

Theme of the day: God delivers His children from difficulties / crosses. Luke 9:18-24

The lyrics of a song often tell you what's going on in a song writer's life. If it's a song you can understand and lyrics that are easy to pick out, it's easy to sense what that artist is going through. Do you sense frustration or relief? Do you sense joy or sorrow? Just listen to the lyrics... Open up your hymnal and listen to the lyrics of some popular hymns: "Amazing Grace"—you listen to that and you can sense John Newton's humility as a sinner but he sings of his trust in a gracious God who saved him. Or how about "A Mighty Fortress"—you listen to the reformation hymn and you hear what was going on in Martin Luther's life, all the attacks he faced, yet he trusted in God, his trusty shield and weapon.

Take a look at **Psalm 56** and hear a song written by King David... what's going on in his life? Just listen to the lyrics:

Part 1 – Aware of the enemies that attack

"Be merciful to me O God, for men hotly pursue me all day long, many are attacking me in their pride." Sounds pretty heavy, doesn't it? This is David's life. David was the one that was chosen by the Lord to be the new king of Israel and he was faithful—God said he was a man after his own heart. David trusted in the Lord so firmly that he was able to go up against the giant, Goliath, with nothing more than a slingshot! He confessed the Lord—there's dozens of psalms he wrote that attest to that. But look what life was like for David—King Saul who was *unfaithful* to the Lord chased David all over Palestine to take his life. That's the situation David finds himself in when sits down to write the song we know as Psalm 56. David was well aware of the fact that enemies attack God people.

So where does he turn? In verse 3 David wrote, **"When I am afraid, I will trust in you (God)."** And he did, eventually, but let's not skip over the heading of the psalm. **"...when the philistines seized him in Gath."** That little bit of information highlights a not so flattering event in David's life. In a moment of weak faith as he was fleeing from Saul, David thought it would be a good idea to leave his country and run away to the philistine city of Gath. Gath, by the way, was the hometown of Goliath. There were probably wanted posters of him up all over the city and that's where he ended up! As soon as David sets foot in the city, people recognize who he is and out of fear for his life he acts insane. That's his backup plan. He foams at the mouth, claws at the door and acts like a maniac. So before David spoke the words of verse 3, he sadly had to admit, "when I was afraid, I turned away and I ran." David was well aware of his enemies that attack and his inability to save himself.

Our song is not all that different. Are you aware of all the enemies that attack you? Even David, God's chosen king, found himself running for his life. Or even more so, Jesus himself was slandered and rejected by his own people and even killed. So he tells his disciples in the gospel lesson (Luke 9:18-27), **"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."** In other words, you can expect the same kind of treatment as Jesus; hardship, rejection, ridicule." So you see our situation is not all that different from David's. David was chosen to be king; you are chosen to be God's own child. Does that mean life on this earth is always, pleasant, always easy?

Maybe the attacks are less obvious for us though, since no one is coming after us with a sword. Instead the unbelieving world comes after what we believe and what we confess with scissors and tries to cut out those pages of scripture that we confess. "all those pages that don't seem to match up with science, let's just cut those out. Or all those miracles, you believe that stuff? Let's cut those out too and write them off as fairytales." David also talks about his attackers who, **"all day long they twist my words."** That's what our enemies try to do to us too. You simply try to share that gospel message that says Jesus is the one Savior of the world. And your words are twisted—"I have to believe in Jesus to be saved? That's just narrow-minded." How many times have I just run away from those awkward conversations because I was afraid of an attack against what I believe...

Look at the extent to which David's attacker pursued him—**“They conspire, the lurk, they watch my steps, eager to take my life.”** Again, that attack is not so obvious to us. We are blessed to have the freedom to still preach God's Word without being physically attacked or even killed. But consider the one who does conspire and lurk—**“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”** Satan watches our steps in life and looks for the right temptations to throw in front of us so we trip up. He's there when something goes wrong in your life to accuse God saying, “If he really loved you, would he let this happen to you.” Or when you're struggling with whatever temptation you struggle with and you know God says “don't do it,” he asks the same question he asked Eve, “did God really say that?” Sometimes doesn't it just seem easier to give in and let him win? The devil is lurking, he is conspire because he wants to take away your eternal life. He's an enemy of God that attacks his people.

