

Psalm 56

The Silent Dove in Distant Lands

This is a psalm about a man without a country. God gives us a Spirit of peace amidst a world of confrontations. On one hand it is sad. On the other hand, there is a valuable faith development process underway.

David was protecting Israel from the invading nations (Philistines, etc.). Unfortunately, his own king was jealous of David's success; and he was trying to kill him. David was like a Navy SEAL war hero on the run, from the President and the secret service. It was a very wrong and an evil situation. Our problems can come from within. Satan attacks the church from the outside and the inside. Any ministry organization can be infiltrated by imposters. Will you quit, because of the hypocrites; or keep serving?

Many of the people cheered David's rescues; and others tried to gain favor with King Saul by helping with the ongoing David manhunt. Some of the citizens of Israel were confederate with King Saul. They kept sharing intel about David's encampments and exploits with the king. His own nation seemed to be too corrupt to help. Sometimes it seems like mankind is too self-defeating to help. Ministry is a messy thing. How do you help people who have self-defeating behavior? The person's life you are saving may want nothing to do with you. Your good works can be mischaracterized. Your own character flaws will be a focus and be magnified; while your good works will be hidden. Supposedly we should be teaching the hungry men how to fish. It is way more complicated than that.

David found more safety in hiding in the Philistine camp (mortal enemies) than anywhere in his own country (1 Samuel 21-23). David found the only safe place to hide his parents was in the country of Moab. As American believers, we see the resident evil in our nation. We too hear our president and congress speak the words of antichrist. We see a move to protect the Muslim belief system and abhorrent sexual preferences. Our media and our education system are committed to marginalize our LORD. Born-again believers are treated like haters and bigots. It does not help to move to Canada. This is still the best nation on earth.

Welcome to the stage of the prophets. They were thick-skinned people who went against the grain of their society. We are heading back into prophetic times.

Still others had trials of mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered around in sheepskins and goatskins, while destitute, afflicted, and tormented. 38 The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. (Hebrews 11:36-38)

What about Elijah, who confronted the evil Queen Jezebel and King Ahab about their idolatry ruining the land? He ran for his life after pronouncing judgement of no rain on the land. In the end; it is a spiritual war. The angels are fighting with demons; but who will be the visible and earthly representative? We can only be on God's side. Our loved ones will be manipulated to exert psychological warfare on us. Making friends with Satan's puppets won't work. Hiding won't work. The only road to success and freedom is to follow God precisely and fully embrace his commands.

Read Psalm 56: 1-3: David tried every means of escaping his predicament. He was a wanted man by his own government. He stood more of a chance of surviving in an enemy nation. To do so he would have to convince them that he had lost his mind; and was no longer a threat. David was pretending to have lost his mind. He was wandering outside of the gates of Gath (a Philistine stronghold). The name Gath is derived from a grape crushing place. David's soul was crushed. He had taken extreme measures to protect his people; and they sold him out. He was confused and depressed and his work seemed pointless. Wrong seemed more right than what was right. Everything right was going wrong. Spiritual warfare involves an affront to your senses and logic. "I feel like I am losing, even when I am winning". "Did God really say I should be doing this"? "Shouldn't I just let the evil Philistines wipe out my own wicked countrymen"? The more that David obeyed God, the more his life seemed to be in danger. I have found that when I pray to walk closer with God, it can result in a challenging day of setbacks. Perhaps what really happened was that God saw the day coming and he urged me to pray to draw closer to him as the challenging day approached.

Read Psalm 56:4-7: Why do we serve God? What if our efforts are rejected by men? What would you do if the whole world was against you? Would you start killing those who opposed you? Would you hide from everyone? Would you ignore them while they

destroyed each other? Would you try to minister to those who were looking to collect on the reward on your head? The bottom line is that Satan wants to just stop us from obeying God. We need to begin with the truth.

We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified. (Romans 8:28-30)

All of this abuse and frustration and rejection was a prescription for David's spiritual development. To become a king; he had to do what self-defeating people would not do for themselves. He would have to ignore the boos and the jeering of the envious and ignorant. You absolutely can not run a popularity campaign and follow God. They say it's lonely at the top. Think about how the press dogged Dan Quayle, George Bush Jr and Donald trump. They could say nothing to help their public image. I can see a value in my work on the road; and being away from home. There is a weekly separation anxiety; and daily dose of disappointments to work through. That all adds to the backdrop of having more time in the word; and more uninterrupted quiet time.

Read Psalm 56:8-11: God does not enjoy seeing our pain. God is with us in our down moments. We are never alone. It is a strange act for him to allow contrary spirits to resist us. He puts our tears in a bottle. He maps our ups and downs and anxiety attacks. We are afraid of going off of the deep end; but our real fear is that nobody can see us or help us. Our delays revolve around thinking that we can still save ourselves. Jesus knows what we can handle; and how much discomfort is required for a u-turn. Disappointment and pain bring about course corrections.

All of us like sheep have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way, (Isaiah 53:6)

I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; 3 the ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master's crib, but Israel does not know; My people do not consider....Why should you be beaten again, that you revolt more and more? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it. Wounds, bruises, and open sores; they have not been closed, nor bandaged, nor soothed with oil. 7 Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; strangers devour your land in your presence; and it is desolate, as overthrown

by strangers....When you reach out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even when you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. 16 Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil from your deeds, from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, 17 learn to do good; seek justice, relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. 18 Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. 19 If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; 20 but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. (Isaiah 1 excerpts)

God monitors our progress and the surrounding resistance in our lives. He is trying to raise our hope level. Scientist Curt Richter performed a hope experiment with rats in the 1950s. He put 12 domesticated rats individually in buckets of water. Some drown in 2 minutes because they just gave up. Others lasted up to 2 days before drowning. Next he did the same thing with survival-oriented wild rats. There was little difference in the results. Next he reached out and saved some rats just before drowning. These saved rats learned to have hope in the future. These saved rats were put back into the water and swam for much longer, expecting that they would be saved again. We are the same way. We can be quick to abandon hope. God keeps rescuing us to teach us that we are in his control and care. David was placed at death's door many times; and repeatedly supernaturally saved. His hope and praise soared.

Read Psalm 56:12-13: David is our example for faith development by God's providential hand. We cannot know about God's salvation unless we are the ones being saved from something real. David felt the power of God's promise; by witnessing his own rescues. God gave him new hope and energy. That is the path for faith development.

David began his life taking care of dependent sheep. They are helpless to predators. His battles were easy to identify. Later on, he started taking care of people as their shepherd. People will turn on you and take away your motivation to help them. He had to get onto God's page; and see things for what they really were. He had a heart to help people; but he could not wait for their appreciation or approval.

In time past, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them in; and the Lord said to you, 'You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler over Israel.' ” (2 Samuel 5:2)

Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: “I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel. 9 And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have [a]cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth. (2 Samuel 7:8-9)