

From Fear to Faith.

Text: Psalm 27:7a, 9b, 1

Suggested Hymns:

336, 189, 348, 161, 365

1) When we need help

2) Where can we get help

3) God will help

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 27:7a, 9b, 1, ***⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice! You have been my help; Do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation. ¹The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear?*** (NKJV)

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

Dear friends in Christ,

“Danger — Winding Road” “Caution — Crest” warn the signs on the highway. When our vision is obscured, we are in danger. Life is full of crests and winding roads — problems we cannot solve, decisions we are afraid to make, worries which gnaw at us, conflicts which frustrate us, failures which lead us to despair, enemies we can’t defeat, and misfortunes we cannot control.

These are the times when our days are troubled and our nights sleepless. Our lives are paralysed by fear. Somebody one said that *“the greatest thing we have to fear is fear itself.”* That is right, but you cannot stop fear simply by saying, *“Don’t be afraid.”* It’s not that simple.

In our text today God tells us how to handle fear. He wants to lead us *From Fear to Faith*. This is our theme for today. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. When We Need Help

Our text begins, ***⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice!*** Here is a man in trouble, a frightened soul crying for help. David knew what it meant to be in trouble way over his head.

King Saul again and again tried to kill him. He was a starving fugitive. He fought wars against overwhelming odds. His own son led a rebellion against

him. Worst of all, he knew too well the trouble of a bad conscience tortured by the memories of murder, adultery, and the many other sins which condemn us before God. David was not a coward, but he knew fear and despair as frequent companions.

Our Fears

Have you ever been afraid and in desperate need of help? Of course you have. Psychologists tell us that fear is the greatest motive in the lives of most people. We are full of personal fears.

Some of the most common are:

Fear of Poverty

We work and scheme, grasp and push, save and bargain, to make money so we won't be poor. Nothing, in the common sense of values, is more important than money. We imagine we can buy power, popularity, position, security, and even a place in heaven. Nothing is more to be feared than being poor.

Fear of Loneliness

We try so hard to make ourselves popular, attempt to bind people to us with bonds of fear or love, struggle to be accepted as part of the crowd, work to be recognised in our community. We do our best to "conform" and force others into the same mould, since we are afraid to be different. We have become a nation of "status seekers" because we are afraid we might be left out. We are afraid to be lonely.

Fear of Boredom

Have you ever wondered why the entertainment world is so popular? Television cannot keep up with the demand for new stories, and new faces. Business is better than ever for TV, radio, theatres, night clubs, internet, and other forms of entertainment. Football, basketball, boxing, wrestling, and many other sports are paying huge amounts for players who will attract crowds lining up to spend their money. World travel is at an all-time high.

More cars are being sold all over the world. Manufacturers of wine and beer report record profits. No price is too great to pay in the pursuit of pleasures, because we are afraid of being bored.

Fear of Sickness

Look at our busy doctors and our crowded hospitals. Responsible specialists have estimated that 75 per cent or more of these patients are suffering from psychosomatic illnesses. Or, one might say, they are afraid they are sick. Their sickness starts in the mind rather than in the body. Neurotic people increase the cost of hospital insurance, bother others with a detailed description of the state of their health when asked “How are you?” and enjoy poor health.

With the high cost of medical care, fear of sickness has become a very real problem for many people. Most of us would have to ask in terror: *“What would we do if we would have serious illness in our family?”* We have good reason to be afraid of sickness and pain.

Fear of Old Age

Our civilisation worships youth. You don’t dare get old, it’s not socially acceptable any more. So we lie about our age, we tint our hair, we pull out the wrinkles, we pull in the abdomen, and we make ourselves miserable in an impossible effort to stay young.

Just in passing, may we ask what is wrong with getting old? Yes, our powers diminish, and we deteriorate physically as the years go by, but there are many compensations. It is such a relief not to be young. However, we must not ask that question. It is unpopular to be old, and the advertising industry has made us afraid of old age.

