

Norman C. Schwab
Yacolt EV Free
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(World Trade Center destroyed)

Faith Faces Fear (Part 1)
Psalm 27:1-6

Tuesday morning's early silence was shattered by a phone call. Terrorists have hijacked commercial jetliners and have crashed them into the World Trade Center in New York. Almost in disbelief I stumbled to the Television and watched as both towers eventually collapsed into the greatest disaster to hit our American soil. We wept for the loss of life we had just witnessed. We prayed for the families where mom would not be coming home, dad would no longer come home to wrestle on the living room floor with his kids. Thousands of lives snuffed out in one horrific morning. Even now it truly is hard to even comprehend. As we watched an eerie, thick layer of dust and debris settle over New York city...a layer of fear, of loss, of anger, or desire for revenge, layers of overwhelming grief settled over all America.

It seems we are attacked on all sides. On Tuesday terrorists attacked ripping families apart. It will never be the same for those who have lost ones they love. Our hearts and prayers go out to those families who have experienced such direct loss. I think also of those whose families in this past year have been torn apart internally, not by some crazed terrorist, but internal attacks that are slowly destroying the heart and soul of America from within. Have you felt those attacks? Have those bombs of conflict been lobbed into your life? Is it possible that we will ever recover?

When we get attacked where do we turn to for strength, comfort, wisdom...When our security gets threatened. When those things we once counted on for security. Things once unmovably solid and secure...crumble before us and lie at our feet in a pile of dust and debris. All of us get attacked at different times in our lives, they cause a layer of fear that threatened to discourage and choke out our life and love. We stare in stunned disbelief wondering how this could possibly happen to us. We wonder how we could possibly make it through. We loathe the

sunny weather because it seems to mock our pain inside. We cringe at other who seem to be having a great time, laughing and loving and cheering...because inside of us...few may know, but we are enduring a horrific attack and a layer of fear threatened to suffocate the life out of us.

Have you ever experienced personal attacks? Maybe you are fighting one even right now. Those personal attacks maybe even by a phantom enemy that cowardly refuses to show its face. Personal attacks inside where maybe we don't even know who or what is causing it, so we are powerless to begin to even know how or where to fight back. If we only knew who the enemy was. If it would only stand still for a moment. If I only knew what my problem was then I could begin to fight it...but I'm not even sure who or what it is. They all seem to be taking shots at you and never play by the rules..they don't even fight fair. Looking at the odds they seem so overwhelmingly stacked against you. Have you ever felt attacked? By a loss, by grief, by illness, by family conflict, by flat out sin. So now we are left sitting in this dust of fear and despair, frustrated and angry. What can we do? Who can help? What would be of help to those this morning to those who are fighting enemies inside and outside. What do you do when you come face to face with fear?

When tragedy hits. When I am getting shelled, I run for cover in the Psalms. For in the Psalms I am reminded who is my refuge and strength and very present help in trouble. Listen as I read from the book of Psalm chapter 27 (READ) David who wrote these words had plenty of times in his life when he was under attack. His own leader, his king Saul whom he had served in his court, playing music to soothe his troubled mind, turned viciously against him and chased him all across the Judean hillside intent to kill him. David's enemies came from unexpected places. David's own son turned a sword against him in an attempt to take over the throne. David's own men were ready to stone him when his poor leadership decision allowed the enemy to wipe out their defenseless city of Ziklag and capture the wives and children. David's family was attacked within and without. David was made famous for the giants he had to face. Overwhelming enemies. Through sinful choices. Through evil intents of the enemy. David had many reasons to fear. Life was not easy...but David grew strong because he usually responded well in the

face of fighting his fears and enemy. And I am confident the people of America will grow strong in the face of attack when they respond well to their fears. How can we face our fears in the onslaught of attack?

Point number one. We face our fears in confidence, when our faith becomes personal. Look with me at Psalm 27 verse 1. David writes, "The Lord is MY light and MY salvation. The Lord is the defense of MY life. So...Whom shall I dread? Do you see the confidence that David has because He has made sure His faith in God is personal. God has become far more than just a gray haired old man way up in the sky somewhere. Far more than a cosmic killjoy threatening to snuff out all his fun. God is far more than unknowable, untouchable, impenetrable, unreachable. David has reached the reachable God. For David knows a God that is personal and cares deeply for Him. He wants to let all those who read his words, preserved for us in Psalm 27 that he is personally connected and close to His hero, His salvation.

He writes the Lord is MY light. Light in the Bible stands for understanding, brightness, clarity, focus, honest joy, direction. One who is not walking in the light is stumbling, confused, hidden, there is deception and trickery. David speaks from as experienced darkness enough to know and appreciate the light. His Lord is His light and His Lord has delivered him from darkness. David wants everybody to know about it. He can face the fearsome times of life because He has a personal God. His faith is personal. The next line. The Lord is MY salvation. The Lord is David's security, deliverance. He has been saved and rescued. That implies that David was able to recognize His need of a hero, a savior, One who could deliver him. His Lord is the defense of His life. He admits there is opposition, a battle, a conflict too big for him to handle by himself. He admits the enemy is taking shots too terrifying to handle alone. He needs a personal strong defender on His side.

