

# Fearless Trust in God

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Salem

Psalm 27

## Introduction:

In a sermon a couple of years ago I told a story that I have since learned is not true, and it was about a woman in Arkansas who was sitting in her car on a hot summer day when she heard a loud bang and then felt a sharp pain in the back of her head.

- She was supposedly sitting there in the parking lot holding her hands behind her head when someone walked by and asked, “**Are you okay?**”
- The woman responded by saying, “**I’ve been shot in the head and I’m holding my brains in.**”
- According to the story, of course, it was not 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.

Well, as I said, that is a fictional story, however, it is still very interesting, because it illustrates the fact that some of us can be afraid for no good reason.

- There is a huge difference between a bullet and biscuit dough. Some fears can be irrational.

On the other hand, some fears can be very real.

- We can be afraid of losing a job, of losing our health, of losing our finances.
- Maybe we are afraid of not being accepted by others. Perhaps we are afraid of growing old.
- And as a result of these fears, we take steps to protect ourselves.
- We buy insurance to protect those things we consider valuable.
- We lock our doors at night...all because of fear.

Certainly we would agree that some fear is good.

- Fear causes us to respect electricity. Fear causes us to turn off the gas when we smell a leak.
- When we are being chased by a dog, fear enables us to run faster.
- And so in many ways, fear can keep us alive.

But then again, fear can also be dangerous.

- Earlier this week, I read the results of a study done by Dr. Walter Cannon, a researcher on psychosomatic medicine at Harvard University.
- Dr. Cannon describes what happens to the human body when someone becomes either angry or fearful.
- He says, “***Respiration deepens; the heart beats more rapidly; the arterial pressure rises; the blood is shifted from the stomach and intestines to the heart, central nervous system, and the muscles; the processes of the alimentary canal cease; sugar is released from the reserves in the liver; the spleen contracts and discharges its contents of concentrated corpuscles, and adrenalin is secreted.***”
- He explains that you do not want this to happen on a regular basis if there is no need for it, because the response to intense fear is rough on the human body.
- Over time, being afraid can literally make us sick.

This morning, when I refer to fear, I realize that it is a very generic term.

- It can refer to an attitude of nervousness all the way up to absolute terror.
- Fear starts when we are very young—we are afraid of the dark, we are afraid of monsters under the bed.

I have heard of some children who have been unable to get out of bed on the sides or the end—they always jumped off a corner.

- After all, if you got off the side or the end, the monsters could grab your feet.
- But for some reason they couldn't do that if you jump off the corner and make a run for the door.
- As we grow up, we start to fear things like rejection, or failure, or humiliation.
- As adults, we are more likely to fear disease, or death, or aging, or financial problems, or crime.
- All of us understand what it means to be afraid of one thing or another.

This morning, I'd like for us to look to God's word for encouragement, and I'd like for us to look very carefully at **Psalm 27**.

- It is a psalm of David, and the heading in my Bible, at least, is "*A Psalm of Fearless Trust in God.*"
- And as I studied this passage, I realized that the title is a very good summary of what David wrote here.

David is someone we might describe as a fearless man.

- But as we look at David's life, we realize that he was not fearless because he had a lack of trouble.
- David's life was full of trouble, and threats, and war, but David himself seems very calm and very much under control.

This morning, as we think about our own troubles—either financial, or medical, or with relationships, or with our jam-packed daily schedule, (or troubles with our groceries... 😊) let us ask ourselves a question, "**How was David able to be so calm through so many very stressful situations.**"

- With that question in mind, let's look together at **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.*

*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.*

As we look back at these 14 verses, we see David's pattern—we see how David overcame so many troubles in his own life.

I. First of all, we notice in the first three verses that **DAVID PUT HIS FOCUS ON GOD INSTEAD OF ON HIS ENEMIES.**

Sometimes we think of Bible characters, and it is easy for us to assume that they had pretty easy lives.

- But as we study, we realize that their lives were not easy at all.
- We look at David, and we find in **verse 2** that evildoers had come upon him and were trying to “*devour*” his flesh—Or do physical harm to him.
- In **verse 3**, we find that those enemies had encamped themselves around David.
- David at this point was completely surrounded.
- And later in **verse 3**, we find that these enemies were waging war.

But we notice in the opening words of **verse 1**, as he is in the middle of all of this, David starts out by saying, *“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?”*

- And we realize that to David, at least, God was a light.
- In so many fearful situations, light has the ability to bring comfort.
- Light can destroy the monsters under the bed. Light can protect us from crime.
- Light can prevent an accident on the highway.
- Light has a way of removing our real and imagined fears, because it gives us information, it gives us direction.
- And in the same way, we go through this life and we may have fear as we face an unknown situation.
- We may be nervous or scared, but the Lord is our light.

