

# Fearless

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Preacher: Ray Sweet

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, hey there. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana.! Thank you again for tuning in today. We're excited to just get into the Word of God, but most of all let the Word get into us.

Just real quick, if you'd like to know more about First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana, you can always go to FCCGreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page. But hey, today's message is called Fearless.

We're in the second week of a series over Psalm 91 called Secret Place and we'll be in Psalm 91 verses 3 through 8 today. Now, go ahead and grab your Bible or your Bible app and why don't you head towards Psalm 91.

And as you are, one day a man got in an Uber. The driver showed up on time, they exchanged pleasantries, and then they started the 30-minute drive. Well, about 15, 20 minutes in, the passenger leans up and gently taps the driver on the shoulder to get his attention.

And boy, he had no clue what would happen next. The driver screamed, lost control of the car, nearly hit a bus, drove up over the curb, and thankfully stopped just inches from a large plate window.

[ 1 : 19 ] At that point, both of them were just breathing heavy with their hearts beating out of their chest. And finally, after a long silence, the driver said, Are you okay? He said, You scared the daylights out of me.

Well, the passenger felt awful about this and apologized, saying, Well, I didn't realize that a mere tap on your shoulder would startle you so badly or I wouldn't have done it.

I am so very sorry. And finally, it all made sense as the driver said, No, no, no, no, it's not your fault. It's mine. Please don't apologize.

Today is my first day as an Uber driver. I've been driving a funeral coach for 25 years. See, I'd jump too, wouldn't you? Hey, welcome back to week two of our series over Psalm 91.

We find refuge in the secret place of God's protection and grace as we don't have to be startled by life. Last week, I was amazed at the spiritual meat that was packed into two verses.

[ 2 : 22 ] We learned four different Hebrew names for God that showed us even more of His character and care for His children. And these attributes of God will continue to carry us through this psalm.

So these are important. We looked at El Elyon, the Most High, that we can put our trust in completely. El Shaddai, the All-Sufficient One, who can handle every problem we face.

Yahweh, the Covenant-Keeping, Never-Changing God. And then Elohim, the One who created you in the secret place and invites you to dwell in His presence.

And it's in that secret place that we find refuge no matter what the world throws our way. Now, that was just verses 1 and 2. But today, we keep this conversation going because like the Uber driver, we can easily be overcome with fear, anxiety, depression, worry.

Now, am I the only one who deals with these things? I don't think so. So let's start by reading this whole passage before we break it down just a verse at a time, okay?

[ 3 : 25 ] So Psalm 91, starting in verse 3, just a reminder, we are reading just the Psalm 91 passage from the New King James Version. Just love just the wording of this.

It just brings it to life even more. So Psalm 91, verse 3. And may God bless the reading of His Word.

Now, if you're a note taker, you can always go to our Church Center app. And you can get that by going to the Church Center app in the Play Store or your Apple Store or whatever.

And you can download that and then you can go through and put in First Christian Church of Greensburg. And you'll kind of see how all that works. But under sermons, under today's message, under take notes, you can start doing that digitally.

But here's the first thing. Trouble comes. Trouble comes. There's a movie that came out in 1994 called *The War*.

[ 5 : 02 ] And it's set back in rural Mississippi in 1972. It's about a guy played by Kevin Costner who has severe PTSD from Vietnam. And it's his battle to raise his kids to be peaceful in a very violent world.

The son is played by Elijah Wood. And a lot of the movie is following the kids in their trouble against some neighborhood bullies with the last name the Lipnickies.

But being right in the heart of the Civil Rights Movement in the deep, deep South, there's some real racial tension going on. And one scene has a racist teacher, Miss Stratford.

And she's asking the kids to do a report on a book called *Why My Life is Like a Bowl Full of Cherries*. Sorry, that's how she says it.

And yet that same teacher puts all the black kids in the back of the room, the white kids in the front. And as she keeps picking on this one black girl, she finally gets an earful back of why life isn't always a bowl full of cherries.

