



Confident Trust (Psalm 56)

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We're concluding our summer series in the Psalms today. We creatively titled this series - *Psalms*. Because sometimes you just need to be clear you know. Just keep it simple, straightforward. That's usually my tendency. Simpler is better. And unfortunately that's kind of why I've never been into the Psalms to be honest. I've always preferred narrative or pragmatic instruction. Tell it to me like it is James, let's not beat around the bush here. So I've never really understood the Psalms. There's so much emotion and fluctuation. High's, low's, low's, high's. And its all a musical? I can't keep up. But as I get older and get a little more real world experience under my belt, I have started to appreciate them. Particularly because a lot of life experience is painful stuff. And we can only manage painful stuff internally for so long before it starts to bubble up or come out sideways or we self-medicate to keep it at bay and keep up appearances. Because as we all know, time stops for no one. It just keeps going. So if you're like me, you may not realize it, but God knows what he's doing and he's given us the Psalms to help us emote well if you will. To help us deal with some of the most difficult things that we will experience here in this broken world. And ultimately in the Psalms, amidst of all of the ups and downs we see how and why we should praise God in and through all circumstances no matter how high or how low. We are going to look at an example of pretty low times today in Psalm 56 which might be a little easier for us to relate to since, well, unfortunately we tend to remember low's better than high's.

There are several different types of Psalms. You've got Psalms of Wisdom, Psalms of Praise, Lament, Thanksgiving, Trust. And we've looked at all of those this Summer. This Psalm actually straddles the line between Lament and Thanksgiving. Psalm 56 is about Fear, its about Trust and its ultimately about Thankfulness. It centers on this repetitive phrase "When I am afraid... I will not be afraid". And in the middle of that phrase its *trust* that tips the scales. But this trust isn't just blind faith, its an active confidence in the word of God. Its movement toward something, its not a set it and forget it kind of thing. *What can mortal man do to me?* The Psalmist asks. Well, quite a bit it turns out. But there's good news, we have reason to be thankful in the midst of it all.

So today we're going to dig into Psalm 56 and look at three points:

- When I am Afraid,
- Trust as Active Confidence and
- Reason to be Thankful.

Let me pray before we get into it.

When I Am Afraid

A little context for this Psalm. Its in reference to 1 Samuel 21. Which I highly recommend you read if you've never read it or haven't read it in a while. David, the anointed future king of Israel is literally running for his life from Saul the current king of Israel and his men who are trying to capture and kill him. And where does he run? A place called Gath. Why is that significant? Well, Gath is the hometown of one Goliath which you may remember is the oversized Philistine who David killed with a slingshot. And basically David had become so famous that everyone knew who he was. Its an act of desperation to go here a place where he is known and hated. David actually ends up acting like a crazy person just to confuse everyone so they wouldn't make him out for who he was. So, you can see when you read these first couple of verses of Psalm 56 what the situation is. There is non-stop, relentless pressure on David's life. And if you look further at verses 5 and 6 you see that its not just physical threat, but social, psychological and emotional threat as well. Verse 5 says *all day long they injure my cause*. That can also be translated *all day long they twist my words*. There is no reprieve. Maybe you can identify with this right now? The challenges keep piling up. What do you do? Where do you turn? David turns, first, to God. He tells God about it all. He talks to God about it. In the midst of being on the run, fearing for his life, suffering the slander of his reputation, David first runs to God in fearful honesty with his situation pleading for mercy.

v1. Be gracious to me oh God, for man tramples on me; all day long an attacker oppresses me. My enemies trample on me all day long, for many attack me proudly.

Right off the bat in humility David lays it out. He shares his fears with God. Understanding your fear can be very helpful in talking it out with God. We're all different and we all handle fear in different ways. I have three kids, three daughters ages 9, 7, and 4. And they all handle fear so differently. Not only that, but the level of fear has just steadily decreased with each child we've had. Our oldest is a worrier. She's afraid of being late, she's afraid of heights, she's afraid of all the things that its wise to be afraid of, but she's also afraid of things that she doesn't need to be afraid of. She can be ruled by fears of performance and perfection. And she can respond to those fears in shame. *"I don't know why I feel this way. I shouldn't feel this way. I don't know what's wrong with me."* And she tends to go inward with it and she doesn't want to tell us about what it is that's got her down. I'll find her crying and will have to slowly and gently coax the detail out of her. Our middle daughter also has her fears, but she doesn't seem too concerned with fears of performance or perfection. Instead she's concerned about Nightmare Moon. That's the bad guy on the My Little Ponies in case you were wondering. Or she's afraid of the storage boxes under her bed and she has to remind me that three years ago there *was in fact* a cockroach in her room. Her response to these fears is direct unlike my oldest who hides, but its also defiant. Calling out, she uses her fears to justify her defiance in refusing to stay in her room and go to bed. Direct but defiant. Our youngest daughter on the other hand seems to not have any fears at all most of the time.

