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OVERCOMING FEAR

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Forward:

While reading Psalms 23 prayerfully, whisper a prayer based on the promises you are reading . For example, the first line is "The Lord is my shepherd." Then you can whisper a prayer something like this:

"Lord, I know that you are my shepherd right now. This practice is especially effective when you are dealing with a fearful situation.

There are many thing in life that may cause discomfort, resulting in fear.

This morning as I was going to work, I came over a hill to a see an officer of the law flashing his lights of warning. I looked at the speedometer, and I was going three miles an hour over the speed limit. He pulled out into the road.

I prayed "Oh Lord help me. I could imagine getting a ticket resulting in a raise in Insurance, wondering if my insurance was in the compartment, etc.

Suddenly, he pulled back over to the side and did not follow me. Of course I said, "Thank you Jesus".

When I was a boy of nine, a Rattle Snake bit me. When I was grown, a Rattle Snake again bit me. To this day, wherever I walk, I watch my steps.

It is all right to have healthy fears, but I am a little ashamed that my wife has to kill all the Rattle Snakes that come near, or in our yard on the farm where we live.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

In this study, I have considered Bible Scriptures that deal with fear. I trust you will be able to understand that when faith prevails that fears will flee.

May God grant you wisdom to understand his word.

It is the word in us that the Holy Spirit anoints, so keep filled with the word of God, and you will be an anointed vessel and be used of God.

May the Lord bless you and keep you and make his face to shine upon you.

Harold Bollinger



Chapter 1

Reasons not to Fear

Genesis 15:1

After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

Why would Abram be afraid? Perhaps he feared revenge from the kings he had just defeated (Genesis 14:15).

God gave him two good reasons for courage:

- (1) He promised to defend Abram (“I am your shield”), and
- (2) He promised to be Abram’s “very great reward.”

When you fear what lies ahead, remember that God will stay with you through difficult times and that he has promised you great blessings.

What does it mean to fear the Lord.

Job 28:28;

And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

The ultimate interpretation of life, of who we are and where we are going, must come from outside and above our mortal life. When looking for guidance, seek God's wisdom as revealed in the Bible. To be lifted above and beyond the boundaries of life, we must know and trust the Lord of life.

Psalm 25:12

What man is he that fears the Lord? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose

To fear the Lord is to recognize God for who he is: holy, almighty, righteous, pure, all knowing, all-powerful, and all-wise. When we regard God correctly, we gain a clearer picture of ourselves: sinful, weak, frail, and needy. When we recognize who God is and who we are, we will fall at his feet in humble respect. Only then will he show us how to choose his way.

Fear should not keep us from God.

Genesis 21:7

And she said, who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck, for I have born him a son in his old age.

Who could believe that Abraham would have a son at 100 years of age—and live to raise him to adulthood? But doing the impossible is everyday business for God. Our big problems won't seem so impossible if we let God handle them.

After repeated promises, a visit by two angels, and the appearance of the Lord himself, Sarah finally cried out with surprise and joy at the birth of her son. Because of her doubt, worry, and fear, she had forfeited the peace she could have felt in God's wonderful promise to her. The way to bring peace to a troubled heart is to focus on God's promises. Trust him to do what he says.

Praying about fear does help.

Genesis 32:9-12

⁹ And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which said unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:

¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.

¹¹ Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.

¹² And thou said, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

How would you feel knowing you were about to meet the person you had cheated out of his most precious possession? Jacob had taken Esau's birthright (Genesis 25:33) and his blessings (Genesis 27:27-40).

Now he was about to meet this brother for the first time in 20 years, and he was frantic with fear. He collected his thoughts, however, and decided to pray.

When we face a difficult conflict, we can run about frantically or we can pause to pray. Which approach will be more effective?

Most fear is normal, but shouldn't paralyze us.

Genesis 46:3

³ And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:

The Israelites did become a great nation, and Jacob's descendants eventually returned to Canaan.

