

Facing Fear

Proverbs Series

By Greg Price

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Proverbs 28:1

Preached on: Sunday, February 3, 2002

Still Water Revival Books

4710-37 A Avenue

Edmonton, Alberta

Canada T6L 3T5

Website: www.swrb.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/swrb

Our New Testament Scripture reading this Lord's Day is from Acts chapter 26.

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which

thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.¹

Our text this Lord's Day is from Proverbs chapter 28 verse one.

“The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.”²

When did fear in the heart of man first raise its ugly head in human history? When Adam sinned by eating the forbidden fruit. For we read in Genesis three verses nine through 10:

¹ Acts 26:1-32.

² Proverbs 28:1.

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.³

You see, dear ones, Adam's conscience tormented him with guilt which caused him to hide from the very presence of God who came to commune with him in the cool of the evening. What was to be a time of precious communion with the living God took a terrible turn and became a time of guilt inspired dread of the living God due to Adam's sin and his fall.

A guilty conscience can make men a terror even to themselves.

Dear ones, when we are living in a guilt ridden state the last person, very often, with whom we want to be alone is ourselves for then we have time to replay in our minds the sins that make us run from the Lord and flee from our own conscience.

Can we not see, dear ones, that sin and the guilt of sin make men cowards?

What are your fears today? From what are you running? Are you trying to escape a guilty conscience, an overpowering individual or group of individuals? Do you fear the loss of work, family or home? Or perhaps do you fear the ruin of your health or prestige or freedom. You may fear the consequences of being right at times and may fear the consequences of wrong decisions as well. Maybe you are overcome with a fear of war, the prospect of war or the fear of death itself, of the fear of eternal death in hell.

Regardless of what our fears may be today we want, by God's grace, to face our fears eyeball to eyeball and learn the divine way to overcome being cowards and running from our fears.

The main points from our text this Lord's Day are the following. First of all, the wicked are overcome by fear, Proverbs 28:1, the first part of that verse. And, secondly, the righteous are overcome by faith, Proverbs 28:1, the last part of the verse.

First of all, then, the wicked are overcome by fear. Proverbs 28:1a, that is, the first part of the verse, says, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth."⁴

When King Solomon states that, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth,"⁵ we are to understand this to be a characteristic of those who are the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a character trait of those who are foes and adversaries of Jesus Christ. For all of us by nature are like Adam who hid in fear before receiving the promise of grace through Jesus Christ.

³ Genesis 3:9-10.

⁴ Proverbs 28:1.

⁵ Ibid.

It is part and parcel of our fallen nature to run in fear. In fact, one of the sins that is especially noted as being a part of those who stand before God on that final day of judgment and will be cast into hell for that sin is found in Revelation 21:8. There it lists these sins and the very first sin is significant.

“But the fearful...”⁶ That is cowards, “...and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”⁷

Try as man will to disguise his fear by laughter, by anger, with his wealth, by becoming drunk, through his pleasures, by becoming a body builder, by engaging in martial arts or even hypnosis, God states that fear, due to the fall of man into sin, fear is bred into the very fabric of man’s nature because of his sin and his guilt. For the wicked cannot ultimately deal with the root of fear, namely, sin and the guilt of sin.

It says in Proverbs 28:1, “The wicked flee when no man pursueth.”⁸ So what are they running from if no man is pursuing them? Most likely it is their own guilty conscience that pursues them. It is the sin which they have committed that pursues them when even no man pursues them.

And I should point out that fear, like sin in general, is not completely eradicated from the heart of the righteous who trust alone in Jesus Christ for their eternal salvation. A sinful fear, dread, terror, worry and anxiety yet plague the Christian in various ways throughout his or her life.

You remember out of fear and the other disciples of Christ fled to save their own necks when Christ was betrayed by Judas in the garden of Gethsemane. Peter even denied shamefully knowing the Lord his Savior, not once, but three times out of fear of what man might do to him.

The difference between the Christian and the non Christian, therefore, is not that in the Christian there is no fear, whereas in the non Christian there is fear, but rather the difference relates to the fact that the Christian has a remedy to his fear. He has grace appropriated. Christ has already secured for the Christian the benefits and the graces to overcome his worries and his anxieties and his fears. Fear has, in principle, already been conquered as all sins in principle has been conquered through Jesus Christ. The power of sin has been dealt a deathly blow through the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is what distinguishes the Christian from the non Christian as it relates to fear.

