

# WHEN I AM AFRAID

## PSALM 56:1-13 ILLUSTRATIONS

### FEAR Psalm 56:1-7

A man who hid for 32 years fearing punishment of pro-Nazi wartime activity says he used to cry when he heard happy voices outside, but dared not show himself even at his mother's funeral. Janez Rus was a young shoemaker when he went into hiding at his sister's farmhouse in June, 1945. He was found years later after she bought a large supply of bread in the nearby village of Zalna. "If I had not been discovered, I would have remained in hiding. So I am happy that this happened," Rus told a reporter. Throughout those years he did nothing. He never left the house, and could only look down at the village in the valley.

*Today in the Word*, October 17, 1993.

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Black Bart was a professional thief whose very name struck fear as he terrorized the Wells Fargo stage line. From San Francisco to New York, his name became synonymous with the danger of the frontier. Between 1875 and 1883 he robbed 29 different stagecoach crews. Amazingly, Bart did it all without firing a shot. Because a hood hid his face, no victim ever saw his face. He never took a hostage and was never trailed by a sheriff. Instead, Black Bart used fear to paralyze his victims. His sinister presence was enough to overwhelm the toughest stagecoach guard.

*Today in the Word*, August 8, 1992.

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Sometimes the Lord calms the storm. Sometimes he lets the storm rage and calms his child.

Unknown.

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Keep your fears to yourself; share your courage with others.

Robert Louis Stevenson.

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Louis Pasteur is reported to have had such an irrational fear of dirt and infection he refused to shake hands. President and Mrs. Benjamin Harrison were so intimidated by the newfangled electricity installed in the White House they didn't dare touch the switches. If there were no servants around to turn off the lights when the Harrisons went to bed, they slept with them on.

Jane Goodsell, Not a Good Word About Anybody, Ballantine.

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It is said that the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin so feared for his safety that his residence in Moscow contained eight bedrooms. Each night Stalin chose a bedroom at random to ensure that no one knew exactly where he was sleeping.

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5-year old Johnny was in the kitchen as his mother made supper. She asked him to go into the pantry and get her a can of tomato soup, but he didn't want to go in alone. "It's dark in there and I'm scared." She asked again, and he persisted. Finally she said, "It's OK--Jesus will be in there with you." Johnny walked hesitantly to the door and slowly opened it. He peeked inside, saw it was dark, and started to leave when all at once an idea came, and he said: "Jesus, if you're in there, would you hand me that can of tomato soup?"

Charles Allen, Victory in the Valleys.

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### **Statistics**

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University reported that 30 years ago, the greatest fears of grade school children were: 1) Animals, 2) Being in a dark room, 3) High places, 4) Strangers, 5) Loud noises. Today, kids are afraid of the following: 1) Divorce, 2) Nuclear war, 3) Cancer, 4) Pollution, 5) Being mugged.

*Back to the Bible Today*, Summer, 1990, p. 5.

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### **Commentary**

Peladophobia: fear of baldness and bald people. Aerophobia: fear of drafts. Porphyrophobia: fear of the color purple. Chaetophobia: fear of hairy people. Levophobia: fear of objects on the left side of the body. Dextrophobia: fear of objects on the right side of the body. Auroraphobia: fear of the northern lights. Calyprophobia: fear of obscure meanings. Thalassophobia: fear of being seated. Stabisbasiphobia: fear of standing and walking. Odontophobia: fear of teeth. Graphophobia: fear of writing in public. Phobophobia: fear of being afraid.

Fraser Kent, Nothing to Fear, , Doubleday & Company, 1977.

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Acute stress can provoke changes in the heart that may lead to death, say Drs. Marilyn S. Cebelin of Cleveland and Charles S. Hirsch of Cincinnati. The two doctors recently identified 15 cases in which people died after a physical assault, although the injuries alone would not have been enough to kill them. Eleven of the 15 cases showed a type of heart-cell death called myofibrillar degeneration, similar to a reaction in experimental animals who are helpless to anticipate or avoid danger.

Unknown.

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### **Humor**

One summer night during a severe thunderstorm a mother was tucking her small son into bed. She was about to turn the light off when he asked in a trembling voice, "Mommy, will you stay with me all night?" Smiling, the mother gave him a warm, reassuring hug and said tenderly, "I can't dear. I have to sleep in Daddy's room." A long silence followed. At last it was broken by a shaky voice saying, "The big sissy!"

