



# TURN YOUR CARES INTO PRAYERS

*Encountering Jesus in*

PSALM 55

ROWLAND FORMAN

**Turn Your Cares into Prayers** is based on Psalm 55, a deeply moving and honest psalm of lament, where David unburdens his soul to the LORD. As you meditate on this psalm may you encounter the Lord Jesus, the Burden-Bearer, and cast your burdens on him because he understands you more fully than anyone else ever could. Your shoulders are not strong enough but his are. He doesn't get tired or weary. Ever.

## DAY ONE

### Offload Your Burdens

What do you do when your burdens are too heavy to carry?

Psalm 55 shows us both what to do, and where to go. It calls us to:

- Name our burdens (vv. 1-21) and
- Unload our burdens (vv.22-23).

In this deeply moving psalm of lament, David honestly spells out what is weighing him down. He then shows us to whom we can turn—and what we need to do:

***Cast your burdens on the LORD and he will sustain you ...*** (Psalm 55:22)

In other words, offload your burdens onto Yahweh. Don't hold onto them. Your shoulders are not strong enough, but his are. He does not grow tired or weary. Ever. He is *the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.* (Isaiah 40:28).

How then do we offload our burdens onto Yahweh? Old Testament scholar Paul Goldingay translates this verse: “Throw onto Yahweh what is given you, and he—he will sustain you.” Notice that phrase: “what is given.” These burdens, in some sense, have been placed in your hands. The invitation is to throw them back—to the One who can carry them.

What burdens have you been carrying in the past year? Are they overwhelming you? Do you feel like running away from them all?

You've come to the right place. More importantly, if you heed Psalm 55:22, you've come to the right person: the Lord of heaven and earth—the Lord Jesus—who understands you in a way no one else can.

In this devotional we will see that Jesus is deeply empathetic towards every burden you bear. This is because of who he was and the way he lived. He leans into your situation, however dire, and feels your pain. Hebrews 4:15 describes him this way:

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.*

Jesus is not detached from your struggles. To *empathize* means that he enters into our suffering—he suffers with us. We'll see this in Psalm 55:

- To whom do you turn when your tears are flowing? Turn to the One who wept. (John 11:35; Hebrews 5:7).
- Where do you turn when your closest friend betrays you? Turn to the One who was betrayed for a few coins (Matthew 26:14-16).

Turn to the bearer of burdens, both small and great.

What are your small burdens today? What are your heavier burdens?

It can help to write them down. In your journal, try two simple headings:

Small Burdens.

Big Burdens.

List them and then give them back to God. Throw them onto him.

In the coming days, we will look more closely at the heavy burdens David carried, and how he brought them to the LORD in prayer.

**He turned his cares into prayers.**

**Reflect & Discuss:**

- What burdens are you holding onto instead of handing over to the Lord?
- What would it look like to truly release them to him today?

**Pray:**

Lord Jesus, you know the weight I'm carrying. Today I choose to place each burden into your hands. I trust you to sustain me. Amen.

**Scriptures for Meditation:**

- Deuteronomy 1:9-13
- Psalm 68:19
- 1 Peter 5:7

## DAY TWO

### When Anxiety Overwhelms You

Yesterday we began offloading our burdens to God—but sometimes those burdens turn into overwhelming anxiety.

What do you do when anxiety has you in its grip and won't let go? That's how David felt in Psalm 55:1-2:

*Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught ...*

He begins to pray but he is restless and agitated. His situation feels too much for him. When he was younger, he fearlessly faced the giant Goliath, while others cowered in fear. Now, later in life, faced with a friend turned enemy, he is not just concerned—he is paralyzed with anxiety:

*My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen on me. Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me (Psalm 55:4-5).*

Notice how his whole being is affected: heart, body and mind. David is remarkably vulnerable here. He brings his unfiltered self to God, telling him exactly how it is.

How is it with you right now? Are you anxious? Are there understandable reasons for your concerns, or have irrational fears begun to take hold?

One of the warning lights on the dashboard of your soul may be persistent inner turmoil—when a sense of dread settles in. You try to suppress it and when that fails, you try everything you can to manage it.

Psalm 55 shows us where to start—to turn our anxieties into honest trust-filled prayers, then wait expectantly to see how God might answer.

Often, he meets us through others—trusted friends who listen with compassion, wise counsellors who help us make sense of what we're feeling, and skilled doctors who provide needed care. These are not second-best options; they are answers to your earnest prayers.

