

# Fear: The Fear We Bring On Ourselves

## *How Life Feels – part 2*

Book of Psalms

April 19, 2020

**“Most of the fear we experience is a fear that we bring on ourselves.”**

### **DAY 1: Putting our real hopes in uncertain things produces fear**

*Proverbs 29:25 Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.*

1. King David had overcome many years on the run as a fugitive when Saul was king. David ushered in the golden years of Israel... until... disaster struck.
2. Fear is directly proportional to the extent that we place our real hopes in uncertain things. The greater our hopes in uncertain things, the greater our fear when uncertainty hits!

3. We are told to “fear not” 63 times in the bible. That is a command to obey. But fear is like weeds. You can keep picking weeds and picking weeds and picking weeds all your life. But is there something that can be done about killing the weeds? What causes fear? And what causes the kind of fear that shakes us? That’s what we’ll look at this week.

4. Emotions are like lights on a dashboard. They tell us something we need to know about what’s going on under the hood of our car. Most of those lights on the dashboard are warning lights, telling us to look under the hood of the car and fix what is broken before you blow an engine! Fear is a light on the dashboard. While we are told to “fear not,” wisdom tells us that there is more to our troubles than a troubling emotion like fear. It’s time to lift up the hood of our hearts and see what needs fixing.

*Psalms 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

*Proverbs 16:2 All a man’s ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord.*

5. Times of uncertainty have the benefit of exposing what our real hopes and real trusts are. During this pandemic what are our REAL hopes? What is exposed seems to be some combination of the following as our real hopes:

- An untroubled life,
- Healthy,
- Financially comfortable, and
- Relationships that are relatively smooth.

6. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

## DAY 2: Control and Helplessness

1. Setting: King David experiences:

- (a) Palace **revolt**, trouble in the city, and sides forming. Will he be out of the kingship?
- (b) Danger: people get killed in a **coup d'etat**.
- (c) **Betrayal**. The coup is led by a close and trusted friend.

2. Psalm 55 is David's response to danger and teaches us much about fear!

*Psalm 55:1-3 Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; hear me and answer me. My **thoughts trouble me** and I am **distraught** at the voice of the enemy, at the stares of the wicked; for they bring down **suffering** upon me and **revile me in their anger**.*

- “**Thoughts trouble me**” – His mind is restless.
- “**Distraught**” – The Hebrew means to groan noisily.
- “**Voice of the enemy**” while his thoughts are inarticulate, his enemies are quite articulate!
- “**Revile me in their anger**” – This is not just a divided nation. This has become personal. There is strong passion behind the enemies to take King David down.

2. Fear's crippling power: Imprisonment

*Psalm 55:4-5 My heart is in **anguish** within me; the terrors of death assail me. **Fear** and **trembling** have beset me; **horror** has **overwhelmed** me.*

“**Horror**” – The Hebrew word carries the idea of physical shuddering.

3. Fear's response: Flight.

*Psalm 55:6-8 I said, “Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest—I would flee far away and stay in the desert; I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm.*

4. David gives three different images for what he'd like to do or go. What are they?

When the perceived danger threatens our cherished purposes we will fear.

When the perceived danger exceeds our perceived resources we will fear.

6. When the goal of self-preservation is greater than honoring God by engaging the agent of fear for His purposes, we will want to withdraw.

7. What strikes you from today's devotional?

### DAY 3: Fear is in the eye of the beholder

1. Fear's eyes: Distortion.

*Psalm 55:9 Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues, for I have seen violence and strife in the city.*

*Psalm 55:10-11 Day and night they prowl about on its walls; malice and abuse are within it. Destructive forces are at work in the city; threats and lies never leave its streets.*

2. What is his growing perception of what is happening around him? Does he see his enemies as growing stronger or weaker?

3. What is his growing perception of himself? Does he see himself as someone strong or someone growing weaker?

4. His fear "hits close to home"

*Psalms 55:12 If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him.*

<sup>13</sup> ***But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend,***

<sup>14</sup> *with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God.*

5. What David never saw coming was an evil betrayal by someone who was close to him and someone he trusted!

6. Have you been stung by betrayal? If so, what would you guess was going on inside David's heart?

7. What if David's real goals were like our real "goals" – to live an untroubled life, healthy, financially secure and relationships that are pretty smooth? How would his troubles affect him?

