

When I Am Afraid

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One of the many reasons that we love the Bible is that it is a book that understands us. There was a theologian one time who when it came to Christ, said that in the Bible he found a book that understands me and that's very true, and as we go through the Psalms together, we find that to be true. We find a book, we find texts that meet us where we're at that understand the hardship of life and give us meaningful help to be able to respond to it and to live through it, and we love God's word for that. We realize that there is no comfort in worldly entertainment, we realize that there is no meaningful help for us in any worldly philosophy, it's only in the Bible that we find that which addresses the deepest needs and the deepest longings of our soul. And it's so important for us to have that, isn't it, because as Job said man is born for trouble as the sparks fly upward, just as naturally as a campfire throws sparks up into the air, so naturally does trouble come to us and the Bible addresses us in that realistic way. Not painting a false picture of ease and comfort throughout life but recognizing that trials come, that trials are difficult, and that trials can even be prolonged in nature. Well, where would we be without a word from Scripture, without a word from God that we can lean on? As we sung earlier, that we can come under his wings, under the protection of God and find a refuge for our soul? Well, Scripture understands that and in Psalm 56 which I read earlier, we're going to find David taking refuge under the shadow of God's wings, so to speak, in the things that he has said for us here.

In Psalm 56, we find David once again under attack. We find him dealing with relentless assault from his enemies. And if you look at the inscription, it says that David wrote this, "when the Philistines seized him in Gath." Now, most commentators believe that this is a reference to a time when David pretended that he was insane when he was in the hands of the Philistines.

If you look over at 1 Samuel 21, to the left in your Bibles, 1 Samuel 21, we can just read the background of this allusion. 1 Samuel 21, beginning in verse 10. David was fleeing from Saul who wanted to kill him due to the hatred that was in Saul's heart and it says in 1 Samuel 21:10, and David is alone at this time, he had not yet gathered men around him that, "David arose and fled that day from Saul, and went to Achish king of Gath. But the servants of Achish said to him, 'Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of this one as they danced, saying, 'Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands'?" They are trying to turn the king against David so that he will deal with

David harshly. And in verse 12, "David took these words to heart and greatly feared Achish king of Gath. So he disguised his sanity before them, and acted insanelly in their hands," notice that he was in their hands, that they had possession, custody of him, "he acted insanelly in their hands and scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down into his beard. Then Achish said to his servants, 'Behold, you see the man behaving as a madman. Why do you bring him to me? Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this one to act the madman in my presence? Shall this one come into my house?'" So in chapter 22, verse 1, "David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard of it, they went down there to him." You see that he was alone and then only after this incident did the men come to rally around him.

David was in a defenseless position in this episode in his life and so he pretended to be insane in order to find a cunning way to escape. It was simply a way of getting out of his situation there and as the text in Samuel tells us what he did, here in Psalm 56 we see what was in his heart, and what we find that was in his heart was that David was making a conscious decision to trust God in the midst of the ongoing attacks that were making him afraid. This was a period of time where David was under duress, he was under stress. You can relate to that, can't you? And yet we find in Psalm 56 how David responds to that trial.

I want to point out something to you that is easy to miss. I tried to emphasize it with voice inflection as I read the text earlier but there is this sense of a relentless weariness with which David is writing under the provocation in Psalm 56. Look at verse 1 where he says, "all day long he oppresses me." And in verse 2, he uses that phrase again, "My foes have trampled upon me all day long." And in verse 5, "All day long they distort my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil." He feels that sense of relentless pressure. The stress of this has no relief for him and there is a groan that is expressed in those words, "Lord, this is all day long and there is no break, there is no respite, there is no rest in the midst of this. Lord, they are pressing on me all day long." So it's with that spirit, he's under a threat, it is a relentless threat and it's in that spirit that he cries out to the Lord.

