

When I'm Afraid

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 August 2022

Preacher: Cedric Moss

[0 : 00] Why often, oftentimes I would introduce sermons by asking a question.

! But this morning I want to do so by making a statement.! And the statement is this. All of us have at different times in our lives been afraid.

And I'm not referring to passing moments of fear like being afraid of insects or animals.

But instead I'm referring to situations, real life situations, that we have faced that have gripped our hearts with fear and worry about the present or the future or even both.

Situations like the loss of a job and the fear of not being able to take care of yourself and your family.

[1 : 14] Like visiting the doctor hearing the news that you've been diagnosed with some life-threatening disease or that the test results show that more tests need to be done and perhaps medical intervention is needed or surgical intervention is needed.

Maybe you've experienced the fear of waiting for the results of a very important exam, the results of which could determine whether you would lose a lot of time and a lot of money by having to re-sit.

Or maybe you've had the fear that came from being a victim of crime. About six family members in four different incidents to be held up at gunpoint.

And one of those incidents was my mother and my father and the gunman actually shot at my father and the bullet grazed him. And I remember just hearing them just recount the ordeal that they walked through and it gripped me with fear even though I had not experienced it.

The kind of fear can linger with you for a very long time. Maybe you faced some other kind of fear that I've not mentioned.

[2 : 50] And I think the one common denominator that all of us would experience in those kinds of situations of fear is the kind of helplessness and darkness that could really engulf us when we faced them.

Perhaps that's your situation this morning. Perhaps even now, though you're here, your heart is gripped by fear fear of the present or maybe something in the future.

Well, the good news is that we're not alone. The good news is that we have not been left without help and hope. And scripture is filled with the experiences and the testimonies of the people of God who have faced fearful situations.

Situations that gripped them with tormenting fear. And the Lord delivered them.

This is especially true in the Psalms. We read the Psalms and we see various ones who have written the Psalms, testifying and sharing about their experiences of fear and the Lord's faithfulness in the midst of it.

[4 : 14] And one of those Psalms, as we begin our five-part sermon series in the Psalms, is Psalm 27. So if you've not yet done so, let me invite you to turn to Psalm 27.

Psalm 27. And here's the truth this morning. Since we live in a sinful and a broken world, we are going to face situations that grip us with fear from time to time.

It would just be wonderful if there are particular things we can pray about once and for all and we never face it again. But this is something that we will face again. We know the certainty of it.

The only thing we don't know is how and when and what it might be. We don't know that. But until the day we die or the Lord returns, in His providence, we will face situations that cause us, that can cause us to be fearful.

And so let's hear this morning the message of Psalm 27. Please follow along as I read. I'm reading from the English Standard Version.

[5 : 37] Psalm 27.

chewing chewing chewing chewing chewing The war rise against me, yet I will be confident. One thing have I asked 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 gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble. He will conceal me under the cover of his tent.

He will lift me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me. And I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy.

I will sing and make melody to the Lord. Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud. Be gracious to me and answer me.

[7 : 13] You have said, seek my face. My heart says to you, your face, Lord, do I seek. Hide not your face from me.

Turn not your servant away in anger. O you who have been my help. Cast me not off. Forsake me not, O God of my salvation.

For my father and my mother have forsaken me. But the Lord will take me in. Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies.

Give me not up to the will of my adversaries. For false witnesses have risen against me.

And they breathe out violence. I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord.

[8 : 17] Be strong. And let your heart take courage. Wait for the Lord. Let's pray together. Father, we bow our hearts this morning and we thank you for your word.

Lord, we thank you, O Lord, that you have cared for us by preserving your word through the ages, that we might have it to instruct us and guide us and to bring us comfort.

Lord, I pray in this moment that you would speak through your word to your people. And I ask, Lord, publicly, as I have done privately, that you would enable me to be an instrument in your hands to proclaim your truth to your people.

We ask, Lord, that you would bless now the preaching of your word to the heart of your people. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

In Psalm 27, we find the psalmist, David, facing one or more situations that made him afraid. From the text, the source of David's fears come from his enemies, whom he describes as evildoers, adversaries, foes, and false witnesses.

[9 : 45] And this is very striking because David was a man of war. He was a mighty warrior. We're told that the women of Israel made up a song that celebrated the mighty warrior that David was.

They said that David had killed his, that Saul had killed his thousands, but David had killed his tens of thousands. And here we see David, this mighty warrior, was at times fearful.

When he faced enemies and armies who were far greater and mightier than he was, and he was fearful. And so, faced with these fears, how did David respond?

