

Series: Psalms
Title: What Time I Am Afraid
Text: Ps 56:1-3
Date: 2-2-2020
Place: SGBC, NJ

In Psalm 56: 1, the heading says this Psalm was written by David when “*the Philistines took him in Gath.*”—

1 Samuel 21: David fled from one enemy king Saul into the hands of another king Achish: 11: And the servants of Achish said unto him, *Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?* 12: And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath. 13: And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard. 14: Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore *then* have ye brought him to me? 15: Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this [*they are calling David a nobody, a nothing*] to play the mad man in my presence? shall this come into my house?

During this time, David wrote Psalm 56. In 1 Samuel we see David’s old man of flesh of Adam but in Psalm 56 we hear David’s new holy man created of Christ. In 1 Samuel David underwent a change outwardly, while in his heart we hear him cry out to God in faith, Christ underwent a change outwardly when *he made him sin for us*, yet inwardly, as we see in this Psalm, Christ persevered in holy faith looking to the Father.

Like David, enemies pursued our Savior the entire time he walked this earth. As David does, our Lord Jesus looked to God his Father. But David did so in sin while our Head did so in perfect faith even to the death of the cross. That is why he is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Title: What Time I Am Afraid

Psalm 56: 3: What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

Proposition: What time we are afraid, believers trust in Christ because in Christ we have already overcome all our enemies and by Christ we shall overcome our enemies throughout our life.

Divisions: As believers we often become afraid, don’t we? 1) Of the devil 2) Of our old man of sin 3) Of worldly, unregenerate men and women

WHAT TIME I AM AFRAID OF THE DEVIL

Psalm 56: 1: Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresses me. 2: Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High. 3: What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

Everything we desire, everything we need, is contained in the petition, “*Be merciful unto me, O God!*” Brethren, we plead for God’s mercy every day, don’t we? God will never turn away that plea. Scripture says, “*God delighteth to show mercy (Mi 7: 18).*” Why did David need mercy?

It was due to his enemies. The margin says “*mine observers*”—those that watch for my sins, that seek to entangle me in my words, those who impute wicked motives to my actions. The Pharisee’s did this to Christ though he knew no sin. They observed his every move to try to find something wherewith to accuse him.

Believer do not be an observer of your brethren (or any sinner). To do so is to be like the devil. He is called in scripture “*the accuser of our brethren*” (Rev 12:10). We see the devil working in the Pharisee’s—observing, accusing. Christ told them, “*you are children of your father the devil and the lusts of your father you will do, he was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it*” (Jn 8:44) It is not difficult to observe sin in our brethren. But don’t do it. Let us observe our own sin, and shut our mouths. But let us cease observing sin in our brethren.

At this time, the devil was ruling king Saul, so Saul daily sought to swallow David up, to kill him. The devil was working in *many* so that David had *many enemies fighting against him*.

Believer, the devil is a very real, very crafty, very powerful foe. He does not come to us dressed in red, with a forked tail and horns. Satan comes using men and women. When we see Saul fighting with David, we see the devil fighting with David. The devil will use a close friend who makes us confide in them. He will appeal to your sinful flesh. Your friend will listen to you, show you sympathy, side with you, give you advice that appeals to your sinful flesh. Before long, the devil will have you separated from your brethren like a wolf separates a weak sheep away from the flock. That is where satan had David, separated in the wilderness.

Ask Eve if the devil is a foe to fear. In a perfect, sinless environment, the devil tricked our sinless mother, which led to Adam willfully sinning and plunging the whole world into sin. Seeing the devil's cunning subtlety to beguile our sinless mother, do we think he will have any problem beguiling sinners like us?

Ask Job if the devil is a foe to fear: Job had done nothing wrong, he was a godly man, but in short order: the devil took his family, his wealth and his health—the devil's objective was to wreck Job's life to get him to curse God.

Job 1: 9: Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? 10: Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. 11: But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. 12: And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath *is* in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

Did you notice in our text that David prayed, "*O thou most High!*" The devil can do nothing but what God permits him to do. As it was with Job, it always ends better for us than the beginning. So when Job held his integrity,

Job 2: 4: And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. 5: But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. 6: And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he *is* in thine hand; but save his life.

The only reason Job was not overcome, the only reason David was not overcome and the only reason we are not overcome is because our Lord Jesus Christ conquered the devil for his people. At Christ's birth, Herod ordered the male Israelite children killed. Who was behind that? "*The dragon [devil] stood before the woman [Mary the mother of our Lord] which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child [Christ Jesus] as soon as it was born*" (Rev 12: 4). Yet, even at his birth our Lord Jesus Christ defeated the devil and at the same time fulfilled prophecy by Joseph fleeing into Egypt from whence prophecy said Christ would be called.

After his baptism, having received the Spirit, having entered his public ministry, our Lord Jesus was tempted of the devil 40 days and 40 nights. But Christ won that battle staying faithful to God and his word. As Christ says in verse 6 of our Psalm, "*In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; ...In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word.*"

It was the devil's hour from Gethsemane to the cross: the devil bruised Christ's heel but our Savior crushed his head. Christ destroyed the devil's power for his people by putting away our sin so the devil has nothing with which to accuse us to God

Hebrews 2 :14: Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15: And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Believer, we are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us. The devil is under the complete control of Christ the most High. Therefore, what time I am afraid of the devil, I will trust in the Lord.

