



Saddle Up!

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Read Psalm 31:1-24.

From 1875 to 1883, the infamous Black Bart robbed 29 Wells Fargo stagecoaches, and managed to strike fear in the hearts of his victims. Bart used fear to get his victims eyes on their circumstances. He knew distracting his victims from what was true was his only hope for a successful robbery and get away. The interesting thing about Black Bart was in all 29 robberies he never fired his gun or took a hostage.

Like Black Bart, Satan – the enemy of our souls – uses fear as a tool to distract us from what is true; he wants us to be afraid. He wants us to be so overwhelmed that we cannot accomplish the things we need to do. When we give in to fear, the devil has the reins on us, and he has us right where he wants us.

John Wayne said “Courage is being scared to death and saddling up anyway.” I love the fact that John Wayne, a big, tough, cowboy, talked about fear. Fear affects us all. Even David in the Bible, who was known for being brave enough to face the giant, Goliath wrote about being afraid in Psalm 31. Using the word fear, each letter is going to give us a way we can saddle up even when we are afraid.

F – Fix your eyes on God. When we are afraid, we need to look to God, not on the circumstances around us, or even the feelings we are experiencing. We are to fix our eyes on God and who He is.

The enemy would love to keep us trapped by our feelings. David expresses his feelings in verses 12, 22. He declares he *is forgotten as though he were dead, and in his alarm he declares he is cut off from God's sight*. That isn't true but that is what he feels. Instead of focusing on how he feels, he focuses on God.

Read verses 1-4. We are to fix our eyes on God who is our refuge, a rock, a strong fortress, a place of safety. Fear tells us that circumstances are bigger than God's power and ability. But by fixing our eyes on God, and focusing on who He is, helps us see that whatever it is we are fearful of, God is bigger; God is stronger; God is greater.

E – Expect God to act and to be present. David anticipated that God would do something about his situation. In verses 1-4 he is asking God to deliver him, to turn His ear to him and come quickly to his rescue, to lead and guide him, to keep him free from the trap that is laid for him. **Read v. 7-8.** David makes this statement before God has answered his prayer. David is expecting God to act. David is confident God will do something. Notice the verbs (the action words) are in past tense – they are finished, a done deal.

In times of fear, we need to expect or anticipate that God will respond. It doesn't mean that He will always take away the fearful situation but God will do something. When we expect Him to act, it may be that God will calm your heart, and give you the strength you need to journey through the difficulty.

Expect God to do something, but also expect God to be with you. Whatever fearful situation we are experiencing, we are never alone. God doesn't expect us to face it alone. The antidote to fear is the promise of God's presence. **Read verse 20.**

A – Affirm your trust in God. Things are not easy for David, and he can't control his circumstances, but he can control his response. We can't control everything that comes our way, but we can control how we respond. We don't have to let fear take control of our hearts and lives. We can choose to affirm our trust in God.

Read v. 5-6. Does verse 5 sound familiar? Jesus said those same words on the cross. Jesus was trusting the outcome to His heavenly Father. He was trusting God; not His circumstances.

Rick Warren wrote, "Your fears reveal where you do not trust God." Ouch! Choosing to trust God is a choice. **Read v. 14-15.** Fear says "this is bigger." Trust of faith in God says, "God is bigger."

R – Respond to God with worship. Fear and anxiety go hand in hand. When we become fearful we also can become filled with worry and stress. We can allow fear to paralyze us, to fill us with worry, and anxiety, to panic. But instead, respond with worship to the Lord. **Read v. 7-8.** Rejoice in the fact that God is loving, and He is aware of the fearful situation you are facing.

Read v. 19-21. We worship the fact that God is good all the time. We worship that He is a source of refuge and safety, we worship Him for the wonders of His love. Worship makes God bigger and the situation smaller. The more we worship God, the less we will listen to the enemy's lies.

David concludes with these words: ***Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord (NIV)***. Verse 24 in *The Message* puts it this way: ***Be brave. Be strong. Don't give up. Expect God to get here soon***. We don't need to panic. We can be strong and take heart, because we hope in the Lord.