And what can we learn from his response in Psalm 27 that can help our own response when we are fearful? What we can learn from Psalm 27 is this.

When God's people are afraid, they should remember him, pray to him, and wait for him. That's what we see the psalmist doing in Psalm 27.

[11 : 06] In short, what we can learn from this psalm is in times of fear, we need to turn to the Lord. And this doesn't mean that we have turned away from him.

But what it means is that even as we walk with the Lord and we face situations that grip our hearts with fear, we need to, in a very intentional and specific way, turn our faces to the Lord concerning those situations that make us afraid.

And so when we, as God's people, are afraid, Psalm 27 calls us to respond in three specific ways. Three ways we are encouraged from this psalm to respond.

And the first is to remember the Lord. And why we call to remember the Lord? We are called to remember the Lord because in times of fear, it is so easy to forget the Lord.

We forget who God is and we forget who God has shown himself to be, how he has revealed himself in Scripture. We forget how he has revealed himself in human history.

[12 : 31] And that happens when we are afraid. We can forget. And when we forget the Lord, we don't remember the Lord, we can respond in the situations that bring us fear in ways that are fleshly and in ways that actually make the situation worse.

But we see in Psalm 27 in verses 1 through 6, in the midst of his fears, David is remembering the Lord. And he's reminding himself of who the Lord is and what the Lord had done for him.

In verse 1, he says, in the face of these fears, in the face of the darkness and the danger that he's facing, he says, the Lord is my light and my salvation.

He remembers the Lord as the one who dispels the darkness that engulfs his people, as the one who rescues his people from danger and even the danger of death.

And in light of that reality, the psalmist asks the question, whom shall I fear? God is the, he's my light and he is my salvation.

[13:47] Whom shall I fear? He acknowledges in verse 2 that the Lord is the stronghold of his life. Well, actually, in the second part of verse 1, still in verse 1, he acknowledges that the Lord is the stronghold of his life and he asks, of whom shall I be afraid?

What the psalmist is doing in verse 1 is he is reminding himself that God is all that he needs God to be in the midst of the situations that bring him fear.

His light, that he might see clearly, that he might have the right perspective to know how to proceed. His salvation, that it's not going to be his own strength that is going to deliver him, but it will be the Lord as his salvation and the Lord as the stronghold of his life.

And these are truths that we easily forget when we are afraid. In verses 2 and 3, we see David reflecting on the Lord's faithfulness in the past, how the Lord delivered him and he's now affirming the Lord's faithfulness and the Lord's deliverance.

He says in verse 2 that when evildoers would come against him to destroy him, he says they are the ones who destroyed. And in verse 3, he says, even in war, if an entire army were to come against me, I won't be afraid.

[15:21] Instead, I will be confident of victory. Now, is David boasting in himself? No, he's not boasting in himself. He's not boasting in his own ability.

He is remembering the faithfulness of the Lord, what the Lord has done in the past. And he is remembering and reminding himself that God has delivered him and therefore God will deliver him. He's boasting in the Lord as the one who delivers. and I think it's fair to acknowledge that this is easier said than done.

This is easier said than done when we are faced with real situations that bring fear to our hearts, that we would remember the Lord this way, remember what he has done and have the same confidence that in the moment he will do what he has done in the past.

Now, I think one of the things that's important for us to note as we're working our way through this psalm is David is not yet praying. He's certainly reminding himself of things of the Lord.

[16:33] He's bringing them to his remembrance, but he's not yet praying to God. He doesn't begin to directly address God until verse 7.

And I want to pause at this point and I want to ask you a question. What is it more than anything else that you're afraid of? What is it more than anything else that tends to regularly grip your heart with fear?

fear? And it varies in a certain way for people.

For some people it might be death or the fear of how they might die. For some it might be being diagnosed with a debilitating disease that causes you to suffer over a long period of time.

For some it's the prospect of financial ruin through losing a job or through business failure. For some it's relational.

[17:47] They fear losing a spouse or a boyfriend or a girlfriend. Or maybe it's something else. but I really think that it is so important to try to grasp and take the time to think about it because sometimes we just don't like to think about it but try to think about what is it that brings me my greatest fear?

And perhaps in a regular and an ongoing way. What tends to happen is whatever that fear is, there are people who just associate the worth of their lives and the worth of living life to that particular situation.

And tragically for some people when they face that situation they take their own lives. Or they basically just give upon life and just goes through life because everything was wrapped up in a particular expectation that they had and not wanting a particular fear to come their way.

fear. And I really think it is a helpful exercise for us to really think what is my greatest fear? What is the thing that I fear the most?