[ 6 : 06 ] Now, look at Psalm 91 verse 3. And I want to show you how this connects. It says, Surely he shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence.

So, two different enemies in this verse that are coming against us. First would be the snare of the fowler. That means the hidden traps, the deceptions, the calculated attacks from the enemy, or even the ultimate enemy.

And then you have perilous pestilence, kind of a cool phrase. And that's the widespread, uncontrollable chaos, disease, and tragedies that we deal with in life.

In other words, Miss Stratford, life is not always a bowl full of cherries because life is hard. People will let you down because they're human. Evil runs rampant.

And sadly, we all face it in different ways. Sickness and disease may ravage families. Tragedy strikes, turning life upside down. And it often feels unfair because we live in a fallen world because of sin.

[ 7 : 14 ] And here's what I've learned, but also that I have to do a better job with sometimes. Every one of us have junk weighing us down. All of us have had a pity party for ourselves at some point.

Me included. Actually, let me have one now, okay? I got three different physical struggles that aren't getting any better that keep me from running and being as active as I'd like.

But you know what? I don't want you to feel sorry for me because I'm good and God's got me under control. And the reason I even mention those things is because I know you have stuff too.

I mean, we could go around to every person listening to this right now and talk about snares that have entrapped you. Perilous pestilence of life. It's all of us in different and yet similar ways.

And if we did ask all of our FCC family, we would hear stories of rough childhoods and how hard those emotional scars have been to overcome. We'd listen to reports of cancer and other illnesses that affect us and our families.

[ 8 : 16 ] We'd tear up over accidents and knocks at the door or phone calls that you never expected. Sadly, some could tell of abuse that changed your life or even a broken home that didn't help you give you a healthy understanding of family.

Maybe a spouse who betrayed you or even your own sin that's affected those you love. Jesus even says to his disciples in John 16, 33, he says, in this world, you will have trouble.

Not you might, not just the crazy family down the street, but you will have trouble. But take heart, he says, I have overcome the world. A former youth pastor here at FCC once said this as he was meeting with a family that lost a loved one.

And I know that this one word in here, some families say it, some families don't. It's not a bad word, but it's kind of that gray area. But it makes sense when life is hard.

He would say to them, sometimes life sucks, but Jesus makes it suck less. So one thing I often tell those that I meet with about baptism is that giving your life to Jesus doesn't make life a bowl full of cherries.

[ 9 : 28 ] In fact, you just tick Satan off more and your spiritual warfare is going to ramp up because you're now a threat to the kingdom of darkness. You know, the passage in Ephesians 6 that talks

about how we are to put on the full armor of God.

Why do you think all the armor is defensive except for one, the sword? Because the battle is real. Because the arrows are whizzing by. Because the enemy's sword is aiming for your head.

You're clearly the target. And can we just call something out so that we can identify it before anything flares up? Right now is a really exciting time in the life of our church.

We should feel blessed to be a part of what God's doing. And it's not the first exciting time where God has shown up in massive ways in the 194-year history of FCC.

And listen, we don't think that we're all that in a bag of chips either. We will always be a work in progress. We have all kinds of things to keep surrendering to Jesus. And that starts with me.

[10:27] But I can tell you that we've never had a ministry impacting so many people than we have right now by God's grace. And since the dust settled after COVID, the Lord's increased this church by 300 plus people on a Sunday with probably 150 to 200 baptisms.

Our Wednesday evening elevate has tripled with more people choosing to be discipled by actively studying God's word. We've seen our giving to missions at home and throughout our nation and across the world.

We believe in a very balanced missions. But we've seen that increase by more than \$100,000 a year because of bold and godly leadership. And because our missions team does a fantastic job of discerning who to support.

Our staff size has more than doubled to keep up with what God's doing. We've also seen this family resemble Greensburg more as we have people from all walks of life and all generations, both white and blue collar, discovering hope in Jesus' name.

And because we just launched a new God-sized three-year plan, of course the enemy will look to destroy it. And this is where each of us have to peer inward. Because sometimes, and this is hard to hear, but sometimes Satan will use even good people who love Jesus to cause chaos, usually over something that doesn't even matter in the end.

