

Psalms
Psalm 3
Freedom From Self-Reliance
5.26.2013

I learned this week that two of my heroes died. On May 8th Dallas Willard passed away. And on April 12 Brennan Manning died. Their books profoundly shaped and formed my life. So when I heard the news, it shook me a bit. I felt small.

Vulnerable. Little. Here were these giants in the faith and they are gone now. That rattled me a bit.

David feels that here. He is nervous, shaken, anxious, scared. We all do this. Life shakes us. We get criticized. We lose our job. Our health wanes a bit. And deep down, we tremble.

Now we think we are safe. The *facade* of security, safety, seduces us. “Look at how innovate, how creative, how advanced, how powerful we are,” some say. And it makes self-reliance and self-trust so attractive and powerful to us.

Think of **The Lord’s Prayer: *Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed thy by name...*** That prayer mentions God’s will, God’s kingdom, God’s glory, forgiveness, temptation, and evil (one?). Those are huge issues. We pray for those! But he also says **“Give us this day, our daily bread.”** Who prays that? Some, for sure. But not many western, American, salaried Christians. We don’t pray that. We visit Dillons. We go to work. We labor and sweat and think and produce.

Self-reliance and God-neglect are so easy. The reason is, we’re **pretty impressed** with ourselves. Our opinions, our thoughts, our convictions, our skills, our take on things, we trust. We value our input.

But this Psalm will free us. It’ll free us from self-trust, self-focus, self-glory, and self-reliance. Let me show you how.

1 Know your condition.

Look at the heading. *A psalm (song) of David, When he fled from Absalom his son.* That’s in **2 Samuel 15-16**. Absalom wants the throne. And David flees for his life. Look verse **1 O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me. . .** So he is outnumbered, outgunned, and all alone and he is afraid. But this is David.

This is the King of Israel, God’s man, God’s anointed and chosen King. God covenanted with Him. This is the dark and handsome giant killer, the song writer,

the fearless leader of Israel. *Saul has slain thousands, but David tens of thousands*, they sang. And he is afraid, vulnerable, and running for his life.

See, even the most powerful, the most good looking, the richest, the most influential, the wisest, smartest among us, can be shaken. We all have limits. There are **some battles**, some giants, some foes, that we can defeat. There are financial, intellectual, physical, marital foes that we can defeat. We can think, reason, work, write a check and the win that battle. But others overpower us, out number us. And our hearts melt.

Know we all know this. We know one phone call, one meeting, one doctor's visit, can change everything. It's why not worrying. . .worries us. You ever do that? You have this awesome month. Money is good, marriage is good, job is good, kids are decent, and you are carefree! And it hits you, "*This can't last! What's coming?*" We do that. We know how little control we have.

So I guess what I'm saying here is: **You should be afraid.** But there is good reason to be afraid.

Paul Tripp says we fear 4 things.

1 ourselves.

We fear us. We fear failure, rejection, not measuring up, not being talented, not being successful or competent, not being pretty, being alone, being broke. We fear ourselves. John Dixon says we suffer from **competency extrapolation**. We're good here, so we're good everywhere, we think. We extrapolate our skills and intellect to all things. Which is why failure and rejection hurt so bad. It wounds our ego!

2 others.

We fear their opinions, their approval, their rejection, fitting in, including us. We fear others. We have this inner **Sally Field**. At the Oscars she said "You like me, you really like me." We like being liked, too much. We fear others.

3 circumstances.

We fear bills and health and job and burglars and hackers and the economy and terrorists and bombs and tornadoes. We fear those things.

4 the future.

We fear what's coming. We look out and see no light and no hope and relief and no comfort.

We have reason to fear. And the result is, our inner life is shaken. Look at *verse 2 many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God*. Now what does that mean "they are saying of my soul" ? The soul is the self, the inner life, its you. *God breathed in Adam, and he became a living soul* (Genesis 2:7). This is the deepest part of David.