Part 2 – Assured by a God that delivers

Are you aware of all the enemies that attack you? Maybe not. It's not always so obvious. But God takes note. Listen to David, **“Record my lament, list my tears on your scroll** (literally ‘put my tears in your wine skin). **Are they not in your record?”** God sees that you need help in the midst of a world that attacks his people. He recognizes your burdens and listens to your cry for help so attentively it's as if he's putting your tears in a bottle. But God not only takes note, he takes action!

So David keeps on singing, **“When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?”** That's David's refrain—he says it twice (verses 4 and 10/11). So quickly a song that started off as a song of distress becomes a song of confidence. That's because David realizes who his God is and what he's done. **“I know that God is for me... you have delivered me from death.”**

Our song, is not that different from David's. **“I will trust in you”**—that's our refrain—**“I know that God is for me.”** Did you notice how David knew that God was for him? **“My enemies will turn back when I call for help... by this I will know that God is for me.”** Picture a battlefield. You're completely outnumbered. What else do you do besides retreat or surrender? Then, all of a sudden you see your enemies turn back and run. Air support is behind you, reinforcements are coming. You know that you're on the winning side. Well picture the spiritual battlefield with all its enemies—the world and temptation and Satan himself. All of a sudden you see them turn back and run. You see Jesus fighting every temptation for you and never throwing in the towel. You see the cross where he took away every sin and ever reason that Satan you use to accuse you. Look at the empty tomb and see Satan running in the opposite direct because Jesus lives and so do you. The battle is won. God has destroyed every enemy. Your sin is forgiven. By this you know that God is for you.

We just keep on singing then, **“I will trust in you... you have delivered me from death.”** If David's enemies were turned back and no longer threatened him, then neither did death. It's as simple as that. If Jesus has conquered our biggest enemies—sin and the devil— then death no longer threatens us. And you can trust that he has because look what God calls us: in Galatians 3, Paul says, **“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”** You are all sons and daughter of God, and what parent wouldn't do everything possible to rescue their child from death? Look what God did—he sent his own Son you rescue you from death. As God's forgiven children, you will not inherit the punishment of eternal death. You inherit the gift of eternal life as God's child.

Look at David's attitude once he realized that he had that kind of relationship with God—**“I will trust in you, in God, whose word I praise!”** David was afraid and maybe even ashamed when the people of Gath found out who he was. Yet now that he's seen God's deliverance, he praises his word. When people find out who we are—Christians—we're not embarrassed. You don't hide who you are; rather you praise God's Word by saying “this is what I believe.”

Notice another transformation in attitude: fear becomes confidence. David says, **“In God I trust, I will not be afraid! What can mortal man do to me?”** David realized this pretty soon after his little incident in Gath. Finally he says, I won't be afraid. If God has delivered me from my enemies and calls me his Son, what's the worst that could happen? Saul does kill me, the people of Gath take my life. Then I end up with him in heaven! And that's our attitude as well. When my life doesn't seem to be going the way it should, what do I

have to be afraid of? When this world attacks us for what we believe, what's the worst that could happen? We get laughed at? What can this world do to me? God is on my side. He's delivered me. I won't be afraid.

Finally look where you stand as God's delivered child—"You delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life." Even after David wrote this psalm, he still had some dark days ahead of him. He'd lose a son. Another child would turn against him. For us too, some days just seem dark. But remember, the God in whom you trust, who has delivered you says you don't have to walk in darkness. You don't have to walk through life ashamed or without hope. You get to walk in God's holy presence as a son walk next to his dad. In dark world, you get to live every day in the brightness of knowing Jesus as your Savior and that promise of eternal life.

So what's going through David's mind? Listen to his lyrics. He's not singing the blues. His song is trust in the most solid thing there is in an unstable world. And that's our song too. With all that's happening in your life or all that could happen in your life, you can keep on singing, "**I will trust in you. In God's whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid.**" Amen.

Vicar Gran