Now, I want to just make a really important but preliminary observation here and it's just such a false view of biblical spiritual life, it's a false view of sanctification where people who are not very well taught will put pressure on us that we should be happy all the day and that there should be nothing but sunshine in our life and we never deal with fear or sorrow or discouragement. That's not the picture of spiritual life you find in the Psalms at all, rather what you find in the Psalms is a recognition that that happens and then the steps that lead you forward from there. So rather than creating a false sense of reality, the Psalms meet us in the reality and then say, "Here is how you grow from that and in that," and we love God's word for its realism. You don't have to live very long to know the pressures of life can sometimes be relentless and that they can come from a lot of different directions. It's the same for me as it is for you. There is no greater pressure being in ministry, there is no lesser pressure being in ministry. You know, we're all in the same boat. We're all going through this together. We're all dealing with the choppy

waters together. And so it's with a sense of sympathy and love for you and hopefully a sense of understanding that I share God's word with you tonight.

And what we find as we look in this, is in the opening section of the first seven verses, we find David's prayer for deliverance. We find David opening with a prayer for deliverance and notice the simplicity of his appeal in verse 1 when he says,

1 Be gracious to me, O God,

Be gracious to me. A simple prayer that says, "Lord, if you would be gracious to me, all would be well. I don't need to define for you exactly how deliverance should come, Lord, I simply appeal and ask you to exercise undeserved favor, to show kindness and mercy to me because of the situation that I am in." And that's always a wonderful way for you to open up prayer when you are in those times, is to not try to be too clever, not try to immediately ask God for how you want the circumstances to work out. Go to God with a sense of humility, a sense even of desperation as the situation calls for it, and just basically, simply, appeal to one of the most fundamental aspects of his character. "God, I appeal to your grace to take notice of me in this time. And stepping out of the earthly provocation and through an opening prayer like that, an opening salvo, to enter into the realm where God's grace is operative, saying, "God, I know what you're like. I know that you're gracious. I know that you are kind to your people and as one of your children, I come and I avail myself of who you are. Be gracious to me, O God."

Then it goes on in the remainder of the verse and he states his need for grace, "Be gracious to me, O God," why?

for man has trampled upon me; Fighting all day long he oppresses me. 2
My foes have trampled upon me all day long, For they are many who fight
proudly against me.

"God, I am under assault here and it seems like every time one person rains his blows down on me, there is another one to add insult to the injury. And there is no break. There is no relief from this. I am on the receiving end of attacks from people who are acting wickedly against me, who desire my harm and, Lord, I have no one to turn to for relief or for help or for protection." Have you been in situations like that? Are you in a situation like that right now? Man, I've been there. I've been there in my life. I remember times gone by where just the sense of being utterly alone and utterly defenseless against the people who were rising up against me. You've been there, haven't you? And the sense of isolation, the sense of fear that that can produce, the weariness of it, of not having any earthly champion, let's say, any earthly help to come alongside you and you are utterly alone in the midst of it. You know what that's like.

Well, what we find here is that as we look at Psalm 56 is, is that this is an opportunity for you to grow spiritually and to learn in the midst of having no earthly recourse, no earthly resources, in the hands of people who have the authority and the ability to make life difficult for you, to harm you, to take away benefits, to do whatever it is that they can do,

that when you are in that situation, to understand that you are not to collapse under fear, not to bow down and not to tremble so much before men but to realize, "This is the place where I appeal especially to the grace of God." And in your weakness, you humble yourself and acknowledge the weakness of it. You are mindful of a passage like in 2 Corinthians 12 where it says, where Paul said three times, "I asked the Lord to remove the thorn from me and the Lord said, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.'"

Beloved, how are you going to know that God's grace is sufficient for you until every other earthly recourse has been withdrawn from you? How are you going to know the sufficiency of grace until you have been led to recognize the insufficiency of your own resources? And we just have to view these things differently and say, "Ah, okay, here I am in my weakness. I fall down before you, O God, I appeal to your grace because I have nowhere else to turn." I have quoted this before, I don't mind quoting it again, I don't mind repeating myself: you will not know that Jesus Christ is all you need until Jesus Christ is all you've got. You won't know that in your own personal experience until you are brought to that place of desperation. So, God who has determined to glorify his name in our lives, God who has determined to own the highest and exclusive affections of our heart, must bring us to such times where he reduces us and he humbles us so that we learn to cry out to him in grace rather than from a sense of pride and self-sufficiency. So don't resist the times when God brings you low, rather see them as the opportunity for you to cry out for grace as David does here in Psalm 56. He cries out for deliverance.

