

SBC – Jan. 12, 2025
Psalm 56 (NKJV)
“Overcoming Fear with Faith”

Psalm 56 (NKJV)
To the Chief Musician. Set to “The Silent Dove in Distant Lands.” A
Michtam of David When the Philistines Captured Him in Gath.

We have here another Psalm of David – and another Psalm that he writes while under duress. It is addressed to the Chief Musician, indicating that David intended that it be used in corporate worship. It was set to “The Silent Dove in Distant Lands” which evidently refers to a certain tune.

A Michtam of David.

It is uncertain what “Michtam” means. Some think it refers to the idea of golden or precious. Others think it may mean “to cover” or “to inscribe”. It seems to have the emphasis that this is something special. It may have been a musical term that held some kind of special designation.

Many of the Psalms leave us wondering what was the specific occasion for the writing of this Psalm – but not this one. Here David spells out the exact occasion as being when the Philistines captured him in Gath.

We read about this in 1 Samuel 21:10-15. In context David was on the run from king Saul. He had secretly gone to the priests at a place called Nob and asked for supplies and said he was on a special mission from king Saul – which of course was a lie.

After getting a few supplies from the priests David then fled to king Achish at Gath also referred to by his royal title Abimelech. This was the area that Goliath hailed from whom David had recently killed.

Slide # 1



David evidently did not realize that he had a growing reputation that went before him which put him in great danger here.

We read about it in 1 Sam. 21:10-15. Also Psalm 34 was written in reference to this occasion showing just how traumatic was this experience in the life of David.

Slide # 2

1 Samuel 21:10–12 (NKJV)

10 Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.

11 And the servants of Achish said to him, **“Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of him to one another in dances, saying: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands’?”**

12 Now David took these words to heart, and **was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath.**

Slide # 3

1 Samuel 21:13–15 (NKJV)

13 So he changed his behavior before them, **pretended madness** in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard.

14 Then Achish said to his servants, “Look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me?”

15 Have I need of madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? **Shall this fellow come into my house?”**

Slide # 4

1 Samuel 22:1 (NKJV)

1 **David therefore departed from there** and escaped to the cave of Adullam. So when his brothers and all his father’s house heard it, they went down there to him.

This event happened fairly early in David’s life after he was anointed to be the next king. He still had a lot to learn as he was enrolled in the walk of faith in his journey to the throne. At this point we see some weakness in David. He lied to the priests. He then ran for his life to Gath evidently thinking this would be the last place that Saul would look for him. But in reality at this point he was walking by sight and not by faith. And in the process he made some mistakes.

You ever do that? We are under pressure. We are weak. And then we mess up. But God uses these times. We learn from it. And so it was with David. And we can learn a lot from what David learned!

Slide # 5

Psalm 56

“Overcoming Fear with Faith”

- vv. 1-2 A Cry to God for Mercy
- vv. 3-4 Fear and Faith
- vv. 5-7 David Defines his Enemies
- vv. 8-9 God’s Sympathetic Care of David
- vv. 10-11 David’s Confession of Faith
- vv. 12-13 David’s Vow to Praise the LORD

1 Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up; Fighting all day he oppresses me.

David at this point was in a very vulnerable and helpless position. He was cut off from all he had known in a strange land. He had no familiar resources at his disposal. All he could do was look to God for His gracious help.

The word translated in the NKJV as “swallow” is better translated as “trampled”. David’s enemies were trampling upon him. Fighting all day they oppressed him.

Facing constant danger, David poured out his heart to God.

2 My enemies would hound me all day, For there are many who fight against me, O Most High.

All day David’s enemies hounded him. There was no let up – no relief. And there were MANY who were fighting against him. It was terrifying!

3 Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.

This is the key verse in the Psalm – essentially repeated in verse 11. The antidote to fear is faith.

Notice that David does not say he will never be afraid. That would be a lie. He was human. He had fear. The great issue is not whether or not we will ever be afraid – the great issue is what do we do with it?

