

Tim Keller: [Praying our Fears: Psalm 3, Genesis 15](#)

1. Psalms are deeply emotional prayers
 - a. Modern people are taken aback by the honesty of the Psalms
 - b. The Psalms give us a unique approach to emotions: A third way
 - i. Religiosity approach to emotions is stuff them, deny them, control them quickly
 - ii. Secular circles there is a love of just expressing our emotions as if they're a good in themselves
 - iii. The Psalms don't do either.
 - (1) We should not be under-aware of them, stuffing them, or denying them
 - (2) We should not be over-awed by them, bowing to them, or venting them
 - (3) We should be praying them: not in nice manicured theologically correct prayers but we pre-reflectively pour them out into the presence of God and we process them there.
2. Fear may be the most primal of all emotions. Baby's first tears are for fear.
 - a. David has something to be afraid of: armies, people trying to kill him, etc.
 - b. He has discovered a way of praying his fear so he can handle it.
3. How do we handle it: 2 levels down into it and 4 steps out
 - a. Two levels down: First two verses:
 - i. Those are two levels of fear.
 - (1) His body is being attacked
 - (2) They are attacking his identity, his calling, his character
 - (a) People are saying: "God has abandoned David like he abandoned Saul"
 - (b) "Look at the terrible things he's done! He's forfeited his right to be king!"
 - ii. What does that teach us?
 - (1) Anxiety:
 - (a) W.H. Auden "The Age of Anxiety"
 - (b) People make a distinction between fear and anxiety
 - (c) Two levels of fear
 - (2) [Rollo May](#)
 - (a) Fear: seeing a car speeding towards you:
 - (i) Healthy: it is specific and constructive
 - (ii) Saving his son falling from a sliding board
 - (iii) Is like a thunderstorm: it galvanizes you
 - (b) Anxiety: after the danger is over you find there is an abiding feeling of hollowness, that your life is fragile. This is anxiety. What we feel when our existence as selves is threatened.
 - (i) Is not specific, it's diffuse, it's undefined, it's abiding
 - (ii) Anxiety paralyzes you.
 - (iii) It's like a slow drizzle. After a while your soul starts to mildew
 - (iv) Your autonomic nervous system is always on and this is bad for you.
 - (v) It's a threat to your sense of self. Something you've put your real security in. This is getting eaten away and it's destructive. Something that was my

security is gone!

b. David is at the bottom. What does he do? 4 things

i. Follow your thread

(1) vs. 3: “but you are a shield around me”

(a) The little shield can’t be it because it isn’t around you

(b) The larger shield, the size of a door must be what he is talking about. What do you use a shield like this for?

(i) Following your general when you go to besiege a fortress. This shield doesn’t get you away from danger but towards danger

(ii) David is NOT saying “You won’t let bad things happen to me.”

(iii) This kind of shield only works when I’m going forward, when I’m obeying you, when I’m following you. You’re not going to shield FROM danger but IN them or even WITH them.

(iv) Anything bad that happens to you he is shielding you with them. If God lets you hurt today it’s because he’s saving you from a greater pain tomorrow.

(v) God’s protection works INTO danger, obeying him

(vi) If you run that shield is of no help running away.

(2) Obedience is very hard, very confusing, but disobedience is lethal. These are your only two alternatives.

(a) [George MacDonald’s fairy tale: The Princess and the Goblin](#)

(i) The little prince finds her fairy grandmother of power, beauty and majesty and puts her hope in her. The grandmother gives her a ring tied to the threat to her room. “Follow the thread and it will take you to me but it may take you in a round-about way...”

(ii) First night the little princess is in danger. The threat led her to the heart of the mountain, into the goblin’s cave, to a heap of stones and left her standing on it. (Chapter 20: Irene’s Escape)

(b) Trying to do the right thing seems to take you to a wall but you can’t go backwards. Your protection only works going forwards

(c) Jesus himself was very scared. He was scared, he should have been scared, because the thread of the will of God was taking him into a tomb which of course looked like a dead end.

(d) To obey seems nuts.

(3) Suck it up, but that isn’t enough. Stoicism won’t get you through.

ii. Relocate your glory

(1) He is literally saying “you are my glory and the lifter of my head”

(a) why would he say “but you are my glory” unless something else has been

(b) he has experienced this deeper level of fear, anxiety, because the things he’s build his identity on have been taken away.

(i) He used to say to himself “I’m a popular sovereign” not any more!

(ii) “I’m a good father” nope

(iii) “I’m a moral person” huh? Adultery, murder...

(c) He’s admitting something. “I’ve located my significance, glory in my family, my work, etc.”

- (2) Something good you've located your glory in. If you put your glory in something finite, finite things are out there in time and space where they are vulnerable and you will always live in fear.
 - (a) It's not enough to stuff your feelings and go on
 - (b) It's not enough to vent your feelings
 - (c) Your feelings are smoke and you've got to find the source of the fire
 - (i) It's not enough to snuff it
 - (ii) It's not enough to vent it
- (3) It's not their approval, it's God's approval.
- (4) God is the lifter of your head
- iii. See the substitute
 - (1) How does David know that God is proud of him?
 - (2) If you knew that then nothing could really bother you, scare you
 - (a) vs. 4: You will answer me from your holy hill. His sins can be dealt with.
 - (b) [Gen 15](#): The same words show at the beginning of Gen 15 as with Psalm 3.
 - (i) "I am your shield and your very great reward"
 - (ii) David is trying to heal his own fear like God healed Abram's fear.
 - (iii) This was how you made a vow. You're identifying with the animal and acting out the curse of the breaking of the covenant. "May I be as this animal..."
 - (iv) God came down, darkness showed up and a smoking torch passed between the pieces. Abram realized that God was taking an oath and identifying with the animals. "Even if I have to die I'm going to bless you."
 - (3) How God did that? Darkness came on Calvary's hill and Jesus was cut off from God
 - (a) To the degree that you know that Jesus is your glory you'll be impervious to that kind of fear.
- iv. Remember the people
 - (1) vs 7, 8: It's not enough that he's dealt with his fear and has inner peace. He wants to go out and get justice for his people.
 - (2) The opposite of love is fear ([1 John 4:18](#)).
 - (3) Fear is self-centeredness, love is self-giving
 - (4) You've got to get your mind off of yourself and your little needs. The only way to destroy fear is in community and in love
- 4. Jesus sweated in the garden but he didn't let that stop him. He followed the thread into the grave but it wasn't a dead end. There was a resurrection on the other side of the grave. God will heal you through your fears and God will heal you of your fears.