Now, with that said, be heartened. Be heartened by the example that David lays out for you here, that there was a man after God's own heart, as the New Testament calls David, a man after God's own heart; the sweet psalmist of Israel; God's chosen king for his chosen people; a type of the Lord Jesus Christ who was to come; in earthly terms a high and exalted man; a warrior on the battlefield; a musician of great skill; a man of a tender heart with weaknesses like you and me can pen these words and realize that we have someone that we can sympathize with in David who suffered all day long, recognizing that David's suffering and David's sympathy is only a shadow of the greater sympathy and the greater suffering that our Lord Jesus Christ would have. So throughout Scripture as it points us to Christ, it draws us near to a God who knows, a God who understands and a God who cares. And we must know him like that. We must love him like that. We must trust him like that.

David leads the way for it and what we find here is David exercises faith in the midst of his fear. Look at verses 3 through 4 with me, and we need to spend a little bit of time here because there is a very important aspect of spiritual life at stake in these verses. David says,

3 When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. 4 In God, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me?

Now, there is a tension that is evident in these two verses. On the one hand David says, "When I am afraid," and then he says, "but I will not be afraid." And in the middle of that as it is wrapped around that, you find David appealing to the word of God and saying, "I praise the word of God." His trials, his isolation, the conflict, the fear, casts him, as it were, a wave upon the rock, the wave of his trials casts him back upon the word of God and he comes back to the word of God and says, "Oh, I remember the word of God, the revealed word of God, where God has made himself known. I remember the riches of the resources of his word and it takes me back there. It takes me back to the word and when I go back to the word, I come back to the God who revealed himself in it." And as the fear casts him back on the word, it casts him back on God and begins to transform his perspective on his situation.

Notice this, beloved: sometimes young men when they are teaching will be too strong in things that they say and set a level of expectation that is contrary to reality and give us a sense that fear or weakness is a sign of spiritual immaturity. David doesn't really give us that sense, does he? David acknowledges the emotion of fear. David states it plainly. But here's the key: he does not let it control him. He doesn't let fear, he doesn't let his fear have the final word in his life. In an example to us, he moves beyond it. He says, "Okay, here I am in this realm of fear. I know what to do here. I go back to God's word. I go back to God in the midst of this." So he goes back to the word of God for strength and that word reveals God's character and who he is to his people. All of a sudden he's got a completely different perspective to draw upon here.

But notice this, beloved: while he's honest about the fear, he does not collapse under it. He does not give into it. He does not let panic overwhelm him. Martyn Lloyd Jones talks about faith in this way, he used this example. He no longer uses it unless he describes it in heaven because he died in 1981, is my point. But he described faith to like having a snake under your foot, you just keep the pressure on the neck of the snake so that the snake is not able to get out and bite you, and faith is applying pressure to a fear or to a threat that would otherwise turn around and strike you. And what David does here is he exercises faith. He makes a deliberate choice to trust the Lord in the midst of his fear.

Listen to what Charles Spurgeon said about this passage. This is very helpful, very insightful and leads us into a, I believe, a more mature perspective on how a Christian deals with fear because I understand, you know, the temptation is especially when you're kind of wrapped up in things, you have the fear that you're dealing with and then you immediately start to feel a sense of condemnation, "Oh, I shouldn't feel this way," and then that just becomes a swirling vortex that only goes down and you are just sucked into that vortex of the circumstances that cause you to fear and then a sense that, "I shouldn't even feel this way. I should be strong." Well, Charles Spurgeon has very helpful words for us on this. He said and I quote, "The condition of the Psalmist's mind was complex. He feared but that fear did not fill the whole area of his mind. It is possible for fear and faith to occupy the mind at the same moment. We are strange beings and our experience in the divine life is stranger still. We are often in a twilight where light and darkness are both present and it is hard to tell which predominates. It is a blessed fear which drives us to trust."

What you see in David, what you see Spurgeon describing, is the fact that the presence of fear does not mean that faith is not present and the presence of faith does not mean that we are not assaulted at times by fear. Simply knowing that can bring a lot of clarity and stability to your mind and rather than overreacting to the circumstances or overreacting to the fear, you say, "This is part of spiritual life and I need to fight my way through it. I need to grow my way through it." And the way that you grow through that, the way that you grow through those times of difficulty, is that you step back from the circumstances, you don't let the fear control you, and as it were, you speak to yourself, you remind yourself of what it is that you believe and who your God is. You must do this. This is the way forward in spiritual life when those things begin to assault you. You consciously, David made a conscious determination, a conscious effort; he applied himself to bring to mind the word of God, to bring to mind the character of God in the midst of the fear and as he did that, he acquired a new perspective that put fear in its place.