[11:50] I've seen this way too many times in churches with personal preferences and generational differences and control issues and personality conflicts, lack of communication and more.

And this is where we have to choose, every one of us, to unify with Christ as the head, under the authority of Scripture, not my will be done, but yours, Jesus.

This is where we get biblical following the lead of our elders as they shepherd the flock, following the Holy Spirit's leading. So yeah, in this fallen world, trouble comes.

You can bank on it. But here's the good news, because if I've been depressing so far, we're about ready to get much more positive, okay? Here's the good news. God's faithful.

Write that down. God's faithful. Trouble comes, but God's faithful. No matter what you're walking through, no matter how impossible the situation seems, He's got this.

[12:50] And He can use whatever you're walking through to grow you. In fact, in the words of Tim Hansel, problems are the very means by which God changes, transforms, and drives us forward.

Without problems, there would be no growth, He says. And while I don't like that statement because nobody wants problems, I agree with it. And yet, in the struggles, I love the promise of refuge that we're given in Psalm 91 for.

He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge. His truth shall be your shield and your buckler. Now, like we hammered out last week, this is if we choose to dwell in the secret place.

If we make Jesus the Lord of our lives, finding our identity and our peace in the shadow of the Almighty. And that's not just a one-time decision where you get dunked in the water, although Scripture makes it clear that, yeah, that's a part of saying yes to Jesus.

We're talking about dying to sin daily, rising to new life filled with the Holy Spirit. See, true repentance is not just a one-time get-out-of-hell-free card type of thing.

[14:05] This is a lifelong commitment. It is a relationship with Jesus where the joy of my salvation leads to faithfulness to Him growing more into Christ's image every day.

And I'm also serving Him with my whole heart. And I love this picture of a baby bird that's under the protection of its mama's wings. And since we kind of beat that horse last week, not literally, we don't beat horses or advocate for it.

But anyways, let's focus on the last part of verse 4. It says, verse 4, okay. So some of you probably remember in 1999, John F. Kennedy Jr., his wife and her sister set out on a private plane at dark. They had gotten delayed, and while John was a licensed pilot, he had not yet been approved for instrument flight using only the instrument panel to navigate. Well, sadly, as we all remember, all three were killed as the plane went down.

Investigators determined the crash was likely caused by disorientation from flying over open water at night without any landmarks or any visible horizon. Kennedy's lack of experience may well have led him to trust what he thought he was seeing more than what his instrument panel was actually telling him.

[ 15 : 30 ] So why do I share that? Because all of us face the temptation to walk according to sight instead of faith. Faith in the Lord will keep us from crashing.

Human reason has and will fail us. But church, hear me. God never fails. And like Proverbs 3, 5, and 6 says, Trust in the Lord with all of your heart.

Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. So what's the instrument panel for us? What's our source of truth that guides us?

Well, yeah, his word, right? Breathed from Elohim, the all-powerful creator, to us, his children. And then the second part of Psalm 91, 4 says, His truth shall be your shield and your buckler.

Kind of a cool way of putting it. So let's talk about that. We're given this picture of a shield that was like what we think of. You know, you think of a Roman soldier kind of marching, had that big old rectangular covering shield that covers the whole body.

[ 16 : 36 ] It could also be kind of planted in the ground, even linked up with other shields, and create, even with those in the middle, kind of creating a shell of protection above, and even in the back.

And so things like spears and rocks or arrows flying in could be completely blocked. Protection from more long-range attacks. And if you think about this spiritually and practically, it's saying that God's word is your shield from those trials, those fiery darts of fear, of doubt, of rough circumstances.

And then there's the buckler, which is a small, probably a round shield, maybe 8 to 16 inches in diameter, that was used more in hand-to-hand combat.

And you wouldn't have it in your hand, because you need to have the sword in the other hand, right? So you would actually have it kind of attached to your arm, and whenever a sword would come for you, you would put that up and block it.