The book of Exodus recounts the story of Israel's slavery in Egypt for 400 years (fulfilling God's words to Abraham in Genesis 15:13-16),

The book of Joshua gives an exciting account of the Israelites entering and conquering Canaan, the Promised land.

God told Jacob to leave his home and travel to a strange and faraway land. But God reassured him by promising to go with him and take care of him.

When new situations or surroundings frighten you, recognize that experiencing fear is normal. To be paralyzed by fear, however, is an indication that you question God's ability to take care of you.

Jacob never returned to Canaan. This was a promise to his descendants that they would return.

"Joseph's own hand will close your eyes" refers to Joseph attending to Jacob as he faced death.

It was God's promise to Jacob that he would never know the bitterness of being lonely again.

You are never alone. The Lord is always with you.



Chapter 2

Fear can keep us from opportunities.

Exodus 2:7-8

⁷ Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?

⁸ And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother.

Miriam, the baby's sister, saw that Pharaoh's daughter had discovered Moses.

Quickly she took the initiative to suggest a nurse (her mother) who might care for the baby.

The Bible doesn't say if Miriam was afraid to approach the Egyptian princess, or if the princess was suspicious of the Hebrew girl. But Miriam did approach her, and the princess bought the services of Miriam and her mother.

Their family was reunited. Special opportunities may come our way unexpectedly. Don't let the fear of what might happen cause you to miss an opportunity. Be alert for the opportunities God gives you, and take full advantage of them.

Fear is sometimes caused by over anticipation.

Exodus 4:1

And Moses answered and said, but, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.

Moses' reluctance and fear were caused by over anticipation. He was worried about how the people might respond to him.

We often build up events in our minds and then panic over what might go wrong. God does not ask us to go where he has not provided the means to help.

Go where he leads, trusting him to supply courage, confidence, and resources at the right moment.

Don't respond to crisis with fear.

Exodus 14:10-11

¹⁰ And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord.

¹¹ And they said unto Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?"

Trapped against the sea, the Israelites faced the Egyptian army sweeping in for the kill. The Israelites thought they were doomed.

After watching God's powerful hand deliver them from Egypt, their only response was fear, whining, and despair. Where was their trust in God?

Israel had to learn from repeated experience that God was able to provide for them. God has preserved these examples in the Bible so that we can learn to trust him the first time.

By focusing on God's faithfulness in the past we can face crises with confidence rather than with fear and complaining.

This is the first instance of grumbling and complaining by the Israelites. Their lack of faith in God is startling. Yet how often do we find ourselves doing the same thing—complaining over inconveniences or discomforts?

The Israelites were about to learn some tough lessons. Had they trusted God, they would have been spared much grief.

God tells us to not be afraid.

Exodus 20:20

²⁰ And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces that ye sin not.

Throughout the Bible we find this phrase, "Do not be afraid." God wasn't trying to scare the people.

He was showing his mighty power so the Israelites would know he was the true God and would therefore obey him.

If they would do this, he would make his power available to them.

God wants us to follow him out of love rather than fear. To overcome fear, we must think more about his love. 1 John 4:18 says, “Perfect love drives out fear.”



Chapter 3

Fear keeps us from utilizing God's power.

Deut. 1:22

²² And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, we will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.

The spies were sent into the land to determine not *whether* they should enter, but *where* they should enter.

Upon returning, however, most of the spies concluded that the land was not worth the obstacles.

God would give the Israelites the power to conquer the land, but they were afraid of the risk and decided not to enter.

God gives us the power to overcome our obstacles, but like the Israelites filled with fear and skepticism, we often let difficulties control our lives.

Following God regardless of the difficulties is the way to have courageous, overcoming faith.

God can cause your enemies to fear you.

Deut. 2:25

²⁵ This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee.

God told Moses he would make the enemy nations afraid of Israel. By worldly standards, Israel's army was not intimidating, but Israel had God on its side.

Moses no longer had to worry about his enemies because his enemies were worried about him.

God often goes before us in our daily battles, preparing the way and overcoming barriers. We need to follow him wholeheartedly and be alert to his leading.

