

LAMPLIGHTER
SEPTEMBER 2009

THEME: "Under God's Watchful Eye-Living in Fear"

LUKE 12:6-9

"Say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.'" (Isa 35:4 NIV)

Dear Fellow Fearers,

"One night in basic training," Rev. Richard Anderson writes, "I was ordered to guard a specified route in the utter blackness of an Arkansas night. There was no moon, no starlight; and in the grove of trees where our company had set up camp, no light was permitted. We were forewarned that 'aggressor forces' would be on patrol, and we were not to let them slip through. I challenged every creaking sound of the trees, every falling leaf, and every bird's sleepy chirp until finally daylight crept ever so slowly into our part of the world. It had been a frightening night, although I knew well the 'aggressors' would do no more than give me a start and a bad report if unchallenged."

Fear is a common emotion. We have all, at one time or another, been afraid. David feared for his life when being pursued by King Saul the father of Jonathan who befriended David. Mary and others who encountered heavenly messengers from God's throne were fearful, and were comforted by the messengers who would say: "Fear not." The disciples who sat at Jesus' feet and learned the wonderful Gospel were often afraid. The Apostle Paul experienced fear in his ministry. A little boy may say to his father, "Daddy, have you ever been afraid?" And the answer would be a resounding – "YES!" We have all experienced the emotion of fear.

When was the last time you were afraid? What was the reason for your fear? When one gets truly to the heart of the matter, isn't our fear evidence of the sin that so easily entangles us and the battle raging within ourselves between faith and doubt? Like Peter, we hear the words of Jesus in Matthew 14:31, "Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. 'You of little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?'" Or again in Matthew 16:8, when Jesus warns them of heavenly things, but the disciples continue to discuss the fact that they forgot the physical loaf of bread. Jesus states, "Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, 'You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?'" We too become so easily distracted by the things of this world. We ponder too much on the physical and not enough on the spiritual. Like the father of Mark 9:24, we also must confess; "Lord, I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

In his first inaugural address, President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." However such a phrase brings little comfort when confronted by those things that go bump in the night. We need to be on our guard against real enemies rather than those boogey men under our beds, or the ghosts and goblins that hide in our closets. Our needless fears need to be under control so we may face the challenge of real threats with the faith to conquer and the will to triumph. Our security needs to be in God, not in superficial human courage.

The Apostle Paul is comforted in 2 Corinthians 7:5-7, "For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn--conflicts on the outside, fears within. {6} But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, {7} and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever." Paul directs our

thoughts not on ourselves but onto God who is able to deliver us from all our fears. Years before the Prophet Isaiah assured the people of Israel the same thing. As God's mouthpiece Isaiah says in 35:4, "Say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.'" Or again in 43:5, "Do not fear, for I am with you."

My friends, fear is a common emotion and one we all experience. In faith, however, let us continue to fight the good fight of faith. Finally the words of the Apostle Paul to the people of Ephesus, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power." Be at peace, for God's watchful eye is always upon you.

Close with prayer, the Lord's Prayer, Benediction, and Song – #53 "I Am Trusting Thee Lord Jesus"