

THE NARROW WAY

WHEN ENEMIES ATTACK ...



I WILL NOT BE AFRAID ...

OVERVIEW: Five considerations we need to process to set the necessary context of the attacks on the faithful followers of God so that we may understand what we must do to not be afraid in the face of the enemy.

#1: All those who desire to live faithfully in the Lord will be under attack.

- (2 Timothy 3:12 ESV) Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

#2: Those who are faithful to God will be under attack by human enemies who hate God, love the darkness, and hate the people who love God and love his light.

- (John 3:19 ESV) And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.
- (John 17:17 ESV) Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.
- (Romans 12:2 ESV) Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

True followers of Jesus will be in a continual process of sanctification—set apart from, made different from this world—as their minds are being renewed by the transforming work of God’s word. Being made less and less like the world and more and more like God will be the cause for further attacks by the enemy.

#3: The faithful of God need to grasp the extent of the danger involved when coming under attack.

Yes, our ultimate wrestling is against the spiritual forces of evil, but to stand against the schemes of the devil we need to also understand the battle on the human level; that the reality of the spiritual wrestling match of good versus evil typically takes place in the context of our human relationships.

- (Ephesians 6:11–12 ESV) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

We will see that going forward in our study in the relationship between David and his attackers. The attackers are undoubtedly carrying out the evil rebellion against God’s anointed king—both David and Christ—which is orchestrated by the devil.

- (Psalm 2:2–3 ESV) The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, 3 “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”
- (Psalm 2:6 ESV) As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.

True followers will increase in love and devotion and submission to the King while living in a world that rebels against the King.

#4: Those who are faithful to God have very real and compelling reasons to be afraid.

- (1 Peter 5:8 ESV) Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

#5: We are not to be afraid but strong and courageous.

- (Deuteronomy 31:6 ESV) Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.
- (Joshua 1:9 ESV) Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

SO WHAT ARE WE, THE FAITHFUL, TO DO WHEN ENEMIES ATTACK? LEARN FROM DAVID’S EXAMPLE ...

1. We pray for God’s grace, 56:1-2.

- (Psalm 56:1–2 ESV) Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me; all day long an attacker oppresses me; 2 my enemies trample on me all day long, for many attack me proudly.

A. Understanding the depth of the meaning of “tramples” is a key to understanding the entire psalm.

Tramples ... to oppress; to cause to suffer, as if being trampled. The thought is that those who trample are relentless; they gasp, pant after, thirst for blood; they pursue, chase after, hound, i.e., follow a person with intensity, focus, and haste; the one who tramples desires passionately to devour, swallow up, crush.

B. David—the man who God found who was after his heart—is the one here praying for grace.

- (1 Samuel 13:14 ESV) But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the

LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.

- (Acts 13:22 ESV) And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, ‘I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’

C. The person faithful to God, especially in leadership, must understand that he will be in contention with worthless men and women.

David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, was committed to God—his house stood with God. By default his stand with God puts him (and us if we live in this way) at odds with worthless men and women.

- (2 Samuel 23:1–67 ESV) Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel: 2 “The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue. 3 The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, 4 he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth. 5 “For does not my house stand so with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire? 6 But worthless men are all like thorns that are thrown away, for they cannot be taken with the hand.”

D. We only survive the onslaught of the attacker and remain faithful to God by the grace of God.

E. Our response to these attacks is never to be vengeance.

- (Romans 12:17–19 ESV) Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”
- (1 Peter 3:9 ESV) Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

F. Responding in humility we receive grace in our time of need.

- (James 4:6–8 ESV) But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
- (Proverbs 3:34 ESV) Toward the scornful he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor.

G. The trampling by human enemies gives opportunities for our arch enemy, the devil, to hound us also.

- (Ephesians 4:26–27 ESV) Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil.

Opportunity ... τόπος [topos] – a place, any portion or space marked off, as it were from surrounding space; an opportunity understood as if having the room or space to function or perform.

H. These human enemies attack because they are lifted up with pride.

Pride ... as in height, an elevated place; this person regards himself to be in a high place; and so is controlled by unreasonable and inordinate self-esteem.

2. We place our trust in God and his word, 56:3-4.

- (Psalm 56:3–4 ESV) When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. 4 In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?
- A. The person who is a faithful follower of God is not afraid, but courageous, because he trusts in God.
- B. He has a high view of God’s word.
- C. He lives according to this high view of Scripture.
- D. He will not be afraid because he sees life and lives life through the lens of Scripture.
- E. He knows that humans can do nothing to him that truly matters.
- F. The person who does not live with a high view of Scripture—no matter his or her profession of belief in God and Scripture—takes life into his own hands and fights his or her own battles.

3. We bring our grievances before God and wait for his wrath and judgment, 56:5-7.

- (Psalm 56:5-7 ESV) All day long they injure my cause; all their thoughts are against me for evil. 6 They stir up strife, they lurk; they watch my steps, as they have waited for my life. 7 For their crime will they escape? In wrath cast down the peoples, O God!
- (Proverbs 20:22 ESV) Do not say, “I will repay evil”; wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.

A. All day long — the attackers are relentless.

B. The attackers injure our cause by twisting what we say because all their thoughts are against us for evil.

C. Their lives are dominated by contentious behavior as they stir up strife, lurk, watch the person’s steps and wait for opportunity to attack.

SIDEBAR: A fundamental, diagnostic question we must each answer before God—Whose cause, or agenda, are we supporting?

For instance, most churches would profess their cause to be the glory of God and the proclamation of the gospel. But how can we know if that is true? Is there a way to prove the claim to be true?

The cause, the agenda, of many churches is to keep “our” church going. This is reflected in direct statements such as “this is our church.” Many attacks within the church come from those whose agenda is to keep church consistent with what they perceive church should be but not church as viewed through the lens of Scripture.

Vicious attacks are directed to those who challenge that agenda. Church as they want it to be has become their sacred cow. Bringing evil on their adversaries through gossip and undermining church leadership dominates their thought life.

4. We set our minds to the reality of God’s omniscient, compassionate accounting of our battle wounds, the future shame of our enemies and our unconquerable standing with God, 56:8-11.

- (Psalm 56:8-11 ESV) You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book? 9 Then my enemies

will turn back in the day when I call. This I know, that God is for me. 10 In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise, 11 in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?

5. We renew our commitment to God in thankfulness that we have been blessed with the opportunity to live before God in the light of life, 56:12-13.

- (Psalm 56:12-13 ESV) I must perform my vows to you, O God; I will render thank offerings to you. 13 For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.

A. The truly saved person is a truly thankful person who remembers and performs his commitment to God.

B. The truly saved person is a truly thankful person who offers thanks to God for delivering his soul from death.

C. The truly saved person is a truly thankful person who offers thanks to God for keeping him from falling that he may live in the presence of God in the light of life.

CONCLUSION: Some biblical, logical conclusions resulting from God delivering my soul from death.

I have changed sides and am now a target.

I resist my human tendency to appease ungodly attackers in a vain attempt for peace and in the process dishonor my God and his word of truth.

I am exultant and rejoicing at my God-given, grace-filled opportunity to stand in battle as light against the darkness and bring praise, glory and honor to Jesus.

- (1 Peter 1:6-7 ESV) In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

What are some biblical, logical conclusions that are relevant to your life from our lesson? Things that the Spirit of God through the word of God might desire to bring to your attention?