

The Fearful Man

Jesus in the Psalms

Psalm 56

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I. David and the Philistines (1 Sam 21:10-15)

II. The Fearful Man

A. David's Faithful Plea (1-4)

1Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up; Fighting all day he oppresses me. 2My enemies would bound me all day, For there are many who fight against me, O Most High. 3Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. 4In God (I will praise His word), In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?

B. David's Faithful Lament (5-11)

5All day they twist my words; All their thoughts are against me for evil. 6They gather together, They hide, they mark my steps, When they lie in wait for my life. 7Shall they escape by iniquity? In anger cast down the peoples, O God! 8You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in Your book? 9When I cry out to You, Then my enemies will turn back; This I know, because God is for me. 10In God (I will praise His word), In the LORD (I will praise His word), 11In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

C. David's Faithful Vow (12-13)

12Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God; I will render praises to You, 13For 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?

III. Dealing Faithfully with Fear

In Psalm 56 David teaches us how to deal faithfully with our _____. John Calvin writes, “there is nothing in [David's] words which [implies] that he was absolutely raised above the influence of fear, and every sense of the dangers by which he was encompassed. They imply no more than that he triumphed over his [fears], through that confident hope of salvation with which he was armed” (351).

A. Identify the causes of your fear

First, identify the causes of your fear and articulate them to God. The 18th century British writer Edmund Burke wrote, “No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.” This is one of Satan’s schemes. He uses hazy, nebulous fears to paralyze us. But “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim 1:7).

B. Speak the truth to your fear

1. The Truth of God’s Person

David speaks the truth of God’s Person to his fears. David reminds himself of God’s character. What is God like? He is Yahweh, the Covenant Keeping God, the God who so loved His own that He sent His only begotten Son to save us.

2. The Truth of God’s Promises

The ground of [David’s] joy is said to be the divine _____; and this implies, that however much he might seem to be forsaken and abandoned by God, he satisfied himself by reflecting on the truthfulness of [God’s] promises. He would glory in God notwithstanding, and although there should be no outward appearance of help, or it should even be sensibly withdrawn, he would rest contented with the simple security of his word. The declaration is one that deserves our notice. How prone are we to fret and to murmur when it has not pleased God immediately to grant us our requests! Our discontent may not be openly expressed, but it is inwardly felt, when we are left in this manner to depend upon his naked promises. It was no small attainment in David, that he could thus proceed to praise the Lord, in the midst of dangers, and with no other ground of support but the word of God. (Calvin)

3. The Truth of God’s Power

What is more obvious than that God is able to protect us from the hand of men, that his _____ to defend is immensely greater than their power to injure? This may be true, but we all know too well how much of that perverse unbelief there is in our hearts, which leads us to rate the ability of God below that of the creature. It was no small proof, therefore, of the faith of David, that he could despise the threatenings of his enemies. And it would be well if all the saints of God were impressed with such a sense of his superiority to their adversaries as would lead them to show a similar contempt of danger.... We shall find men universally agreed in the opinion that God is an all-sufficient protector; but observation proves how ready we are to distrust him under the slightest temptation. When exposed to the opposition of assailants formidable for strength, or policy, or any worldly advantages, let us learn with David to set God in opposition to them, and we shall speedily be able to view the mightiest of them without dismay. (Calvin)

C. Anticipate that God will deliver you from your fears (cf. Ps 34)

A Psalm of David When He Pretended Madness Before Abimelech, Who Drove Him Away, and He Departed. 1 I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; The humble shall hear of it and be glad. 3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me, And let us exalt His name together. 4 I sought the LORD, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my _____.

IV. Conclusion