

When I Am Afraid...

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[0 : 0 0] to Psalm 56. Psalm 56. Right now we're working through some of the Psalms that David wrote while he was on the run from King Saul. Last Sunday we looked at Psalm 59. David wrote Psalm 59 about the time when Saul, King Saul, had sent men to watch his house in order to kill him.

A very desperate time for David. He was feeling very unsettled and troubled with things that were going on and we saw how he responded in the midst of that situation and how he called out to the Lord for help. Well, this morning Psalm is written a little later in the story. From that moment, David escaped out the window. God delivered him from his enemies and he was on the run. He went to the first place that he could probably think of that he could trust someone. He went to Samuel, the Lord's prophet in a small town called Ramah. And while he was there, probably sought the Lord through Samuel.

But it wasn't long before King Saul figured out where David was and sent men and almost captured him except the Lord intervened again and delivered David from his hands. From there, David kind of snuck back into the city where Saul was and met with Jonathan, the king's son and David's best friend. And what he heard there only confirmed his suspicion that Saul was out to get him, that he was bent on taking his life. And so with men watching his house and only the clothes on his back, he made the decision to leave town and to go on the run. He went to a small town called Nob and ran into a priest there named Ahimelech. He asked for some provision, some food and a sword. And it wasn't long before David realized that no matter where he went, somebody was going to recognize him. Somebody would know him. And Saul was going to find out sooner or later that he was there. Not only would his life be in danger, but the lives of the people that were helping him would be in danger as well. And so David decided to go to the one place where Saul would never go after him. He went into Philistine territory. He went to the city of Gath, the territory of the enemy. He went to Achish, the king of Gath. And we don't really know exactly what David was thinking in doing that, but we can only guess that he must have felt desperate.

Not safe anywhere in Israel. Perhaps hoping to make a bit of a play onto the king's good side in Gath there as somebody who's defecting or, you know, shares the enemy of King Saul with him. Hopefully to find a place that's safe for the time being. But David's plan, unfortunately, backfires a little bit.

And they recognize him there too. Some of Achish's servants and advisors, they say, isn't this the guy that they sang and danced to the song where they were singing, Saul has slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands? We can't have this guy here. And of course, David's tens of thousands, many of those thousands were Philistines. And so it says that David ended up in their hands. Or as the superscription of our psalm this morning, Psalm 56 says, the Philistines seized him in Gath. So last Sunday, we saw as everything fell apart for David back in his own home country. But this morning, we see that things have gone from bad to worse. Now he's in enemy territory and they know who he is and what he's done and they have him in their custody. And it was about this time that David wrote this psalm, this prayer. Let me read it for you.

[4 : 3 6] Be merciful to me, my God, for my enemies are in hot pursuit. All day long they press their attack.

My adversaries pursue me all day long in their pride. Many are attacking me. When I am afraid, I put my trust in you, in God, whose word I praise. In God I trust and am not afraid.

What can mere mortals do to me? All day long they twist my words. All their schemes are for my ruin. They conspire. They lurk. They watch my steps, hoping to take my life.

Because of their wickedness, do not let them escape. In your anger, God, bring the nations down. Record my misery. List my tears on your scroll. Are they not in your record?

Then my enemies will turn back when I call for help. By this I will know that God is for me. In God, whose word I praise. In the Lord, whose word I praise. In God I trust and am not afraid.

[6 : 04] What can man do to me? I am under vows to you, my God. I will present my thank offerings to you. For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.

One of the first things that we notice is how David describes his troubles. In verse 1, he says, my enemies are in hot pursuit. They press their attack. In verse 2, my adversaries pursue me. Many are attacking me. Verse 5, they twist my words. Or as some translations say, they cause me trouble. Their schemes or their thoughts are for my ruin.

They conspire. They lurk. They watch my steps, hoping to take my life. We're kind of wondering who David is referring to here.

Is he talking about Saul and his men and some of the people back home in Israel? Or is he talking about some of the Philistines who have something personal against David and want to see him dead?

[7 : 15] Or is it a combination of both? We're not entirely sure. But one thing is certain. These are very serious threats in David's mind.

Three times David uses the phrase, all day long, to describe his troubles. He says in verse 1, all day long, they press their attack.

