

“In God We Trust”
Psalm 56
(Preached at Trinity, January 30, 2011)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Sometimes the psalms seem repetitive. The same themes come up over and over—David finds himself under assault from his enemies, he looks to God as his hope and trust, and God delivers him. We find this recurring theme over and over, and yet each time David provides us with new details, new morsels that we can partake of and find hope and comfort in our own times of trial.
2. We too find ourselves in continued assaults upon us, often from unseen spiritual foes. Paul writes:
Ephesians 6:12-13 – “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.¹³ Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”
3. While these spiritual foes are very real, we also face the reality daily that we live in a world of God despising men and women.
 - A. It’s amazing how they hate God and the things of God.
Example of the Flea Market
 - B. In their hatred of God they often lash out when we hold God’s truth before them. Their attacks come in countless different ways and God’s people sometimes feel overwhelmed.
4. David, too, often felt overwhelmed.
Psalm 56:1-2 – “Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me. Mine enemies would daily swallow *me* up: for *they be* many that fight against me, O thou most High.”
5. David’s response:
Verse 3 – “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.”
Verse 4 – “In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust”
Verse 9 – “this I know; for God *is* for me.”
Verse 10 – “In God have I put my trust”
6. The superscription tells us several things:
 - a. Once again it is a psalm delivered to the chief musician who would use it in the leading of Israel’s worship.
 - b. Then we find a most unusual word: Jonathalemrechokim (Jonath-elem-recho-kim) Literally it means “the silent dove of far-off places”
Musically, the meaning is unclear. It could be the name of a melody that they sang—the title of the tune.

- c. Third, we find that it is a Michtam. No one knows for certain the meaning of this word. Some believe it comes from a word that expresses something hidden. These are hidden truths that only God's people can know and experience—truths of which we must be reminded over and over. Spurgeon – “There is such deep spiritual knowledge in this Psalm that we might say of it, "Blessed art thou David Barjonas, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee.”
- d. Finally, David gives us the context of this psalm. It takes place when the Philistines seized him at Gath.
1 Samuel 21:10-12 – “And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. 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.”
7. Running away from Saul, David fled to Gath. We might be tempted to ask David, are you nuts?
- A. Remember, Gath was the hometown of Goliath, whom David killed just a few years before. Surely they wouldn't take too kindly to David who killed their hero.
- B. And now David is in the city and the king's servants are reminding the king, “Is this not David, the mighty warrior.”
8. During this time David was all alone. This is before he'd gathered together his army. Knowing his precarious situation he pretended to be out of his mind
1 Samuel 21:13-15 – “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 *fellow* to play the mad man in my presence? shall this *fellow* come into my house?”
- A. Many commentators charge David with a great fault in this episode since it would seem he relied more upon his own wit and reason than upon trusting God.
- B. This psalm, however, demonstrates that David *was* trusting God. Trusting God does not remove the use of means.
9. David was overwhelmed with the extent of his enemies. He was not only in danger from the Philistines but also from Saul. It seemed the whole world was seeking his life.
10. We can divide this psalm into three divisions: (alternating stanzas)
- I. David delivers his complaint – **Verses 1-2; 5-6**
- II. David declares his confidence – **Verses 3-4; 7-9**
- III. David delights in his confession of praise and gratitude – **Verses 10-13**
- I. David delivers his complaint – **Verses 1-2; 5-6**
- A. David describes the magnitude of his situation
1. In **Verses 1-2** David describes his enemies as seeking to consume him. The word for “swallow” literally means “to pant after something” in this context to thirst after blood. It can also be translated as the NASB – “to trample”
 It describes David's enemies as desiring to destroy him.

2. These enemies were proud, boastful, arrogant
The phrase at the end of **Verse 2** (**O thou Most High**) probably shouldn't be translated as referring to God. The Hebrew isn't the usual word pointing to God. Instead it points to high places. It points to the pride and Godless arrogance of David's enemies:
NAS – "For they are many who fight proudly against me."
ESV – "for many attack me proudly."
CSB – "for many arrogantly fight against me."
 3. It was a continuing assault – David had no rest
Psalm 56:2 – "Mine enemies would daily swallow me up"
Psalm 56:5 – "Every day they wrest my words"
 4. David describes enormity of the assault. His enemies were too many to count.
 - a. In **Verse 1** he says, "for man would swallow me up"
The word for man can refer to mankind. David felt as if the whole world was against him. Sometimes, in the worst of times, we may feel this way. This has sometimes been the cry of pastors whose churches turn against them.
 - b. Again, in **Verse 2** David describes the magnitude
Psalm 56:2 – "for *they be many* that fight against me"
 - c. This was David's frequent cry:
Psalm 69:4 – "They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head . . ."
 5. They were all in one accord with one goal – destroy David
Psalm 56:5 – "all their thoughts are against me for evil."
 6. In other words David was facing an ongoing threat upon his life by enemies who had dedicated themselves to his destruction. It doesn't seem like things could be any worse.
- B. What do you do during times of difficult or even terrifying circumstances?
1. Financial difficulties
 2. Severe health decline, a terrible accident
 3. Problems at home – a difficult marriage, a rebellious child
 4. Difficult issues at work
 5. An impossible schedule that seems to swallow you up
 6. How would you deal with life threatening persecution – facing the possibility of martyrdom daily?
 7. The world hates God's people and their hatred is not due to any wrongdoing on our part
Psalm 109:3 – "They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause."
 8. Spurgeon – "The ogres of nursery tales exist in reality in the enemies of the church, who would crush the bones of the godly, and make a mouthful of them if they could."
Psalm 56:1 – "for man would swallow me up"
 9. David's response:
Psalm 56:1 – "Be merciful unto me, O God"

