

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 12-29-13 PM NOTES
"WHOM SHALL I FEAR?"
PSALM 27:1-14

Proverbs 9:10a (NKJV) "The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of wisdom..."

The fear that the Bible forbids is a fear that is the result of refusing to trust God, a fear that is rooted in self-centeredness, a fear that causes anxiety, and a fear that is rooted in the desire to control our own life.

Deuteronomy 31:6 (NKJV) "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He *is* the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

Psalms 118:6 (NKJV) "The Lord *is* on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

Isaiah 41:10 (NKJV) "Fear not, for I *am* with you; be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV) "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

I. Be Courageous in the Lord (vv. 1-6)

Faith is activated by our confession of God truth and promises.

The word "confess" means to say with or to agree.

1 John 1:9 (NKJV) "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1 John 4:15 (NKJV) "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."

Hebrews 13:5b-6a (NKJV) "⁵...For He Himself has said...⁶ So we may boldly say..."

A. Be Courageous in His Sufficiency (v. 1a)

1. Light Symbolizes Purity

1 John 1:5-7 (NKJV) "⁵This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

2. Light Symbolizes Life

John 1:4 (NKJV) "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

Colossians 3:4b (NKJV) "...Christ *who is* our life..."

3. Light Symbolizes Truth

Psalms 119:105 (NKJV) "Your word *is* a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

B. Be Courageous in His Strength (vv. 1b-3)

“What can I fear? Will it be death? But Christ is my life. Will it be exile? But the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof. Will it be loss of wealth though we brought nothing into the world and we can carry nothing out? Thus all the cares of the world are contemptible in my eyes, and I smile at all rich things. Poverty I do not fear. Riches? Riches I do not sigh for. Death I do not shrink from. And life I do not desire to save only for the process of souls. So if they banish me, then I shall be like Elijah. If they throw me into the mire, like Jeremiah. If they plunge me into the sea, like the prophet Jonah. If into the pit, like Daniel; if they stone me, like Stephen; if they cut off my head, like John the Baptist; if they beat me with stripes, like Paul; if they saw me asunder, like Isaiah. What shall I fear?” —John Chrysostom

C. Be Courageous in His Shelter (vv. 4-5)

Psalms 27:4 (AMP) “One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek, inquire for, *and* [insistently] require: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord [in His presence] all the days of my life, to behold *and* gaze upon the beauty [the sweet attractiveness and the delightful loveliness] of the Lord and to meditate, consider, *and* inquire in His temple.”

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NKJV) “pray without ceasing.”

D. Be Courageous in His Supremacy (v. 6)

II. Be Courageous in Your Walk (vv. 7-14)

A. Respond to God (vv. 7-8)

In the Old Testament, seeking God’s hand signified seeking His action, and seeking His face was seeking His pleasure or His will.

B. Rely on God (vv. 9-10)

Hebrews 13:5b (NKJV) “For He Himself has said, *‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’*”

C. Rest in God’s Will (vv. 11-13)

D. Remain Courageous in God’s Delays (v. 14)

God’s delays are not God’s denials.

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"WHOM SHALL I FEAR?"
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Even the most courageous among us have struggled with fear. Some have learned to stuff the fear down deep and continue functioning, but eventually it comes back up. Our English word "phobia" comes from the Greek word for fear. Any word that ends in "phobia" is a specific type of fear. In one dictionary, there are over 700 different kinds of phobias! Here are a few of the types of fear: acrophobia (the fear of high places), agoraphobia (the fear of public or open places), claustrophobia (the fears of enclosed places), hematophobia (the fear of blood), monophobia (the fear of being alone), pathophobia (the fear of disease), toxophobia (the fear of being poisoned), xenophobia (the fear of strangers), and zoophobia (the fear of animals). I think that one of the most amusing ones is ergophobia – the fear of work. I've known a lot of people who have that one! There's even a phobophobia which is a fear of fear! Of course, not all fear is bad. A fear of the things we are to stay away from is good. Also, I've preached at least two series of messages on the fear of God which is something we need to cultivate instead of run from. A fear of God is the knowledge that He is holy and that He sees all that we say, do, and think, and that one day we will give account to Him. **Proverbs 9:10a (NKJV)** "The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of wisdom..." The fear that the Bible forbids is a fear that is the result of refusing to trust God, a fear that is rooted in self-centeredness, a fear that causes anxiety, and a fear that is rooted in the desire to control our own life.