And yet, even as we receive that help, we are invited to cast our burdens on Jesus, who is still the Great Physician. He understands us fully and perfectly. Not from a distance but from experience. He is the One to whom we can ultimately entrust every anxiety.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, just hours before his crucifixion, Jesus said:

*My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death (Matthew 26:38).*

The author of Hebrews uses emotive language to assure us that Jesus knows our anxieties:

*During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission (Hebrews 5:7).*

If you are overwhelmed—if you have shed many tears—come to Jesus.

Because he was fully human (Hebrews 2:17-18), you can “... cast **all** your anxieties on him because he cares for you (1 Peter 5:7).” He knows. He leans into your pain.

“Not only can he alone pull us out of the hole of sin; he alone desires to climb in and bear our burdens. Jesus is able to sympathize. He ‘co-suffers’ with us.”<sup>1</sup>

Where will you go, when anxiety overwhelms you?

Reach out to those God has placed around you—people who care and will walk with you. And as you do, keep coming to Jesus. He will never put you on hold.

**Turn to the Burden-Bearer because he understands you more fully than anyone else ever could.**

**Reflect & Discuss:**

- What situations are currently making you anxious?
- How do you usually respond when anxiety takes hold?
- What would it look like for you to bring your unfiltered thoughts honestly before God today?

**Practice:**

Pause to name your anxieties before God, out loud if possible. Don't tidy them up. Then consciously roll each one back onto God.

**Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, you know every fear that is stirring within me—every fear, every restless thought. Thank you that you understand me completely. Help me to bring every worry to you. Teach me to rest in your arms of grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Dane Ortland, *Gentle and Lowly*, Crossway, Wheaton IL, 2020, 49.

### **Scriptures for Meditation:**

- Psalm 55:1-5
- Matthew 6:25-34
- Philippians 4:6-7

## DAY THREE

### When You Feel like Running Away

The second stanza of Psalm 55 raises a searching question, “What do you do when you feel like getting away from it all?” David expresses it this way:

*My heart is in anguish within me;  
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.  
Fear and trembling come upon me,  
and horror overwhelms me.  
And I say, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove!  
I would fly away and be at rest;  
yes, I would wander far away;  
I would lodge in the wilderness; Selah  
I would hurry to find a shelter  
from the raging wind and tempest. (Psalm 55:4-8)*

Can you relate to these words? Has life ever felt so heavy that you’ve thought about escaping from it all? Ever caught yourself thinking, “I’ve had enough”?

In some ways, that’s a very human response. This world is not our true home. My father, in his late seventies, was bedridden for the last five years of his life. He had a strong, steady faith, but every now and then, he would say he wanted to go “home” to heaven. His mind was still sharp, but his body had simply worn out. It wasn’t despair—it was longing. He identified fully with the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:16: They were ... *longing for a better country—a heavenly one.*

Sometimes, though, the urge to run comes because we feel overwhelmed or even threatened—as David was. The terrors of death had closed in around him. All he wanted was a pair of wings so he could fly to safety like a pigeon finding shelter on a Temple ledge.

Elijah knew that feeling too. After a dramatic victory, he crashed emotionally and spiritually. Afraid and exhausted, he echoed David’s cry. *I’ve had enough LORD ...* (1 Kings 19:4). He was disheartened that Israel hadn’t turned back to God, and he was fleeing for his life from Queen Jezebel.

So, what should we do when the urge to run away takes hold? Even though it is natural, yet not healthy?

First, turn our cares into honest faith-filled prayers. That's what David did. He didn't tidy up his emotions—he brought them to God, just as they were.

Second, as we saw on Day Two, turn to Jesus. He understands us better than anyone else ever will.

Jesus never diverted from his mission to die for your sins and mine. Whenever he did step away—it was to commune with his Father. Luke tells us that *Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed* (Luke 5:16).

And he stayed the course. Hebrews 12:2-3 tells us that he endured. As we consider him who endured both the Cross and opposition from sinners, we are encouraged to not grow weary and lose heart.

**When you feel like running away, run into Christ's arms of grace.**

His arms are open wide, and in him you will find the refuge you are really looking for.

**Reflect & Discuss**

- If you have ever felt like “running away,” what were some of the things that activated that feeling?
- How did you deal with it?

**Practice:**

- Take a few quiet minutes today to tell God honestly how you are.

**Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, when I am overwhelmed and want to run, help me to run to you. Thank you for welcoming me with open arms. Give me strength to keep going and rest in your presence. Amen.

**Scriptures for Meditation:**

- Romans 5:3-5
- 1 Corinthians 15:56-58
- James 1:2-4

## DAY FOUR

### When it Feels Like the World is Falling Apart

How do you respond when everything around you seems chaotic, uncertain, and out of control?

In Psalm 55:1-8, David casts several of his personal burdens on God—his inner turmoil, his fears, and his longing to run away from it all.