II. David declares his confidence – **Verses 3-4; 7-9**

A. David declares his faith in God –

Psalm 56:3 – “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee”

1. At times both fear and trust will occupy the same mind
Yet faith will soon drive away fear. When fear and faith collide faith always wins.
2. For the unregenerate fear drives him from God. For the child of God fear drives him running to the strength and comfort of God
3. The child of God is able to trust the gracious promises of God
4. Before God our enemies appear smaller and smaller.

Psalm 56:4 “I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.”

B. David makes several declarations of faith before the God of his confidence

1. **Psalm 56:7** in *thine* anger cast down the people, O God.
 - a. The enemies of David were also the enemies of God. David was petitioning God to cast down His enemies.
 - b. This must also be our confidence. Our enemies are also God’s enemies. We must be careful and discerning here. We must not declare the wrong people to be our enemies.
2. **Psalm 56:8** – “put thou my tears into thy bottle: *are they* not in thy book?”
 - a. David declares that God knows his steps. He knows the things David is experiencing.
 - b. David asks God to store up his tears—to consider them, measure them, weigh them.
 - c. David rests in confidence that God does indeed know his tears – they are recorded in the book of God’s Divine Decree.
3. David rested in this: when he cried out to God God heard and God defeated David’s enemies.

Psalm 56:9 – “When I cry *unto thee*, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God *is* for me.”

 - a. There is no greater confidence than this! God is for us. This is the ultimate expression of faith. God is for us.
 - b. For the lost person the only thing he can say is, “God is against me!” This is the greatest lament. God is against me!
 - c. If God is against you you are ruined, but if God is for you all the forces in the universe will not be able to be successful in an assault upon you.

Romans 8:31 – “What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?”
4. This is why David can declare his hope in God with such confidence

Psalm 56:4 – “In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.”

III. David delights in his confession of gratitude – **Verses 10-13**

- A. David has made it clear the source of his trust
Psalm 56:3 – “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.”
Psalm 56:11 – “In God have I put my trust”
1. David has also made it clear the fruit of his trust
Psalm 56:4 – “In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.”
Psalm 56:11 – “In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.”
 2. It is repeated in Hebrews 6
Hebrews 13:6 – “The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?”
 3. As David considered his great God his fears faded to faith
- B. Now David expressed his heart towards God
Psalm 56:10 – “In God will I praise *his* word: in the LORD will I praise *his* word.”
1. David was a man under a vow
Psalm 56:12 – “Thy vows *are* upon me, O God”
 - a. David frequently expressed that he was a man under vows to God and that he was careful in paying them.
Psalm 22:25 – “My praise *shall be* of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.”
Psalm 50:14 – “Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High.”
Psalm 61:8 – “So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.”
Psalm 66:13 – “I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows,”
Psalm 116:14 – “I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.”
 - b. All of God’s people are under a vow
We have pledged loyalty to God.
 - c. We owe praises to God
“I will render praises unto thee” – David was giving to God His due. “Render” = pay, remunerate, restitution
David had a debt to pay.
 2. Our praise is due to God but our praises flow forth freely
David trusted God. God proved Himself mighty and David was overwhelmed – he responded with overwhelming gratitude.
He praised God for both His work and His word – His promises not yet fulfilled but the confidence that God will be faithful to every promise.
 3. David describes the greatness of God’s deliverance
Psalm 56:13 – “For thou hast delivered my soul from death: *wilt* not *thou deliver* my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?”

Conclusion:

1. This great psalm, written so long ago, still expresses the heart of God's people today. We fall into times of great trial and cry out to God and He hears us and delivers us by His mighty power which then causes us to sing forth with praise and gratitude.
2. Matthew Henry: "How pleasantly may a good Christian, in singing this psalm, rejoice in God, and praise him for what he will do, as well as for what he has done."
3. Although we face many trials in this life we can trust God without fear.
Psalm 56:3 – "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."