And the reason that's important and helpful for us to do that is because when we do so, what we will find is an idol. when we ponder what it is that grips our hearts with fear, and especially if we are associating the value of life, our life, or the value of living to that thing, brothers and sisters, we have put our finger on an idol.

[19 : 38] people. We've attached such high value to it that we fear losing it or we fear experiencing whatever it is we don't want to experience.

And our fears are connected to whatever that is, whatever we value in that particular way. And when you think about it, I think it comes down to two basic things.

It's either some kind of certainty that we value and really idolize and worship certainty in our lives, predictability in our lives, a sense of having control in our lives, or just comfort.

And what we really fear is not so much the thing, but really the result of that thing, whether it brings uncertainty or brings this prospect of discomfort in our lives.

Verse 4 gives us insight in how the psalmist dealt with his fears. He says this in verse 4, one thing, one thing, have I asked 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 gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

[21 : 17] Now, clearly, David was not saying that he only asked the Lord for one thing, that he only had one prayer request. That's not what he was saying. What he's saying is, above all else, the paramount thing, the most important thing that I've asked the Lord for, the most important thing I'm going to seek after is that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

Remember, David is surrounded by enemies. He states that in the coming verses. And in the midst of all of that, with the temptation to be gripped by all these fears, he says there's one thing I desire of the Lord.

He's basically saying, I want to be near to God. I want to be able to dwell in the house of God. I want to be able to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.

I want to be able to inquire in his temple. David is saying, more than anything else, I want to be near the Lord. Next week, we're going to look at Psalm 42 and 43.

And it was a time when David could not go to the house of the Lord. And we will see the despair that that brought to him. But he's saying, this is what I desire more than anything else.

[22 : 46] I want to be near to the Lord. And why does he want to be near to the Lord?

He tells us in verse 5. He says, because the Lord will shelter me in the day of trouble. The days that could make him fearful.

He says, the Lord will shelter me. And here, David is speaking about the perspective and the peace that comes in times of trouble when we are near to the Lord.

And brothers and sisters, I believe that this is something that is so important for us to really grasp in our lives. Because really what the psalmist is saying is this.

He's saying essentially, if I have God, more than anything else, I have all that I need. to be near to the Lord. If I lose everything else, nothing else matters except this one thing.

[23 : 50] I want to be near to the Lord. The Lord is my portion. And that's what I've asked for, that's what I seek.

And brothers and sisters, if we have the Lord who's with us, who's promised that he'll never leave us, that he'll never forsake us, that should put our fears in perspective.

It doesn't mean that we are stoic and nothing bothers us and nothing matters to us. But what it does mean is we see those things for what they are.

we realize that they're not our end all and be all. We realize that our lives are not consisting in those things. Our life is in God.

And we are to be seeking and desiring to be near to the Lord. And the psalmist is remembering the Lord in this way as well. The place of the Lord holds in his life.

[24 : 50] The importance of the nearness that he has to God. And he has that. And he says, that's what I want. And brothers and sisters, this is what we need to remind ourselves about as well.

Whatever the source of the fear, whether it is a job that has been lost or a business that has failed, or the uncertainty that's happening in the company that you work for, we need to remind ourselves, you know what?

The most important thing to me is my relationship with God, being close to the Lord, letting him be a shelter for me in whatever situation that I find myself in.

And we see David saying that in the midst of all these fears, he was going to commit himself to worshipping the Lord, sacrificing with shouts of joy, and singing and making melody to the Lord. God. And when we read the full psalm, we see that this was not a constant thing for David. David went like that. This was his heart's desire, but the human condition showed that it wasn't always flat and level for him.

[26 : 10] And I say this this morning, brothers and sisters, in our times of fear, fear, we need to remember the Lord and we need to remember that he is or ought to be the priority in our life.

And so when trouble comes and we are fearful, we automatically turn to him and as long as we have him, we truly have all that we need in this life. If we can settle that, the fears are not going to be overwhelming.

The fears are not going to just grip us where we forget the Lord in the midst of our fears. We'd be able to say like the psalmist, I can have enemies all around me, but my head is going to be lifted up because God lifts up my head and I will worship the Lord.

And see, this is why Job was able to respond the way that he did. in the face of unimaginable loss. The Bible says he fell to the ground and worshipped.

He said the Lord has given and the Lord has taken away. so first in Psalm 27, we see that it encourages us to remember the Lord when we are afraid and then second, when we are afraid, Psalm 27 encourages us to pray to the Lord.

[27 : 49] This is what we see David doing in verses 7 through 12. In verse 7, he prays to the Lord to hear him when he cries out and to be gracious to him and answer him.

