

Avoid the Trap

by Chuck Smith

The fear of man is a snare that has destroyed many people, but trusting in the Lord is a shield that protects and watches over those who put their trust in Him.

Duration: 35:18

Scripture: Psalm 118:1-8, Psalm 118:22, Psalm 118:24-27, Psalm 118:29

Topics: "Proverbs"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of David and Goliath from the Bible. He emphasizes how David, a young boy, fearlessly faced the giant Goliath, who was nine feet tall. Despite Goliath's threats, David trusted in the Lord and declared that the stone rejected by the builders became the cornerstone. The preacher also mentions the story of Daniel in the lion's den, highlighting how God delivered him from harm. The sermon concludes with a reading of Psalm 118, emphasizing the central truth that God's mercy endures forever.

Transcript

Let's turn now in our Bibles to Psalm 118. I'll read the first, the outnumbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the even-numbered verses.

And verse 8, interestingly enough, is the center verse of the Bible. So it's interesting to see the central truth of the Bible found there in verse 8. Let's stand as we read God's Word. O give thanks unto the Lord, for His mercy endureth forever.

Let Israel now say, that His mercy endureth forever. Let the house of Aaron now say, that His mercy endureth forever. Let them that fear the Lord say, that His mercy endureth forever.

I called upon the Lord in distress. The Lord answered me, and He set me in a large place. The Lord is on my side.

I will not fear. What can man do unto me? The Lord taketh my part with them that help me. Therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me.

It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes. All nations can pass me about, but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them.

They can pass me about, yea, they can pass me about, but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. They can pass me about like bees. They are quenched as the fire of thorns, for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.

Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall, but the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.

The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted. The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.

I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore, but he hath not given me over unto death. Open to me the gates of righteousness, I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord.

This gate of the Lord into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee, for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner.

This is the Lord's doing. It's marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made.

We will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now I beseech thee, O Lord, O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord. God is the Lord which hath showed us light. Bind the sacrifice with cords even unto the horns of the altar.

Thou art my God, and I will praise thee. Thou art my God, I will exalt thee. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your mercies, and indeed the mercies that endure forever. We thank you, Lord, that as the heavens are high above the earth, so high is your mercy over those that fear you.

Lord, we pray that today, as we again have this opportunity of looking into the Word, may your Holy Spirit allow the Word to look into our hearts, and reveal to us, Lord, the things that are there, that we might walk, Lord, in a way that would be pleasing to you. Guide us now, Lord, into all truth. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

This morning, I'd like to draw your attention to the 29th chapter, verse 25, where Solomon said, The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe. There is a dangerous trap that has snared and destroyed many people. That trap is the fear of man.

It brings a snare, Solomon said, or it's a trap. Peer pressure has a very strong influence upon our actions. It has led many people to be trapped by evil.

A person often is led to do things that they really do not want to do, nor would they do unless they were pressured by the crowd. And for the fear of being disapproved by the crowd, many people do things that are very harmful and dangerous, and become trapped in these things because of the fear of man. It brings a snare.

Interesting to me that there are many people that seem to have the fear of man who really do not have the fear of God in their hearts. If they should break the law of God, they just sort of shrug it off. But they are

very careful to keep the laws of man because they don't want to be arrested.

They don't want to spend time in jail. Interesting that more people are interested in escaping jail than they are escaping hell. You know, you shrug off the commands of God, but you keep the commands of man.

But the fear of man, that can be a trap. It brings a snare. It leads many people into sin.

I think of Pilate. As Jesus was brought before Pilate to be condemned, Pilate examined Jesus and by his own confession said, I have examined this man and I find no fault in him. And yet he was being pressured by the crowd to crucify an innocent man.

And finally he gave in to the pressure of the crowd because of the fear of man. They had threatened, if you let this man go, we will report it to Caesar. Because here's a man who is claiming to be the king and you are not really taking care of him and Caesar won't like that.

And though he knew that Jesus was innocent, confessed to the innocence, yet he delivered him to be crucified because of the fear of man. I think of King Saul. The prophet Samuel came to King Saul and said that God had chosen him to be God's instrument of justice and judgment upon the wicked Amalekites.

The Lord ordered them to be utterly and completely destroyed. They're animals and all. Saul went down and God gave him victory over the Amalekites.

But when they saw some of the animals, they were good stock. And so they brought some of those healthy animals back. And when Samuel came out to meet Saul, Saul greeted him saying, as the Lord liveth, I've done everything God told me to do.