⁶ Revelation 21:8.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Proverbs 28:1.

That is why we read in Romans chapter eight verse one, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”⁹

And that is why we read later on in that same chapter these encouraging words:

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?¹⁰

Can any of these things cast us into despair to such an extent that we are actually separated from the love of Jesus Christ?

Verse 37 says, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”¹¹

That is, because Christ has overcome all of these things in his death and his resurrection, we, too, being united to him through faith are overcomers. We are not victims. We do not have to run and hide. We can, by God’s grace, look our fears straight in the face and we can say, “I am an overcomer of that fear through Jesus Christ. Because Christ conquered, I am a conqueror. I am not a victim. I do not need to be a coward.

Verses 38 and 39 of Romans eight say:

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.¹²

There is a promise, dear ones, that we can cling to whenever our fears would overwhelm us.

You see, the work of justification and God declaring us righteous and pardoning us of all of our sins and the work of sanctification wherein we become more and more conformed to the image of Christ has as one of its benefits to replace the torment of fear with an ever increasing enjoyment of Christ’s love.

That is, again, what replaces fear. If you want to replace fear, learn to enjoy the love of God.

⁹ Romans 8:1.

¹⁰ Romans 8:33-35.

¹¹ Romans 8:37.

¹² Romans 8:38-39.

For we read in 1 John chapter four these words. Verse 18 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”¹³

The fact that we still fear shows that we have not yet been made perfect in love. We may be growing in love, but we have not been made perfect in love. And to the degree that we do love God and understand the love of God and appreciate the love of God, that is manifest unto us in the covenant of grace, to that degree we will overcome fears and worries and anxieties in our own lives because we will be able to cast the complete confidence, everything in our lives, upon the lap of the Lord and know that he can do us no ill. He can do us no wrong. He can do us no harm because he loves us so perfectly and completely as his own dear children, purchased unto him by the death of his own dear Son.

It is, indeed, one of the tools which Satan will use against the believer in his or her weakness to resurrect various fears and worries in his or her life. Satan will lead the believer to fear the God of this salvation with a slavish fear. Satan will move to cast the believer in his mind back under the covenant of works, under the condemning and avenging wrath of God so that he views or she views him or herself as not being acceptable before God on the basis of Christ’s righteousness alone, but rather on the basis—in addition to Christ’s righteousness—his own righteousness in some way, his own good works, his own graces, his own gifts in some way.

And, dear ones, when we are thrown back under the covenant of works in our own minds, we can almost count on being cast into fear and into worry and into anxiety. But while we are safe and secure in the covenant of grace there we find absolute safety and confidence and boldness and courage. There the Lord builds us up and makes us strong as we continue to draw strength from the covenant of grace.

I would like to—in order to understand what fear is—I would like to distinguish between a sinful fear and a wholesome fear. First of all, I would like to talk about what a wholesome fear is. So we are going to look at what sinful fear is not.

First of all, a due respect for lawful authority is not sinful fear. Proverbs 24:21 God says, “My son, fear thou the LORD and the king.”¹⁴ Not only the Lord, but fear the king. This applies to all lawful authority whether in the family or in the church or at work or in the civil realm. For it is founded upon the Fifth Commandment, “Honour thy father and thy mother.”¹⁵ This is a wholesome fear, to fear the king, to fear parents, to have a wholesome, healthy respect for those who have lawful authority over you. That is a good fear.

¹³ 1 John 4:18.

¹⁴ Proverbs 24:21.

¹⁵ Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16.

Second, a cautious determination to avoid danger, sin or temptation is not sinful fear. A cautious determination to avoid that which will hurt you and, in effect, both bodily and spiritually, is not sinful fear.

This is actually a keeping of the Sixty Commandment wherein we are taught to endeavor by all lawful means to preserve our own life, body and soul, and the life or others. Therefore, fleeing persecution in order to preserve one's life is not sinful in and of itself as long as the testimony for Jesus Christ is not abandoned nor forsaken in the process. For Jesus says in Mathew 10:23, "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another [city]."¹⁶ The fleeing persecution... Avoiding that which is dangerous to both body and soul is not a sinful fear in and of itself.

