



The Trinity Pulpit



Blessed Assurance Psalm 27

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These are difficult economic times. We all have been impacted by the current economic recession in some way. President Obama, in his first Presidential Address to the joint Congress, declared:

I know that for many Americans watching right now, the state of our economy is a concern that rises above all others. And rightly so. If you haven't been personally affected by this recession, you probably know someone who has – a friend; a neighbor; a member of your family. You don't need to hear another list of statistics to know that our economy is in crisis, because you live it every day. It's the worry you wake up with and the source of sleepless nights. It's the job you thought you'd retire from but now have lost; the business you built your dreams upon that's now hanging by a thread; the college acceptance letter your child had to put back in the envelope. The impact of this recession is real, and it is everywhere.¹

It is real and it is everywhere. We are living in the midst of turmoil, angst and constant worry. Though there are signs of economic recovery in the near future, it is still too early to feel secure about our financial future.

In addition, the media continues to bombard the public with bad news of businesses laying off its employees, the auto industry still going through difficult times, banks still refusing to lend money, and people losing their homes to foreclosure. The news is filled with doom and gloom. On top of all that, no matter which side of the party line you may fall, the last thing any of us want to see is more Washington politics that get in the way of finding real solutions which would help the citizens of this nation

and move the country forward. Party lines are holding firm on the health care reform. Though the state budget is complete, there seems to be no winners by a long shot. Teachers are being laid off, prisons closing down, and state services being cut.

I believe that people are looking for an encouraging word! We are seeking for something that will help us to feel more at ease and secure. We are searching for something to hold on to. My friends, we have been given that message. Psalm 27 is a message of hope. Psalm 27 is a message of assurance. Psalm 27 contains a message that tells all who has an ear to hear that: 1) in God, we have assurance that we have nothing to fear, 2) in God, we have assurance of divine guidance and 3) in God, we have assurance of his faithfulness. This morning, I want everyone gathered in the presence of our Lord to know that we are assured of an abundant life in God for all believers.

Let's be sure to define what an abundant life looks like. It has nothing to do with the size of your home or the make of your car. It has nothing to do with the size of your 401K or your savings account. It has nothing to do with the clothes in your closet or the job you currently have. The abundant life that Jesus promises in John 10:10 is a life that is in Christ. It promises a life that is protected by Christ. It promises a green pasture of love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, and faithfulness. It promises an abundant life full of authentic relationships that will bring greater joy than any of earth's treasures. The abundant life is not a financial prosperity gospel but rather a relational prosperity Gospel!

Psalm 27 begins with the assurance that in

God, we have nothing to fear. The psalmist states in verse 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?” The psalmist put all of his faith in his relationship with God. He understood that nothing could overcome the works of the Lord.

Paul echoed David in Romans 8:31-32, “What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” Paul knew that if God was willing to sacrifice the life of Jesus for the sake of our salvation, then there was nothing that God would spare from his children.

When we live in fear, we are often paralyzed to the point where we allow fear to overwhelm us. Fear can paralyze people to not live life to the full.

Five-year old Johnny was in the kitchen as his mother made supper. She asked him to go into the pantry and get her a can of tomato soup, but he didn't want to go in alone. ‘It's dark in there and I'm scared.’ She asked again, and he persisted. Finally she said, ‘It's OK--Jesus will be in there with you.’ Johnny walked hesitantly to the door and slowly opened it. He peeked inside, saw it was dark, and started to leave when all at once an idea came, and he said: ‘Jesus, if you're in there, would you hand me that can of tomato soup?’²

In our text, David faced enemies who were advancing to devour his flesh. He faced an entire army whose purpose was to overtake the land and overthrow the throne. David faced his enemies with courage beyond his own capabilities. It was not confidence in himself that filled him with courage; it was the confidence he had in his Lord. David held onto the assurance that the Lord was his light and his salvation.

What shall we fear? Of whom shall we be afraid? There is nothing to fear! Should we fear our current economic downturn? Should we live in fear concerning our retirement funds? Should we live in fear for our car payments and our mortgage payments? Should we live in fear of our own health or

the health of our loved ones? Should we live in fear of what might happen next? Friends, in God there is nothing to fear!

One theologian stated it very eloquently.

I am inwardly fashioned for faith, not for fear. Fear is not my native land; faith is. I am so made that worry and anxiety are sand in the machinery of life; faith is the oil. I live better by faith and confidence than by fear, doubt and anxiety. In anxiety and worry, my being is gasping for breath--these are not my native air. But in faith and confidence, I breathe freely--these are my native air.³

We have nothing to fear because we are a people of faith. We can live at ease because we put our faith in the heavenly things and not the things of this world.

In God, not only do we have the assurance of having nothing to fear, but we also have the assurance of God's divine guidance. In verses 4-10, David pleads with God to protect him from his enemies by allowing him to dwell in the house of the Lord and to hear his prayers. David asks the Lord to not turn away from him and to hear his supplications. Then in verses 11-12, David requests the Lord to teach him the ways of the Lord in order to overcome his enemies. These laments are reminders of the assurance we have as Christians that God will give us his divine guidance and direction in life.