That is absolutely essential. This is critical to the Christian life and when you do that, even when you are alone in the midst of your trials and weakness, even when there is no earthly help available to protect you, you can come to this point, beloved, you can come to this point of confidence. You can come to this kind of declaration of faith that David makes at the end of verse 4. He has said, "In God I have put my trust. I know this infinite, invisible, immutable God. I know this independent God who is powerful over his creation; who is faithful to his people; who is loving; who is true; who is kind; who is gracious and merciful to me in all of my sins and weaknesses. I know who that God is and that God is my Shepherd; that God is my heavenly Father; that God has made himself known; that God belongs to me by covenant promise."

And when that has started to fill your mind, then you can look back at the situation and ask the question that David asks at the end of verse 4, "What can mere man do to me?" It's a rhetorical question. "If God" – watch this – "if God is who he is," and he is, "and if he is my God," and he is, "then what can man do to me?" It's a rhetorical question and the answer is: nothing. "Men cannot do anything of consequence to me because they are weak and my God is strong and my God covers me. My God protects me. My God filters everything that happens to me through his wise, omnipotent, loving hand. And therefore if that's true," and it is, "then what's the ultimate consequence that could ever come to me at the hands of men who oppose me? They are weak. Their breath is in their nostrils. They will perish. And therefore fear does not have to dominate me."

Now, from that perspective and you can kind of see waves coming in and out in David's soul as he writes these things, he has that perspective and yet he is realistic about what he's facing. Look at verses 5 and 6. He says,

5 All day long they distort my words; All their thoughts are against me for evil. 6 They attack, they lurk, They watch my steps, As they have waited to take my life.

Notice how personal it is. Notice the personal anguish that David feels as he describes these things. He says in verse 5, look at it with me again, it is "my words that they distort. Their thoughts are against me." Verse 6, "They watch my steps, they have waited to take my life." So this is a threat that he feels most personally, most intimately, and he says, "Everything that I do and everything that I say is subject to distortion and it is subject to attack. There is no sympathy to be found in man here and they are not restrained by any sense of decency or righteousness. They will distort what I say without any compunction to constrain them."

So he makes his prayer in verse 7. He says,

7 Because of wickedness, cast them forth, In anger put down the peoples,
O God!

What David is describing here is this, he's saying, "God, I'm experiencing more than just personal opposition here. This is wicked what they are doing. It is wicked when people distort our words. It is wicked when they say false things about us. It is wicked when they undermine us without reason. It is wicked when they undermine the work of God with the things that they say and do." And God does not take that lightly. God is not indifferent to the attacks on his people. God is not indifferent to sin. He is holy. He hates sin. Psalm 7 says he is angry with sinners every day.

So David, knowing that to be true about God, appeals to his justice and asks him to intervene. He appeals to the Lord's holiness as the basis upon which God should intervene to help him. It's far more than just a simple matter of a personal realm simply on a human level, one man opposed to another. What David is describing here is men animated by sin and wickedness attacking a chosen servant of God and it is wicked. It is not a neutral matter. David feels the weight of that and he says, "God, according to your holiness, this should not stand. God, based on your faithfulness to me and your hatred of wickedness, you are thoroughly entitled and it is time for you to act."

And beloved, you know, look, some people shy away from these kinds of prayers in the Psalms and I think that's a very serious mistake because if God is opposed to evil, and he is, and if evil is manifested and worked out through the sinful actions of human beings, well, what happens? When God steps up against evil, human beings are going to fall. That's just a natural consequence of the way things are in the righteous realm of God. So when David says, "Because of wickedness, because of their sin, Lord, act and cast them down," he's making a perfectly righteous prayer as he does.