Fear of Sin

This fear is usually expressed in different terms. We would rather speak of mistakes and faults, but God says we sin, and our own consciences tell us it is true. *“The wages of sin is death,”* eternal damnation.¹ This fear may not be as close to the surface of our minds as some of the others, but it goes much deeper. Feelings of guilt disturb people in the very core of their being. Many of our other fears are foolish, but the fear of sin is deadly serious.

Fear of Death

This is a fear which is seldom expressed, because there is nothing you can do about it. Death is our last and worst enemy, but no one can help us, so we generally avoid the subject whenever possible. Yet the stench of decay and death is all about us and in us.

All of us know that we will die someday, we just hope it is not today. The terror of death is horrible to behold.

Our fears go on and on. In addition to many other personal fears there are the fears concerning society. We are afraid of war, of depression, of inflation. We are afraid of authority and afraid of anarchy. We are afraid of what we do, and what we don't do. You see, we need help!

2. Where Can We Get Help?

From Other People?

The most obvious place to turn for help is to other people; others have managed to get through life, meet their problems, and overcome their fears. But when you turn to others, you find that they are too busy with their own affairs to care very much. You cannot even buy help for the fears which bother you most.

Worse yet, you learn that everyone else has his problems. They are afraid too. Our own problems always seem worse to us, of course, but when you get right down to it, everyone has pretty much the same basic fears, and no one really has the answers.

From Government?

When people individually are unable to help us, we often turn to people as a whole — the government. It is less personal, and often less embarrassing to ask help from the government. The same age-old pattern repeats itself. The people expect the government to solve their personal problems and to relieve them of personal responsibility.

Politicians, eager for power, are all too willing to promise security from the cradle to the grave. The cure for poverty is big government spending; for sickness, socialised medicine; for old age, social security; for war, get rid of the party in power; and for any thing not already covered, more investigation committees. So we can lose our freedom, but when does the real help come?

From Science?

Most popular of those who promise help is the sacred cow of science. It has promised us a bright new world full of gadgets for the body and tranquillisers for the soul. Surely science can quiet our fears and end our problems. Engineers can supply our physical needs, psychologists can give us personal power,

psychiatrists can eliminate the sense of guilt, doctors can keep us alive and young, chemists can control the secrets of life, and physicists can supply us with weapons to win all wars.

And there are many others not yet mentioned who will help to do the job. Alas! In its smug self-satisfaction, science has forgotten that it can do nothing more than supply better tools. It is still up to the individual to use the tools. Experience holds forth no hope that better tools will make better people. For this, we must find some other help.

God Our Only Help

In his time of need, David turned to God, his only Hope. *“Do not leave me nor forsake me.”* David knew that he was a sinner and the natural reaction of a sinful man before God is that of Peter when he said, *“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”*²

Yet David pleads that God will not forsake him, because he needs Him so much. *“Do not leave me”* is the desperate cry of a man who needs help. So we must come to God knowing our sinfulness and unworthiness, yet pleading for Him not to leave us since we need Him desperately. We cannot help ourselves, human help fails us, there is only one hope left. If only God will come to our aid! Could it be that God might still help us even though we have neglected and abused Him so shamefully?

3. God Will Help

God’s Help in the Past

Look at the past. *“You have been my help”* our text says. The best way to find out if a person is reliable is to look at his past performances. If he has consistently kept his word and done what he promised to do, you can depend on him. This is our starting point when we ask if God will help us in our time of need. He always has been a *“very present Help in trouble”*³ for those who turn to Him.

David had experienced God’s help again and again. When he was a youth and went out to fight against the giant Goliath, God gave him the victory. Pursued by the deadly hatred of King Saul, David led the perilous life of an outlaw, yet he lived to become Israel’s greatest king.

Even when David stood guilty of the blackest crimes and was condemned out of his own mouth before the prophet Nathan, God heard his confession and granted him forgiveness. David turned to God for help, because God had always helped in the past.

Have you seen God's help in your life? Consider some of the things He has done for you. He has given us a world in which we can live. We have abundant air, water, food, and shelter. If you have been without these things even for a short time, you will know how important they are.