Probably as a result of having to make it on her own for the past four years. I mean we are outnumbered here ok. She just doesn't acknowledge that she might want to think twice about doing that full front summersault off the coffee table onto the couch because 'what could go wrong?' The allure of excitement or achieving the next great feat takes over and she doesn't have time for fear. She pushes it down, she disregards it, in order to move forward. We all fear, and these days there is an endless stream of things that we are being told to fear. It may not be attackers after your life, maybe its work pressure (fear of losing your job) or social pressure (fear of losing those friends or that status). But like David, most of the fears we have are consistent and they are constant. Always on our minds. Is fear the driver of your life? Is it driving you to shame? Driving you to defiance? (Justified defiance in your mind) Driving you to performance so you can escape it? Or are you humbly and honestly acknowledging your fear before God? "God, this is what's going on with me right now." "This is how I'm responding." "These are my emotions." "Have mercy on me." If you feel like your prayer life is stagnant or prayer is boring, read some of these laments and learn how to lament to God. It will blow your prayers wide open. God longs to hear your honest, raw emotions. But it doesn't stop there. David confesses his fears to the lord. And he actively places his trust in God which moves him from a place of fear. But its not just trust in name only. Its not just mere acknowledgement. Its trust as an active confidence.

Trust as Active Confidence

Let's look at verses 3 & 4

v3-4 When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.

What can flesh do to me?

Notice the bookends to these verses. *When I am afraid... I will not be afraid.* This is actually a literary device the Psalmist uses meant to emphasize what is in the middle of that phrase. What's in the middle? Trust. Trust is what tips the scale. But not just blind trust — I put my trust in you. In God, *whose word I praise*, in God I trust. David actively trusts God, with his praise, by reminding himself of God's historic faithfulness (v.8 - kept count of my tossings/wanderings) and by looking forward with great expectation (v. 9 - my enemies will turn back when I call on you.) Now, it is very easy to trust in name only. Its easy to say "Yeah God, I trust you" and then go and act like you don't trust him at all. Its like doing a trust-fall at a corporate team building retreat but when its your turn you just bend your knees and squat down. You don't *really* trust your coworkers, probably for good reason. So let's look at how David shows us what trust looks like here. Trust, by definition is a *firm belief in the reliability, truth and strength of someone*. That's the English definition, which is good, but it gets even better when we look at the Hebrew word translated as trust here in verses 3 & 4. That word means *to be confident*. Confidence. What are you confident in? Maybe you're confident in the roadmap you have for life? In the plans you've laid out for a good life?

In 2011 my wife and I were living in Seattle, WA. Our oldest daughter was about to turn 2 and we had another on the way. I had grown kind of depressed. I was tired of the way life was going there. Neither of us were from the Northwest, but we had been living there for almost a decade. It was gray, rainy, there was just barely 2 months of summer each year. My job situation was frustrating and I didn't like the direction things were going with our organization. We lived 3,000 miles away from most of our family. I wanted a change. I was confident that a new city, a new job, a new direction would make me happy. I put confidence in my plans. We researched. I secured a job. We put a deposit on an apartment sight unseen. I worked my last day in Seattle with a packed U-Haul in the parking lot and left that night on my way to Austin, TX. My wife had never even been here. She flew down with the kids a few days later to start a new chapter in life. A better chapter we hoped. Looking back now, these past 7 years have been some of the most difficult, most painful and hardest of our lives. Maybe that sounds familiar. Maybe you've placed your confidence in other things. In your perfect plan only to be disappointed when things fail to live up to your expectations. When we place all of our confidence in our plans, in our ideals, in our perfect world, it limits the real confidence we can enjoy from trusting God. See, God is inviting you to know him, as a person, but when you're off trusting other things it cheapens the relationship and limits your confidence in him. Through our struggles, God shows us the frailty of our plans and invites us deeper into the one relationship that doesn't let us down, who is always trustworthy. You see, I had a new city, a new life, but the same problems, the same sinful responses, the same disappointments. Because I was only looking at my circumstances and my abilities and not at God and his goodness and his faithfulness and his desires for my life. See, in his prayer, David praises God for his faithfulness and places his trust in God and his amazing promises. Look at verse 8.

