeping what is worth keeping, and then with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.”

David had a friend like that, but something terrible happened. The friend turned against him. Psalm 55 pours out of David’s heart as he struggles with the unbearable emotional pain of abandonment, betrayal, disillusionment and disbelief.

Internal Nightmare

David begins with a plea for God to listen (v. 1). The “listen” is punctuated by urgency: “Do not ignore my plea; hear me and answer me” (vv. 1,2). Did David fear God would be as insensitive as the departed friend?

Quickly, David summarizes his deep depression (vv. 3,4) and poignantly notes the horrible physiological and psychological trauma he experiences: “Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me” (v. 5).

Emotions like this never arise with the loss of a casual acquaintance. Such wounds can only be made by someone close to you. Who has left you that you loved? The excruciating present feelings far surpass the former comfort in friendship.

You now long for escape from the hurt but can’t find anywhere to run. “Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. ... far from the tempest and storm” (vv. 6–8).

External Danger

Some breakups in close relationships are not accompanied by the external dangers confronting David in this psalm: violence, strife, malice, abuse, threats and lies. However, such terms do describe the devil's assault: "Destructive forces are at work" (v. 11).

The enemy's deeds are never constructive. He is interested only in our defeat.

Unendurable Loss

A grieving divorcee asked for prayer: "I just can't bear the pain. My husband, my closest friend, told me he had to leave me because he was gay. I never saw it coming. We had such a caring relationship. I don't know if I have the strength to go on living."

The betrayal of a spouse, a friend, a relative, a close companion is very hard to take. David speaks for all who have been so wounded when he laments, "If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you ... my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship" (vv. 12-14).

Intensifying the pain is the remembrance that the "sweet fellowship" had included spiritual togetherness ("as we walked with the throng at the house of God" (v. 14). He never expected the companion who loved God with him to turn against him.

Anger Vented

A husband, whose wife had left him for another man, admitted, "It was all I could do to restrain myself from going to her new home in the middle of the night and torching it with her and her lover in it."

David is no stranger to those emotions. He wishes the worst to happen to the one who hurt him—sudden death or being buried alive.

The Psalms continually illustrate how to deal with anger when we are hurt by others. The Lord gives permission to express that anger to Him, but it is not acceptable for us to act on the anger. Maturity in Christ takes us along an even higher and more difficult path: forgiveness and overcoming evil with good.

One Dependable Friend

Other persons may disappoint us. God won't (vv. 16-19). His action is always consistent with His speech. We can rely upon the Lord; therefore, David closes this psalm with a word of advice—picked up by Peter in the New Testament: "Cast your cares on the Lord" (v. 22; 1 Pet. 5:7).

It's hard. I want to solve my own problems so I can get the solutions I desire. Prayer makes me desire His solutions.

Is a broken relationship with a close companion plunging you into the emotional fight of your life? God must be involved. Put the matter in His hands.

We began the psalm by demanding God's immediate attention, and after a season of struggle in prayer, quietly relinquish our situation into the Lord's care, "But as for me, I trust in you" (v. 23).

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