

Trapped by Fear

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's presence and love in our lives to overcome fear and live a life of faith and trust.

Duration: 42:38

Scripture: 1 Samuel 21:10-15, Psalm 27:8-9, Psalm 27:11-14

Topics: "Fear"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal experience of facing death and how it tested his trust in the Lord. He recounts a situation where someone aimed a gun at him, but it turned out to be a test to see his reaction. The speaker emphasizes the importance of dispelling fear in these fearful times by putting our trust in God. He encourages the audience to remember that God is with them and loves them, and that they should not fear despite the troubling reports and events happening in the world. The sermon also mentions the assigned reading of 1 Samuel 21-23, where David's early experiences and God's hand upon his life are highlighted.

Transcript

The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, 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 inquire in his temple.

For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion. In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me. He shall set me up upon a rock.

And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me. Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy. I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.

Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice. Have mercy also upon me and answer me. When thou saidest, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.

Hide not thy face far from me. Put not thy servant away in anger. For thou has been my help.

Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up. Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path because of mine enemies.

Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies. For false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord. Let's pray.

Lord, we have gathered together this day to wait upon you, to hear you speak to us through your word. We thank you, Lord, for the word of God and for the strength and the guidance that it gives to our lives. May we walk, Lord, in the light of your word this day.

Blessed we pray now as we open the word and as we look to you to minister to us in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.

As we're going through the Bible, we've come to 1 Samuel 21 through 23. That's been your assignment for your reading this week. And tonight we'll be doing a commentary on 1 Samuel 21 through 23 as we follow David and we see him as he begins to gather together his mighty men and as God's hand is obviously upon his life.

This morning we'd like to draw your attention to one of the incidents in the early experiences of David. It's in chapter 21 beginning with verse 10. Saul has been pursuing after David.

So David finally flees because of the fear of Saul. He went to Achish, the king of Gath. And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this the David, the king of the land? Did they not sing one to another of him in their dances, saying, Saul is slain his thousands and David is ten thousands? And David laid up these words in his heart and was sore afraid of Achish, the king of Gath.

And he changed his behavior before them. He feigned himself to be mad in their hands. He scrabbled on the doors of the gate and he let his spittle fall down upon his beard.

And then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, you see the man is mad. Why have you brought him to me? Do I have need of mad men that you have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house? We notice that David was fearful first of Saul. His fear of Saul caused him to flee to the enemy country of the Philistines to the city of Gath.

And there in Gath when David realized that they were actually suspicious of him because of his exploits against the Philistines. David then greatly feared Achish, the king of Gath. And it caused David to act like a mad fool, scrabbling at the door of the gate and letting his spit run down his beard as he acted like he was insane in order to escape from Achish.

Fear caused David to do some rather ridiculous things. But we are living in a time of fear. The Islam terrorists are at war against the Jew and the Christian and our whole Western culture.

We have finally awakened to the reality of this war. We have finally come to realize that Israel is not the only target, but the whole Western civilization. This war has been going on for many years, but for the

most part, we've just ignored it and have not really been aware that war has been declared upon us.

The downing of the Pan Am flight over Scotland was one of the acts of war. The bombing of our embassies in Africa was another act of war against us. The car bomb in Lebanon that killed so many of our Marines there was an act of war, as well as the car bomb in the World Trade Center a few years ago, where he was attempting to bring down the World Trade Center, actually hoping that the one would fall into the other and they would both collapse.

And after his arrest, one of the officers said, well, you failed in your task. And he said, yes, for now. But it is an act of war.

And we have finally recognized that there are those aspects of Islam that are at war against our Western culture. The World Trade Center towers are no more. Now, the purpose of terrorists is to strike fear into the hearts of the people and debilitate them through fear and then to conquer them.

They have been quite successful in their endeavor to instill fear in the hearts of the people across the United States, as is evidenced by the fact that people are now, so many of them, afraid to fly for the fear of a terrorist attack. We are being warned that there is the possibility that our water supplies will be poisoned. We are told that Iraq is training men now for chemical and biological warfare, and they have built up quite an arsenal of biological and chemical weapons.

We are told that we are even facing the possibility of a nuclear attack from within the United States. It may be, we are told, they have already brought nuclear devices and are planted in major cities, and the next terrorist attack will be against the cities, the major cities of the United States. The Muslim extremists number into the hundreds of thousands.

It isn't just one small little radical group. It isn't just one man. And I think that the United States is making a tremendous mistake in just trying to lay the blame on one man.

