

PRAYING THE PSALMS

WHEN I AM AFRAID

Thursday, January 11

Reading: Psalm 56

Psalm 56:8 *Record my misery; list my tears on Your scroll— are they not in Your record? 9 Then my enemies will turn back when I call for help. By this I will know that God is for me. 10 In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise—11 in God I trust and am not afraid. What can man do to me?*

There's an anonymous proverb that says, "Sometimes the Lord calms the storm. Sometimes He lets the storm rage and calms His child." That is where David is in this psalm. He is floating between fear of the storm and faith in the Lord. King Saul is in hot pursuit trying to kill him. In a desperate attempt to find safety, David unwisely goes into Philistine territory. There he is recognized as the great hero of Israel who has been a thorn in their side for years. He only escaped by pretending to be insane (1 Samuel 21-22).

In danger from all sides, David turns to God (56:1-3). David knows that back home Saul is slandering him among the people and that he is sending spies out to find and kill him (56:5-6). God is not calming the storm that swirls around his life. But in Psalm 56 we see God calming David's heart in the midst of the storm.

David's trust is not based on hearsay or wishful thinking. Three times David states that his trust is "in God, whose word I praise" (56:4, 10-11). He remembered the promises and faithfulness of God recorded in the Scriptures (for David this would be the Books of Moses). This gave David the courage to fight his fears and not worry what men could do. Their words and actions could never defeat God's plan for his life. When we are afraid do we go to God's Word for comfort and strength? God sees where we are. And more important, God is in control of where we are!

The second truth that calmed David's fears was that God knew how he felt. God is keeping a record of all the pain he is going through. "List my tears on Your scroll" could also be translated as "put my tears in Your bottle." Both phrases tell us that God not only knows about our pain, but He actually stores them up to be remembered at a later time. God wants to take our tears and trials and use them for His glory. He will help us pass on the greatness of His work in us to others (see 2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Despite the storm's continued presence, David is able to say that God has delivered him so he "may walk before God in the light of life" (56:13). In the midst of the dark, God shines His light. Jesus picks up this theme in the New Testament when He says:

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life" (John 8:12)

PRAYER THOUGHT: What is the "call for help" that David cries?

"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?" (56:10-11). The author of Hebrews picks up this thought in the New Testament: "So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my Helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?' (Hebrews 13:6). Memorize these verses from Psalms and Hebrews and use them in your prayer time.