There is no shortage of passages in the Bible that deal with this forbidden type of fear. Though I haven't personally counted, I have read in multiple sources that there are 365 times in the Bible that we find the words "fear not" or their equivalent. That means there is one "fear not" for every day of the year! Other passages on fear are: **Deuteronomy 31:6 (NKJV)** "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He *is* the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." **Psalms 118:6 (NKJV)** "The Lord *is* on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" **Isaiah 41:10 (NKJV)** "Fear not, for I *am* with you; be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." **2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)** "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." But of all the passages in Scripture on fear, there is none more important than Psalm 27. As we face a new year with all of its uncertainties, all of the gloom and doom that is being predicted, we desperately need the truths of this Psalm that is more relevant to where we are than any book written by man.

I. Be Courageous in the Lord (V1-6)

The Lord is our deliverer. He wills to deliver us from everything that would hold us in bondage – and that includes fear. His deliverance, however waits on our faith. Let me share a concept about faith that is often overlooked. Faith is activated by our confession of God's truth and promises. The word "confess" means to say with or to agree. When it comes to confessing sin, we simply stop rationalizing our sin and agree with God about our sin. **1 John 1:9 (NKJV)** "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We also need to confess the truth of God's promises. We see an example of that faith confession in **1 John 4:15 (NKJV)** "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." Even though the word "confess" isn't used, we see the concept illustrated in **Hebrews 13:5b, 6a (NKJV)** ⁵ "...For He Himself has said..." ⁶ so we may boldly say..." That is how confession of truth works. It is an act of faith, counting what God says about us, Himself, or our situation as true whether it feels true or looks true. I choose to agree with what God says because He is trustworthy and His Word is inspired, infallible, inerrant, and authoritative. I must confess what God says when I don't sense it in my feelings and when my mind can't fully comprehend it. My favorite definition of faith is that faith acts like God is telling the truth, and a part of that "acting" is to confess His word as truth. I'm not talking about the unscriptural excesses of the word of faith movement that confesses verses (or even small parts of verses) taken out of context. For instance, I cannot confess my instantaneous physical healing or anyone else's healing. Nowhere are we told in Scripture that God

always heals His children when they claim it. What I can do is confess Romans 8:28-29 that He is working my illness for good because I love Him and I am called according to His purpose. I can confess that His enabling grace will be sufficient for me because He says that in 2 Corinthians 12:9. I cannot confess that God is going to make me successful in business, enable me to buy a new \$200,000,000 home and drive a Bentley. I can confess that if I am faithful in giving that according to Philippians 4:19 He will supply all of my genuine needs (and He gets to define what a need is). I can confess when I am facing a decision that He is giving me wisdom to make the correct decision because James 1:5 promises that.

When the Psalmist feels fear sweeping over him, he begins to confess the promises of God and the power of God.

A. Be Courageous in His Sufficiency (V1a)

David is confessing the truth of who God is. He begins by saying the Lord is his light. Note that he doesn't say that the Lord gives light; he says that the Lord is the light. Light in the Bible symbolizes several things:

1. Light Symbolizes Purity

1 John 1:5-7 (NKJV) “⁵ This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” When I confess that He is my light, I am confessing that He is the source of my purity; He is the source of my holiness. I can live a pure life, a holy life because I have the source of purity and holiness living in me. His Spirit is the **Holy** Spirit.

2. Light Symbolizes Life

Speaking of God the Son, we read in **John 1:4 (NKJV)** “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” To confess that He is my light is to confess that He is my life. **Colossians 3:4b (NKJV)** “... Christ *who is our life...*”

3. Light Symbolizes Truth

Psalms 119:105 (NKJV) “Your word *is* a lamp to my feet and a **light** to my path.” To confess that He is my light is to confess that He is the truth and being the truth, He will lead me in the truth when I don't know where to go. In the first part of the first verse, we find that the Lord is our purity, our life, and our truth. This is the one I have in me when I am filled with fear.

