The Mastery of Fear

King delivered "The Mastery of Fear" as the second in his series on "Problems of Personality Integration." He kept the following three handwritten documents in the same file folder. In each, King urges his listeners to openly confront their fears. He incorporates quotations found in Harry Emerson Fosdick's sermon "The Conquest of Fear," Fosdick's essay "Dealing with Fear and Anxiety," a newspaper column by Benjamin Mays, and Robert McCracken's sermon "What to Do with Our Fears."2

The Mastery of Fear, Sermon notes

[21 July 1957]
[Montgomery, Ala.]

They are part of the fee we pay for [citizen].

1. Of primary importance in dealing with fear is making a practice of looking fairly and squarely at the object of our dread. Emerson "He has not learned the lesson of life who does not everyday surmount a fear."4

One of the chief services of ministers and psychiatrists is to be listening-posts, where crammed bosoms, long burdened with surreptitious fears, can unload themselves.6

Fear of dark, of water, of closed places, of high place, of cats, of Friday, of walking under a ladder, fear of responsibility, of old age and death.6

Get them in open and sometimes laugh at them. Dr. Sadler said "Ridicule is the master cure of fear and anxiety."6

2. There is an area of fear which must be mastered with goodwill and love.

3. It is overcome by possessing adequate interior Resources.

The cure of fear is Faith.7

AD CSKC Sermon file, folder 45, "Mastering Our Fears"

---

1. "Members Enjoying Sermon Series," Dexter Echo, 7 August 1957
3. McCracken, Questions People Ask, p. 125. "The first is that we make a practice of looking fairly and squarely at our fears." Fosdick, On Being a Real Person, p. 112. "Of primary importance in dealing with fear is the need of getting out into the open the object of our dread and frankly facing it."
4. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Courage," in Society and Solitude (1870). Fosdick also used this quote in On Being a Real Person, p. 116
5. Fosdick, On Being a Real Person, p. 113. "One of the chief services of ministers and psychiatrists is to be listening-posts, where crammed bosoms, long burdened with surreptitious fears, can unload themselves."
6. Fosdick, The Hope of the World, p. 63. "Fear of the dark, fear of water, fear of closed places, fear of open places, fear of altitude, fear of death, fear of hell, fear of cats, fear of Friday the thirteenth, fear of walking under a ladder—anybody who knows that hinterland and slum district of the mind knows how tragic it is."
7. Fosdick, On Being a Real Person, p. 132. "It was a psychiatrist, Dr. Sadler, who, having said in one place, 'Ridicule is the master cure for fear and anxiety,' struck a deeper note when he said in another, 'The only known cure for fear is faith.'" For the source of this quote, see William S. Sadler, The Mind at Masch (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1929), p. 43.