

'In God I trust and am not afraid ' 5 July 2026

"When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise – in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" (Psalm 56:3-4)

'In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise – in God I trust and am not afraid. What can man do to me? (vv.10-11)

Psalm 56 is one of those psalms that anyone needs to keep in their pocket, so that when times get tough, or we worry unduly about something, it can remind us of five things:

1. In the midst of calamity, God is there to call upon (vv.1-2)
2. When fear overwhelms, God is there and can be trusted (vv.3-4)
3. We can pour out our troubles to God and ask him to help (vv.5-7)
4. Listen to me! Let me know you are listening! (vv.8-9)
5. Thanks and praise to the God I know, who is there and can be trusted to deliver me from death to life. Amen! (vv.10-13)

Let's be honest, there is no-one who has not been afraid of something at some time or other. This feeling can take many forms from the perfectly rational to the irrational, though I suppose it may not be irrational to the person who is afraid at the time. It can be severe or just constantly niggling.

It starts from when we are very young, even as small babes when the person who looks after us moves out of sight perhaps, we are unconsciously asking ourselves: 'Is she, or he ever coming back?' Or maybe when the kiddie is feeling hungry: 'Will I ever be fed again?' The other end of the scale can be similar: 'Who is going to look after me when I am old and unable to look after myself?'; 'How will I react to the process of getting old and dying and what will happen when I die?'

In between these there is a whole range of other things that can make us afraid, including spiders. My simple advice here is to remember that a spider is more afraid of your shoe size than you are of it!

The trouble with fear is that we tend to internalise it and do not bring it out into the open. Even if it is a ridiculous thing, then it becomes a burden to us that stops us doing what we could do or think, or would want to do or think. It is not like sin which is something we know we should not do or think. Having said that, the fear of our sin being found out is equally crippling and often because we fear what might happen or what other people and not least God will think of us.

What then does the psalmist recommend? 'When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.' This sentiment in vv.3-4 and 10-11 form the outsides of a sandwich which takes us through a transition from being afraid, to trusting God to see us right, through to not being afraid any more. The psalmist is saying that when we recognise this fear and share it with God, he in

return can give us the strength to overcome our fear through his love and care for those who call upon him.

This is never more pertinent than when we are contemplating our death. What will happen to me when I die? Can I save myself or is that the end? The answer to those questions are 'No' and 'No'!

No-one can save themselves, which is a bleak thought to so many people, who in other aspects of their lives take control and direct operations to as satisfactory a conclusion as possible. Such people dread the thought of death; they have no power to prevent it or put it off.

'Why can I not save myself from death?' you may ask. Well, I would suggest that other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself, no person has died and come back to live life again. So, if no-one else has done it, what makes you think you can?

Therefore, if we are going to die, what is the best we can hope for? The answer to that question is: 'Entry, with the Lord, into the kingdom of heaven'. So: 'What is the criteria for entry into the kingdom of heaven, that place where God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit abide together in unity?'

Now think about this. We are calling on a Most Holy God to allow us entry into his most holy place among the company of saints, angels and other examples of holy beings. Holiness is the criteria for entry, but what qualification of holiness do you, or I, of ourselves possess that will bring us to heaven?

You see, so many people think they deserve a place in the Lord's company because they think they are good people. They've done the right things; kept the right company; done well in life; been a great source of strength and shown kindness to others; pillars of the community; resisting the sort of things listed as the doings of evildoers in vv.5-6 and, maybe, if they are believers, noting the fervency of prayer in v.8. Our deeds, however are not the key to entry to the kingdom of God, they merely indicate how we are doing. We can never be good enough of our own account.

Yes, we should all strive to do all these things and some, if not most of us, will be more or less successful at some of them, but by no means all of them. Look at our reading from the Apostle Paul; if he has trouble doing the good he wants to do, what chance have the rest of us got? Our sinful human nature always lets us down somewhere along the line.

However, the Lord calls us to holiness and a holy life. So please friends, brothers and sisters, do not think that your entry into the kingdom of heaven will depend on you, on the thought: 'I am good enough, or 'I deserve it'. Rather, learn the humility of true faith, so that when your time comes, your entry into the kingdom of heaven will not depend on you, or the question: 'Am I good enough to get in?' with the attendant fear you might not. Neither you nor I will enter the holy place on account of our good deeds.

Friends, this sounds bleak, does it not? It would indeed be bleak if not for one thing, the question we must answer from the Lord Jesus, himself, our judge and saviour:

'Do you truly believe I can do this for you?' If we can answer 'Yes!' to that then we will have nothing to fear this side of eternity as there will be nothing to fear the other side in the presence of Almighty God. If we can answer 'Yes!', then the Lord will transform us from what we are to what he always intended us to be from the beginning: Holy in his sight. Therefore, the Christian should not have this dread of death in their life.

If we truly trust in the Lord Jesus to see us through our life and death on earth to life in heaven, with him, then there is a certain sense in which we might even permit ourselves to look forward to death when it comes. We may not like the manner of it, that is true and, of course, we leave loved ones behind, but if we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God without dying and being resurrected from the dead through the power of the Lord, we might, at least, permit ourselves to tolerate the thought.

You see, this life should be a life of training for holiness, for that day, so that when the Lord comes, we will be in a condition to see him, know him and hear his voice echoing the man who gave a Great banquet: 'Come for everything is now ready' (Luke 14:17) And we will say in return:

'In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise – in God I trust and am not afraid' Amen.