Unknown.

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Two explorers were on a jungle safari when suddenly a ferocious lion jumped in front of them. "Keep calm" the first explorer whispered. "Remember what we read in that book on wild animals? If you stand perfectly still and look the lion in the eye, he will turn and run." "Sure," replied his companion. "You've read the book, and I've read the book. But has the lion read the book?"

Unknown.

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### **Focus on God Ps. 56:8-9**

Golf immortal Arnold Palmer recalls a lesson about overconfidence: It was the final hole of the 1961 Masters tournament, and I had a one-stroke lead and had just hit a very satisfying tee shot. I felt I was in pretty good shape. As I approached my ball, I saw an old friend standing at the edge of the gallery. He motioned me over, stuck out his hand and said, "Congratulations." I took his hand and shook it, but as soon as I did, I knew I had lost my focus.

On my next two shots, I hit the ball into a sand trap, then put it over the edge of the green. I missed a putt and lost the Masters. You don't forget a mistake like that; you just learn from it and become determined that you will never do that again. I haven't in the 30 years since. Don't let people allow you to lose your focus on God.

**Carol Mann, The 19th Hole, (Longmeadow), quoted in *Reader's Digest*.**

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A weakness of all human beings, " Henry Ford said, "is trying to do too many things at once. That scatters effort and destroys direction. It makes for haste, and haste makes waste. So we do things all the wrong ways possible before we come to the right one. Then we think it is the best way because it works, and it was the only way left that we could see. Every now and then I wake up in the morning headed toward that finality, with a dozen things I want to do. I know I can't do them all at once." When asked what he did about that, Ford replied, "I go out and trot around the house. While I'm running off the excess energy that wants to do too much, my mind clears and I see what can be done and should be done first." Keep focused on God and let him lead your activities.

*Bits & Pieces*, September 19, 1991, p. 18.

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### **Follow Through With Praise Ps. 56:10-13**

The Duke of Wellington, the British military leader who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo, was not an easy man to serve under. He was brilliant, demanding, and not one to shower his subordinates with compliments. Yet even Wellington realized that his methods left something to be desired. In his old age a young lady asked him what, if anything, he would do differently if he had his life to live over again. Wellington thought for a moment, then replied. "I'd give more praise," he said.

*Bits & Pieces*, March 31, 1994, p. 24.

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John Wesley was about 21 years of age when he went to Oxford University. He came from a Christian home, and he was gifted with a keen mind and good looks. Yet in those days he was a bit snobbish and sarcastic. One night, however, something happened that set in motion a change in Wesley's heart. While speaking with a porter, he discovered that the poor fellow had only one coat and lived in such impoverished conditions that he didn't even have a bed. Yet he was an unusually happy person, filled with gratitude to God. Wesley, being immature, thoughtlessly joked about the man's misfortunes. "And what else do you thank God for?" he said with a touch of sarcasm. The porter smiled, and in the spirit of meekness replied with joy, "I thank Him that He has given me my life and being, a heart to love Him, and above all a constant desire to serve Him!" Deeply moved, Wesley recognized that this man knew the meaning of true thankfulness.

Many years later, in 1791, John Wesley lay on his deathbed at the age of 88. Those who gathered around him realized how well he had learned the lesson of praising God in every circumstance. Despite Wesley's extreme weakness, he began singing the hymn, "I'll Praise My Maker While I've Breath."

*Our Daily Bread*.

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A conference at a Presbyterian church in Omaha. People were given helium filled balloons and told to release them at some point in the service when they felt like expressing the joy in their hearts. Since they were Presbyterians, they weren't free to say "Hallelujah, Praise the Lord." All through the service balloons ascended, but when it was over 1/3 of the balloons were unreleased. Let your balloon go.

Bruce Larson, Luke, p. 43.

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A body is not crippled 'til its heart has ceased to praise. Louis Albert Banks tells of an elderly Christian man, a fine singer, who learned that he had cancer of the tongue and that surgery was required. In the hospital after everything was ready for the operation, the man said to the doctor, "Are you sure I will never sing again?" The surgeon found it difficult to answer his question. He simply shook his head no. The patient then asked if he could sit up for a moment. "I've had many good times singing the praises of God," he said. "And now you tell me I can never sing again. I have one song that will be my last. It will be of gratitude and praise to God." There in the doctor's presence the man sang softly the words of Isaac Watts' hymn, "I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,/ And when my

voice is lost in death,/ Praise shall employ my nobler power;/ My days of praise shall ne'er be past,/ While life, and thought, and being last,/ Or immortality endures."