We need to realize that it isn't just bin Laden, that it is a number of men numbering into the hundreds of thousands who have a great hatred against America. They call us the great Satan, and they feel that it is their religious duty to destroy us. For years they have been saying that their first target is the Saturday worshippers, the Jews, and their second target is the Sunday worshippers, the Christians.

Why is it that they are so fanatical? Why is it that they are willing to give their lives in these terrorist attacks to commit suicide in order to further their cause? Well, they are promised that the only way they can guarantee entrance into paradise immediately is by being a martyr in a jihad. They have declared a jihad against America, against the Western culture, against the Western society, against the Jews. And thus if they can be martyred in the war against America, they feel that they will have an instant access into paradise.

What is paradise for these men? It is actually entering into a harem where they will have 70 virgins at their disposal. And so that's what they're looking forward to when they blow themselves to pieces of entering into this room, and there will be 70 virgins chained to beds, and they can have then their excessive sexual indulgences. Imagine their surprise when they blow themselves to pieces and they awake in hell.

They find that there are not the 70 virgins waiting for them. But there is much in the world today to inspire fear in the hearts of the people. And yet God tells us, fear not.

In this chapter that we have for our text today, we find that David is filled with fear. He is afraid of Saul. Thus he flees to the Philistine city of Gath where he greatly fears Achish.

But what really is the cause of fear? We fear when we lose the awareness of the presence of God with us. It seems that God's cure for fear is always to remind the people that he is with them. He is present with them.

When Abraham's son Isaac, after the death of his father, was trying to find a place to settle down, he would dig a well and then the people of that community would come and drive him away. They'd say, this well belongs to us. And so he was being driven from one place to another.

He finally came to Beersheba where he drilled, or he drilled, he dug the well. And again at this point there at Beersheba, the Lord appeared to him and said to him, I am the God of Abraham, your father. Fear not for I am with thee.

You see, the consciousness of God's presence was intended to dispel fear. David, when he was ready on his deathbed to turn the kingdom over to his son Solomon, said to Solomon, be strong and of good courage. Fear not nor be dismayed for the Lord God, even my God will be with you.

He will not forsake you or fail you. Now here is David encouraging his son. Now David in his later years has come to a great trust in God, an awareness of God's presence with him.

And now as he comes even to the valley of the shadow of death, he is not fearing evil, but he encourages his son, Solomon, don't be afraid because the Lord will be with you. Later on in the history of Israel, the Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites had all joined together their armies to invade Judah. They came with a vast number of men.

And of course, Judah was not really up to the battle from a physical standpoint. And so the prophet came to Jehoshaphat, the king, and he said to him, you will not need to fight in this battle. Just set yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord with you.

Oh, Judah and Jerusalem, fear not nor be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them for the Lord will be with you. The promise of God's presence with them was intended to dispel any fear or anxiety that they had concerning this battle that they were facing.

Finally, Isaiah, the prophet spoke for God saying, fear not for I am with thee. Be not dismayed for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee.

Yea, I will help thee. Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Fear not for I am with thee.

God's remedy for the fears that we might have to know that God is with us. Paul said, if God before us, who can be against us? You need to remember that you have put your trust in Jesus and you are his child. You are the sheep of his pasture and he is going to watch over you and keep you.

Nothing can come against you but what he has allowed it to come. And if he has allowed it to come, then he has good reason and a good purpose for allowing it. And it is for your good for all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

And thus later we hear David saying that I will not fear though the mountains be removed and cast into the midst of the sea. David's son Solomon wrote a proverb in which he declared the fear of man is a snare or a trap. It is interesting how there are so many people who have no fear of God in their hearts but they have a great fear of men and they are trapped by that fear.

Fear is a very debilitating thing. It is a trap and there are people today who are afraid to fly in airplanes because of the fear of terrorism. The whole airline industry is suffering tremendously as you well know because people have canceled their flights.

They're afraid to fly. There are people who are afraid to go into tall buildings now. Of course there have been those that have been afraid to go up in an elevator because they have the fear of the close quarters.

And they will only go so high in a building because they have a fear of heights. And the psychologists have identified all kinds of debilitating phobias that people have. There are a lot of people that are not in church today because they have a fear of crowds.

And they get into a crowd like this and they begin to panic because they have this fear of crowds. In fact there are so many different fears that haunt people and that trap people that the psychologists even talk about what they call the phobophobia, which is the fear of fear. And they're afraid of being afraid.

And so it is a thing that is so common but it is a trap. Because people can be haunted by fear. They can be bound by fear.

They are trapped by fear. And as Solomon said, the fear of man is a trap. It's a snare.

