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Handling your fears God's way

By Thomas Lindberg

Ann Landers, the well-known newspaper counselor, received more than 10,000 letters each month requesting her advice. The columnist was asked what was the most common problem from her readers. "Fear," she said.

Nobody is exempt from fear. People today face the fear of terrorism, fear of disease, fear of rejection, fear of job problems, fear over their children and countless other varieties of fear.

How can you handle your fears God's way? Psalm 27 is a prescription from God Almighty, the Great Physician, about how to handle your fear. In these inspired verses, the Holy Spirit reveals four antitoxins that will neutralize the poison of fear in your life.

FACE YOUR FEARS

To handle your fears God's way, you must begin by facing them. That's what David is doing in verse 12: "For false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence" (NKJV). What's David doing? After using much of the psalm to remember God's past faithfulness and consider possible situations he may face in the future, David is facing up to his current fears.

Most authorities suggest the background of Psalm 27 is found in 2 Samuel 17. David's son Absalom led a bloody revolt against his father. David ran for his life. David was fearful for his own life, for his son's life (whom he continued to love even as his enemy) and for his nation's survival.

God dropped the words of Psalm 27 into David's heart and David penned this psalm so fearful people everywhere could profit from what God taught him. And the first thing David learned was to face his fears.

Only when we face our fears, crying out to the Lord who "knows our frame" and "remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14) and admitting the terror in our hearts, only then will we begin the steps to gain victory over our fears.

Jesus asked His first-century followers, "Why are you fearful?" (Matthew 8:26). He asks His 21st-century followers the same question. Tell Him! That's the first step toward handling your fears God's way: Face your fears.

FASTEN YOUR FEARS

Fasten your fears on God who cares for you. That's what verses 2 through 5 in Psalm 27 are all about. David speaks of the greatest calamities imaginable, then connects those catastrophes with his faith in God. He is fastening his fears on God.

Despite everything going on around him, David boldly asserted, "In this I will be confident" (Psalm 27:3).

Of what was David confident? Of everything he spoke of in verse 5. David was confident that God knew where he was, that God was with him and that God was caring for him. David fastened his life to God's awesome power. My friend, if you forget God's power in and around you then fear will run your life like a hand runs a puppet.

In a Pennsylvania coal mine, one man had the precarious job of checking for methane gas each morning before the rest of the miners descended into the shafts. The man checked every tunnel to make sure no deadly explosive methane gas buildup was present.

When his inspection was finished, all the other workers would press around him and ask, "Is it safe today?" The man would reply, "I've checked every tunnel and it's safe. I've been there. Go to work and have no fear."

That's just what Jesus Christ has done for each of us. He has gone before us. He says to us, "Go forward in life. Problems and pressure will arise, but I have overcome them. Do not fear. Fasten your fear on Me. I have and will continue to go before you."

FIGHT YOUR FEARS

David opens Psalm 27 with a reference to light: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" (v. 1). Light—what a powerful weapon against fear.

David never passively acquiesces to his fears. In verses 13 and 14, he proclaims his continued faith in God and determines to "wait on the Lord" and "be of good courage." He is fighting his fears.

Fear is like a mosquito on your arm that you swat at and miss. It buzzes off for a moment, only to circle and land on you again to attempt to draw blood. Fear returns again and again to suck vitality from your life and faith. You must fight your fears.

When you fight fear, you are not simply fighting your own imagination. Satan is behind much of life's fear. Genesis 3 makes that abundantly clear through its picture of the serpent's influence on Eve. That's why I can say to some of you who read this today that you're facing fears that do not have earthly origins.

Perhaps it's an inordinate fear over your kids, a consuming fear of failure, nightmares that plague you often, or an overwhelming fear of the future. Some fears can only be fought in the name of the Lord through the power of prayer. That's why David exclaimed, "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!" (Psalm 27:14).

Someone has said, "Courage is fear that has said its prayers." Fear can be fought. Fear must be fought. And it must be fought in the name and power of the Lord.

When the devil attempts to prowl within your life and create fear, show him the power of Christ within you. The man or woman with Christ in his or her heart overcomes the devil "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (Revelation 12:11).

FORGET YOUR FEARS

That's what Psalm 27:6 is all about. David is forgetting his fears. And he forgets his fears by remembering something far more compelling. David remembers his Lord.

That's precisely what the apostle Paul did in Acts 27. He was in the center of a storm. Without doubt there was fear in his heart. However, Paul was able to calm his own fears and the fears of his fellow travelers and convince them they all would be safe. How was this possible? Because the Lord pressed His Word into Paul and Paul remembered the greatness of God.

Do you know that God has no desire for you to live in the twilight zone of fear? Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). His light can fill your life and cause fear to flee. The Bible says that Jesus is the Prince of Peace. You can live with the peace of God from the God of peace, or you can live in fear. The choice is yours.

If you have never invited Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior, that's the place to start winning your battle with fear. Right now, confess your need of Him. Ask Him to forgive you of your sin. Ask God to make you a new person by the power of Christ's death on the cross.

That's a prayer God always answers. And it's step one to freedom from fear.

If you do know Christ, please let His light dispel fear from your life today. Bring your fear directly to Him in prayer. Ask God to give you His peace today.

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