Do you face unknown but very real fears this morning? David was able to face His fears in confidence because his faith became personal. Maybe you think just because you live in America you are a Christian and have a personal relationship with God. Maybe you think just because the family you grew up in went to church and your parents are strong Christians that you automatically get the blessing and privilege of a personal relationship with God. Maybe you think that just because you

come to this church that you are tight with God. but just living in a country or coming to a building or even growing up in a certain family doesn't build any relationship with God. Just because you hang out at an airport doesn't make you an airplane. You may even run along the railroad tracks, but that doesn't make you a train. Your parents may have dragged you to church since you were sporting diapers. But unless you have began and developed your own personal relationship with God. You know its not there. God doesn't have any grandchildren. Only children. You must take a personal interest in getting to know God personally.

Just as it takes time to get to know someone personally. It takes time to get to know the Lord and walk through the tough times and the great times together. Like a good friend, you include him in your life, your decisions, your heartaches, your pains, your frustrations, your victories, your joys, your concerns, your fears, your worries. As the days and months go by of pursuing a personal connection with God, a great strength and confidence begins to build. For we face our fears in confidence when our faith in the Lord becomes personal.

Some may say, "Well I guess its OK to pray alot when a national tragedy strikes like what happened this week. I was tremendously encouraged to see how fashionable prayer has become. I never thought I would see the day when they would cancel football and baseball games in order to encourage people to go and pray. It was encouraging to see the leaders of our country get down on their knees before god and pray and plead for His mercy and blessing. And yet, I fear for many it will be simply a fox hole prayer driven by fear and not faith. I trust many will be strengthened in their faith during this time, but the best time to make your faith personal is long before the tragedy strikes. The time to make it personal is right now, so that when the storms hit you will be ready.

When the Lord is the one we fear, or have an awesome and holy respect for...then we need fear no one else but if God be on our side whom shall I fear. Look at the end of verse one "Whom shall I dread? Implies answer. NO ONE! If God is on our side their aint no mountain big enough, aint no river deep enough, there is no storm to dark, No problem too big to keep Him from getting through to us and be our Light, our salvation, our defense.

Just so you don't think David lives in a Pollyanna world where he denies any reality of pain around him let read verses 2 and 3. (READ) David is not blind to the attacks hitting him. He doesn't deny it. He fully admits the tenuous position he is in. The evil doers are pouncing on him and it feels like they are chewing him up. He compares the enemy with ravenous beasts who are threatening to shred up his flesh. V. 3 the odds are overwhelmingly stacked against him. A whole crowd of people are ready to do him under. And yet....His heart is not shaken, it is not given to the fear the enemy wishes to thrash him with. Incidentally is that not the number one tool of the evil one who terrorizes people. Fear. Fear will cripple and chain up godly people from doing will bring triumph and victory. II Timothy 1 "God has given us not a spirit of fear but of power of love and discipline." Those terrorists on Tuesday wanted to cripple Americans spirit with a suffocating blanket of fear. But it didn't work. The opposite occurred as a nation turned onto its knees in prayer. Whom shall I dread? NO ONE. When the Lord God is near. God is my rock. Fear God and we have no need to fear anything or anyone else. For when we link ourselves to God's ultimate resources we have everything we need to fight the battle of fear that rages within.

End of verse 3 In spite of the apparent strength of the enemy. In spite of an elusive enemy that refuses to show its face to fight back. In spite of the overwhelming odds against your personal giants and enemies. David says emphatically, "I shall be confident" Why? Because he had spent years getting up close and personal with His Lord. We are able to face our fears in confidence when our faith becomes personal. So...who are you getting close to? Who are who getting more and more intimate with? Is a possession getting in the way of your getting personal with God? Is it a sport or leisure activity? hobby? work? job? Is it a relationship with a friend? Nothing wrong with any of those things...unless of course they are holding you back from strengthening your personal relationship with God. Who are you letting get close to you? Whom you allow to get intimate with you will regulate your confidence. If you have never come to faith in Christ, made it personal, now is the time to begin your journey for we face our fears in confidence when our faith becomes personal.