Again, Spurgeon says this, he says, "The good man is no fool. He sees that he has enemies and that they are many and crafty. He sees also his own danger and then he shows his wisdom by spreading the whole case before the Lord and putting himself under divine protection." David is simply saying, "Lord, here I am in this place of danger. I am putting myself under your protection. I am drawing upon what you are, a covenant keeping, faithful God to your people. I avail myself of that. God, I flee to you for protection. In dependence, I seek you." Let me restate that because that could come out

wrong. In dependence, not independence, "In dependence, O God, I seek you." You see, the reality of trust and the reality of faith is this: it doesn't make us self-sufficient. One of the aspects of true faith is that it makes us conscious of our need and we go dependently to the Lord. Faith does not turn us into self-confident braggarts, it makes us those that are humbled enough to willingly go before the Lord and say, "Lord, I need your help here. I'm at the end of my rope. I have no other resource. I humbly appeal to you. Lord, I am weak and I am heavy laden. I come to you for rest."

So the spirit of this Psalm is a direct contradiction of the self-sufficient spirit of our age. And the godly man is not recognized by his boastful demeanor, he is recognized by his humble dependence on his God. And the condition that produces that in man may make us the object of worldly and earthly ridicule but it's something that is precious in the sight of God. So the holiness of God, the righteousness of God when we are under attack, is our refuge in times of fear when we are being wronged, and it is a proper appeal to God to appeal to his holiness to help us in the midst of the unrighteous assaults that we sometimes find ourselves under. It's just part of walking with God.

Notice David not taking his own revenge but appealing to God for help. And beloved, here's what happens. You know, so much of it is just a question of perspective, isn't it? It's just a question of the glasses through which we are viewing the circumstances. This appeal to God is that which changes our focus from the provocations of men against us to the protection of God for us.

So that's David's prayer for deliverance there in the first seven verses. Let's look at the second section of the Psalm here: David's praise for deliverance. David's praise for deliverance. And now he leaves the problems behind and rests in a special way, rests in an exclusive way in his God. Now having laid forth his request for deliverance before God, now he is consumed with the glory of who his God is and the sense of confidence begins to permeate his being. Again, beloved, you cannot know God well enough, you can never know him well enough, but knowing him is the foundation of your trust. If you have never seriously studied the attributes of God, if you've never seriously considered the character of God, your spiritual life is going to be weak; it's going to be unstable; you're going to be tossed to and fro by circumstance. David here in the second section shows a deep knowledge of God and he uses wonderfully picturesque images to express his trust.

Look at verse 8. In speaking to God, he says,

8 You have taken account of my wanderings; Put my tears in Your bottle.
Are they not in Your book?

He's appealing to the omniscience of God here as he speaks and he says, "God, your knowledge, your omniscience means something and it means this: it means that you are mindful of the sorrows that I'm going through. You are mindful. You know. You see the heartache. You know the circumstances. You know the inner workings of my heart. You know the reasons that make me cry. You know the things that reduce me to weeping and

you're not indifferent to it, O God, you tenderly care for me. You care about what I'm going through as a function of your love and as a function of your omniscience. You know all about me and in love you so carefully mark my steps, you so carefully mark my course in life, that when I am in sorrow, you mark it so carefully that, speaking metaphorically, you take my tears and you place the liquid in a bottle for future reference." God knows, beloved, your circumstances. God knows your pain. God knows the hardship and the discouragement and what this Psalm teaches you to take to heart is this: is that your sorrows matter to him. He's not an indifferent umpire, an indifferent referee getting ready to throw a flag on your lack of faith. God cares. This matters to him. He sees it. He cares about it and this is repeated and emphasized in the New Testament as well. Many of you have probably memorized the passage from 1 Peter 5 that says this, "humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him," why? "Because He cares for you."

You see, this should just warm your heart. This should encourage your heart. It should draw you to God in prayer. It should draw you to God in trust. To recognize that he is like that. That this is how God is toward his people. He is good. He is loving and he is caring. He is not indifferent. He is not the God of deists who say that God created the world, set it into motion and then stepped away because he didn't care what happens. That's not the biblical God at all. The God that we serve, the God that you know in Christ, is a God who knows your circumstances, who is working them out for good, and who cares for you in the midst of them. And you can rest in a God like that. Even in the midst of desperation, even in the midst of not knowing what's going to come next, even in the midst of knowing that there is someone else just waiting to count your steps, to mark your steps and looking for an opportunity to trip you as you walk, as David describes here. Even in that, all the more you can go to this God and be confident of his care, of his mercy, of his grace. And in that, beloved, find rest for your weary soul. Find that which can dry your tears. Find that which can restore joy where sorrow and fear have predominated. What a wonderful God. What a gracious God. How wonderful is this?

