

“Enduring Fire: Praising a Faithful God – Triumph and Confidence

Scripture: Psalm 27

Graphic: fire, hands raised, life, worship, victory, Holy Spirit

Key Verses: 3b ...yet I will be confident.

Theme: The enduring fire of God is always present in our lives and when we move close, then God’s triumph through Jesus and the confidence he brings flow through us into our lives and the lives around us. God’s protection and provision lead to confidence in the Word of God and salvation.

1) Introduction

- a) Grab your bibles and turn with me to Psalm 27...having your Bible with you in worship is like having a fork with you at a Pig Roast (if you eat that sort of thing). In order to fully experience the pig roast, you have to be able to eat it, not just smell it or see it. As we open God’s authoritative and transforming Word this morning, I pray you came hungry and equipped.
- b) As you find Psalm 27, let me tell you about my Dad...
- c) Raymond Louis Taylor was born on May 4, 1944...his father was an alcoholic truck driver who was abusive, from the stories I’ve heard. My Dad’s mother was a teacher. The only lasting memories I have of either one of my grandparents are not really that flattering.
- d) My Dad grew up in lots of different places, but graduated from high school in Watkins Glen, NY. He went to Cortland State where he met my Mom...they got married the year after graduating from college. They both were great teachers...my Dad taught science for 35 years.
- e) Not only was he a public school teacher, but he was also a District and Conference Lay Speaker who probably trained over a hundred lay speakers for certification in the UMC. There are several pastors in ministry today who still come up to me and attribute a portion of the discerning of their calls to my Dad and his teaching.
- f) When my Dad died of complications from heart surgery and diabetes in 2002, I was finishing my first semester in seminary. In most ways, the life of my family drastically changed that day...
- g) My Dad was one of the few people that I had trusted with the knowledge that I was embarking on a vocational change. When I told him that I was

being called to be a pastor, he didn't say much...he just quietly smiled and confidently nodded as if to say, "I couldn't be more proud."

- h) When it was apparent that he was going to die in that room at Sister's Hospital, I told him that I would be the best pastor I could be.
- i) After he died, I confidently answered my call to ministry...I just wouldn't have my Dad there to walk with me...
- j) You have no idea how many times I would've liked to talk with him about the church (and by that I mean the Little Valley church, of course). ☺ So many times I would've wanted him to give me wisdom or hold me accountable.
- k) When I was ever in any trouble, I would go to him. I trusted him and was confident he would be able to provide for me. He taught me truths about life that were critical for me to know.
- l) One of the things I loved to do with my Dad was go camping...and one of our challenges every time we went to the woods was to light the fire at the beginning of the trip and never let it go out! When morning came, it would take every bit of effort we could muster, every bit of waxed paper, bacon grease-soaked plates, and lots of hot air (which he had a lot of), to get the fire going again WITHOUT a MATCH. And even with our best efforts, the fire eventually went out when we went home. My Dad went home...
- m) And on December 5, 2002, he was gone.
- n) But here's the deal...I have a heavenly Father who does all the things I've mentioned more perfectly than my earthly father ever could.
- o) Praise God that we have a heavenly Father who not only has an eternal and enduring fire that burns for us, but that we are invited to join Him in experiencing that fire in our lives through salvation and vocation in Jesus Christ.
- p) I've attempted in this sermon series to focus our attention on God's enduring fire in our lives...my heart's desire is for every single one of us to experience that in our lives – through worship, and learning, and service, and fellowship. I want us to love the Lord God, introduce people to Jesus Christ, and then help those relationships grow! I want all that we do, without

exception, to be powered by the light and heat of God's enduring fire and then let that be our motivation for praising our faithful God.

- q) For safety and security. For life and purpose. For power and strength. For creation and provision. And today...for triumph and confidence.
- r) As the saints surround us and encourage us today, let's put a match to this thing and turn to Psalm 27...
- s) Let's pray...

2) Scripture

a) Read verses 1-6

- i) From fear to triumph! From assault to confidence! This is the outcome of God's enduring fire in our lives.
- ii) Look at verses 1, 2, and 3. I'm going out on a limb here and just say that we have a fear epidemic going on in our lives, especially in the church. Someday, I'll write a book, from personal experience, about the fear pastors have and contend with in ministry, and the fear that congregations deal with in their lives. Fear of making people mad...fear of offending people...fear of people not liking us...fear of saying the wrong things or being rejected.
- iii) Look, God's fire is not burning in our lives in order for us to allow the cold reality of fear to dictate our actions and words. Romans 8:15 reminds us, "For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into **fear**, but you have received a **spirit of adoption**."
- iv) Fear is a tool of the devil to force us to fight or flee. And because fighting is not politically correct, we so often flee. Fear paralyzes us into thinking that we can't defend the Word of God against those who would seek to tear it down and make it more culturally acceptable. Fear causes us to fail to hold each other accountable in love because we think people will get mad and leave the church.
- v) But, as Paul says, we have received a spirit of adoption...verse 1, says, the LORD is my light and my salvation...the LORD is the stronghold of my life. We have been adopted as daughters and sons of the most High

God, who causes evil to stumble and fall...who protects us from the armies that surround us.