Fear comes when we leave out God.

Joshua 1:5

⁵ There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Many people think that prosperity and success come from having power, influential personal contacts, and a relentless desire to get ahead.

But the strategy for gaining prosperity that God taught Joshua goes against such criteria. He said that to succeed Joshua must

- (1) Be strong and courageous because the task ahead would not be easy,
- (2) Obey God's law, and
- (3) Constantly read and study the Book of the Law—God's Word.

To be successful, follow God's words to Joshua. You may not succeed by the world's standards, but you will be a success in God's eyes—and his opinion lasts forever.

Fear doesn't excuse us from God's work.

Judges 7:10-11

¹⁰ And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?

¹¹ Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.

Facing overwhelming odds, Gideon was afraid. God understood his fear, but he didn't excuse Gideon from his task.

Instead he allowed Gideon to slip into the enemy camp and overhear a conversation that would give him courage (Judges 7:12-15).

Are you facing a battle? God can give you the strength you need for any situation.

And don't be startled by the way he helps you. Like Gideon, you must listen to God and be ready to take the first step. Only after you begin to obey God will you find the courage to move ahead.

Fear of man versus the fear of God.

Proverbs 29:25

²⁵ The fear of man brings a snare: but whoso puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe.

Fear of people can hamper everything you try to do. In extreme forms, it can make you afraid to leave your home.

By contrast, fear of God—respect, reverence, and trust—is liberating. Why fear people who can do no eternal harm?

Instead, fear God who can turn the harm intended by others into good for those who trust him.



Chapter 4

Fear leaves when we trust God.

1 Samuel 14:6

⁶ And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armor, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.

Jonathan and his armor-bearer weren't much of a force to attack the huge Philistine army.

But while everyone else was afraid, they trusted God, knowing that the size of the enemy army would not restrict God's ability to help them.

God honored the faith and brave action of these two men with a tremendous victory.

Have you ever felt surrounded by the “enemy” or faced overwhelming odds?

God is never intimidated by the size of the enemy or the complexity of a problem.

With him, there are always enough resources to resist the pressures and win the battle.

If God has called you to action, then bravely commit what resources you have to God, and rely upon him to lead you to victory.

Some become preoccupied with fear.

1 Chron. 11:12-14

¹² And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, who was one of the three mighties.

¹³ He was with David at Pasdammim, and there the Philistines were gathered together to battle, where was a parcel of ground full of barley; and the people fled from before the Philistines.

Fear can immobilize you.

1 Chron. 28:20

²⁰ And David said to Solomon his son, be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my

God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.

David told Solomon to be careful to follow every one of God's commands to ensure Israel's prosperity and the continuation of David's descendants upon the throne.

It was the king's solemn duty to study and obey God's laws.

The teachings of Scripture are the keys to security, happiness, and justice, but you'll never discover them unless you search God's Word.

If we ignore God's will and neglect his teaching, anything we attempt to build, even if it has God's name on it, will be headed for collapse.

Get to know God's commands through regular Bible study, and find ways to apply them consistently.

How to resist fear

Neh. 2:2-3;

² Wherefore the king said unto me, why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid,

³ And said unto the king, let the king live forever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchers, lies waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?

The king noticed Nehemiah's sad appearance. This frightened Nehemiah because it was dangerous to show sorrow before the king, who could

execute anyone who displeased him. Anyone wearing sackcloth (mourning clothes) was barred from the palace (Esther 4:2).

Nehemiah wasn't ashamed to admit his fear, but he refused to allow fear to stop him from doing what God had called him to do.

When we allow our fears to rule us, we make fear more powerful than God. Is there a task God wants you to do, but fear is holding you back?

God is greater than all your fears. Recognizing why you are afraid is the first step in committing it to God. Realize that if God has called you to a task, he will help you accomplish it.

Psalm 27:1

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Fear is a dark shadow that envelops us and ultimately imprisons us within ourselves. Each of us has been a prisoner of fear at one time or another—fear of rejection, misunderstanding, uncertainty, sickness, or even death.