WHAT TIME I AM AFRAID OF MY OLD MAN OF SIN

David had enemies in his own camp. Every believer has a great enemy in our own camp—our old man of sin. What time I am afraid of my old man of sin, I will trust in the Lord.

By the irresistible grace of the holy Spirit of God there is a new, holy man created in us "*which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*" (Eph 4:24). The new man created of God is righteous and holy after Christ's image that created him. God's elect are justified by Christ's righteousness imputed to us through faith and sanctified by Christ's holiness imparted in us in regeneration.

Yet, as a regenerated child of God, with this holy new man, Paul wrote "*I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*" (Rom 7:18)

I remember my disappointment when I first discovered that my brethren, who I looked up to, were sinners. I recall the disappointment after my baptism when I discovered I am still a sinner. Brethren never be disappointed when you find out God's saints are still sinners. Even the apostle Paul still committed evil he hated.

But I will tell you what you will find out about your brethren, they are the only merciful people in this world because they know that in their flesh dwells no good thing. We see our flesh is nothing but sin. We know we cannot do what we would; we keep committing sins we hate. Our own flesh is *the enemy who would daily swallow us up, who fighting daily oppresses us; in our flesh they be many that fight against me.*

Yet, God continues to show us mercy for the sake of Christ! That is why God's saints are merciful. We know our brother hates the sin he commits because we hate the sins we commit; we know our brother can't do the good he wants to do because we can't do the good we want to. Yet, God continues to show us both mercy; therefore, we continue to show one another mercy.

Years ago, there were some brethren who offended me greatly. I got to the point where I was determined not to show them mercy. It took a year of trials but God broke my heart and brought me down to see that I was overcome with a far worse sin than the sin I saw my brethren commit. I was overcome with pride and self-righteousness. I had sat down in Christ's judgment seat and passed unrighteous judgment on my brethren by imputing wicked motives when I had no idea what was in their heart. I trampled underfoot the blood of Christ by thinking his blood was not enough for me to be merciful to them. There is no sin as evil, as wicked, as cruel as pride! It is the sin for which God cast Satan out of heaven.

So why did God leave us in the body of this death? Why does God allow us to commit acts of sin? There are at least two reasons. One, by revealing our sinful flesh, God prevents us from trusting in ourselves. If we finally abstain from a certain sin, unless Christ keeps us humbled, we become puffed up in pride that we did not commit that sin. We flee one sin, into a worse sin—pride! I know a new free will preacher. He claims he is not a sinner anymore at all! Would you want a preacher that does not know the sinfulness of his flesh? How could he teach about God's mercy?

John Rusk wrote, "I want an experimental preacher, one who, when he has had one meal, is tried how he shall get the next; one who is tormented with devils fit to tear him limb to limb; one who feels hell inside himself and every corruption in his nature stirred up to oppose God's work; one who feels so weak that every day he gets over he views it as next to a miracle."

So one, God uses our sinful flesh to keep us from trusting ourselves. Two, by revealing our sins, God keeps us crying out to Christ alone. It is Christ alone who delivers us from our sinful flesh? Paul said, "*O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

The sins of our flesh will never cause God to say, "Enough" and cease showing us mercy! God our Father chose us by free and sovereign grace, not based on any good or evil in us "*that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;*" (Ro 9:11)—therefore grace never gives up on us because of something we have done. Christ bore our sins away therefore before God's judgement-seat we have no sin.

Jeremiah 50:20: In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.

Therefore it is unrighteous judgment for me to condemn my brethren for their sins when God doesn't! Paul said, "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in him, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*" So, for Christ's sake God continues to show us mercy.

1 John 1: 9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness...2: 1: My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world. (1Jo 2:1-2)

God leaves us in our sinful flesh to keep us from trusting ourselves and to keep us trusting Christ, "*What time I am afraid of my sin-nature, I will trust in thee.*"

WHAT TIME I AM AFRAID OF UNREGENERATE, WORLDLY SINNERS

David also had enemies in unregenerate worldly sinners. So do we. We are tempted to befriend this ungodly world on a daily basis. God calls it adultery.

James 4:4: Ye adulterers and adulteresses, [that is what God says it is when we flirt with the ungodly world, courting their friendship. Why?] know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

But our Redeemer gave us this good news—

John 16:33: These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Believer, since our Redeemer has overcome the world, we have overcome in him. Therefore, our Redeemer shall keep us so that we overcome at last. That same Redeemer who gave himself for me on the cross is King of kings and Lord of lords ruling all things for my good.

Proverbs 21:1: The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

He leaves us in this world—to teach us these two things. One:

1 John 2: 5: Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16: For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17: And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. (1Jo 2:15-17)

Two, he teaches us that our purpose is to spread his gospel. He left us in this world because he has a people who he shall call out. And he will use us, his church, to preach his gospel that he might call them out.

So brethren let us spread this gospel in the face of every enemy, knowing, when it comes to the devil—by Christ our Prophet, Priest and King "*the gates of hell shall not prevail against us.*" When it comes to sinful flesh, Christ shall make the walls of our Jericho-heart fall flat. Despite worldly enemies who *daily* fight against us, Christ shall "*add to the church daily such as should be saved.*" Therefore, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." May God comfort you with those words!

Amen!