Now he lifts his eyes to the chaos around him.

His prayer doesn't make for easy reading:

*LORD confuse the wicked, confound their words, for I see violence and strife in the city. Day and night they prowl about on its walls; malice and abuse are within it. Destructive forces are at work in the city; threats and lies never leave its streets. (Psalm 55:9-11)*

This is not just personal pain; it is the pain of national brokenness. Notice the words he uses—violence, strife, malice, abuse, deceit. These are heavy communal burdens.

Yet David continues to respond to the psalm's central invitation: "Cast your burdens on the LORD." Deeply disturbed by the breakdown around him, he rolls this massive weight onto God.

Sometimes our burdens result not just from what is happening within us, but from what is unfolding around us—in our neighborhoods, our nation, our world. At times the weight of it all can feel overwhelming.

The way David dealt with his burdens in this Psalm might have influenced the prophet Habakkuk. He opens his prophecy by asking why evil seems to flourish while God appears silent. Injustice is rampant. Violence is everywhere. Where is God in all this chaos? (Habakkuk 1:1-4)

Eventually, Habakkuk resolves to wait and watch. "I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts..." (Habakkuk 2:1).

God commends him there and provides us with a timeless truth—one that captures the heart of the gospel: "... the righteous shall live by his faith." (Habakkuk 2:4).

In other words, the just will live by faith in our sovereign God.

Waiting time is not wasted time because God is in control all of the time. He is at work—even when, like David and Habakkuk, all we can see is chaos and confusion.

What burdens are you carrying today because of what you see around you, locally or globally?

Bring your world to God in honest, faith-filled prayer.

And as you do, may you rest in God's sovereign control and tender care. He is not distant from the chaos we see—He rules over it.

In the gospels, we encounter Jesus, with his disciples in the middle of a violent storm. As the winds rage and the waves threaten, he simply speaks—and all is calmed. The disciples are left in awe. Even the wind and the waves obey him. (Matthew 8:23-27)

The forces that unsettle us are not beyond his authority. The wind and waves in this unstable and uncertain world still know his name.

### **Reflect & Discuss:**

- What burden are you carrying today because of what is happening around you?
- How does David's response in Psalm 55 challenge or encourage you?
- What is one way in which you can cast this burden on the LORD today?
- What does it mean to you that the Lord Jesus offers us peace in the storms, however violent?

### **Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, you see the chaos and brokenness around me. You are not distant or unaware. Help me to trust you and place these burdens in your hands. Calm me as you calmed the storm on Lake Galilee. Teach me more of what it means to live by faith. I'm resting in your sovereign care. Amen.

### **Scriptures for Meditation**

- Psalm 55:9-11
- Habakkuk 2:1-4
- Matthew 8:23-27
- 1 Peter 5:7

## DAY FIVE

### When a Trusted Friend Betrays You

We are left with questions following on from the highly emotive verses of Psalm 55:1-11.

Why is David so desperate?

Why is he so anxious?

Why does he feel like running away?

These questions are answered in the next stanza. David's pain isn't just circumstantial. It is relational. More than that, it's personal. He has been betrayed by his most trusted friend.

*If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were rising against me, I could hide. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my closest friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship at the house of God, as we walked about among the worshippers. (Psalm 55:12-14)*

This is the agony of betrayal. Not opposition from a distance—but deep wounds inflicted by someone close. Someone trusted. Someone loved. Someone with whom David shared his life.

David is likely referring here to the coup attempt made by his son, Absalom, coupled with the betrayal by his trusted counselor, Ahithophel. David describes the latter as “my companion”—a member of his inner circle. This was no casual acquaintance. He calls him “... my closest friend.”

On the surface all seemed fine. Ahithophel's words were smooth, but underneath there was deceit and hostility. “His speech was smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart.” (v. 21)

Have you ever experienced that kind of pain?

In Psalm 55 we not only hear David's voice, but we are also being prepared to encounter Christ.

What do you do when trust is shattered and friendship is broken? To whom can you turn?

You turn to Jesus, the One who has experienced betrayal first-hand.

Think of Jesus and Judas. Three years of sharing life. Three years of teaching, eating, and ministering together.

Jesus knew what Judas would do yet still loved him. On the night of his betrayal, Jesus knelt and washed Judas' feet. He even offered Judas the "sop" – a morsel of bread dipped in sauce at the Last Supper - as a final appeal of love.

This is a staggering picture of love in the face of betrayal. Here we see Jesus modelling his own teaching: *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.* (Matthew 6:44)

Jesus does not stand at a distance from the pain of betrayal. He has felt it—deeply, personally, and fully.

What do you do when you feel betrayed?

