

God's Cure for Fear

by Chuck Smith

God's presence and love can cure our fears and anxieties, and we can trust in him to deliver us from harm.

Duration: 27:12

Scripture: Psalm 23:4-5, Isaiah 40:12, Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 43:2, Matthew 6:33, John 10:11

Topics: "Fear"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the book of Daniel. He highlights how these three Hebrew boys were thrown into a fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar because they refused to worship his golden image. However, God miraculously protected them, and they walked around in the fire unharmed. The preacher emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's promises and the consciousness of His complete love for us as remedies for fear. He also encourages the congregation to read and study Isaiah chapters 41 through 43, which contain powerful messages of comfort and assurance from God.

Transcript

Let's pray. Father, how wonderful it is to know you as a shepherd and to be a part, Lord, of your flock, knowing that you are watching over, knowing that you are providing, knowing, Lord, the security of having you as the good shepherd. How wonderful it is, Lord, to know you as our guide, as you lead us in the path of righteousness for your name's sake.

How wonderful, Lord, to know you as a host, as you prepare the table before us, as you anoint our heads with oil, as you fill our cup until it overflows. How wonderful it is, Lord, to know that when our path brings us into the valley of the shadow of death, you'll be with us to lead us beyond the shadows into the glorious light of our Father's house, where we shall live forever. Lord, we thank you that you are our God and that we can put our hope and confidence and trust in you today.

Minister, Lord, through your word to our needy hearts, in Jesus' name we pray, amen. You may be seated. As we are journeying through the Bible, our journey has brought us this week to Isaiah chapters 41 through 43.

Tonight, Pastor Skip will be teaching on these chapters, great chapters. In fact, this was one of those weeks that hard to sort of zero in on the text for Sunday morning. There are so many good texts in these chapters, and so we encourage you to read them over.

Join with us tonight as we gather again for the study of the word and going through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. This morning, we'd like to draw your attention to the 41st chapter and verse 10 of Isaiah, where the Lord declares, Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God, and I will strengthen thee, and I will help thee.

Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. And again in verse 13, For I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee. We're living in a frightening world.

Kay is often saying, But honey, that's dangerous. I said, Honey, living is dangerous. Danger if you drive your car out on the highways.

Danger of drunk drivers. Danger of crazy drivers. Danger of people who have road rage.

And should you do something that would displease them inadvertently or advertently, they're going to try to cut you off. If they have a gun, they'll shoot you. It's a crazy, fearful world in which we live.

But if you stay home, we are reading more and more about home invasion robberies. So it's dangerous to live at home. It's dangerous to stay in your house.

One of the major crimes today, of course, is that of the theft of identity and people running up great charges to your different accounts. Just this past week, here at the church, when we received our bank statement, there were some weird checks that we had been charged with. Checks that said Calvary Chapel.

They look like they could be Calvary Chapel checks. They did have our old bank account number at the bottom. But yet they were totally phony checks.

Someone had just made up these, printed up these checks and then cashed them. And our account was being charged. Of course, when we called the bank's attention to that, they quickly took the charges off.

But it is a fearful, frightening world in which we live. We are being warned constantly of possible terrorist activity. We don't know where they're going to strike.

We don't know how they're going to strike. We don't know when. But there is that constant fear now of terrorist strikes against us here in the United States.

And in the midst of all of this, God says, fear not. Fear can be a very innervating thing. Some people fear because they're afraid to go out, but they're also afraid to stay in.

They're afraid to buy, but they're also afraid to sell. They have a fear of crowds, and yet they have a fear of being alone. And because of these fears, they become paralyzed.

They find that they can do nothing. Because of the fear of making a wrong move, they don't make any move. Fear also is tormenting.

The Bible talks about how that fear has torment. And many thousands of people today are tormented by their fears. Maybe you know someone who is tormented by fear.

And you know the uselessness of trying to tell them that there is really nothing to worry about. Their fear is all in their imagination. When our one son was a small boy, he came running into the bedroom at night, all

frightened.

He thought that he had heard some noise or whatever. And we assured him that everything was all right. That was just his imagination go back to bed.

He said, but my imaginations are scaring me. And that is so true of so many people. Their imaginations are scaring them, and they live in fear.

But God commands us fear not. And then he gives us the reason why we shouldn't fear. He said, for I am with you.