Thirdly, a serious concern or burden for one's self or for others is not sinful fear. Paul exhorts us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Galatians chapter six verse two. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."¹⁷

I dare say that we cannot bear the burdens of others if we do not take their burdens seriously. If the burden doesn't have some degree of weight upon us, that is what a burden is. It has some weight to it and some weightiness.

You see, God places such burdens upon our hearts, not that we might plunge ourselves into fear, but rather cast ourselves and others upon the strong arm of the Lord.

Beloved, it is when we do not cast these burdens upon the Lord that we are led into sinful worry and anxiety. For God has told us in 1 Peter 5:7 that we are to cast all of our cares upon him for he careth for us.

And so when we continue to carry the weight, the burdens of others in such a way that we are deterred from our own spiritual and godly duties, so that we are led into a sinful fear where we do not cast it upon the Lord but we, in effect, take it upon ourselves and we are going to just bear this burden all by ourselves, then it does become sin. But to have a serious concern or burden for others is not sin or sinful fear in and of itself.

And then, fourthly, a holy reverence for the triune God is not a sinful fear. In fact, David declares in Psalm 19 verse nine, "The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever."¹⁸

Solomon, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit says in Proverbs chapter nine verse 10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."¹⁹

It says earlier that, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge."²⁰

¹⁶ Matthew 10:23.

¹⁷ Galatians 6:2.

¹⁸ Psalm 19:9.

¹⁹ Proverbs 9:10.

²⁰ Proverbs 1:7.

We would know God and if we would know how to apply the knowledge of God the Lord says we must fear him.

This fear of God that is not a sinful fear—as we are speaking of at this time—is a holy fear. It is an awe and a wonder in the very presence of God. It is to stand in utter amazement and astonishment at God’s greatness and his glory as he has revealed himself, his holiness, as we consider that even the seraphim cover their eyes with two of their wings before the holiness of God.

So we ought to before the Lord have the same attitude.

We stand in awe of God’s mercy, the absolute perfection of all of his attributes.

If I were to summarize this fear, it is to take God ever so seriously and not take God lightly, to not take God flippantly, frivolously, to look upon God and all that we find in his Word in a very serious way so that it actually affects our whole emotions and passions.

You know, we continue to read of people who stood in the presence of God and falling down as dead and God continually appearing to those in some form and assuring them, be not afraid because it was, in fact, a kind of fear that just overcame them in the presence of God. But he assures them, “Don’t have that type of fear where you are not going to want to flee to me or to come into my presence.”

This fear of God that we are speaking of is one in which we treat him with all due respect. We avoid all disrespect and irreverence by our thoughts, our words and our deeds and we seek to preserve the infinite dignity of his name and everything by which he reveals himself.

That is what sinful fear is not. What is sinful fear?

Sinful fear is an overwhelming terror, a terror that we have of Satan, of man, a terror of sin, of judgment, of death or any other circumstance in life or death. It is a horror. It is being overwhelmed like a flood by these fears. It is to be controlled by our fears, led by our fears, tormented by our fears. And, certainly, a sin—as I said at the outset of the sermon in which we as Christians can fall into.

Remember how Elijah, after winning such a glorious victory on Mount Carmel before Ahab where the prophets of Baal sought to invoke Baal to bring fire down from heaven and to consume the sacrifice and when Elijah put the challenge to the prophets of Baal and his turn came, he invoked God, having first poured several barrels of water upon the sacrifice, filling the altar about it with water and simply called upon the Lord in meekness and sincerity and truth and God hearing that prayer sending fire from heaven and consuming and licking up the water that was all around the altar and consuming the sacrifice as one that was acceptable to him.

And then God, shortly thereafter, as Elijah had indicated to King Ahab that there would be three and a half years without water, drought upon the entire land, he goes and he pleads with God now that Israel, as a result of this victory, had indicated verbally that they would own God to be their God, having seen what God had done in the presence of this altar of Baal.

So God sends, in answer to Elijah's prayer, God sends rain, a mighty rain. But after all of these victories that God has just won for Elijah, he gets wind that Ahab has told Jezebel of what God had done and how he had destroyed these prophets of Baal. And Jezebel says, "If he is living by this time tomorrow, in effect, let my life be taken."