Then, you know, we're looking at this from David's perspective but we've got the benefit, don't we, of a subsequent 3,000 years. We have the benefit of subsequent revelation. We have the benefit of looking at this through the prism of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and we see that he not only cared for us in our fears, he cared for us in our sins. He cared for us in our darkness, in our rebellion, and he willingly and gladly went to the cross. Why? Why? How can you explain Christ with a God of deism? How could you explain Christ with a God who is indifferent to us? How could you explain Christ as a God who doesn't care? No. No. Mingled in the blood, sweat and the dirt and the scars of the beatings, mingled in the midst of the spittle on his face, we find shining through the loving care of our God for us, that Christ would take that perfect righteous, precious life of infinite value and offer it up as a sacrifice for sin on our behalf. And what David knew from a distance, we know in intimacy in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ and we say, "There is a God who cares for me. There is a God who loves me. There is a God who lay down his life for me and greater love has no man than this, that he would lay down his life for one of his friends." And Jesus said, "You are my friends if you do what I command you." In Christ we have a friend. In Christ we have a Savior. In Christ we have

a God. In Christ we have a brother in heaven who represents us before God and names us as his own, names you as his own. Well, you know, if things are settled in heaven and if things are righteous and reconciled in heaven before God, then you come back to the question David asked, "What can man do to me? What can you do to me? Give me your best shot. My God will never leave me. My God is for me. My God is with me. I will not be afraid."

Beloved, those are the things that give you grounds to pray and to trust him. And watch this, beloved: it gives you the right sense of expectation to know what the outcome of your troubles are going to be. It gives you a right sense of expectation to know what is going to be the outcome of those who oppose you.

David expresses that in verse 9. He says, "because God is who he is, because God cares for me, because God numbers my tears and keeps track of them and it matters to him, here's what's going to happen," in verse 9,

9 Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call; This I know, that God is for me.

David says, "Look, when I'm thinking about this right, when my focus is on my God, I know what the outcome of this is. Yeah, I get swept up and I get brought under the current by the earthly circumstances and the earthly opposition, but when I get my head above water and take a breath of spiritual air, I know what the outcome is. My enemies cannot succeed against me because God is for me and they cannot overthrow the purpose of God." God has purposed good for you if you're a Christian. God has purposed a wondrous outcome to your life. God intends to bless you because that's who God is to his people. Well, if God is like that, then that means that God is for you and if God is a God of might, a God of omnipotent power and a God of unending faithfulness to his people, how can it come out any other way, that ultimately your enemies will fall back, ultimately your enemies' assaults against you cannot succeed because God is for you. The character of God guarantees the outcome, not the hostility of men, not the power of men, whether they have political power, whether they have relational power over you or whatever it may be. Beloved, they are all just instruments in the hand of God to be that which would ultimately draw you closer to the God that you love. He is going to work it all and work through all of that for good. An so David can say, "I know what will happen to my enemies, they're going to turn back because God is for me." And do you see, beloved, the calm confidence that returning to God's word has brought him to? The sense of serenity? The sense of certainty that says this, "Men may threaten me now but my God who loves me is going to have the final word."

So David comes back to the refrain of the Psalm, the chorus of the Psalm that we saw in verses 4 and 5, verse 4, I should say. Look at verse 10,

10 In God, whose word I praise, In the LORD

He changes the name of God and appeals to the covenant keeping name of Yahweh, to the promise keeping God, the God of his people, the God of promise, the God whose loyal love never fails, in that Lord,

In the LORD, whose word I praise, 11 In [Him] I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?

Notice the repetition of it, even. Notice that this process of trusting God like this is not a one off experience and you walk through this in your mind and then you never have to come back to it. David comes back to it in the same Psalm. Well, yeah, we have to, you know, we have to fight this battle again and again because our enemies just don't go away, do they? The problems don't just disappear. And so as gravity would seem to pull us back into the fear, we reassert this again and again and again and the Lord trains us through letting us go through these sorrows so that we would exercise our spiritual muscles, as it were, in order to develop the strength that would become a mature man, a mature woman, who stands against these things in confidence. So if you say, "I was just going through this yesterday and now here I am discouraged again," okay, well, do it again. God hasn't changed. Go back to these same principles and draw the strength because this is always where the strength comes.