Not only is He my light, He is my salvation. The Hebrew word here translated “salvation” comes from a root that means to make wide or sufficient. It is the picture of making a way of escape, deliverance or rescue. When I am in Christ, I will always have a way of rescue or deliverance. When I am fearful, the Lord is my deliverer, my rescuer, my way of escape. Many times He does not take us immediately out of the circumstances or conditions that are overwhelming us, but changes us so that we trust in Him and are no longer overwhelmed. He is oftentimes more glorified in the circumstance that had been making us fearful than He would have been by taking us out of it. In light of the fact that He is our light and our salvation, the question “Whom shall I fear?” has the obvious answer, “No one”.

B. Be Courageous in His Strength (V1b-3)

What a great Psalm this is! Let's look carefully at what the Psalmist is doing here. He is being overwhelmed by a sense of dread and fear of what might happen. Let's admit that fear is the source of our feeling overwhelmed so many times. To combat his fears, the Psalmist is dealing in what I call “worst case scenarios”. He is laying out the most horrible things that could happen – it has to do with vicious enemy armies, whole armies, which would come and surround him. Even then there is no reason to fear. The Lord is stronger than any army; He is omnipotent! When you are feeling overwhelmed and fear and dread of what might happen begins to make us worse and worse, STOP! What is the worst thing that could happen? Is it feeling overwhelmed with financial pressures and job insecurity? What is the worst case scenario? You lose your home and vehicles. You are homeless and have to live under a bridge in a box. Is God still sovereign and on His throne? Is He not the God of all power? Can He not give you a waterproof box, protect you and give you a ministry to the homeless and enable you to glorify Him and

more clearly see his beauty and majesty with all the stuff cleared away? Can He not supply you with the necessities of life? He is strong and mighty; why fear? Settle the fact that even if the worst happens, He is still our light, our salvation, and our strength. He will care for you as you seek to glorify Him.

When I talk about worst case scenarios, I'm not talking about pessimism and fatalism. I'm saying that when you confess that God is sufficient when even that which we dread happens and He will strengthen us and enable us with His grace, you have taken away the enemy's tool to cause us to be overwhelmed and joyless and ineffective in the mission that God has called us to. **Psalms 27:3 (NKJV)** "Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this I *will be* confident." I never grow tired of reading the account of the fourth century church father John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople. His hard preaching against sin deeply offended the sinful Queen Eudoxia. When Chrysostom was on trial on trumped up charges and facing a penalty that was going to be horrible (which turned out to be banishment for life), listen to how he responded:

"What can I fear? Will it be death? But Christ is my life. Will it be exile? But the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. Will it be loss of wealth though we brought nothing into the world and we can carry nothing out? Thus all the cares of the world are contemptible in my eyes, and I smile at all rich things. Poverty I do not fear. Riches? Riches I do not sigh for. Death I do not shrink from. And life I do not desire to save only for the process of souls. So if they banish me, then I shall be like Elijah. If they throw me into the mire, like Jeremiah. If they plunge me into the sea, like the prophet Jonah. If into the pit, like Daniel; if they stone me, like Stephen; if they cut off my head, like John the Baptist; if they beat me with stripes, like Paul; if they saw me asunder, like Isaiah. What shall I fear?"

Whatever is overwhelming you, I doubt that it is as bad as what Chrysostom was facing. Be courageous in His strength that can take us victoriously through our worst case scenarios.

