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Fear and Faith; Psalm 56  
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Introduction - Fear and faith are opposites. So as believers we know that we should not operate on fear, we should not be overcome with anxiety, we should not give way to worry. We should fight against those doubting monsters with faith. In fact, we know that to give place to worry and fear and allow them to dwell in our hearts becomes sin. These frantic, weary plague-like thoughts take us to a place of doubt. We begin to question the things we know. We begin to forget the nature of God and the certainty of salvation and the presence of Christ. And it's in those moments that we know we need faith. We need to believe and trust and rest. We need to be at peace and take comfort in the Lord and all He is for us in Christ. Faith is the cure for our worry fear. Good social media theology might put it this way - #faithoverfear or #faithnotfear.

All of that is true, and we know it's true. But in the middle of the dark cloud of fear, these truths get foggy and blurred. Deeper doubts emerge. Because we know fear is the opposite of faith, when we are plagued with fear we begin to question our faith. If I am filled with fear does that mean I don't have faith? Am I even a believer if I have these doubts and fears? I've prayed and prayed but I keep having these thoughts. Does that mean I'm not really saved? I used to never struggle with this and now I struggle all the time. Does that mean I'm not walking with the Lord? Did I ever really know the Lord?

It is into this territory of deep spiritual doubt and fear that Psalm 56 takes us. You are not alone in your questions. You are not alone in your ongoing battle. And furthermore, you are not alone, period. God is still with you. And if you can find God in your fear, you will soon find faith, for faith is a gift from God.

- I. An Occasion for Fear is an Occasion for Faith (vv1-4)
  - a. In vv1-2 we discover David's occasion for fear. If you recall from our study of Psalm 46, the occasion for fear was the uncertainties of life. When the things that we have grown accustomed to as being certain suddenly prove to be uncertain, it often gives rise to fear in our hearts.

- i. Things like the sureness of the ground beneath our feet. The psalmist writes in 46:2 – Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way. We felt a little of that last Sunday morning didn't we when the 5.1 earthquake hit at the NC/VA line and we shook a little here in Gaffney. Ill. "as sure as the ground beneath your feet"
  - ii. The uncertainty of life gives rise to fear in our lives.
  - iii. Here, David speaks of a fear that arises in our lives from people. He says "man tramples on me," "an attacker oppresses me," "my enemies trample on me," and "many attack me."
- b. This is the classic example of the fear of man. And David felt it. And believers down through the ages have felt it. And we feel it too. As long as there are bullies, there will be the fear of man. As long as there are haters of truth, there will be the fear of man. As long as there are persecutors of the church, there will be fear of man. As long as there are narcissistic people who will lie and cheat others for their own gain, there will be fear of man.
- c. In other words, this is not a fear from uncertainties of life. Since people will always be sinners, fear of man will always be present. However, fear of man is not the only guaranteed certainty of life. Faith is just as certain and just as present.
- d. V3. David relies on his faith whenever he encounters his fears.
  - i. The first lesson for us is this: It is possible for fear and faith to occupy the heart simultaneously!
  - ii. Don't let the presence of fear allow you to question your faith. Rather use your occasion of fear as an occasion for faith.
- e. Here is how you find faith when you are faced with fear.
  - i. Go to God's Word.
    1. The path to God in the cloud of fear is in the Word. The Word speaks the promises of God, the character of God, and the faithfulness of God to our souls. The Word reminds us of what is true and real and certain and eternal and lasting.
    2. The Word shines the bright light of hope through the cloud of fearful darkness. The Word imparts courage and confidence.

3. Fear will have you tremble in fright; the Word will have you praise through the darkest night.
    - ii. The more you linger in God's Word, the larger your view of God. The larger your view of God, the more God overshadows your fear.
    - iii. The second lesson for us is this: When we experience fear or worry or doubt or anxious thoughts, we're actually not on a quest for faith. Don't go searching for faith. Go searching for God in His Word. For when you find God, you'll find your faith!
    - iv. What lies between "When I am afraid" and "I shall not be afraid"? God. God drawing near through His Word.
  - f. And now, even though man continues to trample and continues to attack, David standing on legs of faith asks, "What can flesh do to me?"
    - i. You may say, "Well David flesh can do a lot to you. Men can hurt you, ruin your reputation, cause you loss of goods, shame. Why they can even take your life if given the opportunity. Flesh can do a lot to you."
    - ii. Really? David is not saying flesh cannot do anything to you. He's saying by comparison to being with God, what does it matter what flesh can do to me. There is no reason to fear man as long as we fear God. There is no injury or malice that man can do to you that God cannot turn for your good! That's what He does. He's sovereign and good and wise and faithful. Remember what Joseph told his brothers who sold him into slavery – what you meant for evil, God meant for good!
    - iii. The harm that man can do to God's children in no way compares to the good that God can bring out of it! God used the betrayal of Joseph's brothers to save His starving people!
    - iv. That's what David means when he confidently questions, "What can flesh do to me?"
  - g. But then immediately and surprisingly in v5 David returns to his source of fear.
- II. Fear and Faith is Not a One and Done (vv5-11)
- a. Here's the third lesson for us: Just because your fear returns does not mean you don't have faith. The nature of sin is to keep sinning. Just

because your battle with fear is ongoing does not mean you are not a believer. In fact, your continued turning to faith is the assurance that you are a child of God!

- b. Vv5-7. The attacks and opposition against the people of God are consistent and constant. Faith will drive fear from your heart but it will not evaporate the circumstances or the people that give rise to fear. That's not faith's job. That's not our job. Circumstances and people are under God's domain. Faith doesn't eliminate the occasion for fear; faith just eliminates the fear so that even in the occasion, we walk by faith and not by sight.
  - c. Our first response to fear in v3 was to go to God's Word and there we will find God. Our second response to fear is in v8. Remember.
    - i. God has a record. He keeps an accurate account of every wrong done to you and He keeps a detailed description of every woe those wrongs have caused you.
    - ii. God has a bottle. He won't forget your tears.
    - iii. God has a book. There is a permanency to a written record. You need to remember that God is not going to forget.
  - d. If we can remember, then we can rest. V9.
    - i. And as Paul would say when reading Psalm 56:9, if God is for me, who can be against me?
  - e. So yes, that occasion for fear remained, but so did the recipe for faith remain. Vv10-11.
- III. What to do when Fear and Faith Collide (vv12-13)
- a. When we are faced with the fear of man, or any fear, the question is not what are they going to do? Faith has already settled that question. Whatever they do, God will undo or redo or outdo.
  - b. The question becomes what am I going to do?
    - i. Get busy living for God and worshipping God. How do you face fear with faith? Keep living for God and keep worshipping God. Fear loses its grip when God's people are busy living for Him and loving Him!
    - ii. How can you live for God and worship God when fear is staring you in the face? By knowing that if God saved you, He means to keep you!