

Oh, if I had Wings like a Dove

Open your Bibles to II Samuel 17:24.

In these verses, we find David, running not from the Palestinians, not from the Amorites, not from any of the surrounding enemies that he warred against during his period as king, but from Absalom, his beloved son. Absalom – without going into the lengthy story that leads up to this – is his son and he is pursuing his father to murder him. David was a warrior, as were the people with him at this time. I am sure he could have put up quite a fight and probably have destroyed Absalom. Instead, he chose to run. I do not know what I would do if I was in David’s circumstance, but David chose to run.

In II Samuel 17:24, David finds himself at Mahanaim. And, of course, Absalom is in pursuit as he passed ***“over Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him.”***

Verse 26 continues, ***“So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead.”***

Verses 28 and 29 tell us that those in the land, ***“Brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse, And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.”***

‘The people were hungry, weary, and thirsty in the wilderness’; that is a whole message in itself, but it is not the subject matter of this message. I believe they were fearful, too. If Absalom and the men of Israel caught up to their group, what do you think would have happen to them? Absalom and his men were the Jihadist of David’s day, David and his men all would have died. Fear ran through his mind and what David did so often over and over again when he found himself in times of trouble, he penned some wonderful hymns. In the hymns, we see him starting at a low point and ending at a high point. Where, in the beginning, he has little faith, he ends up with a whole lot of faith, because God’s Word provides hope. Fortunately, we live in a time where we have the luxury of opening our Bible at any time to study because it provides hope for those who are fearful and it can give hope in times of fear.

Now David penned many different Psalms while at Mahanaim, but let us begin with Psalms 55:1-8. Just think about it, David is writing this while in Israel running from his son. David begins,

“Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication.

Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; [David is not being quiet about his complaints]

Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.

My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.”

David is in a bad state of mind, but I will not be judgemental because of the little faith David showed in that verse. What would you do? Ask yourself what you would do if your son or daughter turned on you and wanted to kill you. What would you do? What state of mind would you be in?

Verse 5 is why I know David was fearful and perhaps close to having a nervous breakdown because of the circumstances.

David writes in verse 5, ***“Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest.”***

In the Hebrew, the word ‘overwhelmed’ means ***‘has covered me.’*** In other words, David is saying, “Fear, trembling, and horror have covered me.” How many times have I said, and I was not even in the situation as David, “If only I could fly away from this problem, or these circumstances.” In 2005, towards the end of the year, I faced some circumstances that I thought were going to do me in. At that time I was full of faith, excitement, and enthusiasm. The ministry was less than two months old and then the problems, the troubles, and the circumstances came. I always had problems and circumstances, but nothing like that up to then. I thought they would affect me enough that I would have to put the ministry on hold. Thank God, I did not have to do that, even though I did not know how I was going to get through the circumstances. But I did, because God got me through. I look back at that time now and I say, “Wow, that situation was nothing compared to what I have been facing recently with my health and other things that are going on.” I am not some super human Christian and I have to admit there are times when I find myself in a state of fear over certain things. For myself, in those times, I run to God's Word because that is where hope lies, and that is what gives us hope in times of fear.

In verse 6, David writes, ***“And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.”***

In other words, David is saying, “I am out of here. Put me in some safe haven somewhere where I do not have to deal with all this mess.” I agree with David, but that is not how God operates and that is not what His plan is for our lives. God does not want us to be in a state of fear or to be fearful. His Word provides the antidote for fear. Even though I know God’s Word like the back of my hand, there are many times I have to remind myself of it. So what can we do when we feel as fearful as David did in his circumstances in verse 5 of this Psalm? Read verse 22 in Psalms 55.

First, we must, **“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee:”**

The word 'cast' is important in this verse, because when you cast something away from you, you hurl it away from you. Cast thy burden upon the Lord; hurl it away from you. This is not just throwing it away, but using force to do it. Use all your might to hurl those burdens, those trials, and those hardships away from you. This does not get rid of them, but you can hurl onto God the negative faithless thoughts that come with trials that allow fear to come back into your faith walk and bring you down. This is not Joe Cortes telling you this is what you need to do; it is what God's Word says. When you see yourself in a state of fear and know the reason why, take those reasons, bundle them up, figuratively speaking, and cast them away from you with force. And we are to hurl them onto someone who cares and can handle them better than we can. We hurl them, ***“upon the Lord.”*** The Lord is the one who can handle them. And when you do what the Lord says, we are promised that “He will sustain you.”