“He feared, but that fear did not fill the whole area of his mind, for he adds, ‘*I will trust in thee.*’ It is possible, then, for fear and faith to occupy the mind at the same moment.” - **Charles Spurgeon**

David openly confessed that when he was afraid (and he was) that he would trust in the Lord.

Great men of God are still men – they are still human. David killed the lion – he killed Goliath. He seemed to have nerves of steel, but here he was in great fear. But in his fear, he resolved to trust in God.

And he verbalized it. It is good to speak it out loud. Let yourself hear your resolve to trust.

4 In God (I will praise His word), In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?

Notice the connection here between TRUST and God’s Word. The word is the basis of our faith! Faith in the Bible is consistently connected to God’s Word – to His promises.

We don’t write our own ticket with God. Faith is taking God at His Word. Faith is always based on the word.

Slide # 6

Romans 10:17 (NKJV)

17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

I prayed for faith and thought it would strike me like lightning. But faith did not come. One day I read, “Now faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” I had closed my Bible and prayed for faith. I now began to study my Bible and faith has been growing ever since. -**Dwight L. Moody**

David’s faith was not a blind hope, but rather confidence based on God’s Word. It was based on the revealed character of God in the Word and His promises.

David may specifically have in mind the personal Word of God to him through the prophet Samuel that he was anointed to be the next king over Israel (cf. 1 Sam. 16:1-13). That was a personal and powerful promise!

Since David's trust was in God (based on His Word) David affirmed he would not fear. And then rhetorically asked: "What can flesh do to me?"

Flesh in the Bible represents weakness and mortality (Isa. 2:22; 31:3; 40:6). It the God of all flesh Who is all-powerful and sovereign over all (Jer. 32:27).

Of course, humanly speaking they can do plenty. They can persecute, maim, injure, or kill. But the implied reality is that they can do nothing unless God permits it. We truly are immortal until our work is done. Our times truly are in God's hands.

The sentiment here is that God is greater than all and in His care no one can stop the servant of God unless it is His will.

And we should always keep an eternal perspective in mind. Some of God's servants do die.

Slide # 7

Hebrews 11:33–35 (NKJV)

33 who **through faith** subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again. ...

That sounds like a dose of prosperity gospel – where by faith everything turns up roses. And sometimes that is the case, but not always. The text then goes on to say...

Slide # 8

Hebrews 11:35–39 (NKJV)

35 ... Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.

37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—

38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

39 And **all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith**, did not receive the promise,

These who suffered and died were also people of faith! Some had great physical victories— some died! They were all people of faith! But God is ever sovereign over His personal plan for each one of us.

And that is David's point here. He had been promised the kingdom and therefore was convinced that mere flesh could not thwart what God had promised. Again, faith is always in the Word. God had given a specific promise to David – but we have not been given a specific promise like that – nor had many other OT saints who died for their faith.

Slide # 9

Matthew 10:28 (NKJV)

28 And **do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul**. But rather **fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell**.

In other words, what Jesus was saying is that we need to have an eternal perspective. That is what matters. This life is like a vapor. “Just a little minute but eternity is in it.” I like to say we live here in “vaporville”. Poof and its gone! But we are not gone – we have eternity waiting – we have the kingdom that we are about to enter into.

Slide # 10

Three men were walking on a wall,
Feeling, Faith, and Fact,
When Feeling got an awful fall,
And Faith was taken back.
So close was Faith to Feeling,
He stumbled and fell too,
But Fact remained,
And pulled Faith back
And Faith brought feeling too.

~**Author Unknown**

For us FACT is the Word of God! The Word of God is steady – it never falls! We need to bring our feelings in line with FACT. Our faith must not be led by our feelings but rather must always come back to and rest in the FACT of God’s Word. This is what steadies us in the turmoil of life.