When we take our concerns to our Lord, we have the assurance that we will be heard and given Godly wisdom and guidance. With all of our life's decisions, we are assured God will guide us into his providential will when we earnestly seek our Lord in relationship. This guidance comes in very practical ways we can wrap our arms around. The Lord may show us his ways through our devotional times that we spend in building our relationship with him. It may come in a quiet voice in our minds combined with a peace that passes all understanding to confirm that it is the voice of the Lord. It may come through the reading of Scripture which holds authority in our lives. It may come through a loving word from a caring friend that you have built a relationship with over the years. It may even come in an audible voice that cannot be mis-

taken for anyone else other than God. When we seek our Lord, God is always there waiting for us.

In 1998, an anonymous client hired an advertising agency in South Florida to put up a series of billboards. The billboards were stark and plain: white text on a black background. These billboards were unusual in that they did not advertise a product—they simply contained a brief, one- or two-line quotation with a single name as the author: God. They were so popular that the entire advertising campaign was picked up as a public service campaign by the Outdoor Advertising Association of America.

Let me read you the lines as they appear on the billboards:

- Let's meet at my house Sunday before the game.
- C'mon over and bring the kids.
- What part of "Thou Shalt Not..." didn't you understand?
- We need to talk.
- Keep using my name in vain, I'll make rush hour longer.
- Loved the wedding, invite me to the marriage.
- That "Love Thy Neighbor" thing... I meant it.
- I love you and you and you and you and...
- Will the road you're on get you to my place?
- Follow me.
- My way is the highway.
- Need directions?
- Have you read my #1 best seller? There will be a test.

And finally the one that seems to be the people's favorite:

- Don't make me come down there.⁴

No matter what your opinion might be concerning the billboards, there is not one of us who would not want to hear directly from God in a real and tangible way. However, let's not fool ourselves. There are many voices that try to distract us from the real one. It is often much louder than the voice of our Lord. Recognizing the divine guidance and

direction of God requires a growing personal relationship with the Lord. In order for us to recognize the voice of the Lord, we must be familiar with it to begin with. However, when we have experienced the real thing, we will always be able to recognize the fake.

A Chinese boy who wanted to learn about jade went to study with a talented old teacher. This gentle man put a piece of the precious stone into his hand and told him to hold it tight. Then he began to talk of philosophy, men, women, the sun and almost everything under it. After an hour he took back the stone and sent the boy home. The procedure was repeated for several weeks. The boy became frustrated. When would he be told about the jade? He was too polite, however, to question the wisdom of his venerable teacher. Then one day, when the old man put a stone into his hands, the boy cried out instinctively, "That's not jade!"⁵

When we know the true voice of God, we will be able to recognize the false voices that are all around us.

Finally, we have the assurance of God's faithfulness. In the last two verses the tone of the psalm changes. It is no longer a lament but rather declarative statements. No longer is the psalmist pleading with God but rather stating his strong belief. (vs. 13-14) "I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord: be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord." The psalmist is confident that the Lord will be faithful and shower blessings upon him. There is no question and there is no doubt.

Let us be confident in the same way. This morning, be assured that the Lord is faithful. As the Lord promised Joshua when he was being called to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you," the Lord promises us the same. God will never leave his people nor forsake them. God will never leave you nor forsake you. Have assurance in this promise from our Lord.

Throughout Scripture, we are reminded of God's faithfulness. God was faithful to Abraham when he

promised that he would be a father to many though Sarah was at her advanced age. God was faithful to Moses when he spent 40 years as a shepherd in the desert and when he was a shepherd to his people out of Egypt for 40 more years. God was faithful to his people when the walls of Jericho fell. God was faithful to David even after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband Uriah to cover up the improper relationship. God was faithful to Christ's disciples and to Paul throughout all of his missionary journeys. God was faithful to all who called upon his name throughout the Bible, and he remains faithful to each of us today. We can be assured of this.

This morning, some of you are going through difficult times. You may be questioning the things that are happening and even why God is letting them happen. You may be saying, "Where is God in my situation? Where was God when I lost my job? Where was God when I couldn't afford to stay in my house? Where was God when my business failed? Where was God when my marriage fell apart and my spouse left me? Where was God when my mother died with cancer?" These are not questions for me to answer. There are no easy answers this side of heaven. However, there is one thing I know. I know that God is faithful. God's character never changes and his faithfulness never wanes. This I know with certainty because I am a product of his faithfulness. You are a product of his faithfulness. We are all products of his faithfulness. Therefore, as the psalmist reminds us, "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart. Wait for the Lord."

Fanny Crosby, the renowned hymn writer, wrote the text to a sustaining hymn entitled, "Blessed Assurance." Listen to the lyrics.

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Perfect submission, all is at rest;
I in my Savior am happy and blest,
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with his goodness, lost in his love.

Refrain:

This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long.

We have the assurance of knowing that we have nothing to fear, the assurance of divine guidance and direction and the assurance and God's faithfulness. May we claim these truths for our lives today. BLESSED ASSURANCE! This is our story. This is our song. May we praise our Savior all the day long!



¹http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/remarks-of-president-barack-obama-address-to-joint-session-of-congress/

²<http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/f/fear.htm>
(Charles Allen, Victory in the Valleys)

³<http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/f/fear.htm> (Dr. Stanley Jones)

⁴<http://www.raytrygstad.com/home/preacher/thenextvoice.html>

⁵<http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/c/counterfeit.htm>

