

Entering the New Year Unafraid.

Text: Prov 18:10

Suggested Hymns:

552, 22, 559, 554, 556

1) When we realise that the name of the Lord
is a strong tower

2) When we realise that we find our safety
in the strong tower

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Proverbs 18:10, ¹⁰ *The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous run to it and are safe.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The close and opening of a year is a very solemn moment. It calls for earnest and serious reflection. It demands a careful appraisal of the record which we have written.

What has our life and conduct been? What about our behaviour toward God? toward our neighbour? toward our family? Have we grown in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Have we made real progress in living for Him who died for us and rose again? Are we better Christians today than we were at the beginning of last year? Surely everyone of us has reason to repent.

Despite our frequent failures and sins and transgressions, God has remembered us with both temporal and spiritual blessings far too numerous to mention. Undoubtedly every one of you devoted some of the solemn moments of the changing of the year to praise and thanksgiving for all the grace and mercy and loving-kindness which God bestowed on you. If not, it is not too late to do so even now.

Another year has dawned. What kind of record do we plan to write? Will there be marked improvement in our Christian life? What will the new year bring? Will it be joy or sorrow? Will it be health or sickness? Will all members of our family still be with us at the close of the year, or will death have snatched some loved one from our side?

Does not the very thought of these possibilities make us afraid to enter the new year? Certainly not! As Christians we have every reason to enter the new year courageously.

Let us consider the question, when should we be unafraid as we enter the New Year? May the Lord bless our meditation.

1 We Should Be Unafraid As We Enter The New Year

When We Realise That

The Name Of The Lord Is A Strong Tower

The Bible frequently mentions towers. In practically every instance it has reference not to an ordinary tower, nor to a tower which serves as an object of decoration or beautification, but to a tower built for service, for protection, for defence against the enemy, for safe storage of supplies, etc.

We read of Gideon in his fight against the men of Succoth, as it is written in Judges 8:17, ***17 Then he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.*** When the tower was destroyed, the men were no longer safe.

When God had delivered David out of the hands of his enemies and out of the hands of Saul, he sang a song of praise and gratitude which opens with the words, ***“The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; ³ The God of my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, My [high Tower] and my refuge; My Savior.¹***

Again David sang in Psalm 61:2-3, ... ***Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. ³ For You have been a shelter for me, A strong tower from the enemy.***

The purpose of towers are to protect. Towers have been used throughout the centuries for purposes of protection against the enemy. Think of the Tower of London, which today is shown to tourists as one of the outstanding places of interest. For years it served as a place of safety against attacks.

Or think of the many fortresses and castles which were built throughout the Middle Ages. They were definitely constructed for the purpose of repelling attacks. Later castles were built for families, particularly royal families. These served both as places of safety and as homes or dwellings for them. Many of them were constructed on some high banks of a river, or on some peninsula or island, or on some hill or mountain. Tourists visit them as show places.

Again and again you can hear them marvel at the firm and solid construction of these castles.

Now let us note well that our text states ***The name of the LORD is a strong tower.*** In other words, God is revealed as a Strong Tower. How can a name be a strong tower with all that this term implies? This is not an ordinary name, but the name of God, the Lord.

In fact, God's name is God Himself. We know God by His names, the names which He has revealed to us in His holy Word. By way of example, we know that God is the Almighty, the All-wise, the Omnipresent, because by divine inspiration He has revealed Himself by these names in the Holy Bible.

Since God is such a God of power and wisdom and goodness, we know that with Him we have every reason to feel safe and secure. We have nothing whatever to fear when we are with Him. Therefore we know also that God is the Lord, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Saviour, etc. He will guide and direct. He will provide for us and sustain us.

This means that in Jesus Christ is safety. But more than this, God's name, or God Himself, has been revealed to us in Christ Jesus. In his masterful prologue St. John writes ¹⁸***No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.***²

Jesus, speaking of the Father, said, ***You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.***³ John the Baptist said of Christ, ***He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.***³² ***And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.***⁴

Without doubt the best and most convincing revelation of God we have is in Christ Jesus. In Him and in all that He did for our salvation we have the evidence of God's boundless and indescribable love and grace and mercy.

Yes, in Christ we may look into the very heart of God and see His love toward us. It was a love so great, as we heard again at our Christmas Services, that He gave His only-begotten Son. The eternal Son of God became a true human being. He took on Him the form of a servant. Although He was holy and

perfect, He entered into the poverty and woe and misery caused by the sin of mankind.

More than that, God's love moved Him not to spare His own Son, but to deliver Him up for us all. Go to Gethsemane, and see the God-Man writhing in such agony as none among men has ever endured, or go out to Golgotha, and see how He endured the excruciating tortures of crucifixion and how He bowed His head in that most disgraceful of all deaths.

