

August 23, 2026

Psalm 56 NIV 1984

Be merciful to me, O God, for men hotly pursue me; all day long they press their attack.
²My slanderers pursue me all day long; many are attacking me in their pride. ³When I am afraid, I will trust in you. ⁴In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me? ⁵All day long they twist my words; they are always plotting to harm me. ⁶They conspire, they lurk, they watch my steps, eager to take my life. ⁷On no account let them escape; in your anger, O God, bring down the nations. ⁸Record my lament; list my tears on your scroll – are they not in your record? ⁹Then my enemies will turn back when I call for help. By this I will know that God is for me. ¹⁰In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise- ¹¹in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? ¹²I am under vows to you, O God; I will present my thank offerings to you. ¹³For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.



From Fear to Trust

Psalm 56

BIG IDEA: When we are afraid, God's word teaches us how to face our fears and place our trust in God.

OUTLINE

I. Fear

- A. Fear acknowledged
- B. Fear rational or irrational
- C. What can man do?

II. Trust

- A. Resolve to trust
- B. Prayer
- C. God's word
- D. Worship

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. In what ways can you identify with the psalmist? When have you recently felt overwhelmed, opposed, alone, or afraid?
2. Read vv. 1–4 aloud. David names his fear plainly: “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.” Why does naming a fear out loud — even to God — often feel like a sign of weak faith? What would it look like for you to be that honest?
3. In vv. 5–7, David describes real, ongoing hostility — people plotting, watching, waiting to harm him. Not all our fears are like this. What’s the difference between a fear rooted in a real, present threat and a fear that’s mostly in our heads? Does that difference change how we should respond?
4. Verses 8–11 pivot from complaint to confidence: God keeps count of David’s tossing and turning and collects his tears “in your bottle.” What does it mean to you that God keeps track of your sleepless nights and unseen tears? How does that change the size of what you’re afraid of?
5. Read vv. 12–13. David resolves to trust — not once, but repeatedly (the line “in God I trust; I shall not be afraid” appears in both v. 4 and v. 11). According to the sermon outline, that trust gets worked out through prayer, God’s word, and worship. Which of those three is hardest for you to reach for first when you’re afraid?
6. Why is it so critical that we believe in the authority of God’s Word?
7. What are some ways we demonstrate that we do not believe in the sufficiency of God’s Word? What promises from God’s Word do you rely on when you are afraid? Make a list. (If you can’t list any, then select a few verses to memorize.)
8. Verse 13 ends looking forward: “that I may walk before God in the light of life.” Where do you see Jesus in David’s story — a hunted King who entered hostile territory and was delivered from death so that we could walk in the light of life? How does the resurrection change the way you carry your fears?

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

David wrote Psalm 56 while running for his life. King Saul was determined to kill him, and in his flight David made a desperate choice: 1 Samuel 21:10 tells us he fled to Achish, king of Gath, ruler of the Philistines — Israel’s idolatrous, mortal enemies. It was, in effect, running out of one danger and straight into another. When Achish’s servants recognized David as the man of legend who had slain his ten thousands, David realized he had traded one death sentence for another. Cornered, he feigned insanity to escape with his life (1 Sam. 21:13–15). It was in this doubly desperate moment — out of the pan and into the fire — that David recorded this plea to God. The title links the psalm directly to that episode (similar to Psalm 34, also written after the Achish encounter). “Many take this to be an individual lament, but it could also be a psalm of (anticipated) thanksgiving: the description of troubles and prayer is taken up into gratitude that God has heard and will act (as he has acted in the past). The specific troubles arise from people who aim to hurt the pious singer, as is common with lament psalms. The title links the psalm with the events of 1 Sam. 21:10–15 (similar to Psalm 34).”

— ESV Study Bible

Praise to Jesus – Spend time praising the Lord — the God who is gracious to the trampled and the trembling, who is worthy of trust whether our fear is rational or not, whose word we praise even before we see it fulfilled, who counts every restless night and keeps every tear in His own bottle, who is for us, who delivers our soul from death and our feet from stumbling, and who invites us to walk before Him in the light of life. Praise the Lord!

Repent through Jesus –Take time today to confess the times you let fear win — when you trusted the size of your enemy more than the nearness of God, doubted His word was enough, kept your fear to yourself instead of bringing it to Him honestly, or let anxiety crowd out worship. Confess the times you asked, “What can man do to me?” and lived as though the answer were ‘everything,’ instead of resting in a God who has already numbered your days and your tears.

Consecration for Jesus –Because Jesus, the living Word, met and overcame every fear on our behalf, when we are afraid, we cry out to the Lord and trust God as we face our fears.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. Where is a safe place for you? (Talk with your children about how this psalm shows how King David reacted when he was fearful and faced a tough situation. This psalm, as many of the psalms do, shows us the blessed truth that we can put our trust in God as we face our fears.)