It was like a death threat. It was like a self maledictory oath that she took to see that Elijah be killed. And that after God had shown and demonstrated his power and his greatness, we see the weakness of flesh in which Elijah flees and flees and runs and runs to get from the presence of Jezebel.

The Lord has to encourage his prophet that he will be with him, he will sustain him. He is his strength.

And so we see, dear ones, not only is sinful fear an overcoming terror, sinful fear, secondly, is a worry. And we may classify this into such a lower category that we don't even consider this to be a sin. But sinful fear is a worry or anxiety that we cannot cast upon the Lord. It is rather a preoccupation with a person, event or circumstance that leads us to trust in the arm of flesh, in the gifts and graces of man to find our help and comfort rather than casting ourselves upon the Lord. So that is sinful fear as well, worry or anxiety that cannot be cast upon the Lord.

Thirdly, sinful fear is a slavish dread of a condemning God. When we—due to a guilty conscience, even as the children of God—cast ourselves, again in our minds, under the covenant of works, our minds, our conscience is set aflame and afire. And this servile fear may result from that mere action on our part where we do not consider that all of our righteousness is from Jesus Christ, where we do not cling to, alone, the righteousness of Christ, but in some way cling to our covenant or cling to the ordinances for our salvation or cling to the various sacraments or our own good works rather than clinging to Christ alone.

Dear ones, all that we secure for ourselves in such a state of mind when we move ourselves from the covenant of grace and put ourselves into the covenant of works, all we secure in that state of mind is torment and fear of God's condemning wrath and anger. Our conscious becomes guilt ridden even when we try our very hardest to please him if we are under a covenant of works. We can never, under the covenant of works, secure favor and acceptance with God. We can never do enough to secure acceptance and favor with God for we can never be sure that we have done enough. We can never be sure that we have pleased God enough. We can never be sure that the works we have performed are complete enough. We can never be certain or sure if we do not keep ourselves in our minds and in our words and in our actions under the covenant of grace so that all we do

by way of worship and obedience to Christ is not in order to secure his righteousness or acceptance, merit of favor, but is in order to show our love and our gratitude to God for all that he has done in our lives.

Do we want God to appear to us as an avenging Judge or do we want him to appear to us as a loving Father? That is the difference between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Here is a state of mind in which we may, in fact, endure, as it were, the very torment of hell in our minds if we are not careful.

However, dear ones, there is hope in Jesus Christ for God has not given to us the spirit of fear according to 2 Timothy 1:7. He has not given to us a spirit of fear, rather the apostle says, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."²¹ These are the gifts of God to us, not fear.

Fear, a simple slavish fear, dear ones, though someone may want to make it sound very pious, it is very wicked. It is very subtle and it will drive us away from the Lord Jesus Christ if we are not careful.

Before moving on very quickly let me say this. Fear may be manifested in various ways in our lives. We may lash out in anger or even seek to destroy the person or the thing feared. Saul, you will recall, tried to kill David, the Scripture says, out of fear in 1 Samuel 18:12 and verse 29. It was out of fear that motivated, fear of David that he sought to destroy David.

The Pharisees conspired together to murder Christ and Mark 11:18 says that they feared him. So fear... One would think that fear is always manifested by running. No. Fear is sometimes manifested by taking up a sword and trying to destroy the thing that is feared. In fact, I would offer to you that, perhaps, one of the motivations, the greatest motivations of those who attack us for standing for the truth, who would even be our persecutors, is fear of us.

A second way in which fear may be manifested is we may laugh and make fun of the person or the thing that is feared. We think that if our fears can become almost a joke to us, we can rid ourselves entirely of our fears. This is a very humanistic way of dealing with our fears. It is a short lived cure for a terminal problem. Avoid it, so it is said to us. Avoid the fear by making fun of it and it will go away. Well, perhaps for a time it might go away. It will not go away for good. It is a very short term remedy.

Thirdly, we may, indeed, run from the person or thing that is feared. Here a person thinks if he can keep himself occupied, busy, constantly active, he can rid himself of his fears.

Now there is nothing wrong with being busy and active and trying to keep our minds occupied when we are afraid, but if one thinks that is the remedy, ultimately, to overcoming fears, there is something wrong with that particular response.

²¹ 2 Timothy 1:7.

This may, again, provide some temporary relief, but it will not deal with the fear and with its cause. It simply treats the symptoms, but not the root problems because the root problem is unbelief and guilt.

