

A Sermon To Me: “What Can Man Do To Me?”
(Psalm 56 – A Psalm of David while in great distress)

INTRODUCTION:

1. I am going to let you in on a little secret. Preachers sometimes preach other preacher’s sermons.
 - A. If I choose to do that, most of the time for me it means beginning with hopeful expectations that because the message is good I can get the lesson done faster and can move on to other matters.
 - B. But that, however, is rarely the case, seeing other preachers are not me and how they word things, reason through points, etc., are not always the way I do it. So, rather than it being a quick and easy matter, it ends us taking me days to get it the way I want it.
 - C. That is generally even true of re preaching older sermons of my own.
2. Today’s sermon, however, is different.
 - A. After working through the week to complete my sermon, I was looking in a folder on my desktop and noticed a Word file dating back to January 2020 called, “Sermon B_K”
 - B. There was no other name associated with it, but I have a pretty good idea that it is not from Burger King, but likely from one of two people very dear to us here at Colonial Heights.
 - C. When I opened that sermon and began to read it, it was like it had been put together and somehow left there on my computer for me to hear, learn from, and be humbled by right then.
 - D. It was so pertinent to my current situation, emotions, and feelings that upon examining it I felt I could preach it with little editorial changes on my part.
3. So, I decided to preach it to me! That is what I am doing today. Now, if you want to listen in while I preach to myself, that would be great because I really think you will benefit from it.
4. The secondary title is “What can man do to me?” That is the title I gave it because that is a question David confidently asked in Psalm 56 and it exactly fits my situation right now.
 - A. So, have you ever asked yourself, “what can man do to me”? Well, in answering to that question, have you ever thought “a lot!”
 - B. There are a lot of things people can do to us, and it does not take long to think of them.
 - C. People can hate, oppress, slander, hurt, maim, and kill me.
5. David, however, tells us that the answer is “nothing.” There is **nothing** man can do to us.
 - A. Now David does not write these words as he sits back in luxury on the throne as king in Jerusalem.
 - B. David does not make this declaration when things were going well for him, as if he is stating these words as a boastful claim of the good life he enjoyed.
 - C. This is a psalm written “when the Philistines had seized him in Gath.” Things were not going well for David at that moment.
 - i. He is being chased by Saul who wants to kill him and is in the hand of Achish the king of Gath, a Philistine, and has had to pretend to be a madman to preserve his life.
 - ii. So how can David say that there is nothing that man can do to him?
6. Well, what I want to do today is to read this psalm and consider David’s explanation.

BODY:

I. Plea For Mercy (56:1-4):

- A. David is being relentlessly attacked (56:1-2 – “Be gracious to me, O God, for man has trampled upon me; fighting all day long he oppresses me. ² My foes have trampled upon me all day long, for they are many who fight proudly against me.”).
 1. David describes the severity of the attacks he is suffering from **man** (enos), a less dignified word than the Hebrew word “adam,” indicating mortals, those of the human race.
 2. Notice David’s emphasis upon “all day long.”
 - a. David is experiencing a wearying, continual, attack from his enemies, who are many.
 - b. “All day long” David’s **foes** trampled, or snapped at, him, pressing their attack.

- c. They are hotly pursuing him, like in a military struggle, and David is in retreat.
- 3. Therefore, amid these conditions, David cries out, “be gracious to me, O God.”
 - a. God’s favor is the only answer.
 - b. For, from an earthly standpoint he cannot stop their attacks. Their attacks are “all day long”—they are relentless.
- B. David’s response (56:3-4 – “When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. ⁴ 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?).
 - 1. In the face of these enemies, David expresses a confidence in God that removes his fear.
 - a. As you read these words, you can almost see David working through his emotions as he pens this psalm.
 - b. He is afraid but knows that he does not need to be afraid because he has God.
 - c. Therefore, he puts his confidence in God and praises God’s word.
 - 2. We need confidence in God as we encounter life’s difficulties.
 - a. It is not that we will not have the feeling of fear or that we will not go through times of distress.
 - b. Rather, we know that when these tough times come we can trust God.
 - c. We must remind ourselves of this.

II. David wants his enemies defeated (56:5-13):

- A. David now returns to the tactics of his enemies (56:5 – “All day long they distort my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil. ⁶ They attack, they lurk, they watch my steps, as they have waited to take my life.”).
 - 1. These people are slanderers who listen to and scrutinize his every word and action for evil against him and they never stop.
 - 2. David does not deserve the assault he is receiving, seeing they *twist* his words to give them more reason to attack.
 - a. It is shameful that this kind of activity takes place at all, but especially that it can take place among Christians. But I know firsthand that it does, as do many of you.
 - b. People like this, rather than listening to your explanations and reasons for your actions, watch and listen to find something wrong to promote themselves and their agenda.
 - c. These people see and hear things the way they want to see and hear them and that is the end of the matter, which, of course, is so wrong.
 - i. How evil it is to twist people’s words and plot their harm from it!
 - ii. And you need to know what I think David also knew, which is that until you bow to them, you will never be out of their crosshairs.
 - 3. So, what do we do? We do what David did and look to God for comfort, strength, and victory to keep doing what is right!
- B. David also called for judgment upon these enemies (56:7 – “Because of wickedness, cast them forth, in anger put down the peoples, O God!”).
 - 1. An alternate translation of this passage has David declaring to the Lord not to let them escape!
 - a. David wants justice to come upon them for their actions.
 - b. David says, “In anger put down the nations, O God.” Why? Because of their evil deeds!
 - c. There are people that claim to be Christians that need to be stopped and to repent! And it is not wrong to ask God to help make that happen!
 - 2. David seeks God’s notice of his troubles (56:8 – “You have taken account of my wanderings; put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in Your book?”).
 - a. This language reflects the way kings kept a record of significant events that occurred during their reign.