It seems that the lesson here for us is that no matter where we are or what we are facing, we can face the unknown with what we know.

- We know that God is our light. We know that God’s word is true.
- We know that God has promised to be with us in every situation.
- We know that God will always be there. God is a rock-solid lighthouse who never moves.

Later on in **verse 1**, David says that God is the *“defense”* of his life.

- Some other translations refer to this as a *“stronghold,”* or a *“refuge.”*
- It carries the idea of being a safe place—a place where no one can break in.
- Maybe some of you are familiar with the idea of a **“panic room,”** an idea that was made famous in the movie by the same name several years ago.
- Apparently, many wealthy people are building new homes with panic rooms built in.
- The rooms are made of steel, and it’s almost like locking yourself in a safe.
- The idea is that if someone breaks into the home, you jump into the panic room for safety.
- God is our panic room. As David says, He is our defense, or refuge.

I have read that at least one Native American tribe used to have a very unique practice for training their young men.

- On the night of each boy’s 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, they would lead him out into a dense forest to spend the entire night alone.
- Until then, he had never really been away from his family, but on this night he was blindfolded and taken miles away to be left there for the night.
- When he took off the blindfold, he was there in the middle of the thick woods by himself, all night long.
- I don’t know if we can really appreciate how terrifying that must have been—each cracking twig could have been a wild animal, every howl and screech would have had quite an effect.
- After what must have seemed like an eternity, the sun started to rise, and he could slowly look around and see the flowers and the trees.
- But as he kept on looking around, the young man eventually sees his own father—standing just a few feet away, armed with a bow and arrow.
- He had been there all night long.

I have a feeling that when this life is over, we will see our own Father in Heaven in the same way.

- David, then, did not focus on his enemies, but he focused on God instead.

## II. As we move along to **verses 4-6**, we also see that **DAVID MADE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD A PRIORITY IN HIS LIFE.**

We notice in **verse 4** that David says, *“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.”* ... What an amazing thought!

- David had set his priorities very clearly, and seeking God was at the top of his list.
- It is no wonder that we see a number of times that David’s heart was *“wholly devoted to the LORD his God.”* (1 Kings 15:3)

Unfortunately, sometimes today our desire for the one thing that is worth having is watered down by the busyness of this life.

- It is so easy to get distracted, to get pulled away very slowly.
- Today, even faithful Christians can get pulled away from their faith in God that used to mean everything to them.
- David, then, he was not a perfect man, but at least he had his priorities straight!
- David had put the Lord first in his life.

As we look at **verses 4-6**, we notice that David uses the words temple, and tabernacle, and tent—all referring to being with the Lord.

- He did not just go there as a last resort, he did not just go there in times of trouble, but the goal of David’s entire life was to be in fellowship with the Lord.
- Above everything else, David wanted to dwell in the Lord’s house.

Of course, we do not have a literal tabernacle today, but figuratively speaking the New Testament parallel of the Old Testament tabernacle is the Lord’s church.

- Under the New Covenant, our goal, therefore, should still be to dwell in the Lord’s house all the days of our lives.

We know today that when we go home, we are there with our brothers and sisters.

- It is a place of refuge. It is a place of safety and comfort.
- I know that when I go home, I do not need permission to look in the fridge—how wonderful is that?
- When I go home, I know that there are people there who care about me.
- I can go there for advice and encouragement.
- The church is a lot like this.
- When we need a shelter from the world, when we need a break from the backbiting and gossip.
- The Lord’s church is our place of safety.

Like David, we are to be preoccupied with God even today.

- We are to dwell in the Lord’s house.
- The Lord’s house is a place of safety and it is also a place of fellowship.
- David made fellowship with God a priority in his life, and like David, we should also realize that fellowship with God is a choice.

## III. As we look at the next few verses (**verses 7-10**), we find that **DAVID LOOKED FOR THE LORD SPECIFICALLY THROUGH PRAYER AND WORSHIP.**

As he said in **verse 7**, *“Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice, and be gracious to me and answer me.”*

- David is referring to prayer. When he was afraid, David took his concerns to God in prayer.

David was a very talented young man.

- One author has tried to describe King David by saying that he was a *“...genius...brilliant...with an IQ of 150...the musical talent of a Beethoven and the poetry of a Shakespeare and the hand-eye coordination of a Babe Ruth and a military genius that has never once reappeared in all history.”*
- We might agree with that, but David still needed to approach the Lord with his concerns.

In fact, **verse 8** tells us that David made a habit of seeking the Lord’s face.

