

NOTHING TO FEAR

Thursday, May 3

Reading: Psalm 64

Psalm 64:1 *Hear me, my God, as I voice my complaint; protect my life from the threat of the enemy... 8 He will turn their own tongues against them and bring them to ruin; all who see them will shake their heads in scorn. 9 All people will fear; they will proclaim the works of God and ponder what he has done.*

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt gave his First Inaugural Address to a nation suffering in the darkest days of the Depression. In his opening statement, he uttered words that have echoed through the decades: “So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.”¹ Fear can paralyze people. It can cause panic and as FDR said can turn advance into retreat.

This is another of David’s pleas for God’s protection from his enemies. However, in Psalm 63:1 David’s request is different than in his other psalms. The phrase translated by the NIV as “the threat of the enemy” literally means “the FEAR of the enemy.” It is a Hebrew word (*paḥad*) that expresses a strong emotion of terror or dread. David’s cry is not to be saved from the external actions of his enemies as much as a cry to be delivered from the internal fear their threats were causing in David’s heart (64:1-3).

Unlike David, his enemies’ hearts are “without fear” (64:4-6). They have no problem attacking the innocent or encouraging each other with their evil plans. They believe that no one, not even God, can see or punish them. They think they have the perfect plan to destroy God’s servants. Even David admits their hearts are “cunning.”

But David closes with another kind of fear (64:7-10). God WILL punish the wicked and in response “all people will fear.” This is a different word than before (Heb. *yārē*). It means to reverence, respect, to hold in awe. It is the kind of fear that turns people to proclaim and ponder the greatness of God. It is the reaction of those who are “upright in heart.” Instead of unhealthy terror, they “rejoice” and “take refuge” in the Lord.

Fear is a trap that can shatter what God is trying to do in your life and the life of His church. It can cause us to retreat instead of advance in our Christian lives. Fear and faith cannot live in the same heart. If the enemy can cause you to fear, then he is close to winning the battle. The prophet Isaiah put it well:

“Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD Himself, is my strength and my defense; He has become my salvation.” (Isaiah 12:2)

With God on our side we truly have nothing to fear from the enemy. “So we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’” (Hebrews 13:6)

¹ <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5057>