8. Every one of those real "goals" are uncertain goals! There is no guarantee of all of them continuing or any of them continuing! Therefore, when uncertainty hits, our "goals" are exposed as IDOLS, things which have garnered our ultimate hopes and trust!!!

9. It is these idols which make a mess of so many things in our lives:

a. Personally: emptiness, loneliness, depression, anger, fear, worry, addiction, etc.

b. Relationally: argumentative, petty, insecure, harsh, unresolved conflict, distance, etc.

c. Trouble: at work, in our work, financial worries, health worries, etc.

10. What strikes you from today's devotional?

#### DAY 4: Fear's reactions

1. Fear's 1<sup>st</sup> reaction: Change my circumstances!

*Psalm 55:15 Let death take my enemies by surprise; let them go down alive to the grave, for evil finds lodging among them.*

2. He is so angry he wishes the very worst upon his enemies.

3. Fear's 2<sup>nd</sup> reaction: Deliver me!

*Psalm 55:16-18 But I call to God, and the Lord saves me. Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice. He ransoms me unharmed from the battle waged against me, even though many oppose me.*

4. Fear's 3<sup>rd</sup> reaction: This may not go away.

*Psalms 55:19 God, who is enthroned forever, will hear them and afflict them—Selah. Men who never change their ways and have no fear of God.*

5. Fear's 4<sup>th</sup> reaction: It may actually get worse!

*Psalm 55:20 My companion attacks his friends; he violates his covenant. <sup>21</sup> His speech is smooth as butter, yet war is in his heart; his words are more soothing than oil, yet they are drawn swords.*

6. What occurs when fear continues or even worsens?

Our truest trusts are exposed as idols!

7. We are all living for the "Kingdom of Self." When an untroubled life, health, financial security and pleasant relationships become the real goal of life we will "naturally" assume the role of the "managed life."

8. But what happens when we can't "manage" what is most important to us??? **The Holy Spirit exposes our sin.**

*John 16:8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup> in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me;*

*<sup>10</sup> in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer;*

*<sup>11</sup> and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.*

9. What is exposed?

An arrogance that feels entitled to better treatment from God,  
Enough better to keep me at least relatively happy, secure, and comfortable.

10. What strikes you from today's devotional?

**DAY 5: Fear's final reaction: Expose my deepest trusts. Fear is meant to turn me to fear God.**

*Psalm 55:22 Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.*

1. “**Cares**” – this Hebrew word means “burdens”.
2. “**Sustain**” – endure; persevere.
3. Does this surprise you? Wouldn't you expect David to write something like, “Cast your cares on the Lord and He will bring back all the blessings in which you trust.” What strikes you about this verse?

4. Perseverance is one of the highest, brightest signs of Christian maturity—to keep going when everything seems to be crashing around you. This is when your light shines brightest when the darkness is darkest!

5. “**Fall**” – He doesn't mean “sin,” as in “he had a moral failure.” To fall is the opposite of to persevere.

*Prov. 24:16 The righteous falls seven times but rises again, but the wicked are overthrown by calamity.*

6. The last verse in the psalm is strangely comforting to me.

*Psalms 55:23 But you, O God, will bring down the wicked into the pit of corruption; bloodthirsty and deceitful men will not live out half their days. But as for me, I trust in you.*

- a. David wrestles with what rages in his heart—the battle between the worst of responses and the best of responses.
- b. It is hard, very hard for a human heart to **let go of past trusts**—control, certainty, comfort, stability, security, health, finances, smooth relationships. But as long as we hold on to these trusts, we will deal with far more fear than need be!

Lesson: *Resolving fear requires us to struggle with our deepest allegiances.*

Lesson: *It is not a matter of whether we fear, but what and whom we fear.*

7. Irony: All that I fear losing I can't hold on to tight enough. It can be taken from me. But if I reach out to take hold of God I find the only thing that can't be taken from me. It's not because of the strength of my grip but the strength of His. No one can snatch us.