- vi) Triumph and confidence come when we trust in the Word of God, in the salvation through Jesus Christ, and the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Triumph and confidence come when we reject the fear that wants to paralyze us and give that over to God. And in order to do that, we have to willing to spend time with God and each other...
- vii) Let me read verse 4 again. *One thing I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.*
- viii) When I talk to pre-K kids, I get a kick out of the fact that they think I LIVE at church because I'm the pastor. Stacy sometimes says she thinks that too. I don't live AT church...
- ix) But I've heard some of you say you love to come here. I've heard you say that when you come here on Sunday morning, it's a joy! That when you meet for Sunday school and fellowship and worship it makes you feel like you're in the presence of the Lord. I've heard some of you even say that when we meet together, you can feel the presence of the Lord. We have a chapel that's open 24-hours a day, like the drive-through at Burger King, and people can come in ANY TROUBLE and seek after the Lord in His house...to chase after God and seek shelter in his presence.
- x) And we know that God is not just present at church (we know that, right?). We know that we can seek after God at home and work and wherever we are...
- xi) And so, this psalmist isn't talking about the physical place that is only the temple...he's talking about the burning desire to be reminded of God all the time and everywhere! – God's shelter, God's beauty, God's ability to meet us where we are, God's fire that burns constantly and eternally.
- xii) When we come to worship in this place, we are worshipping with the saints and the angels who are always worshipping, did you know that?
- xiii) And just like a football team who is encouraged and emboldened by the fans that surround them, we can find CONFIDENCE when we worship because we are not alone and we do not have to fear. What a

sense of freedom and assurance...of triumph before God, even in the midst of those things that weigh us down.

- xiv) When we come before God, when we seek after the Lord, he will set us on a high rock, it says in verse 5 – conquerors because of Jesus Christ who is our light and salvation. And we will worship!
- xv) From this point on in the psalm, the writer switches from being a witness to others about God’s enduring presence and salvation, to turning directly to God in fervent prayer.
- xvi) So I’d like us to be in an attitude and posture of prayer, however is most facilitating to you. If you wish to stand and open your hands to God, I encourage that. If you wish to kneel where you are, then go for it. If it’s head bowed and hands folded...let’s focus this prayer to God.

b) Read verses 7-12

- i) (PAUSE) Amen!
- ii) And here’s the final commission...because of all THIS...

c) Read verses 13-14

- i) Lord, because you are my salvation and my light
...because you have devoured all that is waging war against me
...because you allowed me to seek after you and FIND YOU
...because you have given me shelter and lifted me onto a high rock
...because you hear my cry when I’m hurting
...because you don’t hide your face or turn away from me
...because my relationship with you is stronger than any human relationship
...because you teach me your ways...
- ii) I BELIEVE (I have faith) that I will see YOUR goodness NOW!
- iii) This is not some promise for some future reality that we might someday get to see! This is the unwavering faith that God cares about you – that God’s enduring fire is present – right here and right now.
- iv) I will wait for you, Lord. And as I wait, I will remain strong and have a heart of courage.

3) Application

- a) So how do we apply this to our lives? Everyone in favor of application?
- b) Four petitions, four ways for us to seek after the Lord in order to claim the triumph and confidence that God wants his people to have...

i) #1 – When in trouble – go to the Lord for help.

- (1) I, frankly, get discouraged at the number of times in my own life and certainly in the lives of the people who come seeking help in times of trouble – when we turn to EVERY OTHER FORM OF HELP besides the Lord who is the only one who can provide eternally.
- (2) We try drugs and alcohol and sex and therapy and burying ourselves in our work and trying to escape...only to find that those things, AT BEST, are temporary.
- (3) Go to God in prayer! Lay down your burdens and your cares at the feet of Jesus and he WILL hear you and WILL take them.
- (4) I love it (actually, I don't) when we are faced with trials and we try all these different ways to solve the problem, and as a last resort we say, "Well, everything else has failed...we better pray."
- (5) Faith in Jesus is NOT a hail Mary pass in the last second of the game. Faith in Jesus is the pre-game planning, the implementation, and then watching the films to learn our lessons.
- (6) When in trouble – go to God FIRST before ANYTHING ELSE. That's confidence that God can and will do something.

ii) #2 – Trust that the relationship you have with God through Jesus Christ is stronger than any human relationship you have.

