

PSALM 56:1-13

As we come to Psalm 56, we may observe from the superscription that we come to a new cluster of Psalms that are known as “Mikhtam of David” Psalms (pronounced “mick-tame”). This group of Davidic Psalms runs from Psalm 56 to Psalm 60.

Now the specific emphasis of this Hebrew word “mikhtam” is on that which is written (William Gesenius, Hebrew Lexicon, p.473). So a mikhtam Psalm is one that is aimed at getting God’s people to focus on God’s written word.

We will also observe from the superscription that this was a Psalm written for the “choir director” which means this Psalm was to be publicly communicated to the people of God.

It is also a Psalm “according to Jonath elem rehokim”. The word “jonath” is a word that literally means “dove.” The word “elem” is one that means “silence”. The word “rehokim” is one that means “distant ones.” So **this Psalm is written by David who is writing as he feels like a silent, helpless dove who is all alone in a distant region.**

Now we may also observe that this Psalm was written by David “when the Philistines seized him in Gath.” There were five key Philistine cities- Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gaza and Gath. The context in which David wrote this particular Psalm is found in I Samuel 21:10-15. David was taken before Achish the king of Gath and he pretended to be insane so he could escape. During this time David felt all alone; he was on the run; he had no one to talk to and he was in a foreign land.

So this is the Psalm that David wrote as he was experiencing this. What this Psalm actually teaches us is this:

WHEN WE HAVE TIMES IN OUR LIVES WHEN WE FEEL SO HELPLESS AND ALL ALONE WE NEED TO KEEP COMMUNICATING WITH GOD AND CAREFULLY STUDYING AND TRUSTING IN GOD’S WRITTEN WORD FOR THAT IS WHAT WILL ULTIMATELY DELIVER OUR DESPAIRING SOUL FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.

When you are being faithful to God there will be times when you will feel so out of it. There will be times when enemies will put you on the defensive to the extent that you are not even acting or thinking like yourself. When those times hit, it is time to go to God and carefully crawl into God’s written word and that is exactly what this “mikhtam” psalm is all about.

Now there are five key parts that make up this Psalm:

PART #1- David asks God for His grace. **56:1-2**

No matter how successful David had been, he never relied on himself, he always relied on God's grace. He always asked God to be gracious to him. He knew he was a sinner who did not merit grace. There are three reasons David why:

(Reason #1)- Because his enemies have trampled on David. **56:1b,2a**

Now observe that they trampled on David "all day long." In other words there was no relief. These attacks were relentless. David was God's man. He was God's chosen, anointed King and he was always getting hammered by some enemy.

Evil enemies don't usually just quietly go away. God has to make them go away.

(Reason #2)- Because his enemies have oppressed David. **56:1c**

David was always under some attack or pressure. There were people always trying to box him in and David felt he always needed to fight for survival.

(Reason #3)- Because his enemies arrogantly fought against David. **56:2b**

Now notice from **verse 2** that "many" were against David as opposed to a few. Charles Spurgeon said "Persecutors hunt in packs. Wolves of the church seldom come down on us singularly." (Psalms, p.253)

Evil people are too cowardly to face a man of God one on one. They group together and they think their strength is in their numbers. But what they don't realize is the faithful believer's strength is the Lord and they are about to have God fight against them.

David was tired and afraid, so he appealed to God for help. When you are being walked on and oppressed by people who are fighting against you stay focused on the written word and God to God and ask Him to be gracious to you.

PART #2- David acknowledges that his trust is in God when he is afraid. **56:3-4**

Many years ago a columnist by the name of Ann Landers was asked if there was one theme that was predominant in the 10,000 letters she received each month? She said the most predominant theme was "fear", many people are afraid. Now some fears are imaginary. But David's fear was not. There were literally many things David faced that caused him to be afraid.

This is important to know. As great a King as David was, he was still a man and he still had moments when he was afraid. He was a feeble, sinful, finite man who had his own moments of fear.

But David not only had fear, he also had trust. He did not trust in himself, but he did trust in God.

There are specifically two phases to this trust:

(Phase #1)- David trusted in God. 56:3,4b

No matter what David went through, he always kept his confidence and trust in God. Difficult times and scary times are good times to develop trust in God. When you are afraid, put your total trust in God.

Actually, fear can be beaten by faith. Albert Barnes said this is a good maxim to remember when we face dangerous storms, sickness or death. Just as David said here in **verse 3**, “when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you.”

There was once a little boy who had gone to his S.S. class and they were teaching him the song “Trust and Obey.” He hadn’t quite mastered the lyrics of the chorus and he sang something that actually had a powerful theological truth to it- “Trust and Okay.”