So because you can't hide behind that giant big shield when the enemy is right up in your face. And this smaller shield is what you throw up when a sword's headed right at you.

[ 17 : 45 ] And this represents how God's truth protects you from those up-close and personal attacks. We're talking about betrayal. We're talking about lies. We're talking about anxiety, fear.

So when it says his truth is a shield and buckler, that means that when you're under the wings of his protection, you have 360-degree coverage. Isn't that a cool picture?

Not just from the big stuff coming from the front, but even the personal attacks from every angle. So when our passage says truth, it's talking about God's faithfulness over those who are his children.

But you can easily say that it's also talking about the truth that he's spoken to us in his word, because that's where we learn about God's faithfulness. Proverbs 4.13 even says, Hold on to instruction.

Do not let it go. Guard it well. Watch this. For it is your life. Wow. That's a big statement. I even like how Charles Spurgeon once said, A Bible that's falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't.

[ 18 : 49 ] And while we're given the shield of protection against Satan's attacks, we also have what the New Testament calls the sword of the Spirit. Pastor Mitch and our 220 youth, and it's really cool.

So 220 means second to none. Kind of like our vision is Jesus first. So 220, second to none. Our 220 youth have been looking at Ephesians 6 lately, and they've been talking about the armor of God.

And part of that is God's word is your weapon against the enemy. Speaking truth into lies that are everywhere in our culture. And while you have God as your shield, no matter what life throws your way, you also have the truth that shall set you free.

So trouble comes. God's faithful. You've got that 360-degree coverage. And because of that, we can be fearless. We can be fearless. Now, that doesn't mean that life is perfect and you won't deal with stuff, because you will.

We've already talked about trouble will come, but you know that you're protected, so you can be fearless. I recently heard a story about two explorers on a jungle safari, and they were just walking along doing their thing, but suddenly a ferocious lion jumps out right in front of them.

[ 20 : 03 ] I mean, maybe 10, 15 feet away. I mean, not far. And that's when the first guy whispers, Well, that's when the other guy, who was much less optimistic, whispered back, Sure, you've read the book, I've read the book, but has the lion read the book?

Well, here's the good news. The lion of the tribe of Judah wrote the book, and in him we need not fear. Because like the Lord told Joshua when he was calling him after Moses had died, Joshua had always been the right-hand man, and now he's stepping in to lead the children of Israel into the promised land full of bad guys.

What does Joshua 1, 9 say? What does God give to Joshua over and over? Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Watch this. Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged.

For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Or even think about the Apostle Paul's message to a young pastor that he loved and mentored in 1 Timothy 1, 7. For the spirit God gave us does not make us timid.

Some translations say God did not give us a spirit of fear, but he gives us power, love, and self-discipline. So as we look at the last part of our passage today from Psalm 91, 5 through 8, we see that the psalmist, we see the psalmist that I tend to think was David, we see him proclaim this powerful truth that I've got nothing to fear when I'm in the center of God's will.

[ 21 : 39 ] The word says you shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that walks in the darkness, nor the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not come near to you. Only with your eyes shall you look and see the reward of the wicked. So if it was in fact David writing these words, I'm listening because David lived it.

Born in a good family, but also quickly realized he was the runt of the litter. Not daddy's favorite, like his older and taller and stronger brothers. But that didn't stop him from pursuing the heart of God, believing God's will over his life, faithfully doing the job of a servant, caring for the sheep, killing a bear and a lion when they tried to devour the flock, a man after God's own heart.

And one day he's called into the house where the famous prophet Samuel anointed him as the next king over Israel. Are you kidding me? I mean, he's too scrawny. He's too short.

And yet God doesn't look at the things that man looks at. God looks at the heart. And when Samuel left, it was almost like everything just went back to normal. And David went back out with the sheep. And then he was sent one day to take supplies to his brothers in battle.

[ 22 : 57 ] And he ends up slaying a giant in the name of Yahweh Sebaoth. Yahweh Sebaoth, the Lord of heaven's armies.