The consciousness of God's presence dispels fears. When I am aware of and realize that God is with me in those situations that might cause me to fear, the consciousness of his presence dispels the fears. And that's exactly what he said.

Fear not, for I am with thee. When I was a small boy, and my parents would sometimes go out, they would hire a teenage babysitter. And oftentimes my sister would imagine that she heard noises outside.

Someone was outside of our house. And she would get us all scared with her imaginations. But we would talk in loud voices if we thought someone was outside.

And we'd say, it's sure good to have Joe Louis staying with us tonight. We thought that name would scare off anybody, you know. But if the presence of Joe Louis might scare people off, how much more? We would feel strong.

We would feel, you know, they'll be scared. But to know that God is with us. Oh, how it dispels the fears.

Fear not, for I am with thee. One of the greatest fears that people have is the fear of death. Actually, the Bible speaks of people who all of their lifetime were subject unto bondage because of the fear of death.

But as we read in the Psalm this morning, David said, yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. Even in the valley of the shadow of death, we need not fear evil because the Lord will come and take us by the hand and lead us through the valley. Notice he didn't say, yea, though I walk in the valley or into the valley, but through the valley of the shadow of death.

And the Lord will come, take us by the hand and lead us through the valley unto our Father's house where we shall live forever. If you've done your reading this week, you've read Isaiah 53 also, and perhaps you remember there in verse two, Isaiah said, when you pass, or the Lord said through Isaiah, when you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.

When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned. Neither shall the flame kindle upon you. A wonderful promise of God.

I wonder if the three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thinking of this promise in Isaiah when years later they were living in Babylon as captives and Nebuchadnezzar had built that great image, set it up in the plains of Dura, an image that defied the word of God. Because according to the word of God, there was a great image. It had a head of gold, but a chest of silver.

And he was told that that image represented the nations that would rule the world. And that Babylon, the head of gold would one day fall to the Medo-Persian empire, which would fall to the Roman empire, which

would fall to the Grecian empire. And he was defying that interpretation of the dream, declaring that Babylon would stand forever.

And thus the statue of all gold, Babylon will stand forever. And he ordered that at the sound of the music, that everyone was to bow to that image, to that concept that Babylon will stand forever. But the three Hebrew children would not bow to a image or an idol.

And so it was reported to King Nebuchadnezzar that when the music sounded and the people bowed, these three Jewish boys refused to bow. So Nebuchadnezzar called them in, saying, how is it that I hear that you did not bow at the sound of the music? I'll give you one more opportunity. I'll have the music sound again.

And if you refuse to bow, I will have you thrown into the burning fiery furnace. They said, Nebuchadnezzar, we don't even hesitate to answer you on this issue. For the God that we serve is able to deliver us out of your burning fiery furnace.

And even if he doesn't deliver us, we still won't bow. Nebuchadnezzar became so enraged, he ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than it had ever been heated before, that they should be bound with ropes and cast into the burning fiery furnace. We know the story.

The fire was so hot, those that cast them in were killed as a result of the intense heat. But then Nebuchadnezzar looked into that burning fiery furnace and he saw the three boys walking around in the fire. And he said, how many did we throw in there? And they said, three.

And he said, how is it that I see four? And the fourth one looks like the Son of God. The promise, when you pass through the fire, it will not harm thee. They were trusting in that promise of God.

Nebuchadnezzar cried, come on out! And they came out. Only thing that was burned were the ropes by which they were bound. Not even a hair was singed as God kept his promise to these three Hebrew boys.

When you pass through the fire, you will not be burned. Neither will the flame kindle on you. Another of God's remedies for fears is the consciousness of God's complete love for you.

If you only knew how totally, completely God loves you, you would realize that there is no need for fear because he's watching over you and nothing can come into your life except he has allowed it. And if he has allowed it, then he has a good purpose for allowing it. We read in 1 John 4, 18.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love cast out all fear because fear has torment. And he that fears is not made perfect in love. Because God loves me so completely, watches over my life, nothing is allowed that could destroy me.

There are things that are hard to bear. There are things that I don't understand. There are things that would terrify me if I didn't know that God loved me supremely.

And because he's allowed this to happen, he's got a good purpose for allowing it. At the moment, I may question the experience. I may say to myself, what possible good can come out of this tragedy? But I know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

My problem is that I have a tendency of judging the story before I have finished the last chapter. I don't know how it's going to turn out. And at this particular moment, it looks like it's going to crash.

