

Facing and Overcoming Fear

I. Introduction

A. The premise of this lesson is this statement in I John 4:18 – “fear hath torment”

1. word translated used here and in Matthew 25:46; root word used in Acts 4:21 and II Peter 2:9
2. John 10:10 – Jesus came to give abundant life
3. the Christian walk is to be one of hope (Romans 8:24), joy (II Thessalonians 5:16) and peace (Philippians 4:7)
 - a. these are traits of one who is free, not one who is bound
 - b. yet fear keeps one in bondage, stopping him or her from becoming everything they can become
4. fear is punishing, fear is destructive; we need to deal with it

B. Scope of this study

1. while we might mention the fear of God, which we want to have, we will focus mostly on this fear that holds us in its grip and hinders us
2. we're going to look at Bible words such as fear, fearful and afraid to see what they mean and how they're used in their context
3. we're going to look at men and women of the Bible, their fears and how they dealt with them or did not deal with them
4. we're going to present Bible-based principles on how to face our fears and overcome them
5. along the way perhaps we'll see that we're not the only ones to have the fears we face

II. Some Questions About Fear

A. What is fear?

1. “A distressing emotion aroused by impending danger, evil, pain, etc., **whether the threat is real or imagined** (emphasis mine, mg); the feeling or condition of being afraid”
2. Other definitions

B. What is the origin of fear?

1. are we born with it or do we learn it?
2. if learned, from where do we learn it?

C. What do we fear and why?

1. failure
2. loss of love
3. getting hurt
4. dying
5. getting lost
6. embarrassment
7. loneliness
8. change

III. Some Observations About Fear

- A. When we fear it's sometimes because we make up our minds what the outcome of a situation is going to be
- B. How often do the things that we fear come to pass? How often are they as bad as we think they will be?
- C. Fear can be controlled
- D. We fear what we don't know. We might fear something that we've experienced, and even overcame before, but because every situation is different, we don't know how it will turn out this time. We might fear something that already exists, but, again, we don't know how it will turn out and that's really what we fear
- E. This fear is crippling; could it be we don't want to face it? we joke about it or turn to talking about fearing God; could it be we don't want to face it or admit it?
- F. Old illustration asked, “If someone were to hold a gun to your head and tell you to deny Christ or die, would you do it?” Not a good question because this rarely if ever would happen. Better question on a

more practical level: “Would you go next door to talk to your neighbor about Christ or would you be too scared; and what would be the reason for your fear?”

IV. Bible Words

A. Old Testament

1. most common is yare (Strong's #3372)
 - a. used 314 times
 - b. “to fear, revere, be afraid, to stand in awe of” but also “to be fearful, be dreadful, to make afraid, to terrify”
 - c. examples of usage as regarding the scope of this study
 - i. Genesis 15:1 (why was he not to fear?)
 - ii. Genesis 19:30 (afraid of what?)
 - iii. Genesis 21:7 (why was she not to fear?)
 - iv. Genesis 26:7 (afraid of what?)
 - v. Genesis 32:7 (afraid of what? see Genesis 27:41)
 - vi. Genesis 42:35 (why were they afraid?)
 - vii. Exodus 2:14 (afraid of what?)
 - viii. Exodus 14:10 (afraid of what? see verses 10-12 and what their fear led to)
 - ix. I Samuel 3:15 (why was he afraid?)
 - x. I Samuel 15:24
 - xi. I Samuel 17:11,24
 - xii. I Samuel 21:12 (even David)
 - xiii. II Samuel 12:18 (what did they fear?)
 - xiv. II Kings 25:26 (start in verse 22 and also bring in Jeremiah 41-43; fear led to disobedience)
 - xv. Nehemiah 6:9,13,14,19
2. yare is most commonly used for type of fear in this study

B. New Testament

1. phobeo (Strong's #5399)
 - a. used 110 times
 - b. “to put to flight by terrifying, to scare away, to put to flight, to flee, to be struck with fear, to be seized with alarm, to fear or hesitate to do something for fear of harm, to reverence” (look in context for meaning)
 - c. examples of usage as regarding the scope of this study
 - i. Matthew 14:30 (chance to prove his faith)
 - ii. Matthew 25:25
 - iii. John 9:22
 - iv. John 19:8 – Pilate (getting challenged from every side)
 - v. Acts 9:26
 - vi. Acts 18:9 (interesting that even Paul had to be exhorted not to be afraid)
 - vii. Galatians 2:12
2. phobos (Strong's #5401)
 - a. used 47 times
 - b. “fear, dread, terror”
 - c. examples of usage as regarding the scope of this study
 - i. John 7:13
 - ii. II Corinthians 7:5
 - iii. Hebrews 2:15
3. aphobos, “without fear” (Strong's #870)
4. deilia (Strong's #1167)
 - a. used only once
 - b. “timidity, fearfulness, cowardice”– II Timothy 1:7
5. deilos (Strong's #1169)