[v.8 - You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?](#)

It says he has kept a record of every tear drop. He has tracked all of Davids wanderings and David has wandered a lot. That's how intimately God knows and cares about everything we do. Nothing is unimportant to God. He looks forward with great expectation.

[v 9. - Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call. This I know, that God is for me.](#)

Do you know what its like to have someone who is for you? Its the simplest phrase but I think its probably the thing we are most desperate for in life. Do you ever feel like the whole world is against you? Maybe you feel like David, constantly running to stay ahead. Church, God is for you. Not necessarily your perfect plans, but for YOU. Let that sink in for a minute. God is so for you that he will not let you be content with an earthly solution to heavenly desires. You see, there's a bit of a conundrum in this Psalm. David's confidence, prayer and praise of God does not immediately zap him to a safe haven where he is no longer being pursued by enemies or slandered by evil men. Yes, David will eventually receive support and reprieve from these

attacks and he will eventually become king, but if you know his story you know this won't be the last time that David is on the run for his life. It won't be the last time that he has to call out to God for mercy. David calls out to God for mercy but it's not relief from the attacks that brings David peace. What brings David peace is walking with God, talking with God, remembering that the creator of heaven and earth has counted every tear, he's been there the whole time. And as we'll see it is only God who can rescue David from certain death and give him what he really needs. Let me ask you this: Are you trying to get something out of this world that only God can give? Is your trust, your confidence placed in the temporary, the finite, the mortal? Are you trusting in name only while firmly stepping on your ability, your plans just to achieve a relief that will not last? The great preacher Charles Spurgeon once said regarding this Psalm: *God has not made this world to be a nest for us, and if we try to make it such for ourselves, he plants thorns in it, so that we may be compelled to mount and find our soul's true home somewhere else, in a higher and nobler sphere than this poor world can give.* Are you trying to build heaven here on earth on your own terms with your blue print. Relying on your plans to make it through this life. Thinking about life with God as that glorious "one day" when all our tears will be wiped away. And yes, come Lord Jesus! I look forward to that day too. But what the Psalmist tells us here is that we don't have to wait to walk with God. Life can be full of light here and now if we put our trust in God. And for that we have reason to move from fear to thankfulness.

Reason to be Thankful

At the end of Psalm 56 we see a declaration of thankfulness in v12-13. It's a literal physical offering, probably a sacrifice, probably accompanied by this song as an act of worship and thanksgiving. What can man do to me? David asks. And as we saw, there is a lot man can do. And as we all experience there is a lot of sin and pain we have to wade through in this world. And yet, in the midst of external and internal trial the truth, the solid truth, is here for us to pursue and to be confident in. God is for us.

v.13 He has delivered my soul from death, yes my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.

Now, when I first read that as I was looking at this passage, I read it in a future sense. It does have a bit of an eternal ring to it. And though it is true in the eternal sense it is also true in the here and now. The word translated 'walk' is actually a repetitive action. Like a habit, something done over and over again. A part of your life. As we walk with God, actively trusting him, confessing our fears before him, he steadies our feet, keeping us from falling in the rocky, broken landscape of life. Comforting us in our fears, counting our tears, shining a light so we can see what is true and right and good. God is for us. And he wants what's truly best for us. What is the assurance of this? How can we be sure? The assurance is repeated again in v.10: *in God whose word I praise.* The word of God is strong, the word of God is reliable, the word of

God is true and trustworthy. The word of God is alive. The word of God is a person and his name is Jesus Christ! The Apostle Paul actually finishes this thought in Romans 8.

Romans 8:31-39

v. 31 - If God is for us, who can be against us?

He says God sacrificed his own son FOR US. If he did that do you think he wouldn't give us all things? That he won't give you what you really need? You can't trust him and its all on you? He says, who is there to condemn you? Jesus died, he was raised and do you know where he is at right now? He's sitting at the right hand of God. And do you know what he's doing? He's interceding FOR US! You don't have to live and die on the strength of your reputation. On what other people think of you. He says, do you think distress and persecution, danger, death, anything this world has to throw at you, anything in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus? No way! You don't have to live in fear. That's how for you God is. We do not have a God who is unable to sympathize, who does not have skin in the game, who sits on the sidelines removed from pain, suffering and loss. No, God is for you. Now that's a place to put your confidence. And I pray you would. And I pray you will. Every day, walking with Jesus. Confident in his love. In his plan for your life. Its better than yours. I promise. He's worthy of our praise, of our full confidence. Let's pray.