

Psalm 27--Focus on God

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Salem

Psalm 27

INTRODUCTION:

- Welcome
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This morning, we will be taking a look at an excellent passage that demonstrates to us the importance of trust in God.

- This passage, **Psalm 27**, was written by David who as you are probably aware, had much to fear in his life.
- We can think about the wild animals that he slayed as a shepherd boy.
- Facing Goliath when everybody else was too afraid to volunteer.
- Nearly getting pinned to the wall by spears from King Saul on more than one occasion.
- David faced many battles and he had reason to fear even members of his own family.
- If anyone in this life ever had something to fear, it would probably have been David.
- Today there are also many different things that we fear.

On September 11th, 2001 I can distinctly recall the horrific tingle that went up and down my spine when the second plane hit the second tower of the world trade center and at that point it became obvious that this was no accident.

- About an hour later I remember feeling even more terrified when I learned that a third plane hit the pentagon and in about another hour a fourth plane went down in Pennsylvania.
- I remember thinking, "Where is the next one going to crash?"
- Even with the supposed high security at airports, terrorists managed to take four planes and in a matter of hours, thousands of people were dead and Billions of Americans were afraid that they could be next.

Fear starts out when we are very young with fears of things like darkness and monsters.

- It continues into our teenage years with fears of things like rejection, humiliation and failure.
- Adulthood is also filled with possible fears such as fear of disease, financial problems, broken relationships, loved ones being hurt, storms, aging, crime.
- We are afraid to take our eyes off our children at the grocery store for fear that someone will walk off with them.
- We all know what it is like to be filled with fear.

A woman in Arkansas was sitting in her car in a parking lot last year when she heard a loud bang and then felt a sharp pain in the back of her head.

- She was holding her hands behind her head when someone walked by and asked, "Are you OK?"
- The woman answered, "I've been shot in the head, and I'm holding my brains in."
- Well, it wasn't her brains. It was dough!
- A Pillsbury biscuit canister had exploded in the back seat, apparently from the heat, making a loud explosion and shooting the dough into the back of the woman's head.

Some times our fears are justifiable, however often times we are simply afraid of the unknown.

Shohoiya Yokowai (Sha-hoy-ah Yo-ka-why) spent 28 years of his life in prison.

- It was not a prison of bars & locks & wardens, but a self-imposed prison of fear.
- He was a Japanese soldier on the island of Guam during WW2.
- And when the American forces landed, he fled into the jungle & found a cave in which he hid for 28 years because he was afraid of being captured by the Americans.
- He learned that the war was over by reading one of the thousands of pamphlets dropped into the jungle.
- But he was afraid. So for 28 years he lived in the cave, coming out only at night to look for roaches & rats & frogs & mangoes on which he survived.

- Some natives found him and were finally able to convince him that it would be all right for him to come out of his jungle prison.

His fear needlessly caused him to be secluded from human contact for almost 3 decades.

- Does this mean that all fear is bad?
- On the contrary, I would like to submit that there are a lot of fears, which are good.
- It is good to be afraid of the damaging power of electricity. It is good for a child to be afraid to cross the street.
- No one will question that it is good to be afraid of a tornado that is heading toward you.

We realize though, that unnecessary fear and worrying is counter-productive and can even cost us our salvation.

- At the very least it can make our Christianity unhealthy.
- In the parable of the soils in **Matthew 13**, Jesus gives a description of the seed that landed among the thorns. He said, *“this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”*
- We can become so caught up in our earthly worries (in our fears) that we can forget God’s word and become unfruitful, inactive and unproductive.

Fear can be very displeasing and dishonoring to God if we do not respond to it with faith in him.

- In **1 Peter 5:7**, the Apostle Peter spoke of casting our anxieties on Him.
- Those of us that have anxiety want solutions and so we look for something to relieve us from our fears... something to reassure us.

Some people look for that security in their bank account.

- Some seek that reassurance in a relationship or in alcohol or drugs, however, none of these are real solutions because none of them offer total security or absolute reassurance.
- No amount of money, success, or any position in life can truly give you peace in every situation.
- So the question becomes, **"How can we have victory over fear?"**
- The answer to this important question is given in **Psalms 27**, which says in effect **“Focus on God and your fears will disappear!”**
- David, the man who could have been named, **“the man who had the world to fear”**, wrote the following:

Psalm 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?

2 When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.

3 Though a host encamp against me, My heart will not fear; Though war arise against me, In spite of this I shall be confident.

4 One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD And to meditate in His temple.

5 For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; In the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock.

6 And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.

I am always amazed to read the Psalms of David and the beautiful and poetic rhythm of his writing.

- In this passage there is an over riding theme to his message and something that I believe all of us can greatly benefit from in today’s unpredictable and changing world.
- This morning, therefore, I would like to explore three important reasons that we should always focus on God.

I. First of all, we find that if we FOCUS ON GOD, OUR FEAR WILL DISAPPEAR.

Some time ago, Traci and I were watching a program (I think it was Nightline) that was interviewing Tommy Hamill, a prisoner of war in Iraq who was able to escape from captivity.