- a. used three times
- b. “timid, fearful” (Matthew 8:26; Mark 4:40; Revelation 21:8)
- 6. eulabeomai (Strong’s #2125) – Acts 23:10; Hebrews 11:7 (not applicable here)
- 7. eulabeia (Strong’s #2124) – Hebrews 5:7; 12:28 (not applicable here)
- 8. ekphobos, “out of fear” (Strong’s #1630) – Mark 9:6; Hebrews 12:21 (not applicable here)

V. Case Studies In Dealing With This Fear That Can Hinder Us

A. Moses (Exodus 3-4)

- 1. “fear” not used but obvious that it was present
- 2. fear led to excuses
 - a. “who am I?” (3:11)
 - b. “who are you?” (3:13)
 - c. “they’ll say I’m lying” (4:1)
 - d. “I don’t have the necessary talents” (4:10)
 - e. finally led him to express what he was really feeling, “send someone else” (4:13)
- 3. why was God so patient with Moses?

B. Israel and Joshua & Caleb (Numbers 13-14)

- 1. “fear” not used but obvious that it was present
- 2. what did fear lead to?
 - a. exaggeration (13:31-34)
 - b. discouragement (14:1)
 - c. anger, rebellion (14:2)
 - d. question God (14:3)
 - e. irrational decisions (14:5)
 - f. desire to murder (14:10)
 - g. foolish actions (14:40)
 - h. destruction, “discomfited” = “crushed or beat” (14:45)
- 3. not only had they been told about the promised land, some saw it – but they let fear overrule

C. Gideon (Judges 6)

- 1. setting in verses 1-10
- 2. Gideon’s attitude and conversation with the angel (verses 11-24)
- 3. God’s commission to Gideon (verses 25-26)
- 4. Gideon obeyed, but he was afraid
 - a. did this lessen the value of his obedience to God?
 - b. God had not told him when to do this
 - c. courage and fear sometimes mix; which one will we allow to dominate?
- 5. the people’s response (verses 28-32)
- 6. Gideon’s father shows courage in verse 31 (is it possible that we get can develop courage by seeing courage in others? will talk about this later)
- 7. interesting that apparently Gideon still had some fear (Judges 7:10-11) but God still used him
 - a. why?
 - b. Gideon analyzed situations, wanted to be sure, but he did not let his fear cripple him

D. Jesus’ disciples just before His death

- 1. Mark 14:50 (fulfilled prophecy – Mark 14:27; Zechariah 13:7)
- 2. Peter
 - a. his boasting (Matthew 26:33-35; Mark 14:26-31; Luke 22:31-34)
 - b. his denial (Luke 22:54-62)
 - c. what did Peter fear? loss of life
 - d. I Corinthians 10:12 fits in well here and as a warning to each of us

E. Examples in Acts of Christians who were not afraid, though they were certainly in frightening situations

- 1. Acts 4:3,18-30
- 2. Acts 5:17-18,26-29,40-42

VI. How to Overcome Fear

A. Very simply, faith conquers fear (passages that promote faith)

1. II Samuel 22:5
2. II Kings 6:16
3. I Chronicles 28:20
4. Psalm 23:4
5. Psalm 27:1-5,14
6. Psalm 31:24
7. Psalm 34:4
8. Psalm 46
9. Psalm 56
10. Psalm 118:6
11. Isaiah 41:10
12. Isaiah 51:7-15
13. Mark 4:40
14. Luke 12:4-7
15. Philippians 1:20
16. I Thessalonians 2:2
17. Hebrews 11:23,27
18. Hebrews 13:6
19. I Peter 3:13-14

B. Admit it

1. this will require some self-examination
 - a. why don't I talk to others about Christ?
 - b. why don't I take a firm stand, even in a crowd of those who are against God?
 - c. why do I back away from opportunities to show others my faith?
2. confess it to God

B. Identify it

1. why are we afraid?
2. what do we fear in people? they're smarter, more popular, stronger, more powerful, taller, angrier, richer, they'll make us look bad

C. Don't "overthink" it

1. fear can come by thinking about the potential negative outcome too much
2. the "hero" says, "I didn't think about the danger. I just reacted."
3. Philippians 1:21 – what did he mean when he said, "to me to live is Christ"? – his first and foremost motivation was to do the Lord's will

D. Face it or run from it (fight or flight; can run by putting it from our minds; fear of personal evangelism – don't think about it and it won't bother us)

1. what will be the result if we run from fear that keeps us from doing God's will?
2. think about the times we faced it (what happened?)
3. consider the usefulness of fear (can make us more aware; heighten our senses)
4. consider our influence on others when we overcome it (Acts 4, 5, Philippians 1:13-14)

VII. Closing Observations

- A. Balance courage with wisdom; "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." (Eccl. 3:7)
- B. Need the guilt feelings when we give in to fear so we don't do it again
- C. May never completely rid ourselves of fear, but we can learn to control it