I have used this example in the past, I don't know if I have used it from this pulpit, maybe I'll remember going forward. If you've ever chased a stray dog out of your yard, you go out and say, "Get outta here!" you chase them and throw a rock at them or whatever to make him leave because you don't want that dog on your property. For me, it's Canadian geese these days that I'm chasing off. That's a different story. I can change the metaphor now and use it with Canadian geese. But whatever, you chase a dog off. The next day, a few hours later or whatever, he comes back. What do you do? "Oh, the dog is back and now I've lost." No, you just go back out and you chase him off again, "Get outta here! I told you once, I'll tell you again, get outta here!" and you chase that dog off.

Well, it's the same way in dealing with your fears and in your struggles in spiritual life. Yeah, okay, so you have a moment of victory, you have a sense and you go through this and you say, "Okay, my thought is right," and now you're back into the fear again. Well, just go back and do it again. Use these same principles. Go back to the same unchanging character of God and let it be your strength for that day as well. Don't make this too complicated. You just repeat and repeat and repeat until your soul gets the idea. David here is resting on the promise of God's eternal word. Scripture alone is that which is true and enduring.

Look at verse 12, he says,

12 Your vows are binding upon me, O God; I will render thank offerings to You. 13 For You have delivered my soul from death, Indeed my feet from stumbling, So that I may walk before God In the light of the living.

David's whole spirit here is, "If God is for me, what can man do to me?"

Look over at Romans 8. This is a New Testament method of argumentation. Romans 8, beginning in verse 28, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" If God has done the greater thing in giving Christ to you, if God has done the greater thing in forgiving your sins in Christ and reconciling you while you were a rebel to himself, then don't you think having done the greater thing, he will do the lesser thing that is necessary to secure your best interests over the course of your lifetime? The logic is inescapable. God is who he is, God has done what he has done, and therefore you are to interpret all of life in response to those great truths. And the severity of the opposition or the severity and extremity of circumstances can never return that. If God is for us, if God is for you, who can be against you? That is the way that we are to think.

So, beloved, whenever men overwhelm you, go back to God's word and what you'll find is this when you go back to Scripture properly: the Bible will remind you of God's eternal love in Christ. It will remind you of his commitment to sustain you until you see him face-to-face. Your enemies and your problems cannot, cannot, cannot, triple negative, they cannot alter the purpose or the love of God for you. That cannot happen. It is not within the power of man or circumstance to overturn the purposes of good that God has established for you before the beginning of time and therefore you trust him. Therefore when earthly circumstances press, you push them away, you get yourself some space, as it were, and you look up. You remember your God. You trust him in the midst of your fears and you say with David, with the New Testament, "What can man do to me?"

Let's pray together.

Dear Father, we trust you for the reality that you will carry us through this life, that you will be with us, and that one day we will be with you forever in the land of the living. In the meantime, certainly goodness and mercy will follow us all of the days of our lives. Father, we thank you that you have helped us in the past, you are helping us now, we thank you that you will help us in the future. We thank you for that eternal love by which Christ came to earth to redeem us. Father, our destiny is secure. No man can overturn it. You have delivered us decisively for all of time and for all of eternity, and from that great position of strength, O God, we move beyond fear today and renew our trust in you. Father, I ask you to comfort and to strengthen the hearts of all that are here, all that will hear these words in future times, that you would meet them, Lord, with a powerful work of your Spirit to illuminate these truths to see the power of them and the undeniable reality of your love and goodness to your people that is the ground of our eternal security. Lord, you would never abandon us. You are not like that. You will always be faithful to us. So tonight, Lord, even if we came in with fear, we go out in trust. Though

man may have intruded upon our hearts and minds, Father, we cast and fling it away to let the reality of our Christ shape the way that we think. And in light of the eternal love and the eternal redemptive work of our Christ, Father, we find our confidence, we find our trust, and we express our gratitude from full hearts as we close in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

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