- You may remember him... he is an American truck driver who was trying to make a difference for the country of Iraq when he was captured.
- In this program the interviewer asked Tommy a lot of questions about how he was treated and how he was able to get away from them.
- There were two things that really intrigued me about Tommy throughout the course of the interview.
- The way he says that he leaned on God while he was in captivity, and the fact that he didn't even seem like he had been afraid of what they might have done to him.
- He even said at the end of the interview that Iraq still needs drivers and he was considering going back.
- This man had been held captive for many days, he had to eat cookies and water in order to survive in the desert village where they were keeping him and he had even been shot by his captors.
- Even after all of that, he displayed no fear and recognized that Iraq still needs help, and for that reason he was willing to go back.
- His focus on God, made his fear disappear.

This is the consistent message of the Bible.

- When Peter walked on the water he was not afraid until he lost his focus on Jesus.
- In **Isaiah 41:10** God said, *“Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”*
- We also see the same idea in **Philippians 4:6-7**, which says, *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*
- There will be times when anxiety and fear will come into our lives and it is then that we have a choice to make.
- We can choose to focus on the problem and be overcome with fear or we can choose to focus on God and allow Him to take our fears away.

As we look back on our text, in the first verse of **Psalm 27**, David said, *“The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord Is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?”*

- First of all, David says that the Lord is his *“light”* and his *“salvation.”*

Imagine for a moment a man walking into a large dark room that he is not familiar with.

- A room that is full of razor sharp knives, openings in the floor, explosives, poison dipped darts, and all sorts of other deadly booby traps.
- In the darkness, there is a good likelihood that he will bump into one of these hazards that could cause him injury or death.
- What if he was given a blind man's cane to feel his way through the room? That would help right?
- Or how about if he had a bomb sniffing dog? Wouldn't that be great?
- Wouldn't that be the ideal way to navigate this room?
- Of course not! He would be much better off with a light and a guide who knew exactly where every hazard was and would protect you from each and every one.

David said that God is his *“light”* and his *“salvation.”*

- God was David's light, who guided him through the pitfalls and dangers of life without fear.
- God was his salvation who protected him from the evil one who was constantly looking for the right moment to attack David.
- In today's dark and sinful world, we shouldn't go through life worrying about all that can happen to us, we should have faith that God will be our guiding light and our salvation.

David continues on to say *“The Lord is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?”*

- David felt protected by God and so should we today!
- The Apostle Paul expresses the same kind of sentiments in **Romans 8:28**. *“God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God.”*
- And a few verses later Paul said, *“If God is for us, who is against us?”*

- For a person who struggles with fear and anxiety, this is the very question that they should be asking themselves.
- With God as our light, our salvation, our defense, and as one who causes things to work for the good of those who love Him, how can we have fear?
- Who could cause us to dread? And when God is for us, who could be against us?

Notice: In all of these scenarios, God protects those who put Him as the center of their lives.

Those who are protected by Him are those who focus on Him.

- God was the center of David's life.
- I find it interesting that the very center of the Bible is a verse that summarizes the concept we have been talking about.
- There are 31,173 verses in the Bible.
- The verse that I am about to read has exactly 15,586 verses preceding it and exactly 15,586 verses following it.
- It is literally the center verse of the entire Bible.
- What makes it more amazing, is that it is also the central theme of the entire Bible.
- **Psalm 118:8** says, "*It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.*"
- When we focus on God, our fear disappears.

David continued on to say in **verse 2**, "*When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell. Though a host encamp against me, My heart will not fear...*"

- Jesus spoke about those who would threaten the disciples and said, "*I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!*" **Luke 12:4-5**
- Jesus is telling the disciples that they should not be afraid of men who can only kill the earthly body.
- However, Jesus expressed with crystal clarity that it is imperative that they keep their focus on serving God.

When we consider the source of most fear, we realize that the only true reason anyone fears anything is because we fear the unknown and we fear uncertainty!

- A child fears the dark, because they do not know what is in the darkness under the bed or in the dark closet.
- As adults, our lives are still filled with uncertainty; health, financial security, family, residence... It can all change with little or no notice.
- We want to have stability in our lives and we plan our lives as to avoid surprises, but no matter how much planning we do, we are never completely in control.
- Everything about earth is uncertainty, but David recognized that everything about heaven is just the opposite.
- Earthly life is constantly changing and unpredictable, but God is constant, unchanging and predictable.
- He has given us a recipe, a plan of salvation, that allows us to have confidence in how we live our lives.
- As David says in **verse 3**, "*Though war arise against me, in spite of all of this I shall be confident.*"
- Focus on God and fear will disappear.

II. Another lesson that we can learn from **verses 4-6 is that if we FOCUS ON GOD, WE WILL BE REWARDED.**

David recognized that He had something to look forward to.

- In **verse 4** he said, "*One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life...*"
- This is a very important part of Christianity... David had his prayers on one thing!
- There was one thing that David had set his mind on.
- One thing that he had determined that he was going to seek. To dwell in the house of the Lord.
- David's focus was on obedience to God and he longed to be with God in His house.