- (1) In verse 10, we prayed, "If my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will take me up."
- (2) I love my mother...I loved my father. I love my brother and my wife and my kids and even my in-laws. And I would even die for them, if I had to. But in NO WAY do I trust those people more than I trust God because there will always be times when they fail us.

- (3) Some of you have parents that you don't even like, let alone love. Some here today are bitter on a day like today because you HAVE been forsaken by your father...abused...neglected. From the bottom of my heart, hear me say that I am sorry, as a man and as your pastor, that someone did that to you.
- (4) God will never forsake you...the LORD will take you up. Have confidence that the LORD will never abandon you or leave you alone.
- (5) When in trouble, go to the Lord. #2 - Trust in your relationship with God through Jesus Christ more than your human relationships.

iii) #3 – Be confident that God can and will provide

- (1) Throughout the WHOLE of the scripture, the main theme of God's Word is that God CAN and WILL provide.
- (2) The Triune God is not a God made of wood or stone, but is a living and active God who repeatedly and resolutely provides for those who love him and are called to be holy.
- (3) God CAN!...umm, who flooded the earth and saved Noah? God. Who parted the Red Sea so the Israelites could escape from the Egyptians? God. Who defeated the armies that oppressed the people of God so they could inherit the Promised Land? God. Who sent his only Son to earth to perform miracles and wonders so we'd know it was Him? God. Who raised Jesus from the dead so that death could be defeated? Um, God! Can he do it? YES! God can do it (turn to your neighbor and say, "God can do it.")
- (4) And He WILL. He wants to. Whatever the need is in your life, when you go to the Lord, trust in that fact that God is faithful, and that He CAN provide, He WILL provide.

iv) #4 – Seek after God's truth and refuse to listen to Satan's lies.

- (1) God wrote a book and that book contains everything we need to know regarding the truth about God and our lives.
- (2) So much of the debate in the church and in our culture is caused by the fact that people have rejected the idea that there is ANY SUCH THING as absolute truth. Which is sort of ironic because they say,

“There is absolutely no such thing as absolute truth” Even though they are saying that their statement is absolute.

(3) The church of Jesus Christ has to make a choice, and that choice is becoming more and more apparent as time goes on and we get closer to the return of Jesus. Are we going to choose (A) the rock solid foundation of Jesus Christ as Son of God, Savior of our lives, and Lord over all...or (B) are we going to choose to reject the truth of scripture for something more palatable?

(4) When we choose to go with B, then there is NO confidence to anything but what WE think.

(5) Everything is tossed about by the wind and truth is relative.

(6) Option A is where the church has stood for 2,000 years...Jude appeals to us to contend for the faith that was once and for all entrusted to the saints. Only on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ – in Christ alone – and the revealed Word of God through him can we know the truth and reject the lies of this world.

(7) Seek after God’s truth and refuse to listen to the lies of the evil one...

4) Conclusion

- a) I said 5 weeks ago that our God is eternal...He is an **enduring fire** that never goes out and never gets bigger or smaller. He’s the fire that burns from eternity past to eternity future. He is ALWAYS present...ALWAYS burning... ALWAYS perfectly ready to send POWER into your life! He is steadfast and consistent! He’s an Enduring Fire!
- b) But that fire is only as powerful in your life as you are willing to be close enough TO it to make it your heart’s desire – your all in all.
- c) God wants each of us (he’s wooing us) to always be taking steps closer and closer to His enduring fire. To turn our faces to him, to repent and believe. It brings safety and security. It gives life and purpose...power and strength. It is creation and provision for our lives. And, in the end, as we go out from this place, it is the confidence and trust in God. It is triumph in Jesus Christ.
- d) Is there anything today that’s keeping you, honestly, from experiencing more of God’s fire in your life?

- e) Let me talk to the men for just a minute, as you ladies listen in. Men, and especially fathers, it's really easy for us lead the church and our families by doing stuff, making things look good, and organizing programs. We know how to work hard. We're good at keeping God's holy fire at arms length because we don't ever want to appear like we're not the ones in control.
- f) But let me say this...the kingdom of God and the church needs strong men and fathers who are willing to get close to the enduring fire of God so that everything we do is a response to Jesus Christ. So that everything we do is a direct result of our confident and triumphant relationship with Him.
- g) For all of us, we are called to stand together close to the light and heat of God's enduring fire.
- h) And when we do, no matter what else happens, we can praise our faithful God together in all times and in all places!
- i) Happy Father's Day to you all...praise God for his enduring fire and then get next to it and let it be your life!
- j) Let's pray...