My adversaries pursue me all day long. Verse 2. Verse 5. All day long, they twist my words or they cause me troubles. Exactly what that refers to or looks like, we don't know.

But one thing that we can see pretty clearly here is that in David's mind, these threats are constant. They're unrelenting. Morning, afternoon, and evening.

All day long, he feels the pressure and the danger. It just won't let up. David goes on to express how he's feeling in other ways in this Psalm 2.

[8 : 23] In verse 3, he says, When I am afraid, fear, genuine fear, has been a reality for David because of his enemies who are coming after him.

In verse 8, he says, Record my misery. List my tears on your scroll. Last Sunday, David came around to the place of singing joyfully.

But things have gone from bad to worse. And we get the sense here that the tears and misery and fear are now the norm for David.

There's some translation issues in verse 8 as to precisely what he's saying there. But the sense is there either way that there's a lot of tears.

Enough to be collected or enough to be listed. There's been a lot of misery. A lot of miserable nights on the run as he's wandering.

[9 : 26] Enough for him to plead that God would record the instances of it. Keep a record of it. David expresses his emotions to God.

Fear, misery, and tears are his new norm. And it's kind of something that we can understand.

I mean, he has just lost everything. He has had everything that he has in his life that he holds dear, torn away from him. He's on the run. He's being hunted like an animal.

And now he's got his enemies, the Philistines, to worry about. And so the question is, what does David do in the midst of all these troubles and with these troubles, with his emotions, his feelings? Well, the first thing that we see David do, I guess we'll just note the obvious. He prays to God. He calls out to the Lord.

[10 : 44] He tells God his troubles. And he asks for God's help. In verse 1, he says, be merciful to me.

The word merciful, probably better translated, be compassionate or be gracious to me. And then he describes what his troubles are.

As I was thinking about that this week, the thing that really struck me is just how unspecific that is. Be gracious to me. God, why so unspecific?

Could it be that David doesn't know what he needs God to do for him in this situation? Or could it be that David's list of things that he thinks he might need God to do for him is so long that he doesn't even know where to start?

So we praise, be gracious to me, my God. It's good to ask God to do specific things for us.

[11 : 44] But sometimes it's enough simply to ask God to deal with us according to his grace, to help us. The next thing we notice, David asking for, comes in verse 8.

He says, record my misery. List my tears on your scroll. Again, what might surprise us is he's not asking God to do something specific about his troubles here.

Like in Psalm 59 last week. Deliver me from this. Get me out of this. Deal with my enemies. Here, he asks God to record his misery.

To list his tears on his scroll. What's he asking God to do? Take note. Take careful note and see what's going on in my heart.

Know deeply and personally and intimately what's going on as I run for my life and all these things are unraveling what I'm feeling in here.

[12:59] Know it, Lord. Because if you know it, then I can be confident that you will act and do something about it.

That's kind of the progression in verse 9. Then my enemies will turn back when I call for help. The third thing that we see David do in the midst of all this.

He prays to God. He tells God his troubles. He asks very generally for God's help and for him to know what's going on in his heart. The third thing that he does is he puts his trust in God.

He expresses his faith in verse 3. He says, when I am afraid. I put my trust in you. In God whose word I praise.

In God I trust. And I'm not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? Part of this statement here, when I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

[14:11] In God whose word I praise. It kind of becomes a bit of the refrain or the chorus of this song. You see it again in verses 10 and 11. He says, in God whose word I praise. In the Lord whose word I praise.

In God I trust and am not afraid. What can man do to me? Part of what he's doing is simply remembering who his God is. In the midst of all of this.

It starts in verse 1. Be merciful to me, my God. In verse 10. In the Lord. Yahweh.

Whose word I praise. The Lord. You are the God who has spoken. And I praise you for the things that you have spoken.

As I reflect on the words that you have said. Because your words are true. Your words are dependable. Your words give light to my feet. In this difficult situation.

[15:09] They're encouraging all of these things we get from other psalms. David's reminding himself of who the Lord is. Verse 7. You're the God who can do something about my enemies.

You're the God who gets angry when people try to hurt or come after and harm your children. You are the God who is so big and so powerful that you can bring entire nations down.

While I sit here in the midst of a hostile enemy nation. Verse 13. You are the God who has delivered me from death. Many times in the past.

He reminds and remembers of who God is in the midst of his situation. And as he does.