The fear of man will cause people to sin. When Jesus was standing before Pilate to be judged, Pilate acknowledged over and over the innocence of Jesus. He said, I've examined him and I find no fault in him.

Would you crucify, he said, an innocent man? And as he was arguing with the religious leaders concerning Jesus, they finally said, if you release this man you are no friend to Caesar because he says that he's a king. When Pilate heard that saying, he turned Jesus over to them to be crucified. Because he was afraid that a bad report of him would be sent to Caesar.

And the fear of man caused him to sin by turning over what he knew to be an innocent man to be crucified. The fear of man caused Peter to deny his Lord. As he was standing with the soldiers by the fire outside of the judgment hall of Caiaphas, the high priest, when the little maiden came and said, are not you one of his disciples? He said, no, I'm not.

Don't know him. When she returned again and said, you know, I've been thinking about, I've seen you with him. Peter again denied, no, you're mistaken.

Mistaken identity. Finally, the soldier said, you must be one of his disciples. You have a Galilean accent.

And you remember how Peter began to curse and swear, I don't know him. The fear of man was a snare. It caused Peter to sin.

When Saul tried to explain to Samuel the reason why he had not obeyed the commandment of the Lord in the utter destruction of the Amalekites, Saul said, I have sinned. I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words because I feared the people. The fear of man is a snare.

It will lead you into sin. Many people have been trapped by the fear of man. We think of Abraham, the great father of the faith, how that the fear of man caused him to deny that Sarah was his wife and allowed her to go in to the pagan King's harem.

The fear of man causes great men to do foolish things. We see David scrabbling at the door and his spit running down his beard, acting like a madman. This great warrior, David, this great hero, David, acting like a fool because of the fear of man.

We think of Elijah, that mighty prophet of God who challenged the prophets of Baal to that contest on Mount Carmel to build their altar. He would build an altar to the Lord. The God who answered by fire would be acknowledged as the true God.

And we see him as he taunts the prophets of Baal saying he's probably asleep or off on a vacation. You need to cry a little louder. And finally, how when their commotion had sort of settled down, he then prayed and how God sent the fire and the people fell on their faces and said, Jehovah is God.

And rising to the occasion, he took the prophets of Baal down to the little stream of Kishon and there he slew 400 of them. Mighty, powerful man of faith. And yet when Jezebel heard of what Elijah had done, she said, God do to me the same and more if I don't have the head of that prophet.

And hearing the threats of the woman, Elijah ran for his life in fear, clear on down to Mount Sinai. And we find him trembling in a cave on Mount Sinai because of the fear of man. The fear of man is a trap.

The fear of man is a snare. The fear of man keeps people from salvation. There are multitudes of people in hell today because of the fear of man.

They wanted to go forward. They wanted to accept Jesus as their Savior. They knew that they needed his help.

They wanted deliverance from the power of sin in their lives. They wanted to live the right kind of a life, but they were afraid that if the crowd at work heard that they had gone forward and accepted Jesus Christ, that they'd be sort of made fun of by their fellow employees. They'd be ribbed.

They'd say, oh, he's got religion. Oh, he's become one of those Jesus people. And for fear of being mocked or ridiculed, they've not accepted God's wonderful offer of salvation.

The fear of man is a trap. It will trap you in sin. It will keep you in sin.

It will keep you from coming to Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. What is God's cure for fear? We've already covered one of them, and that is the awareness or consciousness of the presence of God. When I'm aware that God is with me, the God who created the universe is with me, that dispels the fear.

God is on my side. David said, of whom shall I be afraid? David later said, yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me. But then another cure of fear is to put your trust in the Lord.

In Psalm 56, David said, what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. I have put my trust in God. I will not fear what flesh can do to me.

So a cure is just to put your trust in God. God, my life is yours. You're in full control over my life.

I just entrust myself to your care, to your keeping. And that dispels the fear. I don't need to be afraid.

Nothing can happen to me but what my loving Heavenly Father does not allow it to happen to me. I will not be afraid what man can do. In Proverbs 29, 25, where Solomon said, the fear of man is a snare.

He said, but whosoever will put his trust in the Lord. You see, this is the other side of the coin. Whoever will put his trust in the Lord shall be safe.

Another way to dispel fear is to just come to know how much God loves you. John tells us in his first epistle, there is no fear in love, but perfect love cast out fear because fear is tormenting. And he who fears is not made perfect in love.

The reason why you're afraid is that you don't realize how completely God loves you. And because God loves you, he is going to take care of you. Jesus said, not a sparrow falls to the ground, but your father is not aware of it.