And his critics and enemies and his own son, are *getting to him* we would say. They are **questioning** his identity, his worth, his very person. They are saying "God is not with you." And David is listening. And we listen. We listen to those voices, those doubts, those fears deep within us.

We call this anxiety; the inner life is rattling, shaking, wobbling.

In 2000, I preached my first sermon. I spent three weeks writing and researching and preparing for it. When it was over, I asked the tech guy how long it was. I figured it was 25-30 minutes. 14! I thought "14 minutes!?! I spent three weeks on that!" And it stung a bit. I wrestled with that. And I realized how needy and how fragile I was. And it drove me to God. It still does.

The self cannot sustain the self (1x). It wasn't meant to. You were made to be reliant, dependent, and lead. You must know this. You must believe that though you are smart, resourceful, hard working, you cannot sustain yourself.

Know your condition. . .

2 Declare your confidence.

Look at the shift in verse 3. *But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head*. David is proclaiming this. He is telling God, who God is to Him. God is his confidence, his trust, his rock, his salvation.

God is his shield. God surrounds him and protects him from all his enemies. God guards his life.

God is his glory. What does that mean? The word glory means weight or heaviness, significance. God is the weightiest, heaviest, most significant reality for David. God is everything to Him. God is all He needs and all He wants.

The lifter of my head. The picture here is one slumped in shame. And a king or a high ranking official lifts up their face. What he is saying is “*God’s approval, is what matters to me. God decides my verdict and worth. God defines me.*”

Look at **verse 4** *I cried aloud to the Lord and he answer me from his holy hill.* He is the prayer answering God. God heard David. And look at **5** *I lay down and slept; I woke again for you sustained me.* Sleep is the fruit of trust. If God is shield, glory, lifter, prayer answerer, what’s left to do but sleep. Now I don’t want to downplay sleeping apnea and disorders. Those are legit. But often sleeplessness is trustlessness. We worry and fret and fear and rehearse things and make up things. **Sleep** says “*I’m in your hands.*”

Psalm 4:8

Verse 6 I will not be afraid of many thousands of people, who have set themselves against me all around.

God is his confidence and strength. **So what is yours?** See, we all look to something for confidence. Something shields us. Something is our glory. Something lifts our head. Something makes us sleep. Some experience, person, possession. Something is our refuge.

Now I could list all kinds of things, but an easy way to find your confidence is to look at your **fear**. What makes you anxious and afraid? Fear is like **smoke**, it comes from something. And if you follow it, you’ll find your confidence. Because when your ultimate trust and shield and glory are shaken, it scares you. You physically feel fear.

Let me risk **offending** a few of you, and **confusing** the rest, to make this point. I’m reading *Harry Potter* right now. In the first book, Harry a young wizard, finds a mirror. The mirror of Erised. He looks in and sees his parents. But his parents died years ago. Then Ron, his best friend, looks in and sees all of these accolades and awards being given to him. They’re confused. But *Erised* is *desire* spelled backwards. Its the **Mirror of Desire**. It shows what you most want, most desire. Harry wants his parents. Ron wants glory. The mirror shows those things. That is British brilliance!

Fear and anxiety are like mirrors. They show you what you want, what matters too much. They show your glory and shield and lifter and your refuge. God should be those things, but we **replace** him. And *when* those little, replacement gods fail, we fear.

But fear drives David to God. He declares God as his confidence. And you should to. You should say out loud “*God, you are my shield and glory and lifter of my head.*” **Every fear is a chance to trust God more.** Fear is moving you away from self-reliance to trust and hope and refuge and sweet communion with God.

So Is God your confidence? Are you stunned by Him? Are you in awe of Him? Are you in love with Him?

If you're aren't a Christian, what is your confidence? Career? Beauty? Money? Power? What do you do with your fear? Numb it with social media or TV or food or shopping? What do you do with it?

