

The Conquest Of Fear.

Text: Psa 27:1-3

Suggested Hymns:

390, 392, 395, 291, 543

- 1) The Wide-Spread Prevalence Of Fear
- 2) Some Reasons Why People Are Afraid
- 3) How People Try To Get Rid Of Their Fears
- 4) How Fear May Be Conquered

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 Psalm 27:1-3, *The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?* ² *When the wicked came against me To eat up my flesh, My enemies and foes, They stumbled and fell.* ³ *Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war should rise against me, [even then] I will be confident.* (NKJV)

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

Dear friends in Christ,

One of the most powerful motivating forces in our lives is fear. It is the fear of wars that makes our nation spend millions of dollars on the continuation of its military program.

It is the fear of another paralysing recession that makes many a person worry. It is the fear of crippling diseases that makes us use all kinds of medicines and immunisations.

It is the fear of the wrath of their gods that induces the heathen to make all manner of sacrifices in a vain endeavour to win the favours of their idols. Down through the long annals of time, fear has played a leading role in the lives of people everywhere.

In recent times much has been spoken and written on the subject of freedom from fear. How can we get rid of our fears? Let us consider the topic of *The Conquest of Fear*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Wide-Spread Prevalence Of Fear

Our text says, ***“Whom shall I fear? Of whom shall I be afraid?”*** People do have many fears. The world of our day is full of fear. Fear may be seen on the faces of men, women, and children in all classes and ranks of life. People are afraid not only of such general things as pain and poverty, sickness and sorrow, want and worry, but also of such present-day menaces as wars, terrorism, and sudden catastrophes.

Some people who do not know the words of our text and who do not know the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ are desperately afraid of falling into eternal damnation. Indeed, the world of the twentieth-first century, despite its many grand and glorious accomplishments and achievements, is still full of fear and fright that sadly disrupt and disturb the lives of many people.

Evidences of the fear which is filling the hearts of people almost everywhere are not difficult to find. You can find evidences of fear in the nervous tension that so many people exhibit in their conversations and in their activities. You can find evidences of fear in many of the articles and stories that appear in the daily papers and in the popular magazines of the day. You can find evidences of fear in the international relations at the moment. You only need to watch the News to find out.

Wherever you go, you will find a note of fear being sounded, fear of contracting sickness, fear of losing one’s position or job, fear of being cheated by inferior brands of merchandise, fear of being avoided by others, fear of ridicule, fear of one’s sins being discovered, fear of incurring the righteous anger of the Lord. Fear does seem to be the keynote of all forms of modern life and living.

Many people, strange to say, are actually afraid of life and of the serious responsibilities of life. Life is, in very truth, an unpredictable thing. Throughout our lives we are subjected to forces and powers over which we ourselves have little or no control.

No one of us can say, with any definite certainty, whether or not he will be living tomorrow for Scripture tells us in Proverbs 27:1, ***Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.*** Many people, therefore, especially those who cannot or will not say with David of Israel, ***“The Lord is the Strength of my life,”***¹ are afraid of life and of its great responsibilities.

When they are obliged to perform certain difficult tasks, they become afraid of their inability to do their tasks properly and afraid of possible failure in their work. Even Elijah, that eminent man of God of ancient times, cowered and cringed in fear and fright for a while at the assignment God once gave him as we read in 1 Kings 19. But God reassured him by saying, ***“Yet I have reserved 7,000 in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal.”***

Many people are also afraid of death and of what may happen to them after death. The thought of the *“grim reaper”* going about everywhere in the world and reaping a harvest in all sections of the earth fills the hearts of many people with dread and terror. Death does make people afraid because death is, for many people, a frightful experience. They are aware of the fact that death is the divine punishment for man’s transgressions.

The Bible declares in Hebrews 2:15 that people are ***“through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”*** A person may have a pleasant personality, a cheerful outlook on life, and a lack of fear of his fellow men, but when he comes face to face with death, his courage often disappears, and he reveals only too plainly the fear of death that he harbours in his heart because he knows full well that death ushers him into the presence of the Great Judge of all mankind, who might justly pronounce a sentence of doom on him because of his failure to keep God’s Commandments.

2. Some Reasons Why People Are Afraid

One of the reasons why the hearts and minds of people are filled with so many fears is the fact that fear is the product of sin. People are full of fear because they are conscious, deep down in their hearts, that their sins have separated them from God.

The Bible confirms the fact that our iniquities separate us from God and cause Him to hide His face from us. Before sin entered into the world, Adam and Eve had no fears whatsoever; but when sin raised its ugly head, people began to be afraid. Fear exists on earth because the original happy relationship between man and his Maker has been broken.

We read in Romans 5:18, that ***through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation.*** Man realises full well that ***“the wages of sin is death.”***² We read in Ezekiel 18:20,²⁰ ***“The soul who sins shall die.*** And

in Galatians 3:10, ¹⁰ *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”*

Another reason why fear exists in the hearts and minds of men is the fact that they lack faith and trust in God. When the disciples of Christ, who were caught by a storm on the Sea of Galilee, appealed to Jesus for help, the Lord replied, *“Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?”*³ Failure to trust in the Lord with all our heart often fills our heart with fear and often plunges a person into the deepest depths of despair. The Prophet Jeremiah says, *“Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the Lord.”*⁴

The hymnist writes,⁵

O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by many a foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of poverty or woe;

That will not murmur or complain
Beneath the chast’ning rod,
But in the hour of grief or pain
Can lean upon its God;

A faith that shines more bright and clear
When tempests rage without;
That when in danger knows no fear,
In darkness feels no doubt;

Lord, give me such a faith as this,
And then, whate’er may come,
I’ll taste e’en here the hallowed bliss
Of an eternal home.

