

# The Gospel According to the Psalms

## Psalm 56 – Trusting Prayer Amid Enemies and Fear

Faith Church of Linden

By Daniel Patz on January 18, 2026

*The following notes are a draft of my sermon. These are not my pulpit notes or a manuscript I use to preach with but something I type up before writing out my “pulpit notes”. I hope they are helpful.*

### **Trusting God Amid Enemies and Fear: Lessons from David's Prayer in Psalm 56**

#### **Psalm 56**

To the choirmaster: according to The Dove on Far-off Terebinths. A Miktam of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.

- [1] Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me;  
all day long an attacker oppresses me;
- [2] my enemies trample on me all day long,  
for many attack me proudly.
- [3] When I am afraid,  
I put my trust in you.
- [4] In God, whose word I praise,  
in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.  
What can flesh do to me?
- [5] All day long they injure my cause;  
all their thoughts are against me for evil.
- [6] They stir up strife, they lurk;  
they watch my steps,  
as they have waited for my life.
- [7] For their crime will they escape?  
In wrath cast down the peoples, O God!
  
- [8] You have kept count of my tossings;  
put my tears in your bottle.  
Are they not in your book?
- [9] Then my enemies will turn back  
in the day when I call.  
This I know, that God is for me.
- [10] In God, whose word I praise,  
in the LORD, whose word I praise,
- [11] in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.  
What can man do to me?
- [12] I must perform my vows to you, O God;  
I will render thank offerings to you.
- [13] For you have delivered my soul from death,  
yes, my feet from falling,  
that I may walk before God  
in the light of life. (ESV)

- Sanctity of Life Sunday
- Set the scene: David, seized by the Philistines in Gath (superscription; cf. 1 Sam 21:10–15), faces real enemies, oppression, and mortal danger. And it is a song written in the night or in the morning after a dark night!
  - 1 Samuel 21:10-15 And David rose and fled that day from Saul and went to Achish the king of Gath. (11) And the servants of Achish said to him, “Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, ‘Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands’?” (12) And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. (13) So he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard. (14) Then Achish said to his servants, “Behold, you see the man is mad. Why then have you brought him to me? (15) Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?”
- In the midst of fear, David turns to prayer—not as a last resort, but as his first and sustaining response. Psalm 34 also writes of this occasion.
- Psalm 56 teaches us how to pray when afraid: honestly, dependently, and triumphantly.
- Psalm 56 shows us David – the anointed King from God whose enemies are God’s enemies. Pointing us to the Greater David (Jesus) – who lived this Psalm out with greater significance when He came here on earth.
- We'll explore David's prayer through four key questions, each yielding a timeless **truth** and **command** for us.

## Main Points

### (From Question 1: Why does David pray?)

1. **We Pray Because We Face Real Enemies, Fears, and Dangers—So Pray Desperately in Times of Threat**
  - David's context: Constant trampling and oppression by enemies (vv. 1–2, 5–6); they lurk, stir strife, and seek his life.
  - They are vast and many - He moves from the frying pan of an Israelite king (saul) to the fire of a Philistine enemy.
  - The enemies are persistently against him - all day long.

- The enemies are varied in their approach.
- The enemies are hostile - they want His life. They want to destroy Him.
- The enemies we face are the devil, the flesh and the world.
- Left to ourselves we have reason to fear.
- Jesus told us though to fear not Him who can only harm the body.
- He openly admits fear: "When I am afraid..." (v. 3).
- **Truth/Imperative:** In seasons of opposition, anxiety, or peril, do not suppress fear or rely on self—turn to God in honest, urgent prayer. Fear drives God's people to dependence, not despair.
- Application: Name your "enemies" today (illness, relational conflict, uncertainty, spiritual attack). Bring them to God rather than bottling them up.
- When we are following Christ and His righteousness – we will have enemies. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you...

### (From Question 2: What does David pray?)

## 2. We Pray with Raw Lament, Pleas for Grace and Justice, and Ultimate Confidence in God's Care—So Pray Honestly and Confidently

- Laments the attacks (vv. 1–2, 5–6).
- Pleads for grace/mercy (v. 1: "Be gracious to me, O God").
- Imprecates/calls for justice (v. 7: "In wrath cast down the peoples, O God!"). Not for personal revenge.
- Affirms God's intimate knowledge and tender care (v. 8: God counts his wanderings/tossings and bottles his tears—personal, compassionate attention).
- **Truth/Imperative:** Bring your full heart to God—lament your pain, plead for mercy, cry for justice against evil, and rest in His detailed, fatherly care for every tear and trial. Pray comprehensively, not superficially.
- Application: Model David's honesty in prayer journals. Trust that no suffering is unnoticed by God.

(From Question 3: How does David pray?)

### 3. We Pray by Addressing God with Pleas and Praise, Then Preaching Truth to Our Own Souls—So Pray with Dependence and boasts in His Word.

- Structure: Direct address to God (pleas in vv. 1, 7; praise of His word in vv. 4, 10).
- Self-exhortation/reminder: "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you" (v. 3); repeated resolve to trust and not fear (vv. 3–4, 11).
- Devotion: Vows and thank offerings (v. 12); determination to walk before God (v. 13).
- **Truth/Imperative:** Shift from fear to faith by speaking God's promises to yourself—depend on Him alone, devote yourself to trusting His word, and boast in it above circumstances.
- Application: When fear rises, declare aloud (like David): "In God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (vv. 4, 11). Memorize and meditate on God's word as your anchor.

(From Question 4:

does David pray?)

### 4. We Pray to the Faithful, Caring, Sovereign God Who Is For Us—So Pray to the God Who Is on Your Side

- Last week – Florian in Psalm 115- God is Sovereign, Trustworthy, Good, and Gracious...
- Gracious, Listening, Justice Giving, Caring/knowing, On Our Side!
- Addressed repeatedly to "O God," "the Lord" (vv. 1, 4, 10, 12).
- Boasts/praises His word twice (vv. 4, 10)—God's reliable promises and character.

[4] In God, whose word I praise,  
in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.  
What can flesh do to me?

- Climactic confidence: "This I know, that God is for me" (v. 9); God records every detail (v. 8); ultimate deliverance (vv. 12–13).
- **Truth/Imperative:** Direct your prayers to the personal, promise-keeping God who is intimately for you and sovereign over every enemy—therefore, pray with bold assurance.
- Application: In Christ (who fulfills God's "for us" promise—Rom 8:31–39), we know God is for us even more deeply. Let this truth fuel persistent, confident prayer.

## Conclusion

- Recap: David prayed **because** of fear and foes → **with** honest pleas and praise → **how** by trusting and boasting in God's word → **to** the God who is for him and cares intimately.
- Gospel tie-in: Jesus faced ultimate enemies and fear in Gethsemane, yet trusted the Father perfectly (Heb 5:7–9). Through Him, our tears are bottled, our fears conquered, and our deliverance secured.

Hebrews 5:7-9 ESV In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. (8) Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. (9) And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,

- Final challenge: This week, when fear strikes, follow David's pattern—pray these four dimensions. Trust the God who is for you.