Something gives us confidence and rest and refuge. But unless its God, its all counterfeit, a house of cards.

Declare your confidence

3 Hope in your conviction.

Look at verse 7 ***Arise, O Lord! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on cheek, you break the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongs to the Lord; your blessing be on your people.***

There aren't just creative prayers and lyrics. These are theological convictions about God. What do I mean? Verse 7, Arise O God is from Numbers 10. Look at your **notes**.

Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say: Arise, Lord! Let your enemies be scattered, and those who hate You feel from your presence. When it came to rest, he would say: Return, Lord, to the countless thousands of Israel. Look at verse 8 “*your blessing be on your people.*”

This is ark, battle language. The ark was a box, like in the movie. It contained the Law, manna, and Aaron's staff. God appeared over the ark. This was their weapon,

a box. They went to war, not just with shields, armor, and spears, but this box. Why?

The **point** was: God fights for us. God goes before us, God is the victor. Some trust chariots, some trust horses, we trust a box (sorta). They trusted God's Name and God's power. The ark was a **symbol** of God's presence and blessing and glory in Israel.

Salvation is God's, not theirs.

Think of the Exodus. At the Red Sea Moses said "***The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent***" (Ex. 14:14). At **Jericho**, they blew trumpets. They played Jazz and the walls fell. Or take **Saul**. His spear always misses doesn't it? David says to Goliath "***the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's***" (1Sam. 17:29).

Jahaziel says "***The battle is not yours, but Gods***" (2 Chron. 20:15). In Judges 6-7 God called Gideon, little wimpy, frail Gideon to lead an army. He had 32,000 soldiers and God says "***You're too big, I can't use you.***" And Gideon narrows it down to 300 soldiers.

This theme pervades the Old Testament. God is the victor, God is the fighter. You prepare and make the horse ready, but Proverbs says "***the victory belongs to the Lord***" (Pr. 21:31).

David is hoping in this and resting in this.

Now what does this mean for us? It means Let God fight your battles. Let God do His good work for you. Stop trying to **manage** opinions and defend yourself and demand your rights. Stop trusting **formulas** and methods and bank accounts. **Release control** over things. Just be silent and watch God's salvation. Take a nap! Turn everything over to Him, and let Him work. Relax in God's sovereignty and goodness.

Psalm **46:10** ***Be still and know, that I am God.***

Now we have to ask the question: *Why was God fighting for them?* Why was God with them? I think the **ark** is the clue. On the ark two gold angels formed the mercy seat. It was the place of atonement, blood was spilled there, an offering was made there. Then God's glory came down.

See, to know God, there must be a sacrifice. You can't know Him otherwise. God's presence and blessing and glory and salvation require **atonement**. Its why the ark had a mercy seat. Something must die, in your place, for your sins, to know God.

For them, it was rams and bulls and goats over a box, or an altar, or in a Temple. For us, its a Cross, its God's Son, the Ultimate Sacrifice, the Lamb of God. He dies on the Cross, in our place, for our sins. And **Paul** says, that's the proof, that God fights for us.

Rom 8:31 *If God is for us, who can be against us?* And whats the proof Paul? Verse 32 *He who didn't spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all. . .* The Cross is God saying: *"I am always with you. I go before you. I'll fight your battles. I'll never leave you."*

The Cross is why you can trust this God.

If He did that, if He died for you, willingly, purposefully, innocently, He'll do anything for you.

So look, not to yourself, but to Him. Look at Him dying, bleeding, suffering, bearing your sin and shame and guilt. There is your hope. **Fear is forgetting the Cross.** Its Gospel amnesia.

In **conclusion**: you cannot trust, rely upon, sustain yourself. So repent of trying. But you can trust this God, this prayer answering, shield, glory, and lifter of your head.

If you don't Him, you can know Him. Call out to Him, by faith, and trust His Son's death and resurrection.

CS Lewis said, we trust not because a god exists, but because this God exists.