5 All day they twist my words; All their thoughts are against me for evil.

In verses 5-7 David describes the wickedness of his enemies. Note that for the 3rd time, he says they are harassing and oppressing him “all day”.

Slide # 11

- v. 1 **all day** he oppressed me
- v. 2 hound me **all day**
- v. 5 **All day** they twist my words

These people were “word twisters,” which is Satan’s activity. My friend Dr. Harold Berry wrote a book called “Truth Twisters,” which eventually was renamed “What They Believe,” which was a book about the cults. But this is what evil people do- they are word twisters. They do it in trying to destroy people.

Word and thoughts go together. A person’s words tell on their heart. Jesus said, “Those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart” (Mt. 15:18). The mouth tells on the heart, and in this way, David could discern the wicked intents of their thoughts. They were constantly plotting against him for evil.

The account in 1 Samuel doesn’t record any physical attacks on David, but he heard a great deal of slander and his life was in danger.

– **Warren Wiersbe**

Slander destroys! In this case it put David’s life in danger!

6 They gather together, They hide, they mark my steps, When they lie in wait for my life.

In verse 2, David said there were MANY who fought against him. Here we see them huddled together. They are pictured as predatory animals waiting to attack their prey. They are stalking him – waiting for just the right moment to pounce on him. David saw himself as being in constant mortal danger!

7 Shall they escape by iniquity? In anger cast down the peoples, O God!

Here David asks a rhetorical question. The expected answer is, “Of course, they are not going to get away with this.” And so David asks God to, in righteous anger, put them down! David sees this as the right thing for God to do, and that being the case - the prayer is right.

8 You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in Your book?

David now reflects on God’s sympathetic and personal care about him. God knows where he has been – every twist and turn – all his wanderings as he flees for his life. God knows! Somehow it is comforting just to know that God knows and He cares.

He keeps a count of our wanderings or restless tossings during the night, of our fevered turnings from one side to another.

– **William MacDonald**

The fact that God cares is reflected in the idea of God putting David’s tears into a bottle and recording them in His book.

Some think that the imagery here may be tied to the ancient custom of mourners preserving their fallen tears in a bottle and then placing the bottle on the tomb of a loved one as a display of affection. It emphasizes deep care! That may be the idea here!

Not only are David’s tears pictured as being stored up in God’s bottle but also that they are recorded in God’s book (cf. Dan. 7:10; Mal. 3:16). He sees and makes record of every tear! It matters to God when we hurt!

Slide # 12

In this period of David’s life, before coming to Adullam Cave (1 Samuel 22), he was completely alone. This made him value the sympathy and care of God all the more, and he found great comfort in the thought that God noted his misery. – **David Guzik**

Sometimes, when it seems you are all alone – it is you against the world – it is very comforting to realize and meditate on God’s loving concern and care.

David saw God as very caring. He was not distant and unsympathetic. Rather He is compassionate and intensely concerned about every detail of our painful experience.

9 When I cry out to You, Then my enemies will turn back; This I know, because God is for me.

David has absolute confidence in prayer! When he prays, God will work – God will intervene and turn back his enemies. He is convinced that God is with him – that God is on his side.

David knew that he was God's anointed – he knew that God was for Him. And we should know it to because we too have this promise. In fact, Paul in the NT (under inspiration) echoes this verse in the mountaintop chapter of Romans 8.

Slide # 13

Romans 8:31 (NKJV)

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Paul here asks a rhetorical question with the answer being NO ONE!

One with God is a MAJORITY because God is greater than all! Who can be against us with God being for us? Absolutely no one! No one will ultimately prevail against us! God's working all things together for our ultimate good will be accomplished!

No one can change, cancel, or disrupt the sovereign good purpose of God that has the destination GLORY written all over it for every believer!

And in the meantime, we are immortal until our God assigned work on earth is done (cf. Eph. 2:10).

Often in the weakness of our faith we fail to properly appreciate the words, "God is for us". We often fail Him, but He is for us.