*Our Daily Bread.*

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I have never forgotten that Daystar began his Great Insurrection by frowning and skipping his morning Alleluias. It must have seemed minor at the time, but hell grows out of paradise gone sour. Joy is a discipline, and fallen angels were always those who grew negligent with their praise.

Calvin Miller, The Valiant Papers, p. 18.

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Andor Foldes is now seventy-two, but he recalls how praise made all the difference for him early in his career. His first recollection of an affirming word was at age seven when his father kissed him and thanked him for helping in the garden. He remembers it over six decades later, as though it were yesterday.

But the account of another kiss that changed his life says a great deal about our inner need for purpose. At age sixteen, living in Budapest, Foldes was already a skilled pianist. But he was at his personal all-time low because of a conflict with his piano teacher. In the midst of that very troubled year, however, one of the most renowned pianists of the day came to the city to perform. Emil von Sauer was not only famous because of his abilities at the piano, but he could also claim the notoriety of being the last surviving pupil of Franz Liszt.

Sauer requested that young Foldes play for him. Foldes obliged the master with some of the most difficult works of Bach, Beethoven, and Schumann. When he finished, Sauer walked over to him and kissed him on the forehead.

"My son," he said, "when I was your age I became a student of Liszt. He kissed me on the forehead after my first lesson, saying, 'Take good care of this kiss -- it comes from Beethoven, who gave it me after hearing me play.' I have waited for years to pass on this sacred heritage, but now I feel you deserve it."

Tim Kimmel, Little House on the Freeway, pp. 41-42.

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Academy Award-winning actor Charlton Heston has not always had rave reviews. He says he learned "The most valuable single truth about criticism" from Laurence Olivier: We'd done a blank-verse play on Broadway...and the blank verse was not Shakespeare. The critics slaughtered us--before the opening-night party we were doomed. Forty minutes later I found myself alone in a restaurant with Olivier and a bottle of brandy. I was young, green and striving for mature detachment. "Well," I said philosophically, I suppose you learn how to forget the bad notices."

Olivier gripped my elbow.. "Laddie!" he said. "What's much harder, and far more important...you have to learn to forget the good ones." He was right.

*American Film*, January 1992.

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The brilliant physician and writer Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., and his brother John represent two radically different views on the subject of flattery. Dr. Holmes loved to collect compliments, and when he was older he indulged his pastime by saying to someone who had just praised his work, "I am a trifle deaf, you know. Do you mind repeating that a little louder?"

John, however, was unassuming and content to be in his older brother's shadow. He once said that the only compliment he ever received came when he was six. The maid was brushing his hair when she observed to his mother that little John wasn't all that cross-eyed!

Source Unknown.

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I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. If it were possible for a created soul fully to 'appreciate,' that is, to love and delight in, the worthiest object of all, and simultaneously at every moment to give this delight perfect expression, then that soul would be in supreme blessedness. To praise God fully we must suppose ourselves to be in perfect love with God, drowned in, dissolved by that delight which, far from remaining pent up within ourselves as incommunicable bliss, flows out from us incessantly again in effortless and perfect expression. Our joy is no more separable from the praise in which it liberates and utters itself than the brightness a mirror receives is separable from the brightness it sheds.

C.S. Lewis.

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The citizens of Feldkirch, Austria, didn't know what to do. Napoleon's massive army was preparing to attack. Soldiers had been spotted on the heights above the little town, which was situated on the Austrian border. A council of citizens was hastily summoned to decide whether they should try to defend themselves or display the white flag of surrender. It happened to be Easter Sunday, and the people had gathered in the local church.

The pastor rose and said, "Friends, we have been counting on our own strength, and apparently that has failed. As this is the day of our Lord's resurrection, let us just ring the bells, have our services as usual, and leave the matter in His hands. We know only our weakness, and not the power of God to defend us."

The council accepted his plan and the church bells rang. The enemy, hearing the sudden peal, concluded that the Austrian army had arrived during the night to defend the town. Before the service ended, the enemy broke camp and left.

Source Unknown.

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