He has given us marvellous bodies with all our senses, our health, and our mind. How sad it is when we lose even one of these God-given blessings! Perhaps even more helpful for you will be the remembrance of some very special deliverance which God has given.

Recall a time when you prayed in great need and your prayer was answered. If you have ever been seriously ill, consider that you got well only because God made it possible. Even through the peephole of our lives we can see God's grace. Think what it will look like when we can see the whole picture! It is good to forget the dangers and troubles of yesterday, but don't forget how God helped you through every crisis of your life.

Most important, bring to mind the relief you found when you came to God with a ghastly burden of sin and He forgave it all. This is the daily experience of all who come to Him. He promises that He will not cast out anyone who comes to Him, and not one of His promises has ever failed. If you have experienced God's help in the past, you will know that there is hope and help for you now.

God Is Your Present Salvation

Now what do you have troubling you today? Come and cast your burden upon the Lord. His goodness is not just an ancient history, it is a living power which you can receive right now. God is my Salvation, says the psalm.

Don't make the mistake of thinking of your salvation as something which is only an act of the past or a hope of the future. The motto of Oxford University is "*The Lord Is My Light.*" This is indeed a noble choice, but often in our day it is an heirloom instead of a motto.

The Christian faith cannot be put in mothballs. You are saved right now. When Jesus died on the cross, He promised, “***Today you will be with Me in Paradise***”⁴ Jesus is your salvation today.

Jesus died for you too. God gave His Son because He loved the world and wants all to be saved. This means you. In Acts 2:21 we are told that “***Whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.***” He is not just a Saviour for David, but for you and me. No one need despair, no one is without hope, no one is lost unless he refuses the help right at hand. Jesus died for all.

But at times we find people who imagine that their troubles are too little and that God will not bother with individuals. Or they imagine that their problems are beyond any help — even from God. Or they think that God may provide for heaven, but will not bother about our earthly needs.

Listen! Scripture tells us in Romans 8:32, ³² ***He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*** Do not forget that when God created us, He made both body and soul. When Jesus died, He redeemed both body and soul. God’s promises are for the life which now is and for that which is to come.

Surely Jesus died to save our souls eternally, and just as surely He has borne the griefs and carried the sorrows which trouble us today. You have His help today.

God Is Your Confidence for the Future

Following after God’s thoughts in our Introit, we can leave His house of Worship with confidence and vitality. We can face the future unafraid. “***Whom shall I fear?***”

An aged pastor, critically ill, was asked how things were going. He answered, “*God is my Father, Christ is my Brother, the Holy Spirit is my Comforter. All is well.*” The apostle Paul, after a life of hard work and persecution, was waiting for a martyr’s death when he said, “***If God is for us, who can be against us?***”⁵

You, too, can face the future with confidence if you put your faith in Jesus Christ. If you can say, “***The LORD is my light and my salvation,***” the rest follows easily.

In other words, if you have learned to turn to God for help in time of need, you have nothing to fear. If you have received God's grace in Christ and rely on Him alone, you know that He will keep you to the very end, and after a blessed end take you to Himself in heaven. If you have learned to accept God's wisdom and strength instead of your own, then He is your Light, your Guide, your Good Shepherd, and you have passed from fear to faith.

For one who has passed from fear to faith, the future is always bright. In Jesus we have a hope which never dies, a joy which never ends. Try this and see what happens to your fears and worries.

But a final word of caution: don't be like the student who remarked, *"I will give God and religion a three-month trial; if nothing happens, I quit."* He quit before he started. The Lord will help those who seek in earnest, but not experimenters.

Come to Jesus with your great need, and you'll leave with a bold faith. This was our theme as we entered into God's house today. Don't leave without getting what you came for. Jesus wants you to be bold in Him. Amen.

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

¹ Romans 6:23

² Luke 5:8

³ Psalm 46:1

⁴ Luke 23:43

⁵ Romans 8:31