C. Be Courageous in His Shelter (V4-5)

I sometimes pick a verse for the year, and several years ago verse 4 was my verse. Listen to the Amplified Translation: **Psalms 27:4 (AMP)** "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek, inquire for, *and* [insistently] require: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord [in His presence] all the days of my life, to behold *and* gaze upon the beauty [the sweet attractiveness and the delightful loveliness] of the Lord and to meditate, consider, *and* inquire in His temple." David's shelter was to be in the Lord's presence constantly. This is what some call "practicing the Lord's presence". It is a life of continual worship and awareness of his watching and sovereign management over all we are experiencing. This was before the temple was built and when David talked about the house of the Lord, he was speaking of living with an awareness of His presence. This is what is spoken of in **1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NKJV)** that we looked at in this morning's message, "pray without ceasing". It is living in communion with the Lord. A daily quiet time that we encourage people to establish is sometimes misunderstood. It is not a time when we listen to God through his word and then spend time in prayer and end it by checking "time with the Lord" off of our list so we say goodbye to Him and tell Him we'll call on Him if something big comes up we cannot handle ourselves. The purpose of the quiet time in the morning is to connect with Him early so that we can dwell in His presence all through the day! When He is your shelter, nothing can overwhelm you. When you are fearful, confess that He is your shelter; he is the rock of stability; abide in Him; walk in communion with him throughout the day!

D. Be Courageous in His Supremacy (V6)

Here is where we begin to come out from under the fear that has been overwhelming us. Now he rises up out of the depths and begins to see from God's perspective. He has **not** been delivered from the circumstance that had been overwhelming him. The circumstance wasn't changed, but the person in the circumstance was changed. Now, from God's perspective, he sees the enemy as being under God and under His sovereignty and the result is rejoicing. That word "joy" is literally "shouts of joy". He sees the victory before it happens and because His faith is in God, he can rejoice in less than pleasant circumstances. Oh the delight of being set free from debilitating fear by seeing our present circumstances and our potential fear causing circumstances from God's perspective.

II. Be Courageous in Your Walk (V7-14)

Whereas the first 6 verses this Psalm give us great principles to obey when we are fearful, the remainder of the Psalm is dealing with the everyday battle. Sometimes we allow the situation or the potential situation to creep back to the forefront of our focus and we slip back into fear. What do we do?

A. Respond to God (V7-8)

This is a great example of how to pray when we are fearful. He first calls out for God's mercy. It is in His mercy that He delivers us. One of the old timers called mercy the hope of sinners and the refuge of saints. His point in verse 8 is that the circumstances or whatever is causing the fear constitutes a call from God to seek His face. In the Old Testament, seeking God's hand signified seeking His action and seeking His face was seeking His pleasure or His will. If you are fearful, seek His pleasure, and seek it diligently. The pattern is that you confess His truth and seek His face on what His exact will is for the thing that is weighing you down. God can typically do more in your life in one year of trouble and heavy burdens than 25 years when everything is going smooth. That's not because God is powerless to do anything when things are going smoothly; it is because we don't usually cry out to Him and seek His face until we start getting desperate. In times of fear, cry out to God.

B. Rely on God (V9-10)

On this side of the cross, we have a promise that speaks to this burden on the psalmist's heart. **Hebrews 13:5b (NKJV)** "For He Himself has said, *'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'*" Even if our closest human relationships break down and we are forsaken even by mother and father, God will not forsake His own. **Psalms 27:10b (NKJV)** "...the Lord will take care of me."

C. Rest in God's Will (V11-13)

He is saying, "Lord, I want to learn what You have to teach me in this tough time." The word "smooth" in verse 11 doesn't mean easy. It is translated "level" in the ESV and "straight" in the NIV. He is saying, "Father, lead me in straight paths of righteousness and deliver me from my enemies who would love to bring me down." He is basically saying that he is resting in the will of God as he goes through tough times. He is not saying, "I have a solution and I want you to bless it." He is resting in God's will and yielded completely to it. In verse 13, he confesses that in spite of circumstances that are painful that God is good and is working all the tough times for his good. Listen carefully: God is good even when His will is painful!

We respond to God, rely upon God, and rest in God's will.

D. Remain Courageous in God's Delays (V14)

God's delays are not God's denials! Someone has accurately said that it takes as much courage to wait as it does to war. God always operates on His timetable and not ours. The Hebrew word "wait" doesn't mean to sit around and twiddle your thumbs. It literally means to wait in expectancy. That's why you can be of good courage – you are waiting with expectancy that God is going to work, to guide, to enable, to mature us, and to glorify Himself. There is no need for fear!

CONCLUSION

Are you struggling with fear – fear of the future, fear of failure, fear of man, fear of some potential undesirable circumstance? Be courageous in the Lord; be courageous in your walk, and walk by faith and in so doing the fears will vanish.