He becomes a great general, leading Israel to victory after victory. His popularity increases, but so did King Saul's jealousy until finally it bubbled over into all-out fury.

David was on the run as an enemy of his own country. That he had fought for valiantly, having done nothing wrong, but serve his king faithfully.

Now he's on the run, running for his life for roughly 10 years, showing his king respect, refusing to kill him when he could have. And it was around 15 years from the moment he was first anointed by Samuel until he became king over Judah.

Another seven and a half years until he reigned over all of Israel. So if anyone could write these words about God's protection when he should have been long dead, it was him.

[ 24 : 00 ] Nothing Saul did worked because he was fighting against the Lord of heaven's armies. David was in the center of God's will over his life. And another David, a well-known pastor today, David Jeremiah, he said it this way, A man in the center of God's will is immortal until God is finished with him.

So church, be fearless in Jesus' name. Not for your own benefit, not for your will, not even in your own power. But in Christ, we have nothing to fear. And this is where last week and this week sort of collide.

Remember those four names of God we studied? El Elyon, El Shaddai, Yahweh, Elohim. If you didn't get a chance to go to the Church Center app and watch or listen to that week one of our series, please do it.

Because we serve an awesome God. And his ways are not my ways. His thoughts are not my thoughts. And that's a good thing. So we can trust that he's got us under control.

So what's that look like in your life right now? Is there something medically going on with you or your loved one that has you just overwhelmed, depressed? Be fearless in Jesus.

[ 25 : 09 ] Is it an addiction that you feel like you just can't overcome? Be fearless in Jesus. Is it a strained relationship that feels hopeless or a financial burden that weighs you down?

Is it even a ministry that you feel called to but you've let circumstances and Satan steal your joy in serving? Are you in a season of change like many of our graduates? Be fearless.

Or is it your past sin and you just can't forgive yourself? Well, if you're in Christ, I want you to hear me. Your sin is long gone. Quit grabbing onto something that's not even there.

If God's forgiven you, what makes you think you have the right to hold on to it? Listen, I have no idea. I have no idea what trouble may be pressing upon you in this moment.

But I do know this. Trouble comes. God's more than faithful. Therefore, I can be fearless in Him. Amen, church?

[ 26 : 05 ] Let's pray. Father, thank You so much for these words of hope, these words of life that You've spoken into us today through Psalm 91. And we don't want to be weak Christians.

We want to believe what Your Word says. And You tell us that we have 360-degree coverage in You. That while trouble still comes, while things are still going to go down, we are in the palm of Your hands and You have us under control.

Thank You, Jesus, for that. We worship You. We adore You. We're so grateful that You love us, You protect us, and You have us in Your purpose and Your will.

Father, we pray that we will be faithful to walk in Your grace, to seek Your heart, to be the church that You've called us to be, and to truly love You with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And we pray all of this in Jesus' precious and holy name. And God's people said, Amen and Amen. Hey, real quick, my name is Ray Sweep from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana.

[ 27 : 13 ] And if you would just maybe have some questions about what does it mean to follow Jesus, or what is this Christianity stuff all about, I'd like to hear more, or can you tell me about First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana?

We would love to do that. So others have come alongside me in my life. I wouldn't be where I am without so many who have poured into me. So let us begin that communication with you.

Here's how you can start that. 812-663-8488. That's 812-663-8488. That's our church number.

Just call. You can ask for Ray, or honestly, anybody on staff can help you with that. Or you can email me at ray at FCCGreensburg.com. And hey, can I ask a favor of you?

If you are someone who listens faithfully to God's word being preached through our program here, if that's you, will you let us know?

[ 28 : 10 ] We just want to hear from you. We want to hear what God's doing. We want to connect with you. You can email me at ray at FCCGreensburg.com. You can even go to our FCC Greensburg Facebook page and just send a message and connect with us that way.

Just let us know. We just want to see what God's doing in your life. And if we can come alongside you, we would love to do that. Hey, God bless you. And I hope you have a great day because trouble comes, but God's faithful and we can be fearless.

Have a great week.