Fourthly, we may become paralyzed and immobilized by the person or the thing that is feared. At such times we are like a deer who can't move because it is caught in the headlights of an approaching car. We are afraid to make a decision one way or another so we say nothing, like a person before an audience who has stage fright. We convince ourselves that the safest thing to do is to say nothing and to do nothing because we are so afraid of making a decision. We are paralyzed.

Or, fifthly, fear may be manifested by an unrelenting guilt that will not cease, nor will be abated. David certainly experienced this fear, this unrelenting guilt in Psalm 32 verses one through four where he speaks of the hand of God as it was heavy upon him during the time of his unconfessed sin, the sin he had committed, adultery and murder with Bathsheba having had her husband murdered.

Dear ones, God says about this sinful fear that we are not given to that fear to follow that fear. We are not obligated or bound to fall into fear. We do have the remedy as we saw in 2 Timothy 1:7.

The Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 12 verses four through seven has taught we who are Christians not to fear any man or any person who can merely kill the body, who can simply take our physical life from us, but him who we ought to truly fear with a wholesome fear is the Lord God who can take both body and soul because of his strength and his power. We ought to fear the almighty God.

The second main point, the righteous are overcomers by faith.

In Proverbs 28:1, the second part it says, "But the righteous are bold as a lion."²²

Here Solomon contrasts the fleeing and fear of the wicked with the boldness of the righteous. Notice they are bold as a lion, not as cocky as a lion, not as arrogant as a lion, not as boastful as a lion or proud as a lion. They are bold or confident, not self confident, but God confident.

The lion of all beasts in the world epitomizes that beast which has without fear of foe or enemy. And the Lord, by this contrast, encourages the Christian that he, regardless of his weakness and of his fears, has been given the grace of boldness and confidence like that of a lion. For the lion of the tribe of Judah—that is the Lord Jesus Christ—has already purchased for him true boldness and courage for each and every believer in Jesus Christ.

Dear ones, this purchase, this redemption of Jesus Christ....

²² Proverbs 28:1.

We are not simply talking about the power of positive thinking. If you simply say it often enough, like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, or continue to say, "I am not afraid. I am not afraid. I am not afraid," that it is going to happen, that you won't be afraid.

No, we are not talking about that at all. This is an actual grace that has been already purchased, deposited into your spiritual bank account which the Lord purchased with his own life.

And, dear ones, if it cost the life of the Lord Jesus Christ to secure that benefit for you, I can absolutely guarantee you that that benefit is in your account if you have trusted and taken Christ to be your Savior. It belongs to you, dear child of God, as your inheritance.

Have you, then, by faith and trust in Christ been withdrawing? Have you gone to the bank account every day to withdraw the grace of boldness and confidence in Jesus Christ? Or have you rather been living as a pauper. Have you been running in fear as if such a grace did not exist?

Beloved, we have seen how fear affects us with the first part of this sermon and manifests itself in our lives. Let us now learn how to overcome our fears by the grace of God.

Now, the solution to overcoming fear almost seems to easy when we feel as though we are enslaved by our fears within a barricade of barbed wire. It almost seems like those walls and that wire at the top of those walls is impenetrable, that we cannot overcome our fears. I am sure we have all experience fear at various times in various degrees. We wondered whether or not it could actually be overcome.

But the way to overcome fear is basically two fold. Trust the promises of God and enjoy the forgiveness of God. Trust the promises of God and enjoy the forgiveness of God. The one naturally follows the other. But we cannot enjoy the wonders of a guilt free conscience apart from learning to embrace the promises of Christ made to us in the covenant of grace.

Since our fears, beloved, result from unbelief and guilt, unbelief in not trusting in God as he has revealed himself, seeing God as someone who is very small in light of our fears, that is unbelief. And since our fears result from guilt and sin as it did in the hearts and life of Adam as well, confidence and courage must come from trust in Christ and forgiveness by Christ.

And I declare to you, dear ones, with all earnestness and sincerity that to the degree that you cling to the Lord as your righteousness, as your strength, as your help as your life as your joy as your contentment as your peace and as you seek daily to cast all of your anxieties and cares upon him, to that same degree you will overcome fear in your life. It is inevitable.