Samuel answered, as the Lord liveth, if you have done everything that God has told you to do, how come I hear the lowing of the cattle and the bleating of the sheep? Saul answered, well, the people, when they saw how good stock these animals were, they forced me and I feared the people and I brought them back. The fear of the people led him to disobey God and it cost him his kingdom. The prophet Samuel said to him, because you have rejected God from ruling over you, God has rejected you from ruling over his people.

He lost the kingdom as a result of the fear of man. I think of how many people today lose the kingdom of God and the hope of the kingdom of God because of the fear of man. Then there is Aaron, the brother of Moses, the one who sort of with Moses led the children of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt.

As they were in the wilderness, Moses went up into the Mount to receive the law of the Lord. And as Moses was gone for 40 days, the people finally came to Aaron and they said, make us a God that we might worship it. As to this fellow Moses, we don't know what's happened to him.

He's been gone and we don't know what's happened. And so make us a God. So Aaron said, well, bring me all of your gold.

And he then took and he used an instrument and he carved out a golden calf. And as Moses was coming back to the camp, he had in his arms the two tables of stone, the two tables of stone upon which God had engraven the 10 commandments. And as he was coming into the camp, he saw the people dancing around this golden calf and worshipping it.

The first commandment was thou shalt have no other gods before me. The second commandment was you're not to make any graven image to bow down to it and to serve it. And here the people, before he could even bring them the 10 commandments, were already in violation of the first two commandments.

And Moses took the tables of stone, threw them on the ground. They broke in pieces, symbolic of how God's law was broken by man as they were worshiping this golden calf. Moses then said unto Aaron, what have you done Aaron? And Aaron answered and said, let not the anger of my Lord wax hot.

You know how the people are set on mischief. For they said unto me, make us gods which shall go before us. For as for Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what's become of him.

And I told them, whoever has any gold, break it off. So they gave the gold to me. And when I cast it into the fire, this calf just came out.

Oh yes. But the fear of man, it led Aaron into the sin of making the golden calf. We look at Peter.

Jesus, the night he was betrayed, gathered with his disciples there at the last supper. And he said, all of you are going to be offended tonight because of me. Peter said, Lord, though they will all be offended, I will never be offended.

Jesus said, Peter, before the rooster ever crows, you will have denied me three times. Peter said, Lord, if they would kill me, I would never deny you. Well, as Jesus was arrested and taken to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest to be tried.

Peter followed afar off and he was standing outside by the fire. When a young maiden came up to him and said, aren't you one of his disciples? And Peter said, no, no, I don't know him. She came back in a little while.

She said, you know, I've been thinking it over. I'm sure that I have seen you with him. And again, Peter denied and said, woman, you don't know what you're talking about.

I don't know the man. The soldiers chimed in and they said, you must be one of his disciples. You have a Galilean accent.

And Peter began to swear that he didn't know who he was. And as he was making that oath, the rooster began to crow. And he remembered the words of Jesus.

Before the rooster crows, you will have denied me three times. He went out and he wept bitterly. But it was the fear of man that created the snare.

Peter was trapped because of the fear of man. The fear of man will cause great men to do shameful things. I think of Abraham.

This is the man that God always points to as an example of a man of faith. He is the man of whom it was said, and Abraham believed God and God accounted his faith for righteousness. But we read that Abraham with his wife, Sarah, went down to Egypt.

And he said to Sarah, honey, you are so beautiful. I fear that these people will kill me in order to have you. So do me a favor.

Tell them that you are my sister. Don't tell them you are my wife. The fear of man caused Abraham to deny that Sarah was his wife.

The fear of man allowed Abraham to even allow Sarah to become a part of the harem of the pharaoh of Egypt. This great man, Abraham, the man of faith, yet the fear of man caused him to do these dastardly types of things against his own wife. I think of David.

I admire David for his bravery. I admire David for his exploits. And yet when he was in the city of Gath, the king of Gath called David in before him.

And David feared what the king of the Philistines might do to him. So as they brought him before the king, he acted like he was crazy. He started to try to climb the walls and he just began to spit and let his spit run all over his beard and all.

And here we see this man David that we always, the marvelous psalmist of Israel, but acting like a fool, acting like a madman because of the fear of man. As the scripture said, the fear of man is a trap. It's a snare.