David is writing this while on the run. His mindset, when he starts thinking about his fear, is that he would rather have his son murder him than kill his son. In addition, I am sure David also feels responsibility to the people who went with him. The situation was a mess. It was the ultimate crisis, but God's Word does not change. Cast, hurl with all your force, and place those burdens upon the Lord because He is the one who can handle them. He is the one who will sustain you and hold you up as He did for David and his men during their struggles. Remember, they were all on the run when they met with the Ammonites, the children of Ammon, but in this case, they were the agent God used to help David and his men. So, the first point is, cast your burdens upon the Lord.

Now, while in this circumstance, David also wrote Psalms 27. Verse 1 begins,

“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.”

Reading on to verse 5, ***“For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.”***

Verse 1 contains the second point: **Take refuge in Him.**

Here, David writes, ***“The LORD is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength [or stronghold] of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”***

In this verse, he is reminding himself and us that we have a safe place to go to when we find ourselves in a state of fear. He describes the Lord as light, salvation, and strength or a stronghold.

In verse 5, David writes, ***“For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:”*** to remind us that there is a safe place to go when we are fearful, and as you read this Psalm, it is obvious that he is describing what he has decided to do when fear strikes. David will remember he has a safe place to go. The same promise is true for us today as it was for David long, long ago. David pronounces that in the time of trouble God will keep us safe, but the condition is we take refuge in Him. We must take refuge in Him!

To review, first we cast or hurl with force our burdens onto the Lord, because that is what He told us to do. Second, we must take refuge in Him because He is our light, He is our salvation, and He is our stronghold. We will take refuge in Him because in a time of trouble, He shall hide us in His pavilion.

In Psalms 32:6-7, David says the same thing. It reads:

“For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve [or guard and protect] me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.”

Think about what David wrote there. God is our hiding place and He shall preserve, guard, and protect from trouble the ones who trust Him. One of the most important things you can do when you

find yourself in a state of fear and a time of trouble is to remember that God, through His Word, has invited us to realize we must run to Him for refuge.

In these verses, God has instructed to us cast all our fears His way, run to Him as our place of refuge, and now, in point number 3: **Replace anxiety with thoughts of God.**

This is not to say that you will not fight back the urges and the thoughts that the dominions of Satan keep bombarding you with in the constant attack to bring fear upon your life. Instead, hurl them away with new thoughts and new ways. When those thoughts and anxiety creep in, even though you hurl them to God, replace the anxiety and anxiousness with thoughts of God. Now I do not want you to get the understanding that it is not Christian somehow to be afraid. Here is what one writer has said about this:

“It is the most natural thing in the world to be scared and the clearest evidence that God's grace is at work in our hearts is when we do not get into panics.... The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God, you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else.”

Think about that. ‘Selah’ on that point! Stop and think about what was written there.

“The remarkable thing about fearing God [to be in awe of God] is that when you fear God, [you are in fear and awe of God] you fear nothing else.” You see, God has given us a way through His Word, thank God, and through the Holy Spirit to keep fear from paralyzing us. Go to Philippians 4:6 in the New Testament. This is a very familiar verse, but it is worth looking at again.

“Be careful for nothing [Some translations will read ‘Do not be anxious about anything’]; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

Most people pray with their supplication but leave the thanksgiving part out because they are so caught up in their gloom and doom and forget about the God who created everything. Let’s read this verse in Philippians again,

“Be anxious for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

This verse is telling us to not be anxious about all the things that bring fear or hardship into your life – ***“think on these things.”***

These verses are amazing. They tells us we can cast, hurl, our anxieties and fears at Him in prayer, and the promise is that our hearts and minds will be guarded by the peace of God; a peace that passes all understanding. It might not make sense at the time, but God will take care of you. Let Him take over; let Him deal with them. Believe me, one of the hardest things for me to do is to let go and let God, but that is what God's Word instructs, and not just for me but for everyone who reads and

has the spirit of understanding of what God's Word is saying.