Now, as I said, the solution seems all too easy. But that is the solution to our fears. It is not something we work. It is not something we accomplish, but it is something that God

accomplishes even through our faith in simply believing and trusting in the promises of God.

It is faith in the promises of God who cannot lie that brings the grace of confidence, boldness and courage into the life of the believer. And I encourage you to read the promises of God every day in order to overcome your fears. If you are wrestling with a particular fear in your life, a worry or an anxiety today, consider Psalm 27, the first five verses.

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 mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an 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 enquire 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.²³

You might want to read Psalm 46 verses one through three as well as giving to us great promises when we face various fears.

I am often in times of fear cast upon the example of some like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who would not compromise the truth even the fate of being thrown into a fiery furnace. You see this is one of those stones, one of those piles of stones that we talked about when we read from Joshua chapter four that God told the people of Israel to set up these 12 stones so as to remind them of his deliverance.

Well, here, as we read this particular account of how God delivered Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and of the courage that he gave to these brethren of ours, listen to their words to the king who threatened them with a fire much hotter than normally would be the case for those who disobeyed the king.

In Daniel three verses 16 through 18:

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.²⁴

²³ Psalm 27:1-5.

²⁴ Daniel 3:16-18.

There is the gift and the grace of courage and confidence, bold as a lion, that was given to three young men who simply trusted God and God showed forth great things when the Lord Jesus Christ came and even stood with them in the midst of that fire keeping them safe from even the smell of smoke upon the hair of their clothing.

How do you, dear ones, grow to overcome your fears? Let me give you, just as we close today, several ways in which you can grow in overcoming your fears.

First of all, get a piece of paper out when you are all by yourself and identify and acknowledge your fears. Deal with them forthrightly. As I said, stare them straight in the face. Look them eyeball to eyeball.

Secondly, confess your fears as rooted in your own unbelief or in your own guilty conscience, that your fears exist because you have not taken God at his Word. Confess that as sin.

Seek, thirdly, seek his forgiveness and endeavor new obedience to trust his promise. Whatever the promise that God gives with regard to a situation that you need to know that he will be with you. Trust him. Endeavor new obedience. And, particularly, beginning with that guilty conscience.

1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."²⁵ Believe it. Trust it. Cling to it that God will forgive when we confess our sins to him.

Fourthly, dear ones, you can't trust someone you don't know. That is just a basic principle. You can't fully trust someone whom you don't really know. Therefore, it must become a daily part of your life to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ through a study of his Word, becoming very familiar with his promises, with his character, spending time in communing with the Lord in fervent prayer. You will not overcome your fears, dear ones, apart from the means of God's grace. Overcoming fear doesn't simply fall out of heaven accidentally or simply light upon us arbitrarily. It comes through a channel, a pipeline called the means of grace and studying the Word of God, committing ourselves to the Lord, calling for his strength and help through fervent prayer.

Beloved, God is truthful, still under the fourth point. God is truthful and cannot lie. Therefore we can trust him. God is faithful and will keep all of his promises. Therefore we need never fear that he will abandon us or forsaken.

God is almighty and cannot be overcome by anything that we fear. He overcomes all other things because all other things are a creation. All other things have been created by the everlasting God.

²⁵ 1 John 1:9.

And, dear ones, God is love. God is merciful and God is gracious and desires that you enjoy all of the benefits of his salvation. And one of those benefits is confidence and courage and boldness.

Fifthly, cast your fears upon the Lord throughout the day as they do appear to you, as they come up. Learn to cast them back upon the Lord. As often as a fear arises, raises its ugly head, chop the head off, as it were, and throw it over to the Lord. Cast it upon God. If it happens 100 times in the day, cast it upon the Lord. Do not carry those fears yourself even for a moment. Cast them upon the Lord.

Sixthly, cling to the promises of Christ and the faith of your fears. Know the promises as we said and use them in battle against the enemy of your soul.

Seventh, think often upon the merciful deliverances of God in your life already. Begin to build those memorials of rocks which the children of Israel were commanded to build when they passed on the other side of the Jordan. Look back to the Scriptures, to those memorial of rocks at every deliverance of God and rejoice in them. Throughout all of history look to the deliverances of God in the life of John Wycliffe or John Hus or Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, of all the of the Covenanters. Look to those deliverances and rejoice in those deliverances and partake of those deliverances because you are one with them and you serve the same eternal God. They are your deliverances, dear ones. But they would never become our deliverances if we do not partake of them, participate of them, if we do not identify ourselves with these brethren. We are members of the same body.