3. How People Try To Get Rid Of Their Fears

In an attempt to get rid of our fears we often resort to various man-made solutions. We spend vast sums of money and vast amounts of effort to protect ourselves against the fearful dangers of fires and floods and earthquakes and epidemics.

We engage the services of large numbers of policemen and firemen because we are afraid of the outbreak of crime and evil. We purchase large amounts of insurance on our lives and on our property because we are afraid of losing our lives or our belongings. We use all sorts of safety devices in our homes, in our places of business, and on our highways because we are afraid of accidents.

We maintain a large Army, Navy and Air Force because we are fearful of our national and individual security. And having taken such and similar precautions, we assume that all will be well with us. Like the rich man whose ground had brought forth plentifully, we say to ourselves, *“take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”*⁶ Yet none of these means can fully calm our fears. We read in Psalm 127:1, *Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.*

In recent times many articles and books have been published, in which suggestions are made on ways of controlling our fears or even eliminating them from our minds.

Some psychologists have been calling fear a mental condition which can be regulated by such measures as self-control, will power, and other human agencies. While some of these suggestions and recommendations have merit, it must nevertheless be said that fear is not simply a mental state that can easily be corrected, but a situation that arises from the fact that man's relationship to God has been broken and needs restoration.

Even the penitent criminal at Calvary realised that fact when he said to his partner in crime on the third cross, *“Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?”*⁷

4. How Fear May Be Conquered

The question that interests us above all others in this connection is this one: How can our fears be conquered and removed? All of our fears, no matter what their nature may be, can be conquered, not simply by psychological self-training,

not by any self-controlled indifference toward fear, and not by taking recourse to any purely human measures, but only by believing and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Believers in Jesus need have no fears whatsoever because through His atoning sacrifice on the cross Jesus has paid the penalty of all our sins and shortcomings, has reconciled us to God, and has restored peace and friendship between God and man. *“We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son,”* says Holy Scripture.⁸ *“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”*⁹

Because of the redemptive work of Jesus, our heavenly Father is now filled with love and mercy toward His children. He is deeply interested in our welfare. He wants us to have no fears of any kind. He quiets our fears by saying, in Joshua 1:9, *“Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”*

He tells us to have no fear for our bodily well-being by saying in Matthew 6:31-33,³¹ *“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’* ³² *“For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

And He tells us to have no fear for our spiritual well-being, saying, in Isaiah 43:1, *“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine.* And in John 10:27-28,²⁷ *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸ “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.*

Every believer in Jesus, the Saviour, can therefore brush aside any fears he may have and can say, *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.*¹⁰ And in Psalm 46:1-3, *“God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”* And in Psalm 56:3,³ *Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.*¹¹

The hymnist writes,¹²

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless:
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Those who implicitly trust in the Lord can live their lives without fear and with calmness and gladness of heart in the knowledge that ***“all things work together for good to those who love God”*** as we are told in Romans 8:28. They can say, in the words of the text before us, ***The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?***

Such trust in the Lord enabled Moses to lead the Israelites without fear through the Red Sea and the wilderness. Such trust enabled Gideon fearlessly to face an army that vastly outnumbered his men. Such trust enabled Paul the Apostle to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ courageously throughout the Mediterranean world. Such trust enabled Martin Luther to stand unafraid before the imperial Diet at Worms and defend his teachings. And such trust in the Lord will enable every follower of Christ to stand undaunted amid the chaos and confusion of the contemporary world. Remember also the story of David at Ziklag,¹³ and the story of Jairus.¹⁴

Jesus says to us ***“Be not afraid; only believe.”***¹⁵ During a frightful storm on the ocean a small boy kept on playing aboard ship with apparent unconcern. When asked whether he was not afraid, the boy replied, “No, because my father is the captain of this ship.”

If we had such child-like faith and trust in our heavenly Father, the storms of life would not be able to disturb the peace of our lives. If you and I walk each day with Jesus at our side, we can walk in the glad consciousness that though dark shadows occasionally fall across our path, our way through life will be brightened and cheered by the presence of Jesus who has said, ***“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”***¹⁶

Every one of us Christians, therefore, can say, not with foolish bravado, nor with false presumption, but with firm confidence, ***The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom***

shall I be afraid? ² When the wicked came against me To eat up my flesh, My enemies and foes, They stumbled and fell. ³ Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war should rise against me, [even then] I will be confident. Amen.

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

¹ Psa 27:1

² Rom. 6:23

³ Matthew 8:26

⁴ Jeremiah 17:5

⁵ Hymn 395

⁶ Luke 12:19

⁷ Luke 23:40

⁸ Romans 5:10

⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:19

¹⁰ Psa 23

¹¹ See also Rom 8:31-37

¹² Hymn 543 v4

¹³ 1 Sam. 30:1-6

¹⁴ Mark 5:35,36

¹⁵ Mark 5:36

¹⁶ Matthew 28:20