We are ignorant, but He is for us. We are not that fruitful, but He is for us. Name whatever shortcoming you will; if you are a true believer, GOD IS FOR YOU!

True story about a saint who was dying. As the pastor came to see him he read Romans 8:31 to him. The dying saint said, “*Read those words again!*” And so the pastor read, “***If God is for us, who can be against us?***” The elderly saint murmured in a kind of ecstasy, “That’s it! That’s it!” Indeed, that’s it! If God is for us, then all is well for time and all eternity!

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

In verses 10 and 11 we in effect have a repetition of what was stated in verses 3 and 4. This is KEY idea in the Psalm. This is the all-important reality the David comes back to and repeats for emphasis sake.

Again, we see the connection between the Word of God and David’s trust! And it is this combination that removes his fear!

For the second and third times in this psalm, David declared the greatness of God’s word. This was how he knew that God was **for** him. It wasn’t just a wish, a dream, or a hope. It was well-grounded, because God said it in **His word**. – **David Guzik**

And with his view clearly upon God he rhetorically asks yet again: “***What can man do to me?***”

This is not just an OT sentiment...

Slide # 14

Hebrews 13:5–6 (NKJV)

5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “**I will never leave you nor forsake you.**”

6 So we may boldly say: “**The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?**”

These are OT principles applied to NT readers by the writer of Hebrews.

God has promised to never leave us.

God is our helper.

Therefore we don’t have to be afraid of any threat!

12 Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God; I will render praises to You,

In the thick of the struggle David made binding vows to God that he now will carry through on. Carrying through on a vow was really an act of worship. He saw God as acting on his behalf and therefore should be praised and worshiped for it.

And of course this is true. Sometimes we are quick to say please and then quite negligent in the worship of thanksgiving!

13 For You have delivered my soul from death. Have You not kept my feet from falling, That I may walk before God In the light of the living?

David, at this point, was so sure that God was going to deliver him that he spoke of it as already being true. In the OT, when the prophets spoke of something as being absolutely certain to come to pass – they often spoke of it as a reality before it happened. This is referred to as “the prophetic perfect.” That is what we have here!

David sees God delivering him from death and keeping him from falling. It is spoken as being certain!

The end result is that David is now allowed to “walk before God in the light of the living” meaning God has preserved his life.

Note how David phrases this: “That I may walk before God”. David realized God preserved him so that he might continue to walk with God in fellowship with Him.

God does not preserve us so we might continue on in a self-serving manner – but rather that we might walk before Him for His glory!

David knew that this was *why* God spared his life. It wasn't so that David could do his own thing or live unto himself. It was so that he could live rightly **before God**. – **David Guzik**

In this short psalm, we have climbed from the ravenous jaws of the enemy into the light of [the LORD'S] presence, a path which only faith can tread.” – **Charles Spurgeon**

In closing let me encourage you to memorize Psalm 56:3. It is a short little verse – anyone can memorize it – and I can tell you there are times in your life where you will definitely need it and lean on it. We taught it to our kids from when they were little.

Psalm 56:3 (NKJV)

3 Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.

Yes, there will be times when we are afraid. We never get beyond it until we get to glory – but here the thing – we must always come back to “I will trust in you.” That is how to handle fear!

Someone has said that “fear not” is the most repeated command in the Bible – perhaps because we are prone to fear.

The night before Jesus was crucified twice He said to His disciples, “Do not let your hearts be troubled” (Jn. 14:1, 27). And the second time He added, “and do not be afraid.”

Someone has counted that some form of “do not fear” or “fear not” is found in the Bible a total of 365 times and then made the application that one is there for every day of the year.

Whenever terrifying times come upon us, whenever we are overwhelmed, when fear is pressing upon us and we feel the natural reaction to panic - then let us quote Psalm 56:3, “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.”

This is the Bible antidote for fear!

God help us to apply it!