And I want you to see the change in moods as we're working through this Psalm. we see David in confidence in these opening verses, remembering the Lord, who the Lord is, and what the Lord has done, and now we see him praying to the Lord and he's saying to the Lord, hear me when I cry aloud.

And that's the way we pray when we face overwhelming situations.

We cry aloud. And we pray to God to answer us and we pray to God to answer us quickly. And notice God's response to David in verse 5.

David cries out, hear me, answer me, and the Lord says to him, seek my face. In other words, God is saying to David, David, don't seek an answer, seek my face.

[29 : 07] Don't seek what you want, don't seek what you have in mind, seek my face. Allow these fears that you face, the troubles that are all around you, allow them to cause you to come to me and to seek my face.

face. And this is one of God's purposes. This is one of his wise purposes when we are afraid.

One of his wise purposes is that it will cause us to seek him and to seek his face. He doesn't want us to just run into his presence and say, God, fix it and fix it now.

He says to David, no, seek my face. And in David's response, we see the human condition. We see our own condition. David says in verse 8, my heart says to you, your face, Lord, do I seek.

And what he's saying essentially is he's saying, Lord, from the depths of my soul, I'm seeking you. But notice what he says in the very next verse, in verse 9. Don't hide your face from me.

[30 : 22] turn not away from your servant in anger, you who have been my help. Cast me not off. Forsake me not, O God, my salvation.

It's as if David is saying, God, you're telling me to seek your face. I really am trying to seek your face, but God, I don't feel like I'm seeking it. It feels like you're hiding your face from me in my fears. He says, don't hide your face from me. God says, seek my face. He says, I'm trying to seek your face, but God, it seems that you're hiding your face from me in the midst of my fears.

And he pleads with the Lord not to turn him away in anger, not to cast him off, not to forsake him.

And even though David had affirmed the Lord for who he was and all that he did, and had this confident expectation that the Lord is going to lift his head above his enemies, we find him just as we are, crying out to the Lord, not to turn him away in anger, and not to cast him off.

David's response reminds me of the man who brought his son to Jesus, that Jesus would heal him, and Jesus said to him, do you believe I can heal your son? And the man said, yes, Lord, I believe, but help my unbelief.

[31 : 46] we find ourselves oftentimes in that dilemma, believing but doubting. And that's where we see the psalmist crying out to the Lord in this way.

And you know, one of the things that happens when we find ourselves crying out to the Lord in this way, it is interesting that the psalmist would say, don't cast me away in anger.

Why does he say that? Not because God is unjust and because God will just wake up on the wrong side one day and just lash out against him.

No, the psalmist does that because he knows that God has good reason to be angry. God has good reason to turn his face from him. And brothers and sisters, the same is true for us.

In and of ourselves, we have sinned enough, we have rebelled against God enough that God would turn his face from us, that God would be angry against us and that he would turn away from us.

[33 : 04] And the psalmist is just mindful of that as he is crying out to the Lord. We see in verse 10 that he was at a lonely place in his life.

We don't know the circumstances, but he actually says that his father and his mother had forsaken him. Though he expressed that he was confident that the Lord would not forsake him, the Lord would take him in.

Verse 11, we see another effect of what should be happening when we are facing fears and when we are praying to God. We should be desiring to know God's ways.

The psalmist is praying, Lord, teach me your ways in verse 11. Teach me your ways that you may lead me on a level path because of my enemies. And a lot of times when we are walking through difficult situations that make us fearful, sometimes we think we know the solution.

We have it in mind. We know what will fix the problem, what we think will fix the problem. The psalmist is crying out, Lord, would you teach me your ways?

[34 : 25] And that's what we need to do as well in humility. Lord, would you teach me your ways so that I might know how to proceed? And it may be the way that we are thinking, but it may not be. And therefore, we need to humble ourselves and ask the Lord to teach us his ways.

And then we say in verse 12 that David finally prays that the Lord will not deliver him over to the will of his adversaries.

And brothers and sisters, this is what we are to do when we are afraid. We're to pour our hearts out to the Lord in prayer. And our chief aim needs to be to seek his face.

Not his hands, not what we want him to do. Our chief aim needs to be, God, I want to seek your face. I want to know what pleases you. I want to learn your ways.

And for those of us this morning who may be facing situations that torment our hearts with fear rather than the present or about the future, encourage us, we would seek the Lord, that we would seek his face.

[35 : 43] We would ask him to teach us his ways. That we would recognize that something haphazard did not happen to us. What has happened to us is something that comes from the hands of a wise and good God who is sovereignly at work in all things.