- b. David is calling upon God to look at the record He has of this event.
 - i. Here we see David’s tears being recorded and kept in a wineskin or bottle by God.
 - ii. This is not literally taking place, but the imagery makes a very assuring point: God knows our pain. He sees our tears and our afflictions are recorded in his sight.
 - iii. In fact, it seems his tears being kept and recorded implies that God will not allow those who cause those tears and troubles to escape judgment.
- 3. David knows that in the end his enemies will be forced to retreat because of the works of God (56:9 – “Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call; this I know, that God is for me.”).
 - a. David expresses a great confidence that when he talks to God, God will respond.
 - b. As faithful servants of God, we should stand confidently in this same knowledge!
- C. David’s confident response (56:10-11 – “In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise, ¹¹ in God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?”).
 - 1. Here David not only invokes God (Elohim), but His holy name Yahweh in this plea.
 - 2. In the first section, David called to God for mercy since he was being trampled by his enemies all day long, but in this second section, the purpose is slightly different.
 - a. David states his trust in God because God knows what he is going through, has recorded his pain, and will cause the enemies to retreat when David calls out.
 - b. Therefore, he declares, “what can man do to him?”
 - i. If God knows my pain, sees my suffering, and will make my enemies retreat, then there is nothing that I have to fear.
 - ii. This explains David’s concluding word (56:12-13 – “Your vows are binding upon me, O God; I will render thank offerings to You. ¹³ For You have delivered my soul from death, indeed my feet from stumbling, so that I may walk before God in the light of the living.”).
 - 1) David will make his offerings of thanksgiving because God delivered him from death and even stumbling so that he can walk before God in the light of life.
 - 2) That is the blessing of knowing and trusting in God in the times of trouble.

III. Application:

- A. God’s people can have the same confidence in Him today as David did (Heb. 13:5-6 – “...for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,” ⁶ so that we confidently say, “the Lord is my helper, **I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?**”).
 - 1. Do you see that the promise David relied upon is the same promise given to us. These are David’s very words—“I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”!
 - 2. So, we need to see that the message of Psalm 56 is certainly applicable to our lives.
- B. Trusting in God and His word removes fear.
 - 1. Because God’s Word is a **source of confidence**.
 - a. Remember how in 56:10 David repeatedly states that he will praise the **word** of the Lord.
 - b. He did so because that word gave him confidence, revealing to Him the God he served and the promises He made to His people!
 - c. When we are attacked, we need to be able to draw on the stable assurance of God’s word rather than the ever-changing perspectives of human feelings and emotion.
 - i. Therefore, a lack of knowledge of the scriptures is crippling to the Christian.
 - ii. Too many people have too much of their faith based solely on emotions and feelings.
 - 1) And that is a terribly unstable foundation upon which to stand.
 - 2) I know personally that when under attack, it is our emotions that fail and our feelings that become a rollercoaster ride.
 - 3) That is why we need to know and rely upon God’s word for confidence.

2. Because God's word **puts our minds on a spiritual plain** (56:10-11).
 - a. In 56:10-11 David lifted his eyes above the world and saw God and was refreshed.
 - b. Things are the most difficult and scary when our focus is on the problems of this world, on the actions of the ungodly, and when we lose sight of our heavenly purpose.
 - c. Instead of focusing on the earth, we must look for God's help and be reminded that God is in charge and sees the big picture.
 - i. This is so important because there are many times when we are suffering or under attack and we do not think that we can endure another day.
 - ii. Yet, when we look to God and are calm and clear in our thoughts we cannot help but see how many times God has offered relief for the moment to help us get our head about us and continue to press forward.
3. God's Word **reminds us that God is for us**
 - a. Despite all that David went through in his life, he returned to this theme: I trust God, so what can man do to me? (56:4, 11).
 - b. That same promise is given God's people today (Rom. 8:31-32 – "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?").
 - c. When God is on our side, it is possible to find a refuge amid the storm.
 - i. For, we must remember that our relationship with God has greater value than simply trying to stop the present suffering.
 - ii. As God's people we can surrender ourselves to God's control and allow the Creator to help us through our difficulties.
 - d. This has always been the way for God's people, making it possible, like the apostles of Christ, to count it as a joy to suffer for the cause of Christ.
 - i. And do not forget that as Christians we are called to experience suffering.
 - ii. But always remember that suffering does not equal abandonment from God.
 - 1) We must trust in God to bring justice to it all in the end, as well as a reward for our faithful obedience.
 - 2) It is through these things that we can remove fear in dire times.

CONCLUSION:

1. I hope you will take the words of David to heart and when faced with earthly trials and tribulations, even when facing things you may not deserve, and look to God and His word to gain confidence and strength to pull you through.
2. I know that when you are in the crosshairs that is not always easy to do, which is why I preached this sermon to myself.
3. But I can also assure you that when you understand and believe these words, they will truly bless you and raise the quality of your life beyond measure!
4. Will you come to Jesus today?