God demanded this life and suffering and death of His Son. And He did it because He wanted to save us. He wanted us to be with Him in heaven. Was there ever love like this? St. Paul writes in Romans 5:6-8, ⁶ *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* ⁷ *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.* ⁸ *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Surely a God who will do all this for sinful mankind, do it for every one of us, is a God of whom we can say, *"The name of the Lord is a strong tower."* Since we have learned to know Him as such a God, and since He is with us and we are permitted to be with Him, we can be unafraid at all times. This holds true also when we enter a new year with all of its uncertainties.

2. We Should Be Unafraid As We Enter The New Year

When We Realise That

We Find Our Safety In The Strong Tower

Our being unafraid as we enter the new year is based especially on the fact that we may find our safety in the name of God as our Tower. Our text says, *The righteous run to it and are safe.*

This means that only the righteous are safe. Note well that only certain people experience and enjoy safety in this tower. They are the righteous.

But does not this exclude all of us? Have we not transgressed the Commandments of God? Furthermore, do we not daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment? How can we claim to be righteous? Must we not say with Isaiah as written in Isaiah 64:6, ⁶ *But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags?*

This necessarily means that if we are to be righteous, God must declare us sinners righteous. All our own efforts will be a constant failure. However, as we learned before, God sent Christ into the world to atone for our sins. Jesus paid the utmost price to remove our debt. He shed His holy precious blood to blot out all our sins and iniquities. He fulfilled every demand of God's holy Law perfectly in order that we might be dressed in the garments of His perfect righteousness.

More than that, God has given us His Holy Spirit. By means of the holy Law He has worked within our hearts a crushing knowledge of our sins, and by means of the precious Gospel, He has led us to know Jesus Christ and created complete faith and trust and confidence in Him within our hearts.

Now God sees us not as we are by nature, but as we appear in Jesus Christ. Now we are declared just as perfect and holy and righteous as Jesus is perfect and holy and righteous. For Christ's sake we have even been adopted into the family of God. We are His children, His heirs, yes, joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

Our text tells us that *The righteous run to it and are safe*. As long as we are in this world, the prince of this world will seek to harm us, to deprive us of our faith, and to snatch us away from Christ. He will cause all manner of dangers to beset us. He will seek to plunge us into harm and evil.

From the history of Job we learn how far the devil would like to go in bringing evil upon us. However, it is then that we Christians run into the strong tower. We find safety in the name of the Lord. We know that this offers perfect security for us. In this tower we are lifted up high above dangers. We occupy a sheltered position against all attacks. Even if at times the old evil Foe will storm the tower, we are declared righteous children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and we know that all the devil's efforts will be in vain and that security is assured.

Let us flee to the Lord in trouble. Especially, when conscience begins to trouble us on account of our sins and transgressions, we can flee to the name of the Lord, the God of love and grace and mercy, and find in Him perfect forgiveness.

When temptations to sin come anew, we can flee to the name of the Lord and find in Him the strength to overcome. When sickness or sorrow beset us, we can

flee to the name of the Lord and fervently plead with Him to help us, to comfort us and to strengthen us.

When losses of friends or earthly possessions trouble us, we can flee to the name of the Lord and find in Him the Friend who will never fail us and the riches which can never be taken from us. When the moment of our death approaches and the natural fears of death would seize us, we can flee to the name of the Lord and find in Him the great assurance "Fear not."

Then we can say with the Psalmist of old, *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*⁵

Or we can exclaim with St. Paul as he wrote in Philippians 1:23,²³ *For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.* We know that Jesus has promised, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.*²⁶ *"And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."²⁶ This promise cannot fail. Thank God that He has provided this strong tower for us!*

We need such assurance of safety at all times. Without it terror and despair would seize us again and again. With it we may remain calm and serene. This is especially comforting when we step across the threshold of a new year. We do not know what it holds in store for us. The days are evil. The horizon reveals threatening clouds. But God knows what the future will bring. He offers us all the security we need. Come what may, we are unafraid, yes, confident, for we shall always run into the strong tower and be safe.

Let us conclude with the words of the hymnist,⁷

*Help, Lord Jesus, let Thy blessing
Rest upon this opening year;
May we now, new strength possessing,
Walk in love and holy fear;
Blessèd Saviour, speed our way;
Strength bestow from day to day. Amen.*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 2 Samuel 22:2-3

² John 1:18

³ John 5:37

⁴ John 3:31-32

⁵ Psalm 23:4-5

⁶ John 11:25-26

⁷ Hymn 554