But we can conquer fear by using the bright liberating light of the Lord who brings salvation.

If we want to dispel the darkness of fear, let us remember with the psalmist that “the LORD is my light and my salvation.”

Mark 4:38-40

And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

⁴ And he said unto them, why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?

The Sea of Galilee is 680 feet below sea level and is surrounded by hills. Winds blowing across the land intensify close to the sea, often causing violent and unexpected storms.

The disciples were seasoned fishermen who had spent their lives fishing on this huge lake, but during this squall they panicked.

The disciples panicked because the storm threatened to destroy them all, and Jesus seemed unaware and unconcerned.

There was a physical storm, but storms come in other forms. Think about the storms in your life—the situations that cause you great anxiety.

Whatever your difficulty, you have two options: You can worry and assume that Jesus no longer cares, or you can resist fear, putting your trust in him.

When you feel like panicking, confess your need for God and then trust him to care for you.



Chapter 5

Let Jesus deal with your fears

Mark 6:49-50

⁴⁹ But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

⁵⁰ For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and said unto them, be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

The disciples were surprised to see Jesus walking beside them on the water. But they should have realized that Jesus would help them when they were in trouble.

Though they had lost sight of Jesus, he had not lost sight of them. His concern for them overcame their lack of faith.

The next time you are in “deep water,” remember that Christ knows your struggle and cares for you.

The disciples were afraid, but Jesus’ presence calmed their fears.

We all experience fear. Do we try to deal with it ourselves, or do we let Jesus deal with it? In times of fear and uncertainty, it is calming to know that Christ is always with us (Matthew 28:20).

To recognize Christ’s presence is the antidote for fear.

You need not fear death.

Luke 9:24-25

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

Christians follow their Lord by imitating his life and obeying his commands. To take up the cross meant to carry your own cross to the place where you would be killed.

The Romans had killed many Galileans that way.

Applied to the disciples, it meant to identify completely with Christ’s message, even if it meant death. We must deny our selfish desires to use

our time and money our own way and to choose our own direction in life without regard to Christ.

Following Christ is costly now, but in the long run, it is well worth the pain and effort.

People are willing to pay a high price for something they value. Is it any surprise that Jesus would demand this much commitment from his followers?

There are at least three conditions that must be met by people who want to follow Jesus.

1. We must be willing to deny self,
2. to take up our crosses, and to follow him.
3. Anything less is superficial lip service.

If this present life is most important to you, you will do everything you can to protect it.

You will not want to do anything that might endanger your safety, health, or comfort.

By contrast, if following Jesus is most important, you may find yourself in unsafe, unhealthy, and uncomfortable places.

You will risk death, but you will not fear it because you know that Jesus will raise you to eternal life. Nothing material can compensate for the loss of eternal life.

Jesus' disciples are not to use their lives on earth for their own pleasure—they should spend their lives serving God and people.

Fear keeps us from speaking for Christ.

Luke 12:4-5

⁴ And I say unto you my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

⁵ But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

Fear of opposition or ridicule can weaken our witness for Christ. Often we cling to peace and comfort, even at the cost of our walk with God.

Jesus reminds us here that we should fear God, who controls eternal, not merely temporal, consequences. Don't allow fear of a person or group to keep you from standing up for Christ.

John 7:13

Howbeit, no man spoke openly of him for fear of the Jews.

The religious leaders had a great deal of power over the common people.

Apparently these leaders couldn't do much to Jesus at this time, but they threatened anyone who might publicly support him.

Excommunication from the synagogue was one of the reprisals for believing in Jesus (John 9:22).

To a Jew, this was a severe punishment.

Everyone was talking about Jesus! But when it came time to speak up for him in public, no one said a word.

All were afraid. Fear can stifle our witness.

Although many people talk about Christ in church, when it comes to making a public statement about their faith, they are often embarrassed.

Jesus says that he will acknowledge us before God if we acknowledge him before others (Matthew 10:32).