And he has ordered and orchestrated that we be right where we are in the situation right where we are that he might work out his plans and purposes. And what we see here is chief among it all is that we get in his face.

We seek his face that we might do his will. So when we are afraid we should remember the Lord, we should pray to the Lord, and third and finally, we learn from Psalm 27 that we need to wait for the Lord.

Notice in verse 13 that David expresses his sincere expectation that despite all the enemies who were seeking to destroy him, he says this, I believe that I, this is verse 13, I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

What he's saying is this, I believe God is going to deliver me. I believe that God is going to bring me through this. He's going to preserve my life. I'm going to experience his goodness.

[37 : 24] I'm going to be in the land of the living. But there are two things that David didn't know. One, he did not know how God was going to do what he was expecting.

And he also didn't know when God was going to do what he was expecting. And so there was only one proper response for David, though he had this expectation, the only proper response that David had is expressed in verse 14.

Wait for the Lord. Be strong and let your heart take courage. The minute you see those words, be strong and let your heart take courage, that means that the situation is such that you need to be strong and your heart needs to take courage and you need to wait.

And notice that he emphasizes it two times at the beginning of the verse, at the end of the verse, wait for the Lord. And David is speaking to himself but he's speaking to us as well.

He's counseling us as well that we are to wait for the Lord. Remember him, pray to him, have a confident expectation about what he's going to do and then you just need to patiently wait.

[38 : 45] Let your heart take courage. Let your heart be strong and wait for the Lord. And part of the reason that God has us to wait, yes, because he's sovereign, but part of the reason is that God is doing more than we know and we can see.

God is doing more than that situation that's right in front of us. And one of the things he does is he is working in us and he is conforming us to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We're not as mindful about what the Lord is doing in us as we are mindful of what we want him to do in a particular situation, but God is doing all of that and he's doing even more.

when we hear the psalmist in Psalm 27 saying that there's one thing that he desired of the Lord and there's one thing that he would seek after, that he would dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life and gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and be near to the Lord.

I want to suggest to us this morning that the greatest fear that the psalmist expresses in Psalm 27 is not about the enemies who are around him.

[40 : 09] It's not about those who surrounded him. He says in verse 6, and now my head should be lifted up above my enemies all around me.

But that wasn't his greatest fear. The greatest fear of the psalmist is expressed in verse 9. Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help.

Cast me not off, forsake me not, O God of my salvation. See, that's in contrast to this one thing that was so important to David. One thing above all things was that he would be near to God, and he is, for whatever reason, is fearful about being cast away, God hiding his face from him, God forsaking him, God turning away from him in anger.

God will fear. God will be fearful. And you know, I think the same thing happens to us when we are fearful.

Even if it's a passing thought about whether God might be punishing us for some past sin that we did, or whether because God is not pleased with us, and really, we know we're not pleased with ourselves.

[41 : 39] We know that we've not been the people we ought to be, and so we know that if we're not meeting our own standard, we're not meeting God's. But, brothers and sisters, when we read Psalm 27, when we today who belong to the Lord read Psalm 27, the fear that the psalmist expresses in verse 9 should not be a fear that enters our hearts.

David wrote Psalm 27 in a personal way, and it served the corporate community, and so all of Israel under the old covenant would have been reading this psalm, and they would have related to him, to the psalm, in the same way that David did, but we shouldn't.

And the reason is that on the cross, God hid his face from the Lord Jesus, so he would not hide it from us.

on the cross, he forsook his son, that he doesn't have to forsake us. We deserve to be forsaken.

We deserve to have him turn his face away from us and to be angry at our sins, but he poured it out on his son. God. He poured it out the full extent of his wrath on the Lord Jesus Christ as he hung on the cross, as he was our substitute standing in our place.

[43 : 15] And so when we fear, this is one fear we don't need to have. We need not fear that our God will ever turn his face from us, that he will ever pour out wrath and anger on us.

He did it on his son in our place. And isn't that wonderful news that when we face fears, that's not one?

And if we have the Lord, we have enough. You realize that all the things that bring us comfort and that bring us a sense of security and certainty is perishable and related to this life.

The only lasting possession is our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the only thing that lasts beyond this life and we have that. Whatever the circumstance we face, whatever daunting fears come upon us, we can be confident if we have the Lord, he is our portion and he is our portion forever.

Lord, he will never turn away from us. He will never forsake us. We will never have to experience what the psalmist experienced. Enemies all around him and for whatever reason there's fear that God would forsake him, that he cries out, don't forsake me.