2. Make a list of your fears, then use verses 3-4 in a prayer to trust in the Lord as you deal with your fears.

3. What does it mean that God is for us (v.9)? (This is a glorious truth that part of our salvation is the change in relationship with God, in which we change from living as enemies of God to living knowing that God is for us. He promises to work for our good (Romans 8:28).

4. How would our lives change as we come to trust more and more that God is for us?

5. In verse 13, what is the outcome of God saving David? How does this comfort us and remind us of what our lives look like after God saves us? (David wrote that “I may walk before God in the light of life”. This reminds us that our salvation doesn’t only guarantee that we will go to heaven someday. It also means that our present lives are changed as we can now live for God.)

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 8:31

John 16:33

Galatians 2:20

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 8:31

John 16:33

Galatians 2:20

Psalms 27:1

Isaiah 41:10

1 John 4:18

1. David names his fear out loud before God; he does not pretend it is not there or dress it up. What are you actually afraid of right now? Not the spiritual-sounding answer, but the real one. What makes it hard to bring that fear to God honestly?

2. In verse 3, David says, “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.” Notice it does not say if; it says when. David expects fear to come. What does that tell you about the Christian life? Have you ever been taught that trusting God means you stop being afraid, rather than trusting him in the middle of the fear?

3. David asks in verse 4, What can flesh do to me? He is not saying nothing bad can happen - he is saying that even if the worst happens, God is bigger. Think about your biggest fear right now and finish this sentence honestly: Even if that happened, God would _____. What does it take to actually believe that?

4. David says God has kept count of his tossings, collected his tears in a bottle, and recorded them in his book. None of his suffering has gone unnoticed. Is that actually comforting to you, or does it feel hard to believe? Where do you most need to be convinced that God sees what you are going through?

5. David's response to God saving him is that he gets to walk before God in the light of life. Salvation is not just about where you go when you die - it changes how you live right now. How would your daily life actually look different if you were walking in the freedom of someone who knows God is for them and not against them?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. Whether reasonable or not, the fact is that we often feel afraid about things. Fears are real. What are some of your biggest fears at the moment? How are you handling those fears?

2. Try the exercise suggested in this morning's sermon message.

Play out your fears:

- 1) "What if" (a particular fear were to come true)? _____
- 2) That would (affect your life in what way)? _____
- 3) But God would (fill in the blank) _____

3. What are some ways you can apply this morning's sermon message to your life? What would it look like for you to trust God by resolving to trust, praying, dwelling on God's word, and worshiping him as an antidote to fear?

4. The only thing to ultimately fear is eternal death. But if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you can be confident that you are saved and will never die.

Question: So have you trusted in Jesus Christ to save you and secure you in his love forever?!

The Blessed Life: A Study of the Psalms



"The Light of the World" (1851-1853) by William Holman Hunt

Psalms Introduction

The Book of Psalms is the sacred place where the living God meets His people in the most intimate and personal of ways. He invites them to know Him not merely as an idea, but as their refuge, portion, shepherd, and King. From the opening doorway of blessedness in Psalm 1 to the climactic Hallelujahs of Psalm 150, the Psalter reveals that the truly happy life is one rooted in the person and work of Almighty God, whose steadfast love holds His people through every season of the soul. As the Psalter moves from anguish to adoration, from darkness to dawn, it becomes a mirror of the Christian life itself. It teaches us to pray honestly, to hope stubbornly, and to sing faithfully, even when night seems long. In the deepest valleys, the Psalms give voice to the church's groan; on the highest heights, they train the church's doxology. And in every line, every cry, and every hallelujah, Christ Himself comes near, revealing the light of the world in the dark night of the soul and leading His people into the blessedness that only His grace can give.

– Pastor Bill

About the artwork and artist.

The Light of the World, 1851-1853, is an iconic allegorical painting by William Holman Hunt. The painting depicts Jesus Christ as a regal figure in flowing robes, wearing a crown of thorns, holding a glowing lantern, and preparing to knock on a weed-overgrown wooden door with no external handle. This illustrates Revelation 3:20 from the Bible: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him..." The artist William Holman Hunt is showing us that Jesus is the divine door to the living God who meets His people in the most intimate and personal ways. The closed, overgrown door → representing the human soul or "obstinately shut mind" that has long ignored spiritual calling. There is no handle on the outside → the door can only be opened from within, emphasizing free will and personal invitation to faith. The lantern → Christ as the light of the world (John 8:12), illuminating darkness and offering salvation. The work marked Hunt's deepening Christian faith (from earlier agnosticism) and became one of the most reproduced and devotional images of the Victorian era, inspiring oratorios, hymns, and widespread popular piety. It's often called a visual sermon on personal salvation.