- Certainly the face is a very important part of the body.
- About four years ago doctors in France performed the first face transplant in the history of the world.
- It was a risky procedure, but the woman with a disfigured face decided that the risk was worth it.
- We recognize each other by looking at each other’s faces.
- When we look at the pictures of our loved ones in our wallets, those pictures are most likely of their faces.
- We carry pictures of faces because to seek someone’s face is to seek intimacy with that person.
- We normally do not get very close, face-to-face, with someone with whom we do not want to have a relationship.

I recently heard about a college professor who had her entire class do something very unusual.

- Everyone got a partner, and the assignment was to look directly into the other person’s eyes for a full five minutes.
- From what I understand, the professor was trying to prove a point about relationships.
- Each of the students learned very quickly that there was a great deal of discomfort and awkwardness when it comes to staring into the eyes of a stranger.
- The class was not allowed to even shift their gaze for an instant.
- But the professor apparently made her point.
- Looking into someone’s face for an extended period of time can have a powerful effect on us.

And in **verse 8**, David said, *“Your face, O Lord, I shall seek.”*

- This morning, we need to ask ourselves whether we are also seeking the Lord’s face.
- Is there something keeping us from making eye-contact with the Lord?

To David, then, going to God in prayer was more than just rattling off a long list of needs and concerns, but going to the Lord in prayer was an attempt at actually being close to God.

In the New Testament, in **Hebrews 12:2**, the Bible actually refers to those of us as Christians, *“...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith....”*

- When we fix our eyes on God, we grow closer to the Lord.

**IV.** As we look at the closing paragraph of **Psalm 27**, we notice in **verses 11-14** that **DAVID GOT OVER HIS FEAR BY FOLLOWING THE LORD WITH PATIENT OBEDIENCE.**

Up in **verse 11**, David says, *“Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a level path....”*

- Some translations refer to a *“plain path.”*
- Others refer to a *“straight path,”* or an *“upright path.”*
- The idea is that David wanted to learn how to live a righteous life.

- Very little is said these days about the value of living a morally upright life.
- In our society, it is not acceptable to question another person's behavior or lifestyle.
- Even when we start teaching or admonishing, some are very quick to jump in and say, "**How dare you judge this person!**"
- Even in **verse 12**, David refers to those false witnesses who had jumped up against him.
- Perhaps he had the same problem back then. People will be cruel to us when we live an upright life.

So in **verses 13-14**, David is asking for patience instead of fear.

- In fact, his conclusion in **verse 14** seems to be a word of advice for those of us who are reading this psalm, "*Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the Lord.*"

We are living in an impatient society.

- Maybe you noticed the story not too long ago about a man living in Los Angeles who was arrested for negligent discharge of a weapon after shooting his toilet bowl five times with a .38 caliber handgun.
- The man said that he just got upset. He couldn't take it anymore.
- Apparently his daughter had flushed a hairbrush earlier in the day and clogged it up—so he shot the toilet!
- I think we've all felt that frustration!

But David tells us to slow down and, "*Wait for the Lord.*"

- Everything about modern life tells us to be in a hurry, and no matter how fast we hurry, there is never enough time to do the things we need to do.
- We keep running out of time.
- Maybe we need to reevaluate the way we live and get involved in what we might describe as "**wait training**" (wait being spelled as **w.a.i.t.**).
- Perhaps as we find ourselves in the slowest moving line at the grocery store, we should assume that God put us there to help us with our "**wait training.**"
- As we are stuck on the interstate and find ourselves in the wrong lane—God put us there to help us learn patience.
- As we're sitting at a restaurant and people who came in after us are getting their food before us—God put us there to help us learn patience.
- I don't know if God would do that for real, but it does seem that there is a lesson for us to learn in every circumstance.

One of the hardest things that we can do is to wait.

- David, though, prayed that he would be able to follow the Lord with patient obedience, because certainly God is worth waiting for.

### **SUMMARY:**

This morning, then, we have looked at a passage that David wrote during a time when he was tempted to be afraid. But as he wrote, he gave us some advice. Instead of being afraid...

- We are to focus on God, not on our enemies.
- We are to make fellowship with God and His people a priority.
- We are to seek the Lord through prayer and worship.
- We are to follow the Lord with patient obedience.

And until we follow David's advice, I would sincerely recommend jumping off the bed from the corners.

**CONCLUSION & INVITATION:**

There may be someone here this morning who is not a Christian and may be ready to make that commitment.

- It is a serious life-changing decision.
- We must realize that Jesus died in our place as a sacrifice for our sins.
- When we come to that understanding, we turn away from sin.
- At that point, we confess the name of Jesus and allow ourselves to be immersed in the name of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.
- When we are baptized, our sins are covered by His Son's blood, and we are added by the Lord to his church.
- We would love to see you make that decision this morning.
- If you are ready, you can come to the front as we sing the next song. Let's stand and sing...