And there doesn't seem to be any possible way of escape. And if I'm looking then at just the situation, I'm prone to panic. But if I will look beyond it and see God has allowed it.

This isn't just some happenstance. God has allowed this to happen. And because he's allowed it, there is a good purpose that he is working out in it and through it.

And when I get to the final chapter, I know that the last sentence of the final chapter is, and they lived happily ever after. It's going to turn out okay because God loves me supremely. Another problem, of course, is that as God is working in your life and in my life, God always has eternity in view.

I live my life with the present in view. I'm interested in my present welfare, in my present comfort, in my present joys. Where God is interested in my eternal comfort, my eternal joy.

And if a little discomfort now will assure me of the plan of God in my life, he's working out in me some issue that needs to be worked out of teaching me to trust and teaching me to have confidence in him. If he has to use temporal pain to accomplish an eternal value, he's not opposed to that. And oftentimes God lets us go through these experiences that are painful to us now, but they are working for our eternal welfare and good.

When fearful threats come your way, remember that God loves you and he's watching over you, and that he loves you so much that he gave his only begotten son to redeem you from your sin so you could spend eternity with him. And if God spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how much more shall he then not freely give us all things? God's promise to those that were fearful were, I will strengthen you. Don't be dismayed.

Don't be dismayed at the circumstances in your life. Oftentimes I'm confused. I don't know which way to turn.

I'm overwhelmed by the circumstances. Try as I might, I can't see any way out. I'm dismayed.

Again, I need to remember he's my God. He said, be not dismayed. I am your God.

When David was taken captive by the Philistines there in Gath, David prayed, be merciful unto me, O God, for man would swallow me up. His daily fighting oppresses me. My enemies would daily swallow me up, for there are many that fight against me, O thou most high.

When I am afraid, I will trust in you. I will praise the word of God. I will put my trust in him, and I will not fear what flesh might do to me.

When dismayed, when fearful, it's good to follow David's example. Just put your trust in God. God's promise, if you will do that, I will strengthen you.

Paul said, when I am weak, then am I strong, for his strength is made perfect in my weakness. Don't measure the job with your strength. Measure it with his strength.

I'm not able, but he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that I ask or think. God then promises, I will help you. In Psalm 46, David said, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

In Psalm 121, David said, I will lift up mine eyes into the hills. And then he asked the question, from whence cometh my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth. He will not

allow my foot to be moved.

He that keeps me will not slumber. What David is saying is that God will not let you fall. He promised, I will hold you up with the right hand of my righteousness.

Sometimes I think I'm going to fall. Sometimes I think I can't handle this. But it is at those times that God holds me up with the right hand of his righteousness.

Now, these chapters that we've been reading here in Isaiah, beginning with chapter 40, are chapters that tell us about God, the greatness of God, the power of God, the wisdom of God, the vastness of God. There are chapters that really extol the God that we serve and worship. That is why they are important chapters to read and to really meditate on, because these chapters teach you the greatness of the God that you have chosen to serve.

The God, as Isaiah tells us in chapter 40, who holds the waters in the palm of his hand. Think of all the oceans and the seas held in the palm of the God that we serve. He stretched out the heavens like a curtain, looking at the vast universe and realizing that God just stretched it out like a curtain.

Now he promises to you that he will uphold you. Don't be dismayed. God said, I will strengthen you.

I will help you. I will uphold you by my right hand. Sometimes when we have exhausted our own resources, when our strength has failed, ere the job is half done, when we think that we can't go another step, God steps in.

He upholds us with his right hand, and we discover that underneath are the everlasting arms. We can be assured the Lord will not let you fall. He will hold you up.

So trust in him. Lean upon him. He is with you, and he loves you more than you will ever know.

And thus, you have no cause or no reason to fear what might befall you in the future, because God is with us always. Let's pray. Father, how thankful we are for your presence with us.

Help us, Lord, to become conscious of your presence with us. At the time, Lord, when we are prone to faint or prone to fear, help us, Lord, to just realize you're there. You're with us.

You surround us. And you've promised, Lord, that you would help us and that you would sustain us. Help us, Lord, to, again, understand just how much you do love us, that we might comprehend the length, the breadth, the depth, the height of your love for us, and to know the love of Christ Jesus, which even passes our ability to understand, so that our hearts are comforted in the knowledge of your presence and of your love, and the fears are dispelled.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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