

Psalm 27:1 (ESV) ¹ The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Fear can inhibit a person from doing what ought to be done. Fear can inhibit a person from doing what God wants you to do. Fear can stop you in your tracks and keep you from succeeding in whatever task or goal you are trying to accomplish. Fear can cause you to overreact and lay a person flat. A person can say something to you that revives an old fear, and you blast the person with both barrels; you give the person a piece of your mind you can ill afford to lose. Fear complicates that which is simple. Fear paralyzes a person who may just be the best athlete ever. Fear can keep you from moving forward when you need to move forward. Fear can cause you to live as if you have no faith in God at all, an emotional atheist. Fear can keep you awake during the night and exhausted all day long.

You may have had a terrible, an awful experience as a child. In your adult life that experience still haunts you. One time in seminary I said one of the worst things a person can say to a professor. This professor almost died due to a virus that hit his heart. I had the gall to tell the professor what particular sin he had in his life that led God to bring his life to a near end. A dear friend was standing right next to me when I spoke and said to me, "Terry, you were not chewing out the professor." "You were chewing out the person in your life who terrified you the most." Fear can cause you to say and do things you regret terribly. One of the worst aspects of fear is when it keeps your tongue from speaking the Good News of Jesus Christ to people who are aching to hear it.

On the other hand, fear can be exceptionally healthy if it keeps you from behaviors that are sinful, deadly, harmful, and detrimental to your body. A proper use of fear may cause you to be silent because you do not want to get fired for shooting your mouth off at the wrong time to the wrong person. A proper fear is to hold your explosive temper when you would like to

discipline your child. Overdoing it is abusive and harmful and a healthy amount of fear can keep you from damaging your child or children with your sinful anger.

I am a person with unhealthy fears and insecurities. I know too much about fear, more than I would like to admit.

There is one fear that is good to talk about. The Bible says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” A healthy fear of God does not paralyze you. **1. A healthy fear of God sets you free to live a life that bears good fruit for the Lord Jesus.** Luther begins the meaning of the commandments with these words, “We are to fear and love God.” **2. A healthy fear of God is to carry within you a holy respect, the deepest of reverence, an intense love for God that you do not want to let Him down.** **3. A healthy fear of God knows that if you do something against God, you will reap the consequences of your own actions for God disciplines those whom He loves.** God has his ways of disciplining us and it is never easy to experience. God cuts things out of our lives, prunes us so we can bear more fruit. Pruning can be quite painful but always done out of love.

For example, when I see four sheriffs sitting at Dunkin Donuts on the inside my fear of God sets me free from fear of people. I have no fear at all to walk straight up to them and ask to pray with them. It is my fear of God that motivates me to do so. **4. A healthy fear of God motivates you to obey God because God’s ways are always the best ways and to go against God not only offends God but harms ones very being.** We cannot get away with our sins for our sins will find us out. **5. A healthy fear of God is the source of an obedient life.**

Our nation keeps slouching toward Sodom and Gomorrah because far too many people live their lives never thinking that one day they will answer to God for the way they lived. People have become their own god, thinking their way is the only way, and the only person they have to answer to is themselves. Living one’s life not knowing God is living dangerously indeed. You are building up to receive the wrath of God He has stored for you in the end. Living without God or

any thought of God is the most dangerous life of all. There is no good ending. **6. With a healthy fear of God, you live a life that pleases God knowing you will answer to God one day for the life you have lived.** A healthy fear of God keeps one on the straight and narrow path that leads to heaven. I see one of the greatest sins of our nation is this. The people have no fear of God. **7. A healthy fear of God restrains sin. It leads to holy living.** No fear of God leads to God's judgment as the Bible says, "And He gave them over to their sins." Yes, the more you fear God in a healthy manner, the less fear you will have of any circumstance or any person in your life.

I have dreams where I am so filled with fear that I cannot move. I always begin to shout out, "in the name of Jesus, Satan be gone." It is then that I wake up and cannot move until I calm down. Yes, fear is a strong emotion, one of the strongest. The Good News is Jesus is more powerful and stronger than any of our unhealthy fears. Knowing that can set one free to soar as an eagle and not be earthbound.

One of the reasons I like to play the piano or organ in public is because that is one of my most intense fears. I am so nervous, so anxious at times playing before you that I cannot even see the music. I end up playing from memory from feeling the right keys to play, muscle memory. My legs are shaking, and I am scared to death. I put myself through that to overcome the greatest of fear. The last time I played for the worship service the 8:00 people clapped, not because I was done, but out of appreciation and I welled up with tears because of God helping me with my intense fear of playing in public.

Unhealthy fears can be quite comical if one is honest. 1. The phone rings so it must be bad news. 2. A friend is coming for a visit, what did I do wrong this time? 3. You take a test at school and know you flunked it and you put yourself through the ringer. You are shocked that you got an A and may think the grade was a mistake. Unhealthy fears make you think the worst which for the most part never occurs.

In my 64 plus years, two of my worst fears in life came true. I will not tell you what they were. They were exceptionally painful, awful, excruciating. Years later I can honestly say, that after the fears were realized, God had His way of showing me that those fears need not be, for God had his way of showing that God's grace is always sufficient, God's power is always greater than that debilitating fear. I am glad my worst of fears came true for God proved Himself far greater and I was set free to soar all the more in Christ. Nothing can come our way that will ever separate us from the love of God.

Unhealthy fears, crippling fears are the exact opposite of God's love. God's perfect love enables you to cast away all unhealthy fears. The more you fear God in a healthy way, your unhealthy fears in this life dissipate. Fear is like a wall that you build to protect yourself. The sad thing is that wall will eventually be your undoing for it will keep you locked down, locked out, and unable to be free in Christ. You miss out on how wonderful life can be in Christ, living in the prison of your own making, the prison of fear.

I wish to close this sermon by reading Psalm 27 out of the paraphrase Bible called The Message. **Psalm 27:1-14 (MSG)** ¹ *A David psalm Light, space, zest - that's GOD! So, with him on my side I'm fearless, afraid of no one and nothing.* ² *When vandal hordes ride down ready to eat me alive, those bullies and toughs fall flat on their faces.* ³ *When besieged, I'm calm as a baby. When all hell breaks loose, I'm collected and cool.* ⁴ *I'm asking GOD for one thing, only one thing: To live with him in his house my whole life long. I'll contemplate his beauty; I'll study at his feet.*

David had real enemies that wanted him dead. David's fear of God took away his fear of his enemies. David's parents somehow abandoned him but God Himself met that need in David's life.

There is a common fear I sense in our nation that is completely out of control. It is the fear of the future. As Bible-believing Christians, we know that history is always moving toward

the end that God has already established since the beginning. God knows the beginning from the end, the end from the beginning. The end has already been set in motion. To fear, to dread the future is to look ahead without your faith in God. God will never abandon you. We will all get old and breathe our last breath. One hundred years from now none of us will be here. God has guaranteed eternity for all believers. We have nothing but a bright future in the glory of God. The time between now and eternity passes by like a mere breath. It all goes by so quickly.

Matthew 14:22-33 (NIV) ²² Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. ²⁵ During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. ²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." ²⁸ "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" ³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³ Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." Friends, faith in Jesus Christ means we can walk on water. What I mean by that is with faith in God we are able to do extraordinary works for Christ. Faith in Christ keeps us on top of the water. When fear takes over all we can do is sink and cry out to Jesus to pull us up. **8. Walking on water to me means no matter what difficulties you have in this life you need not sink. You can stand tall by faith in Christ that overcomes this world and all its evils.**

I close with these words from Isaiah. **Isaiah 40:31 (NLT2)** ³¹ *But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.*