We start to see a bit of a shift. You see the shift in verse 3. When I am afraid. I put my trust in you.

[16:16] I put my trust in God. In God. Whose word I praise. In God I trust and am not afraid. You see that shift? Afraid.

Genuine fear. Real fear. My enemies are lurking around. Right in front of my face. I am afraid. And he goes to saying. I'm not afraid.

In fact that shift happens all throughout this psalm. And in many of David's other psalms. We see it again. The end of verse 4. You can imagine.

He's been thinking. Man if they get their hands on me. What are they going to do to me? But then there's that shift. To now. He's saying. What can mere mortals.

Do to me? In verse 8. He's asking God to record his misery. To list his tears. To keep a record. And then there's that shift again. At the end of verse 8.

[17:15] That statement of confidence. Are they not in your record? Implied answer. Yes. I know they are. This I know.

God is for me. There's that shift. That we see. In verse 1. My enemies are in hot pursuit. And then verse 9.

My enemies will turn back. When I call for help. The interesting thing about this.

Is that nothing in David's circumstances. Has changed. But his attitude. His perspective. His feelings. Have changed. He goes from afraid.

To not afraid. He goes from worrying. What they're going to do to him. To not worrying. What they're going to do to him. How does that change take place? What's the key thing.

[18:14] David. That we can do in our lives. In our situations. In our troubles. That can help us make that shift. From afraid. To not afraid. From worrying about our troubles.

To not worrying about them. David gives us his own. Tried. Tested. And true. Key. To seeing that shift happen.

In verse 3. He says. When I am afraid. I put my trust. In you. In God. Whose word. I praise.

In God. I trust. And I'm not afraid. It's a pretty simple key. Isn't it? I put my trust. In you.

Lord. But it's not the easiest thing to do. And it kind of begs the question. Well what does it really mean. To put our trust. In someone.

[19:10] To put our trust. In something. How do we do that? As I was thinking about that this week. I realized. This is not something. That's easy to describe.

Or to define. And I got thinking about chairs. I have this. Chair. Now if you saw this chair.

Sitting around a campfire. With a bunch of other chairs. And you needed a place to sit down.

Probably. Automatically. And subconsciously. You wouldn't even think about it. You just trust.

Well this is a good chair. I'll just come and have a seat. When everything appears normal. It looks fine. Trust is automatic.

It's subconscious. But that feeling of trust. That you have towards this chair. Could change very quickly. When I tell you a little bit. About it. I got this chair.

[20:07] Over ten years ago. For five bucks. From Walmart. And if you start to look at it. A little more closely. You'll start to see. That there's some tearing. It's kind of.

Aged by the sun. If you flip it upside down. You start to see. That the bottom. Is peeling all off of it. There's other tears on it. You look at the. The nails.

They're all rusty. One of those days. One of these days. One of them. Could just snap. Suddenly now. Do you feel like. You want to just. Flop down.

Into this thing. Or is there some hesitation there. Trust. A lot of times. Has to do with. How things appear. Versus.

The reality. Of what's really going on. Underneath. Or behind the scenes. Now if this was. David's chair. And David came. And said. Actually.

[21:02] It kind of looks. A little rickety. And shabby. But it's the sturdiest chair. You've ever seen. I sit on it. Every day. It'll hold you up. For sure. Now suddenly. I'm faced with.

A bit of a. A decision. Trust is not. Automatic. I have to make. The choice. Will I entrust. Myself. To this. Will I entrust. Myself. To David's words.

Do I trust. What he has said. About the chair. Maybe I. I have a great. Relationship. With David. And I know. I trust his judgment. And so I'll say.

Sure. Everything that I see. About it. I'm just going to. Throw that out the window. And I'm going to go. And sit down. With confidence. Because I know. It's going to hold me up. When things.

Don't. Look. Good. When they don't. Appear normal. Trust. Involves. A deliberate. Choice. And.

[21:58] Our experience. Factors. Into it too. I'm. Very slow. To entrust. Myself. To this chair. Chair. Even though. It's my own chair. And I know.

All about it. For the simple reason. Of that. I have. Fallen. Right through. To the ground. Three of these chairs. In the past. And so.

Every single time. I sit down. On this chair. I do it. Very gently. And I know. That one of these days. It's going to do. The same thing to me. As all those other chairs did. Our experience.