You do what David learned to do. He cast this heavy burden on the LORD, realizing that God is the one who will bring about justice (v.23).

You cast it on the Lord Jesus, who sympathizes with you.

Not ignoring the pain. Not minimizing the wound. But entrusting it to the One who understands and who is more than able to sustain and heal you.

And as you do, ask him for grace to love your enemies as he has loved you.

### **Reflect & Discuss:**

- Where have you experienced the pain of broken trust or betrayal?
- What makes betrayal especially difficult to bear?
- How does Jesus' response to Judas shape the way you view your situation?
- What would it look like to cast this burden fully on the LORD today?

### **Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, you know the pain of betrayal. You understand what it is to be wounded by someone close. I bring this hurt to you—not hiding it or carrying it alone. Help me to trust you with it and find the strength to endure. May the Holy Spirit empower me to show love to those who oppose me. Amen

### **Scriptures for Meditation:**

- Psalm 55:12-22
- John 13:1-17
- 1 Peter 2:23

## **DAY SIX**

### **How to Turn Cares into Prayers**

What do you do when your burdens threaten to overwhelm you?

After pouring out his gut-wrenching trials to God in Psalm 55:1-21, David summarizes, in verse 22, what he has learned:

*Cast your burdens on the LORD and he will sustain you. He will never let the righteous fall.*

Troubles will come—that is certain. But David shows us what to do with them: take each one and turn it into an honest, faith-filled prayer.

But how do we do that?

### **Pray Frequently**

“I only pray when I am in trouble,” said Isaac Singer, “But I am in trouble all the time, and so I pray all the time.” David would say, “Amen.”

He describes his own prayer rhythm in verse 17:

“As for me, I call to God, and the LORD saves me. Evening, morning and noon, I cry out in distress, and the LORD hears my voice.”

This was his life rhythm—pausing to pray at set times throughout the day. Perhaps Daniel learned the habit from this psalm. He prayed three times a day, even when his life was at risk (Daniel 6:10). His habit was simple and steady: ending each day in prayer, beginning the day in prayer, and interrupting the middle of a busy day to turn his cares into prayers.

Prayer is a simple thing; it is a glance toward God. A pause. While the Pharisees loved long eloquent prayers. Jesus taught his disciples The Lord’s Prayer, which can be prayed in under half a minute.

When you are in trouble, pray short prayers—often.

### **Pray Honestly**

Psalm 55 is raw and unfiltered. It is a deeply emotional lament.

David cries out to God to frustrate the plans of the wicked (v.9) and even calls for the grave to swallow them alive (v. 15). How do we reconcile that with Jesus’ call to love our enemies?

Scottish minister and author, Alexander MacLaren, answers: “Rooted griefs, overwhelming sorrows demand many repetitions. It is absurd to look

for cool, logical sequence in such a heart's cry as this psalm. Smooth continuity would be most unnatural.”

In other words, this is what honest prayer looks like.

Bring your burdens to God as they are—honest and imperfect. He already knows your thoughts before you express them (Psalm 139:4). You are not informing God; you are opening your heart to him.

### **Pray Trustfully**

*Psalm 55:22 is David's simple and settled conclusion:*

*Cast your burdens on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken.*

The word **cast** carries the idea of rolling something heavy onto another. David learned to roll burdens he could not carry onto the strong shoulders of the LORD.

And he invites us to do the same.

Will you do that today?

Will you cast the burden of anxiety, grief, confusion, or whatever is too heavy for you, onto the Lord Jesus?

- When anxiety grips you, turn to Jesus, who understands you fully.
- When you feel like running away, run instead into his open arms.
- When life is spinning out of control, turn to the One who calmed storms with a word.
- When a trusted friend betrays you, cast this burden on Jesus, who has experienced betrayal firsthand.

Turning your cares into prayers is an act of faith. It is a daily expression of trust in God who sustains you through it all.

### **Reflect & Discuss:**

1. What burdens are you carrying right now that feel too heavy to manage on your own?
2. Which of the three practices—frequent, honest, or trustful prayer—do you find most challenging? Why?
3. How do you relate to the daily rhythm of pausing to pray in the evening, morning and midday?
4. How does knowing that God understands your thoughts (Psalm 139:4) change the way that you pray?

**Prayer:**

Lord Jesus,

You know the burdens I am carrying, those I can name and those I cannot. Teach me to bring them to you, not just occasionally but often. I long to pray honestly, without pretending, and to trust you with things I cannot control. Today, I choose to place my cares into your hands.

Sustain me, steady me, and remind me that I cannot carry these alone.  
Amen.

**Scriptures for Meditation:**

- Psalm 68:19-20
- Deuteronomy 33:27