Look at verse four. We face our fears in strength when we pursue His presence with priority. David writes about one thing. One thing. In the summer of 1993 a film called "City Slickers" hit the movie theaters. Billy Crystal and three other guys were burnt out businessmen. They lacked purpose. Their lives had become burnt out and boorish. Those four guys, who had yet to grow up decided they needed some excitement. These City Slickers from New York signed up for an adventure vacation on a cattle drive out west. Jack Palance played the cattle driving foreman named "Curly" whose face looked like a piece of worn out leather who smoked and snarled the whole trip. He had a particular disdain for..."City Slickers." But, we viewers all knew that "Curly" was a real man, content with himself and knew what he was doing and who he was about. For most of the movie Billy and his friends were riding wildly and still searching for purpose and vision for their lives. Billy Crystal was riding one day with Curly said. "You city folk come out here for a wild time but you just don't get it...all you need is this. Curly pointed his knurled finger up in the air and Billy said, "a finger?" No said Curly, "All you need is one thing." Billy asked "what thing... (pause) that's for you to find out...You stick to that one thing and everything else don't mean nothing." What's the one thing for David that brings strength and confidence? That one thing that means everything for David is pursuing the presence of God with priority. "One thing I have asked of the Lord and that I shall seek. To dwell, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple." Does that mean that David wanted to become a priest? No. The temple hadn't even been built yet. David's one thing was he wanted to dwell, to behold to walk to live in the presence of God. We face our fears with strength when we pursue His presence with priority. Our relationship with God becomes more personal when we pursue His presence. We become strengthen in His presence because our perspective becomes adjusted. When we meditate on God, we think about the things God thinks about. We look at life the way God looks at life. Our perspective is not so swept away by the crushing business of the here and now, but we see things correctly in light of eternity. Being in God's presence bring perspective to our problems. As we pursue the presence of God in the face of our fears, we find strength.

People tend to find what they are looking for, what we are pursuing after. What have you trained yourself to look for? Take a look around the room and find five things that have blue in them. Go ahead do it. With a "blue" mindset" you find that blue jumps out at you all over; the blue in the pillow, the blue blouse, the blue jeans, pen, blue in the banner. Just like after you buy a new car you promptly see that make of car everywhere. You learn a new word and are amazed at how often it is used that you never saw before. That's because people find what they are looking for. So what is that "one thing" that you are looking for? There are times in our lives when God seems strangely absent, but that problem is not that God has disappeared. We simply lack a "God" mindset. When we develop our sensitivity, we soon begin to enjoy his presence and see His work everywhere.

So what consumes your pursuit? What consumes your thoughts? Whatever you are pursuing will control your priorities. Change what you are pursuing and your priorities will adjust accordingly. Make a pursuit of the presence of God your priority and perspective will change. You will find your relationship will become more personal with God, more meaningful and you will be better able to face your fears in faith.

In the face of attack, there is confidence. In what ought to produce great fear, there is confidence. In the face of confusing darkness, there is light. In the face of drowning under the circumstances of life, there is deliverance. Not only do we face our fears in confidence when our faith becomes personal. Not only do we face our fears in strength when we pursue His presence with priority. Point number 3 this morning; We face our fears in joy when we respond in praise. David's in the middle of a time of trouble much like we are facing in our nation. Much like some of you now face in your own lives. Yet v.5 David has found refuge in God. The only quiet and secure place in an increasingly scary world. The perfect getaway from the onslaughts of life. He has lifted him up on a rock. David proclaims the source of His security. Verse 6 It is God who will lift me up when all those around me are trying to pull me down. So v.6 I will praise God heartily. I will sing loud praises to God and shouts of joy even in the face of troubled times, because I know the true source of my security is not found on Wall street. It is not found in the financial strength of the American economy. It is not found on Pennsylvania

avenue the source of great political power. It is not found in the Pentagon, the source of great military power. It is found in God. The source of your security will be the subject of your praise.

There are many stories of heroes and people who saved others from certain death. The story of those helping the man whose prosthetic leg had fallen off in the rush down the steep stairs of the world trade center. The man trapped by his foot unable to escape. Those all too few people who were pulled from the rubble and rescued. I'm sure the face of their savior is permanently etched into their minds. Its pretty hard to forget the person who rescued you. Its pretty hard to forget your Savior. They will be telling stories of their savior for years to come. Even in their hospital beds, with broken and bruised bodies, they will heap great words of thanks and gratitude to those who labored to rescue and save. Even when our own lives may be beat up and bruised and hurting. We face our fears in joy when we respond in praise to the One who saved us. When He becomes the source of our security, He will be the subject of our praise.

So who is the source of your security? What draws your heart will elicit your praise. Do you know your savior? Do you know you need a savior? Maybe you have been trapped under the rubble of sin your whole life and never saw the need of a savior until now. You hear Jesus the Rescuer of Life calling out from His bullhorn; Come...I want to begin a relationship with you that is personal. I want you to spend time in your presence. I want to save you out of your fears and the rubble of sin you have been laying in for far too long. Come. Now is the time to make it personal. Jesus laid down His life to save you. He died on a cross to pay for our sins, and rose again three days later. He calls us to simply believe and receive Him as your savior, your rescuer. Grab His hand, his free gift of grace. His costly sacrifice just for you. Do it now and begin to live life the way God intended. A life of confidence and strength even in the face of fear.