Affects. How we. Trust. Or whether we. Withhold trust. How much we trust. So let's bring this back. To David. A little bit here.

Trust is not automatic. For David. In this situation. Nothing appears normal. Everything appears bad. He's surrounded by. Real threats. His enemies are real.

[22:55] The dangers. Right in front of his face. And contrary. To how he might feel. About all of this. That he sees. That's very real to him. He has to make.

A deliberate choice. To set those feelings aside. And to embrace. The unseen reality. That he is in the care. Of the almighty.

Invisible God. He may be sitting. In a Philistine prison. But he couldn't be safer. Because of who his God is.

And this is not easy. Think of David's experience. And some of the things. That he's been through. He has to deliberately. Let go of his anxieties. Of his fears. Of his thoughts. Of what they might do to him. And he has to embrace.

[23 : 53] The truth. Of who his God is. And that the Lord is his shepherd. And is watching over his life. Now this is not. An easy.

Decision to make. It's not just an emotionally detached. Simple moment. Well. I'm afraid. I just. Put my trust in God. No. I'm not afraid. Oftentimes. It's a process.

And as much as we would like it to be. It's not a. A twelve step process. Or a three step process. Where we just do this. This and this. And automatically.

Our feelings. Change. Our perspective changes. Joy is come. Misery. Is gone. If it was like that. Every one of the Psalms.

Would have the same progression. Bing. Bang. Boom. And you feel better. Wouldn't that be nice? And yet in some of the Psalms. You see by the end of the Psalm.

[24 : 49] The person who wrote it. Doesn't even get to that place. Psalm 88. Ends with the phrase. The darkness is my closest friend. It's not an easy.

Decision. It's oftentimes a process. And the reason why. Is because feelings. Are not easily changed. They're not easy to manage.

They're always responding. To something. The question is. Are they responding. To how things appear. On the surface. Or are they responding.

To the unseen realities. Underneath. I said a moment ago. That our experience. Factors into. Whether we trust or not. And how easily. Well the same is true. With God. Some of us. Have probably had moments. In the past. That we could point to. Where we felt.

[25 : 45] Like God let us. Hit the ground. And fall down. And we wonder why. Why did you let me. Fall like that. And so we're maybe having.

Some trust issues. With God. We've. There's areas in our lives. Where anxiety. Where fear. Reeks havoc. Reeks havoc. In our hearts. But as we look back.

On those moments. Where it seems that God. Let us fall to the ground. Are we looking at the. Outward appearance. Of how things were. Or.

Are there unseen realities. Of how God was working. For our good. Even in those situations. That we simply. Missed. Or don't understand.

You see up until now. David's life. It's been fantastic. He's been anointed. To be. The future king of Israel. He's. He's. He's been a giant slayer.

[26 : 41] He's become. The king's favorite musician. He has become. A military hero. Totally successful. In battle. He's risen to be.

A high ranking. Military official. He's become. The king's son-in-law. And we know. From the story. That he's going to go. Right to the top.

And become the next. King of Israel. But then everything. Falls apart. And goes off the rails. And David's on the run. For his life. Is God.

Any less good. Or trustworthy. In the midst of that. Can David. Say to God. You let me fall. To the ground. To the ground. Or are there unseen.

Realities. We know. Because God's word. Tells us. That God is good. That he causes. All things.

[27 : 39] To work. Together. For the good. Of those who love him. And are called. According to his purposes. And so. For some of us. Or at some times.

For each of us. Putting our trust in God. May mean. Choosing. To let go. Of some of the criticism. That we have. Of how he has handled things.

In our lives. How he has let our lives go. It may mean. That. We need to. To put aside. Some of the things. That we think.

Man. God didn't do it right. Here. In this situation. In my life. And instead. We embrace. The unfelt reality.

That God's word gives us. That he is good. That he is working. For our good. At the bottom. Of this whole matter of trust.

[28 : 34] Sometimes. Is the simple question. Who knows better. What you need. For your life. You. Or God.

God. Sometimes. Putting trust in God. Involves. Finally. Admitting. That we don't know better. What we need.

In our life. Than God does. I see the. A picture of that moment. Many times. In my own home. With my kids. They have their.