Jesus said believe in God, believe also in Me. Trust in the Lord and it will be okay.

(Phase #2)- David trusted in God’s word. 56:4a

David not only trusted in God’s word, he praised it. David realized the great importance of the Word of God. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. David developed a deep faith and trust in God through the written word of God. **In fact, you will not ever develop a true, deep trust in God without a proper commitment to God’s word.**

When you are scared, pick up the Bible. When you are afraid, go to a church where the Scriptures are accurately expounded. Your faith will be strengthened.

People who strut around telling others they have no fear, also are people with a shallow faith. The reason is because deep faith, like that of King David, is developed in moments of fear. That is when we learn to trust in God and His precious word.

PART #3- David observes that his enemies are against him. **56:5-6**

David’s enemies were very real and very united. We learn some facts about his enemies here and how they operated:

(Fact #1)- David’s enemies distorted his words. 56:5a

They not only distorted his words, they distorted his intentions. They continually said things David did not say. They twisted his words. Mr. Spurgeon said this is the common mode of warfare among the ungodly. They put our words on the rack and extort meanings we never intended. (Ibid., p.284)

(Fact #2)- David's enemies continually thought evil of David. **56:5b**

These enemies never thought one good thing about this faithful man who was so committed to God and His word. They actually viewed a godly king through evil minds and speech.

(Fact #3)- David's enemies are continually looking to attack. **56:6a**

They were operating in a clandestine fashion, acting like a bunch of spies, trying to get any thing on David they could. Notice the text says "they lurk" which means they are trying to ambush him. This is secret behind his back stuff. They don't dare go face to face with David.

(Fact #4)- David's enemies are continually watching every move. **56:6b**

Instead of these people dedicating themselves to understanding and applying God's word to their own lives, they were always looking and watching David with the goal to destroy him.

Andrew Bonar said the goal of the world is to seek daily to overthrow God's people. Evil enemies are on the continual lookout to overthrow you. Now we are all sinful, so in some respects if they look long and hard enough we will manifest a few flaw. But don't give them ammunition to attack because they are watching.

PART #4- David asks God to deliver him from his enemies. **56:7-9**

David petitions God to do four things:

(Petition #1)- David asks God to cast down his enemies. **56:7a**

This is a request for God to intervene and "cast down" his enemies is the idea of not letting them get away with it or escape but to slice them up (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p.675)

(Petition #2)- David asks God to put down his enemies. **56:7b**

David asks God to act in anger. This Hebrew word has to do with God bringing the arrogant down from their lofty position. This often has reference to casting down into hell (Ibid., p.365). David is asking God to destroy his enemies physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

(Petition #3)- David asks God to put his tears in His bottle. **56:8**

Dr. C.I. Scofield said that sometimes ancient east mourners would catch tears in a bottle and place them at the tomb of a loved one. These bottles were called lachrymatories and were made of glass and pottery. David knew of them.

When you are brought to tears, remember God sees the tears and those who are causing them. Dr. McGee said that when he studied this Psalm he actually wished he had cried more.

God does three things with our tears:

- 1) He bottles them- every tear is seen and know;
- 2) He books them- the reason for every tear is on file;
- 3) He banishes them- he will wipe every tear away.

(Petition #4)- David asks God to cause his enemies to realize He turned back his enemies. **56:9**

David wanted his enemies to know that God had kept track of their deceptive evil and would show that when David prayed, He did answer and when God did answer David would know “God is for me.”

PART #5- David acknowledges final praises to God. **56:10-13**

David offers a series of final praises to God:

(Praise #1)- David praises God for His word. **56:10** – We cannot magnify God’s word too much.

(Praise #2)- David acknowledges God is his trust **56:11- fear is conquered by faith.**
D.L. Moody’s favorite verse- Is.12:2- “I will trust and not be afraid.”

(Praise #3)- David acknowledges his faithfulness to God. **56:12-** fear did not prevent David from being faithful to worship God.

(Praise #4)- David acknowledges the salvation of God. **56:13-** salvation is from God. always.

Practical Lessons:

- 1) **When you feel alone, remember you are not alone.**
- 2) **When you are being attacked by enemies, you need to attack the Scriptures.**
- 3) **When you feel so unlike yourself and depressed, step up your commitment to worship.**
- 4) **Always maintain a trust in God and a trust in God’s word.**
- 5) **Remember the tears you shed because of your righteousness and your enemy’s evil are being stored in God’s bottle and God will pay back those evil for every tear you shed.**