When God delivers them, he has delivered us as members of the same body. And so, dear ones, be thankful. Count your deliverances as blessings.

Eighthly, learn to rest in the knowledge that you are a justified, beloved and adopted child of God. Learn to enjoy the covenant of grace. Do not cast yourself back under the covenant of works. Learn to be humbled by God's amazing love for you rather than being filled up with pride.

And, finally, look in faith to Jesus Christ. Look at this death and his resurrection as the basis for your deliverance from fear. Look to his death and resurrection as securing everything that you possibly need in this life to overcome fear. And look to your heavenly inheritance. For what can Satan do to you, dear ones, if your life is hid with Christ in God there in heaven? If that is where your life is, what can mere man do to you? They can simply take your life here and you can be ascending into heaven rejoicing where God, Jesus Christ awaits you. There is nothing that man can make you fear that Jesus Christ is your life. If heaven is your hope, if that is where your heart, your affections and your mind is no one can make you fear in this life.

Philippians 1:21 says, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."²⁶

²⁶ Philippians 1:21.

Is Jesus Christ your life and your reason for living? If he is, you can overcome the fear that runs rampant in your own life.

Let us stand together in prayer.

Our gracious Father in heaven, how we do thank thee and praise thee that thou art God, our courage, our help, our strength, our confidence, our boldness. Lord, the world would teach us to be merely self confident, to look to our own strength and our resources, to look inside of ourselves. But, oh Lord, the Word of God teaches us to look to Jesus Christ, the lion of the tribe of Judah. And as we, Lord, are in that lion, we become lions. We cease from running from our own fearful conscience and from an avenging God, we cease running, oh Lord, in fear from our enemies and we learn, oh Lord, to stand for the truth. We learn, oh Lord, that regardless of the consequences that may come our way because, oh Lord, we stand in Christ and in his boldness, though, Lord, we need not give way. We need not compromise the truth. We need not, Lord, feel like that our life even should it be taken is of such significance. Oh Lord, we pray that thou would cast us this day upon our Savior and upon the promises of God.

We thank thee, our God, for the truth of thy Word. We pray, Father, that it would, by thy Spirit, find application and obedience in our lives for Jesus' sake. Amen.

This reformation audio track is a production of Still Waters Revival Books. You are welcome to make copies and give them to those in need. SWRB makes thousands of classic reformation resources available free and for sale in audio, video and printed formats. It is likely that the sermon or book that you just listened to is also available on cassette or video or as a printed book or booklet. Our many free resources, as well as our complete mail order catalog contain thousands of classic and contemporary Puritan and Reformed books, tapes and videos at great discounts is on the web at [www dot swrb dot com](http://www.swrb.com). We can also be reached by email at [swrb at swrb dot com](mailto:swrb@swrb.com), by phone at 780-450-3730, by fax at 780-468-1096 or by mail at 4710-37A Avenue, Edmonton—that is E D M O N T O N—Alberta—abbreviated capital A, capital B—Canada P6L 3T5. You may also request a free printed catalog. And remember that John Calvin in defending the Reformation's regulative principle of worship or what is sometimes called the scriptural law of worship, commenting on the words of God which I commanded them not neither came into my heart from his commentary on Jeremiah 7:31 writes, "God here cuts off from men every occasion for making evasions and he condemns by this one phrase 'I have not commanded them' whatever the Jews devised. There is, then, no other argument needed to condemn superstitions that if they are not commanded by God. For when men allow themselves to worship God according to their own fancies and attend not to his commands, they pervert true religion. And if this principle was adopted by the papists, all those fictitious modes of worship in which they absurdly exercise themselves would fall to the ground. It is, indeed, a horrible thing for the papist to seek to discharge their duties towards God by performing their own superstitions. There is an immense number of them as it is well known and as it manifestly appears.

“Were they to admit this principle that we cannot rightly worship God except by obeying his Word, they would be delivered from their deep abyss of error.

“The prophet’s words, then, are very important when he says that God had commanded no such thing and that it never came to his mind as though he had said that men assume too much wisdom when they devise what he never required, nay, what he never knew.”