- In **John 14:23**, Jesus said that anyone who is obedient and who loves Him is welcome to live with God; *“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”* [NIV]

David was committed to his goal of dwelling in the house of the Lord *“all the days”* of his life!

- He also said that he wanted to *“behold the beauty (or delightfulness) of the Lord.”*
- I am certain that he had often thought about God’s beauty, the glory of God, and contemplated how God would look.
- He had considered that moment of amazement that he would feel the first time he was able to gaze upon the face of the almighty God.

In **verses 5 & 6**, David continues the thought that God will protect him and hide him where no man can cause him harm. He says *“And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes I will sing praises to the Lord.”*

- What a glorious day that will be!
- A day that we will be able to gaze upon God’s face, to be comforted and protected from our enemies and the torments of this world.
- The apostle Peter obviously recognized that God rewards those who have the right attitude toward Him.
- In **1 Peter 5:6-7**, Peter said, *“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”*
- David asked to be lifted up above his enemies and we recognize that God will exalt those who love Him, who are humble, and who are obedient all the days of our lives.
- When we focus on God, not only will our fears disappear, but God will exalt us at the proper time.

III. A third and final lesson that we can learn as we move forward in our text to **verses 7-14**. We should **FOCUS ON GOD BECAUSE HE WILL TAKE CARE OF US.**

Even though David was focused on God and knew that he could inherit the reward some day, he knew that he was still at God’s mercy and he still needed God’s guidance.

- Let’s read **Psalm 27:7-14**...

7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice, And be gracious to me and answer me.

8 When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, O LORD, I shall seek."

9 Do not hide Your face from me, Do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; Do not abandon me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation!

10 For my father and my mother have forsaken me, But the LORD will take me up.

11 Teach me Your way, O LORD, And lead me in a level path Because of my foes.

12 Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries, For false witnesses have risen against me, And such as breathe out violence.

13 I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living.

14 Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.

In this last half of **Psalm 27**, David pleaded with God to be *“gracious”* to him and he indicated that whatever God wanted him to do, he was willing to do it. *“When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, O LORD, I shall seek.”*

- He had uninhibited obedience and submission to God. **“Whatever you say, I’ll do it!”**
- Do we have this same level of commitment to God?

Who do you rely on? Yourself? Your friends? Your job? Your family?

- David said, *“my father and my mother have forsaken me, But the Lord will take me up.”*
- He continued on to say, *“Teach me Your way”* and *“lead me in a level path.”*
- The world is full of uneven paths that take us on a roller coaster ride full of changes.

- David expresses that God is the one who he relied on! God is consistent and never changing!
- David said, *“I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living.”*
- His faithfulness to God is what gave him hope!

SUMMARY:

There are a host of things that can cause us fear in our lives, but what good is that fear really going to do for us?

- The parable of the soils tells us that the *“worry of the world”* can choke the word and make us unfruitful.

We have learned a number of important lessons this morning.

- I. **First we learned that we should FOCUS ON GOD AND FEAR WILL DISAPPEAR.**
 - With the Lord as our *“light”* and our *“salvation”* and our *“defense”*... who should we fear?
- II. **The second thing that we have learned from David in Psalm 27 is to FOCUS ON GOD AND YOU WILL BE REWARDED.**
 - It should be our #1 goal in life to seek to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our lives.
- III. **The third and final lesson we discussed was to FOCUS ON GOD BECAUSE HE WILL TAKE CARE OF US.**

CONCLUSION:

Earlier in the lesson, I briefly mentioned that God provided a plan of salvation that gives us confidence in our lives.

- His plan is clear and unmistakable.
- We must hear the good news according to **Mark 16:15**.
- Believe that Jesus is the Son of God according to **John:8:24**.
- **Luke 13:3** says we need to repent of our sins and **Matthew 10:32** says we need to confess His name.
- We must also be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins according to **Mark 16:16**.
- Who gave all of these commands? Jesus Himself!

When we take the final step in God’s plan of salvation and we are baptized into Christ’s body, we no longer have to face all the fears of the world alone!

- As David recognized there is nobody else to fear with God as our defense.
- He set for himself a goal that he would strive for this all the days of his life. To dwell with the Lord.
- In **verse 14**, David gave some final words of advice, *“Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD.”*

There is another passage in **Revelation 2:10**, which does a good job of summarizing David’s life.

- It says, *“Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.”*

INVITATION:

If you have taken the steps to make your life right with God, but you are filled with fear, take the advice of David in **Psalm 27**. Put God as the focus of your life and set heaven as your goal.

- And take his advice that he gives as he closes this psalm, *“Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage.”*

If you have NOT taken the steps to make your life right with God, what are you waiting for?

- Do you want to continue going through life with fear?
- You can set all your fears aside and be confident that at death, you will be receiving the crown of life and as David says, you can dwell in the house of the Lord.

If you would like to respond to the invitation this morning, I would encourage you to come forward as we stand and sing...