And how many great men have been snared by the fear of man? I think of Elijah, the prophet. At the time of national declension, as the people were worshipping Baal and other gods, he challenged the 400 prophets of Baal to meet with him on Mount Carmel. They would have a contest.

They would build altars, put a sacrifice on it, but they wouldn't light any fire under it. They would pray to their gods to kindle the fire. And the God that answered by fire, let him be acknowledged as the true God.

So as the 400 prophets of Baal were praying that Baal might ignite the fire under their altar, when nothing happened and Elijah began to sort of poke fun at them, finally he said, okay fellows, you've had your day. Now move aside. And he prayed and God sent the fire and consumed the altar, the sacrifice.

And the people all fell down and acknowledged Jehovah is God. He took the prophets of Baal down to the little stream of Kishon and he slew the 400 prophets of Baal. And we see this mighty man of God and challenging the false gods and the prophets of the false god.

And then when Jezebel the queen heard of what he did, she said, God do the same to me also if I don't have that prophet's head cut off. And he fled. He started running and he ran clear on down to the Sinai peninsula trying to escape from the queen.

The fear of man caused this brave prophet of God to flee from this woman. The fear of man keeps many people from accepting Jesus Christ. What will they say at work if they find out that I'm now going to church and that I went forward to accept the Lord.

And for fear of being taunted by friends, people oftentimes refuse to accept God's offer of eternal life to them. There are those that actually reject God's gift of eternal life and salvation because they fear the mocking of some fool. It keeps people from witnessing of their faith in Jesus Christ.

We do read that in the Bible times there were many who were secret believers in Jesus for fear of the Jews, because the Jews had determined that if anyone confessed a faith in Jesus, they would be put out of the synagogue. One such person was Nicodemus. You remember he came at night to see Jesus because he was afraid that if they knew that he was visiting Jesus, they would reject him.

There was also Joseph of Arimathea, who was a secret believer in Jesus. The fear of man keeps many people from witnessing of their faith. But Jesus said in Mark's gospel 8:38, whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

He warned you, if you're ashamed of me, I'll be ashamed of you. Now the other side of the coin, whoever puts their trust in the Lord shall be safe. The fear of man, it can be a trap.

But if you put your trust in the Lord, you'll be safe. Throughout the scriptures, we are exhorted to put our trust in the Lord. Back in Proverbs 3:5, we read, trust in the Lord with all of your heart.

Lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge him and he will direct your path. In Proverbs 6:20, we are exhorted to trust in the Lord with all of our hearts.

And we read, whoever puts his trust in the Lord will be happy. Never sad that you put your trust in the Lord, but you'll always be happy because you realize I did the right thing. Next week in our reading, in Proverbs 30:5, we read that the Lord is a shield to those that will put their trust in him.

In other words, he'll protect you, he'll watch over you. In Psalm 118:8 that we read this morning, the middle verse of the Bible, it is better to put your trust in the Lord than your confidence in man. Here in our text, we read that those who put the trust in the Lord will be safe.

So you'll have a shield, you will be safe, you will be happy when you put your trust in the Lord. I think of the three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and how that they were there in Babylon and King Nebuchadnezzar had made this great image all of gold, set it up in the plains of Dura. The image was a defiance of God's word.

You remember he had the dream and Daniel came to interpret the dream and Daniel said, you saw this great image, it had a head of gold, it had shoulders of silver, it had a stomach of brass, it had legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay. God has shown to you the kingdoms that will rule over the world. You Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian kingdom, are the head of gold, but your kingdom is going to fall to the Medes and the Persians, the arms of silver.

They also will fall to the Grecian empire, the legs or the stomach of brass, which will be crushed by the Roman empire, the legs of iron. And the final world power will be a combination of 10 nations that were once a part of the Roman empire. Now by making the image all gold, he was defying the interpretation of the dream.

What he was saying is Babylon will live forever. Babylon will never be conquered. And having made this image of gold, he said and made a decree that when the musicians began to sound with their instruments, everybody was to bow down and worship this image.

When the music sounded, the people bowed except for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They refused to bow. Word was brought to Nebuchadnezzar that these three Hebrew boys did not bow when the music sounded.

So they were brought before Nebuchadnezzar. He said, Okay, fellows, I'm going to give you one more chance. I'm going to order the music to sound off again.

And you have the opportunity to bow down to this image. And if you don't, you will be cast into the burning, fiery furnace. They said to him, King, we're not even careful how we answer you on this matter.