Are you not worth more than many sparrows? A sparrow isn't even his child. It's his creation, but yet not a sparrow falls to the ground, but what he is not aware. But you're his child, your father.

Are you not worth much more to him than many sparrows? God is interested in your life and in my life because we are his children. He loves us more than we can possibly imagine. Jesus often used the analogy between the father and his children to demonstrate the immensity of God's love for us.

If you earthly fathers have a love for your children, how much more? If you earthly fathers take care of your children, how much more your heavenly father? If you earthly fathers love your children, how much more your heavenly father loves you? And when you come to realize how much God loves you here in his love, not that we love God. He loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

If he spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how much more shall he not freely give us all things? Your father loves you greater than any human being could love you. You're his child. He loves you and he's not going to allow anything to happen to you that is not for your good and your best interest.

You need to know that God is with you. You need to put your trust in God and you need to realize just how valuable you are to him, how much he loves you. For in the days ahead, we're going to be hearing many troubling reports as this war against terrorism gets underway.

There will be many things that will be reported that will strike fear in the hearts of people. In fact, Jesus, in talking of the last days, said that men's hearts would be failing them for the fear of the things that are coming upon the earth. But yet in the midst of this, the Lord said, fear not for I am with you.

Be not dismayed. I am your God. I will help you.

I will strengthen you. Listen again to the words of David that we read this morning in Psalm 27. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.

Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. Why? Because he was aware that God was with him, that God was for him. And so he put his trust in God and went forth victorious over the enemies, not fearing what man could do to him.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you that we can live without fear, without the fear of death. For we know that in our Father's house are many mansions, and you've gone to prepare a place for us.

And to be absent from this body is to be present with the Lord. And so even though we may walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil for you are with us. Thank you, Lord, for the faith that dispels the fears.

Give us that kind of faith. Dispel the fears today. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Shall we stand? Years ago when I was pastoring in Huntington Beach, we had a man in the congregation who suffered mentally because of his involvement in the Korean War. And he came one day, there was a knock on the door, and Kay looked out and saw that he was standing there.

And she said, Chuck, don't answer the door. It's, you know, he's crazy. And I said, you know, I know he's crazy, but you know.

So I opened the door. She was behind me. She said, Chuck, don't go out to the car with him.

He's crazy enough he'll pull a gun and shoot you. And the guy says, come on out to the car. So I went out to the car with him.

He opened the car door and he said, get in. I got in. He went around to the driver's side and he pulled a .45, aimed it at me, and pulled the trigger.

Pulled the trigger twice. Then he started to laugh. He said, last Sunday you said that because of your trust in the Lord you were not afraid.

He said, I decided to put you to the test. He said, you passed. He said, I filed off the firing pin, but I just wanted to see what you would do in facing death.

Well, you know, the thought that was going through my mind as I saw the gun, I've married a prophetess. All this time I've been married to a prophetess, you know, and I thought this was it, but I thought, well, you know, here I come, Lord. The dispelling of fear.

How important in these days, because these are fearful days, but we need not fear because God is with us. We put our trust in him. He loves us.

He's watching over. He will keep. It may be that some of you today are afraid to commit your life to Jesus Christ because of what others might say or others might think.

And the fear of man has you trapped, trapped in your sin because you're afraid to come to Jesus Christ. I pray that the spirit of God will dispel that fear today. That you will overcome that fear because it is a trap and that you will come and receive the forgiveness of Jesus Christ and the power of Jesus Christ to free you from the power of sin that's been holding you in bondage.

Jesus came to set us free. He said, who the son sets free is free indeed. Your opportunity today to be set free.

Don't let the fear of man keep you from coming to Jesus Christ. Maybe there are other things that have sort of created fear. There's uncertainty of the future right now.

There are certain threatening situations. Maybe the fear of your job as there are layoffs. Maybe the fear of the finances as the market seems to be fluctuating so much.

And fear sort of has you terrified and immobilized. You don't need to fear. Just rest in the love of Jesus Christ.

He'll take care of you. But it says, cast all your cares or fears upon him because he cares for you. The pastors are down here at the front this morning to pray for you.

If you've been haunted by fear, come and let them pray for you that God will free you and assure you of his presence and of his love. That you might put your trust in him. Maybe you have been living in sin.

You need to get right with God. I would encourage you come on forward. Don't let the fear of man hold you back.

Remember when you were a kid you used to say sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me. Not true. Words do hurt.

They hurt a lot. But yet I wouldn't let the fear of man keep me from my eternal salvation. As soon as we're dismissed, make your way forward.

You'll go home a better person, fearless through the work of God's love in your life. The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee and be gracious unto thee.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace. you

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