Limited perspective. And understanding. Of. The world. And often times. They think. This is what we need to do. This would be a great idea. And as parents. Of course. We know. That's not a good idea. We're not going to walk. To the goatees. That's a. That's a really far walk. You guys will be. Way too tired. To have any fun there. Before we get there. [29 : 30] We're. And so. Bringing some of these things together. Putting our trust in God. Is not always easy. It's often a process.

It's often. Something that. That happens. In a way. That we don't really understand. It's complex. Relationships. Are complex. The way God. Works things. On this earth. Oftentimes. Has complexity. Doesn't. We. We. Putting our trust in God. Is not something. That just happens overnight. Many times. It's a process. We wish. That we could just do. X Y and Z. And get there. Afraid. To not afraid. But it's often. Not that simple.

But the good news. Is. Even if the journey. To get from afraid. To not afraid. And put our trust in God. Is not simple. How we do it. How we go about.

[30 : 25] Putting our trust in God. Really. Is. And that's something. We see from David here. So what do we need to do. To put our trust in God. To see that shift.

Take place. In our own emotions. When we look at our troubles. The answer is fairly straightforward. We do. Persistently. What David does.

Right here in the psalm. We pray. To God. We tell him our troubles. We call out to him. We ask for his help.

For him to intervene. And there's no magic formula. That. This is the right way to do it. David does it differently. In this psalm. Than he does in this psalm. And as we do those things.

We remember. Who our God is. And what he has said. And as we do that. The Lord does the rest for us. He's really the one.

[31 : 23] That brings that shift. From afraid. To not afraid. From worrying. To not worrying at all. The verse that comes to mind.

From Philippians. Do not be anxious about anything. But in everything. By prayer. And petition. With thanksgiving. Present your request to God.

And the peace of God. Which surpasses all understanding. Will guard your hearts. And your minds. In Christ Jesus. How does it work? Well it surpasses our understanding.

We might even be skeptical. Does that really work? But God is able to bring that shift. From afraid and worried. To not afraid.

And not worried. By his spirit. By his word. Through Christ. We have a similar relationship. To the Lord. In fact a better one.

[32 : 19] Than we see David had. Even at this moment. He is our father. He hears our prayers. And he will absolutely respond.

And come to help us. In our time of need. And so I want to. End this morning.

The same way I did. Last Sunday. With a simple question. What kind of troubles. Are going on in your life right now? What kind of things are you facing.

Right now? What kind of. Health troubles. Are you dealing with? What kind of relationship.

Troubles. Family troubles.

Troubles at work. Financial troubles. What kind of. Things are you afraid of? What kind of things are you worried about?

[33 : 19] What kind of other negative emotions. Have you got. Right now. Right now. This word.

Has been given to us. So that we can take it. And follow its example. With those specific things. In our lives. And do what David did.

Pray to God. Tell him our troubles. And let me just say here. That token prayers won't do. If there's anything we see from David.

It's that he. Gets. Honest. And personal with God. He takes time. To talk to him. Many of the prayers that we. I'm guilty of this myself. Often pray.

Will be like. One verse. We need to take time. To really. Express our hearts to God. To meet with him. As we pray. And I know I find that difficult.

[34 : 18] To. There's so much going on in life. We get distracted. Our focus is. All over the place. And so one of the things. That I find helpful. Is just to sit down. Tech free. Screen free.

With my Bible. And with a piece of paper. And a pen. And write out my prayer. It helps keep my mind locked in. It helps me to think clearly. And to really. Really come to that place. Like David did. When he wrote these words. Down. As he prayed to God. So with our own troubles. We need to pray to God. We need to tell him about our troubles. We need to ask for his help. And as we do. We need to remind ourselves. Of who our God is. And what he has said. And God will take care of the rest. He will bring us to the place. Where in verse nine. We can say with David. This I know. God is for me. In God whose word I praise.

[35 : 18] In the Lord whose word I praise. In God I trust. And am not. Fill in the blank. What claim do my troubles have on me?

Let's pray. Father take these words. Deep into our heart. Cause them to. To produce fruit. And grow. In the soil of our hearts. Teach us your ways. Teach us to walk by faith. And not by sight. So that we would. Honor you. And so that we would. Show this world. What it means. To have an amazing God. Like you. A savior. Like you. Jesus. We ask this. In Christ's name. Amen. Amen.