First, Paul tells us do not be anxious for anything, and then Paul instructs us what to think about. Instead of thinking about all those things that cause the anxiousness and fear, think about what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy. Paul knew that when we concentrate on our anxiousness and our fears, the result would be unrest. Know that this message is for me as well as you. By focusing on anxiety and fear the result in stress; the result is ulcers; the result could be a nervous breakdown. But, when we focus our attention on God's Word, His promises, and His character, knowing that His Word is true, eventually those fears will be replaced with faith. Faith that says, "Give me this mountain, because if it needs to be moved, I know who can move it." It is the kind of faith that will develop and is found in Psalms 23:4, and tells us,

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Psalms 23 is known as the Shepherd's Psalm. Within this Psalm are tools that the shepherd uses for carrying and protecting his sheep from danger, which we find ourselves, getting into from time to time. The tools listed are His rod and His staff. Now the rod was a long pole with a large knot on the end of it that the shepherd would hurl at anything that was endangering the sheep. Almost like stabbing it or even throwing it if he had to. The staff was a long stick with a crook at one end that the shepherd would use to lift the sheep up out of dangerous places or to draw the sheep near to him to protect them. That is what God is saying here. That is what He will do with us. He will draw us near to Himself to give us His personal protection and attention. In other words, this Psalm is telling us that the Good Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ, still brings that kind of comfort today by protecting us from danger, lifting us up, and drawing us near to Him. What a wonderful promise! Those are the kind of thoughts that should replace the anxiousness in your life, and those thoughts are found in God's Word.

Psalms 46 tells us the same thing. It begins,

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present [In Hebrew this word emphasizes the speed, the completeness and might of the Lord's help.] in trouble.

Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. [or 'Stop and think about that again.']"

This passage reminds us to remove those anxious thoughts that fill our minds and replace them with the picture of God as our refuge. Once again, at a time of trouble, God is our strength, God is our Good Shepherd so we can say, "I will not fear" whatever we are fearful today or in the future.

So far, God instructs us to:

Number 1: **Cast your burdens on the Lord.**

Number 2: **Take refuge in Him because He is our light, salvation, and stronghold.**

Number 3: **Replace anxiety with thoughts of God.**

Number 4: **Keep your eyes on eternity.**

We are to change our focus from the things of this world to the things of eternity. Because part of the

reason we fear is that we forget this life is not all there is. We forget that every single one of us was created for a special purpose and that is for eternity.

II Corinthians 4:16 tells us:

“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”

The Greek word for ‘renewed’ is really closer to *renovated*. We are a renovation project. This physical flesh that you see is deteriorating and it will perish, ***“yet the inward man is renovated day by day.”*** Too many people in this world are so worried about having cosmetic surgery to improve their appearance when they should be worried about the renovation of the inner man day by day.

Verse 17 goes on to say, ***“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”***

Too many people have their focus on the here and now, and the here and now will always produce situations and circumstances where you find yourself in a state of fear and grip your heart. To change that, you need to change your focus from the here and now to eternity. It is not easy, but it is necessary.

The point of this message is cast your burdens upon the Lord; take refuge in Him; replace anxiety with thoughts of God; change your focus and keep your eyes on eternity. Remember, He has promised us through His Word that though we walk through the valley of death, or though we walk through difficult circumstances, they will not overtake us. That is the promise I have for my health issues. One of the problems I have, my back issue, will not overtake me. Right now as I am sitting here it feels like it will, but it will not. God is with me and He knows He will use these situations in your life and in my life to work His good.

His promise is that He will walk with us. His promise is that He will never leave us nor forsake us. He will not allow anything to overtake us. But, when we find ourselves in a state of fear, we must remember what He has said: cast your burdens upon the Lord; take refuge in Him; replace anxiety with thoughts of God; and keep your eyes on eternity. When you focus on that, I promise that you will make it and I will make it. Let us bring it all to Him and let Him carry us.

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