The God that we serve is able to deliver us from your burning, fiery furnace. And even if he doesn't deliver, we still are not going to bow. They probably were thinking of the words of the prophet Isaiah, who said, When you pass through the waters, God said, I will be with you.

Through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, neither will the flames kindle upon you. And so they said, we're not even careful.

The God that we serve is able to deliver us out of your burning, fiery furnace. And even if he doesn't, we're still not going to bow. Nebuchadnezzar became furious.

He ordered that they heat up the furnace seven times hotter than it had ever been heated before. He ordered that these three Hebrew boys be bound and cast into the burning, fiery furnace. And those men that cast them in because of the immense heat were burned to death.

And then as the king looked into the fiery furnace, he said, how many did we throw in there? And they said, three. He said, how is it that I see four? And the fourth one looks like the Son of God. And he called Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, come out.

And they came out of that burning, fiery furnace without even the smell of smoke upon them. And Nebuchadnezzar then declared, there is no God in all of the universe like the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. But they put their trust in the Lord and they were safe.

There is the story of David again, when faced with Goliath, as he was just a stripling of a lad. And as he came up the hill to fight Goliath, to accept the challenge of this giant of a man, some nine foot tall. Think of what he could have done in the NBA.

He could have made a fortune, for sure. And as David came up against him, he was incensed. He said, am I a dog? You'd send a child out to fight me? And he told David, I'll chop you up and feed you to the birds.

And David answered him, you come after me with a sword, a spear, and a shield, but I come against you in the name of the living God that you have defied. He put his trust in the Lord and he was safe. He defeated the giant.

Then there's Daniel himself. When the Medo-Persians did conquer the Babylonian kingdom, the king of the Medes, Darius, saw that Daniel was a very brilliant, excellent man. And so he put Daniel over all of the other counselors, which made them jealous.

So they were determined to do Daniel in, and they watched him carefully. And they finally had a meeting and they said, fellas, that guy's unreal. He just keeps everything so perfect.

We're not going to be able to find anything against him. We're going to have to create a cause. They did notice that he was a man of prayer and that he would three times each day go to his room, open the windows toward Jerusalem and pray.

And so they came to the king with this offer. They said, you know, you are so important and people don't realize how important you are. We need for them to come to that awareness.

So we've made this decree that no one should pray to anyone except the king for 30 days. And if they should violate this rule, they would be cast into the den of lions. Well, the king was conned by these guys and he signed the decree.

And then they went down to Daniel's house and waited. And sure enough, Daniel went home. He opened the windows towards Jerusalem, knowing the decree was signed.

And he started to pray and they came running back and they said, king, we've got a violator, a man who just ignored the edict that you signed and so forth. And when he found out it was Daniel, he was very sorrowful and he did his best to find a loophole, but there were none. They had very cleverly written the law.

And so he called Daniel in and expressed his sorrow. And he said, but Daniel, the God that you serve is able to deliver you from the lions. And so Daniel was cast into the lion's den and the king spent a sleepless night.

In the morning early, he went running out to the lion's den. He called down to Daniel. It says in a lamentable voice, Oh, Daniel, is the God that you serve able to deliver you? And Daniel called up and he said, oh, king live forever.

The Lord sent an angel who closed the mouths of the lions. I'm fine. Get me a ladder.

Let me get out of here. Those who put their trust in the Lord shall be safe. In Psalm 91, we read, because you have made the Lord who is my refuge, even the most high your dwelling place, there shall no evil befall you.

Neither shall any plague come near your dwelling, for he will give his angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. They will bear you up lest you dash your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon you will trample under your foot.

And then the Lord speaks and says, because he has set his love upon me, therefore, will I deliver him? I will set him on high because he has known my name. He shall call upon me and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble.

I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and I will show him my salvation. Yes, whoever puts their trust in the Lord will be safe.

The fear of man can be a trap. It can rob you of the kingdom of God. But those that put their trust in the Lord will be saved.

Oh, safe to the rock that is higher than I. My soul in its conflict and sorrow would fly. So weary, so sinful, thine, thine would I be. Thou blessed rock of ages, I'm hiding in thee.

Those that put their trust in the Lord shall be saved. Let's pray. Father, how thankful we are that we can put our trust in you today.

We ask, Father, that you would help us to overcome the fear of man. Lord, may we not be cowed into wrong actions because of the fear of what others might think or what others might say. But help us, Lord, to put our trust in you today and find your salvation, your deliverance, your help.

Minister now, Lord, to our hearts and to our spirits. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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