Be courageous! Speak up for Christ!

John 12:42-43

⁴² Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Along with those who refused to believe, many believed but refused to admit it. This is just as bad, and Jesus had strong words for such people (see Matthew 10:32-33).

People who will not take a stand for Jesus are afraid of rejection or ridicule.

Many Jewish leaders wouldn't admit to faith in Jesus because they feared excommunication from the synagogue (which was their livelihood) and loss of their prestigious place in the community. But the praise of others is fickle and short-lived. We should be much more concerned about God's eternal acceptance than about the temporary approval of other people.



Chapter 6

How faith overcomes Fear.

John 6:18-19

¹⁸ And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.

¹⁹ So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.

The Sea of Galilee is 650 feet below sea level, 150 feet deep, and surrounded by hills.

These physical features make it subject to sudden windstorms that would cause extremely high waves. Such storms were expected on this lake, but they were nevertheless frightening.

When Jesus came to the disciples during a storm, walking on the water (three and a half miles from shore), he told them not to be afraid.

We often face spiritual and emotional storms and feel tossed about like a small boat on a big lake. In spite of terrifying circumstances, if we trust

our lives to Christ for his safekeeping, he will give us peace in any storm.

The disciples, terrified, probably thought they were seeing a ghost (Mark 6:49).

But if they had thought about all they had already seen Jesus do, they could have accepted this miracle.

They were frightened—they didn't expect Jesus to come, and they weren't prepared for his help.

Faith is a mind-set that *expects* God to act. When we act on this expectation, we can overcome our fears.

Faith makes trouble less frightening.

Acts 5:17-18

¹⁷ Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

¹⁸ And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

The religious leaders were jealous—Peter and the apostles were already commanding more respect than they had ever received.

The difference, however, was that the religious leaders demanded respect and reverence for themselves; the apostles' goal was to bring respect and reverence to God.

The apostles were respected not because they demanded it, but because they deserved it.

The apostles experienced power to do miracles, great boldness in preaching, and God's presence in their lives, yet they were not free from hatred and persecution.

They were arrested, put in jail, beaten, and slandered by community leaders. Faith in God does not make troubles disappear; it makes troubles appear less frightening because it puts them in the right perspective.

Don't expect everyone to react favorably when you share something as dynamic as your faith in Christ.

Some will be jealous, afraid, or threatened. Expect some negative reactions, and remember that you must be more concerned about serving God than about the reactions of people.

Fear neutralizes effectiveness for God.

2 Tim. 1:6-7

⁶ Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

⁷ For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

At the time of his ordination, Timothy had received special gifts of the Spirit to enable him to serve the church (see 1 Tim. 4:14).

In telling Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God,” Paul was encouraging him to persevere.

Timothy did not need new revelations or new gifts; he needed the courage and self-discipline to hang on to the truth and to use the gifts he had already received (see 2 Tim. 1:13-14).

If Timothy would step out boldly in faith and proclaim the gospel once again, the Holy Spirit would go with him and give him power. When you use the gifts God has given you, you will find that God will give you the power you need.

Clearly Timothy’s spiritual gift had been given to him when Paul and the elders had laid their hands on him and set him apart for ministry (see 1 Tim. 4:14).

God gives all Christians gifts to use to build up the body of Christ (see 1 Cor. 12:4-31), and he gives special gifts to some through church leaders, who serve as God’s instruments.

Timothy was experiencing great opposition to his message and to himself as a leader. His youth, his association with Paul, and his leadership had come under fire from believers and nonbelievers alike. Paul urged him to be bold.

When we allow people to intimidate us, we neutralize our effectiveness for God. The power of the Holy Spirit can help us overcome our fear of what some might say or do to us, so that we can continue to do God’s work.

Paul mentions three characteristics of the effective Christian leader: **power, love, and self-discipline.**

These are available to us because the Holy Spirit lives in us.

Follow his leading each day so that your life will more fully exhibit these characteristics

References:

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Additional comments and charts are taken from:

***Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print**