Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption

"It's Only a Flesh Wound"

Rabbi Cosmo Panzetta

Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Psalms 56, 116, 146; *Matt. 10:16–31; Rom. 8:22–39*

There is a ridiculous scene in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* where King Arthur is fighting the Black Knight. Arthur cuts off one of his arms, and the knight insists, "It's only a scratch." When he loses the other arm, he announces, "It's only a flesh wound." Obviously, he is not taking his circumstances very seriously! But that absurd picture raises a question that is anything but ridiculous: How much of our lives do we spend afraid of wounds to the flesh? We fear being hurt, rejected, betrayed, embarrassed, or made uncomfortable. And because we fear those things, we sometimes make decisions—or fail to make decisions—that have very little to do with trusting the Lord.

The question at the heart of Psalms 56 and 146 is this: Whom do we fear? Do we stand in awe of ADONAI, or do we stand in fear of humanity and what people might do to us? Yeshua never promised His disciples a pain-free life. He warned them about opposition, betrayal, and persecution. Yet He also told them not to fear those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul (Matt. 10:28). Our lives are precious to the Father, who knows even the hairs of our heads. The wounds of this world are real, sometimes terribly painful, but they do not get the final word. So where will we place our confidence?

1. IN THE DAY OF MY FEAR, I WILL TRUST IN YOU (Ps. 56:1–5)

Psalm 56 finds David in a frightening place. He has been running from Saul, the one who should have been protecting him, and now the Philistines have seized him in Gath. He is surrounded by people who want to crush him. David does not pretend the danger is imaginary. He cries out because his enemies pursue him all day long. Yet right there, in that place of fear, he makes a decision: *"In a day when I am afraid, I will put my trust in You"* (Ps. 56:4). Notice, the fear is there. David is not saying he never feels afraid. He is saying that in the very day of his fear, he will turn toward ADONAI and place his confidence in Him.

Then David declares, *"In God—I keep praising His word—in God I trust, I will not fear. What can mere flesh (basar) do to me?"*(Ps. 56:5). The Hebrew word *basar* means flesh, skin, even meat. That is the perspective David is choosing: Why should I allow mere flesh to determine whether I obey the living God? It does not mean pain will not hurt or that persecution cannot take something from us. It means people do not have ultimate authority over who we are or whose we are. So much of our hesitation to walk in faith comes from fear of failure, loss, or somebody else's opinion. But when the Lord has spoken, we can keep praising His Word, keep holding on to what He has said, and take the next step of obedience.

2. THIS I KNOW: GOD IS FOR ME (Ps. 56:6–14)

David's trouble does not disappear after his declaration of trust. His enemies still twist his words, stir up strife, and watch his every step. Yet in the middle of describing their wickedness, he turns to the One who truly sees him: *"You have recorded my wanderings. You put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in Your book?"* (Ps. 56:9). Think about that. David's wandering, his aimlessness, the places where he has felt homeless and alone—none of it has escaped the Lord's notice. Not one tear has been overlooked. The same Father who knows the sparrows and numbers the hairs on our heads knows our suffering. We are not disposable pieces on a chessboard. There are no pawns in the kingdom of God.

Then comes this remarkable confession: *"This I know—that God is for me"* (Ps. 56:10). David returns to praising what God has spoken, and now he asks, *"What can man (adam) do to me?"* (Ps. 56:12). In verse 5, it was what can flesh—*basar*—do to me; here the word is *adam*, humanity formed from the dust. Why should dust become the object of my greatest fear when the Creator of heaven and earth is for me? Psalm 116 echoes this confidence: *"I trusted even when I said, 'I am very afflicted'"* (Ps. 116:10). Trust does not require us to deny our affliction. Paul reminds us that even in suffering, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Messiah Yeshua (Rom. 8:35–39). The Lord can take what is shattered and work it together for good—not because every evil thing was His desire, but because His love and power are greater than what has been done to us.

3. DO NOT TRUST IN PRINCES; HOPE IN ADONAI (Ps. 146:1–10)

Psalm 146 brings the same truth into even sharper focus. It begins with a decision to praise: *"Halleluyah! Praise ADONAI, O my soul!"* (Ps. 146:1). The psalmist will praise Him again and again, as long as he has breath. Then comes the warning: *"Do not put your trust in princes—in man, in whom there is no salvation"* (Ps. 146:3). We are so easily impressed or intimidated by people with titles, power, money, influence, or the ability to make our lives difficult. But their breath will depart, and they will return to the ground from which they came. And when they perish, their plans will perish. Why would we place our ultimate hope in those who cannot save themselves? *"Happy is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in ADONAI his God"* (Ps. 146:5).

And who is this God in whom we are placing our hope? He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the One who keeps truth forever. He does justice for the oppressed, gives bread to the hungry, sets prisoners free, opens blind eyes, and raises those who are bowed down. He watches over outsiders and upholds the fatherless and the widow (Ps. 146:6–9). This is not an incidental description; it reveals His character. The earthly rulers that you fear so much or trust so much will return to dust, but *"ADONAI will reign forever"* (Ps. 146:10). And those who truly believe He reigns are called to reflect His character through their own hands and feet, their choices, their compassion, and their willingness to stand with the vulnerable. Fear of man makes us retreat into self-protection. The fear of ADONAI frees us to live in obedience, even when obedience costs us something.

CONCLUSION: KEEP YOUR EYES FIXED ON HIM

The Scriptures are not telling us to pretend wounds do not hurt. David knew betrayal, fear, and tears. The psalmist in Psalm 116 knew trouble and sorrow. Paul knew that all creation groans as we await the fullness of our redemption (Rom. 8:22–25). But we are still in the middle of the story, and the Lord has already spoken concerning its end. In all these things—not merely afterward—we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Rom. 8:37). We do not have to live controlled by the threat of pain, the approval of others, or the plans of people who will one day return to dust. We can praise His Word, call on His name, and walk before Him in the light of life.

Today bring before ADONAI the fear that has been shaping your decisions. Perhaps you have been silent when you should have spoken, held back when He called you forward, or trusted human approval more than His promises. Maybe you are carrying a wound that still feels anything but small. Do not deny it; bring it to the One who has recorded your wanderings and collected your tears. Surrender the fear, and ask the Holy Spirit to give you the courage to obey. Say with David, "In the day of my fear, I will trust in You." Choose to fear the Lord more than you fear the wounds of this life. Keep your eyes fixed on Him, because His eyes are fixed on you. And then, trusting His love, take the next faithful step.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does David's choice to trust God *in the day of his fear* teach us about the difference between courage and the absence of fear?
2. How does the picture of God recording our wanderings and tears change the way we understand suffering?
3. Where is fear of criticism, rejection, financial loss, or failure influencing a decision you face right now?
4. Psalm 146 contrasts human power with ADONAI's care for the vulnerable. How can you put that contrast into practice in your community this week?
5. What promise from God's Word do you need to keep praising and holding on to as you take your next step of obedience?

CLOSING PRAYER

ADONAI, You know the days when we are afraid. You see every wound, every wandering, and every tear. Forgive us for fearing people more than we stand in awe of You, and for allowing discomfort or the opinions of others to keep us from obedience. Teach us to praise Your Word and place our confidence in what You have spoken. Spirit of God, strengthen us in our weakness. Fix our eyes on Yeshua, remind us that nothing can separate us from Your love, and make our lives a reflection of Your justice, mercy, and compassion. May we walk before You in the light of life, trusting that You are for us.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.