

## When I Am Afraid

*“When I am afraid, I will put my trust in Thee.”*

**Psalm 56:3 NASB**

This verse was written by one of the most powerful men who ever lived on the face of the earth; one of the most valiant warriors who ever waged war; one of the noblest godly kings to have ever led a nation. To this very day the nation of Israel esteems this king for his power, bravery, and nobility. Nevertheless, King David penned these words, “When I am afraid...”

The Bible conveys the reality of the David’s attributes of power, bravery and nobility as it teaches us that David was a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam. 13:14). The Scripture teaches us that God prepared David to be a warrior while he was but a youthful shepherd (1 Sam. 17:31-37). David himself acknowledged the fact that it was God Who divinely prepared him for his role as a warrior king when he wrote, *“Blessed be the Lord, my rock, **Who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle...**”* (Ps. 144:1). He was indeed a noted warrior (1 Sam. 18:5-7). Nevertheless, David penned these words, “When I am afraid...”

David was not talking about reverential fear of God that respects and honors God for Who He is (Deut. 6:4; Josh. 4:23-24; 24:14; 1 Sam. 12:24). Neither was he speaking of fear in the sense of prudence that shows respect for probable danger and consequently prepares for it (Pr. 22:3; 27:12). No. David was talking about the fear that wrenches the spirit; that anxious fear which distracts one’s mind from those things which are essential (1 Pet. 5:7-8) causing one to act apart from faith and therefore sin against God (Rm. 14:23c).

### **The Reality of Fear**

In this statement David conveyed the fact he encountered fear. Note that David did not write “If” but “**when**” he became afraid. In the original Hebrew language it is literally, “In the day I am afraid...” The KJV reads, “What time I am afraid...”

In this same chapter David described his life as trampled and oppressed by his proud enemies (vs. 1-3) who distorted his words and thought evil against him (v. 5). They waited and watched to entrap him (v. 6). His life was in definite peril. No wonder he experienced fear. As a matter of fact, in this very chapter David inferred that such conditions even brought tears to his eyes (v. 8). Yes, he cried! Although he was a mighty king his encounter with fear was real and intense.

Fear is a reality of the fallen world in which we live. It is both a product of the flesh and a tool of the devil. If it was experienced by someone like David who was both close to God and well trained for the purpose God called him, we can be certain that we too will encounter it.

### **The Remedy for Fear**

Nevertheless, what David did when he experienced fear is of the utmost importance to us in this verse. He said, “I will put my trust in Thee.” David did not allow the fear to linger. Instead, when fear came, David responded by trusting in the Lord.

It is our characteristic to make things much more complicated than what they actually are. When it comes to the remedy for fear this characteristic is often evident. Because fear is frequently experienced with such intensity we often think the remedy must consist of much complexity. For instance, the entire army of Israel was once brought to a stand-still by a single individual. Goliath's reputation,<sup>1</sup> size, strength, armor, and defiant challenge of the Israeli army effected dismay and great fear in both Israel's king and army (1 Sam. 17:11). Every day, twice a day, for forty days Goliath presented his challenge (17:16) and each of those forty days ended with Israel's king and army fleeing the battle line in fear (17:24). There is little doubt that every day Saul and his men were employed in drafting some complex plan to conquer the giant. An enthusiastic battle cry did not work (v. 20). Even after Saul declared he would give riches to the man that killed Goliath, along with his daughter in marriage and tax exemption to the man's entire family, no one in the entire Israeli army stepped forward to accept the challenge! (17:25)

This encounter between Goliath and Israel conveys much information regarding the workings of the intense fear experienced by Israel. We could spend significant time drawing it out of the text and I encourage you to do so but for now acknowledge Israel's real problem.

Israel's real problem was not Goliath's reputation, size, strength, armor, and defiant challenge. Their problem was really not even their fear. Fear simply seized an opportunity made available by the real problem. The real problem among Israel was their failure to trust and obey God. And the remedy for their fear was not to be found in pep rallies (17:20), some fantastic scheme, elaborate rewards (17:25) or special armor (17:38-39). As a matter of fact, the remedy was not even an inexperienced shepherd with a sling and five smooth stones. The remedy was faith and it was this trust in God that the young shepherd named David possessed.

For now, neither time nor space will permit an examination of Israel's history prior to this encounter with the single individual, Goliath but anyone familiar with the biblical account of that history knows it is replete with the most extraordinary victories brought about by divine intervention as Israel trusted and obeyed God. As long as Israel trusted and obeyed God they prevailed. When they failed to trust and obey they experienced one defeat after another. Their trust in God and His presence with them is the bedrock of Israel's history.

Anyone, even slightly familiar with the biblical account of Israel's history knows their prosperity was intimately tied to their trust in God. Satan also knows this and because he was aware of this truth when Israel's army confronted the Philistine army, he employed the use of Goliath and furnished his evil mind with a sinister plan crafted to shift Israel's trust from God to man. Notice, in Goliath's challenge there is no mention of God. He even calls Israel the servants of Saul (vs. 8-10). Furthermore, his challenge was man against man, "Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants..." For forty days, once in the morning and again in the evening (v. 16) he uttered the same words (v. 23). The satanically engineered plan worked. For forty days, instead of looking to God and plowing the uncircumcised Philistine under in the name of the Lord of Hosts, Israel looked to themselves and feared (vs. 23-24) because there seemed to be no man among them to confront the giant.

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<sup>1</sup>(1 Sam. 17:4 calls him a champion in the NASB. Also see 1 Sam. 17:33)

As a contrast, note David's words when he first became aware of Goliath's challenge, "For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God." (v. 26) David had not succumbed to the deception. He saw the battle not existing merely between men but a defiance of God. Even at the most tense point of David's encounter with Goliath, David acknowledged that the battle belonged to the Lord (v. 47).

Fear along with its consequences can be and often is intense but its remedy need not be complicated. Actually, the remedy to fear is basically simple. Responding to fear by trusting God is the only certain remedy for fear. As a matter of fact, it could be stated that fear is failure to trust God. When fear is present, trust in God is not. Likewise, when trust in God is present, fear is not. Speaking of the righteous Psalm 112:7 says, "He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord." Jesus said to His disciples, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me." (Jn. 14:1 ESV) In this verse Jesus conveyed to His disciples that the answer to a troubled heart was to trust in God. Trusting in God eliminates the fear. For this reason David wrote, "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in Thee."

Before closing it is important to recognize a second truth in this Psalm related to verse 3. Three times in this Psalm David reveals the concrete foundation to his trust in God,

***"In God, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me?"***

Psalms 56:4 NASB

***"In God, whose word I praise, In the Lord, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?"***

Psalms 56:10-11 NASB

Three times in this Psalm David stated he placed his trust in God (vs. 3, 4 and 11). This was the remedy for fear—trust in God. Three times in this Psalm David praised God for His Word (vs.4 and twice in verse 10). God's Word was the rock of David's faith.

Faith is not blind. However, neither is faith physical sight (2 Cor. 5:7). Furthermore, faith does not negate one's responsibility or prudence (David gathered 5 stones 1 Sam. 17:40). Instead, faith is based on God's Word and acts according to God's Word. If we are to be strong in faith we must be strong in God's Word. We must know and obey the verses that pertain to that which we fear.

My prayer for you is that as you meditate on this simple but powerful verse you would grow strong in the faith and consequently experience your fear replaced by trust in God.

***"When I am afraid, I will put my trust in Thee."***