

## **The Problem Of Fear**

### **Introduction**

1. One of the problems of life, even the Christian life, is fear.
  - a. Psychologists tell us that we are born with two fears:
    - 1) The fear of falling.
    - 2) The fear of noise.
  - b. We soon develop many more.
    - 1) Members of a psychology class asked 500 people, "What are you afraid of?"
    - 2) They listed 7,000 fears.
    - 3) This is sad because Jesus came to deliver us from fears that keep us from doing God's will.
2. Let us make a study of fear and how the Christian can overcome it.

### **Two Kinds Of Fear**

The Bible speaks of 2 kinds of fear.

1. There is a commanded fear. (Eccles.12:13; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Heb. 11:7; Acts 9:31; 10:2, 22, 35).

Eccles 12:13 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.

Prov. 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Heb. 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Acts 9:31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

Acts 10:2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually.

Acts 10:22 They said, "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message from you."

Acts 10:35 but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.

- a. Leads to holiness. (2 Cor. 7:1; Acts 2:43-47).
- b. Working out salvation. (Phil. 2:12).
- c. Evangelism (2 Cor. 5:11).

2 Cor. 5:11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.

2. There is a forbidden fear.

- a. This fear is synonymous with dread, alarm, fright, terror, apprehension, anxiety, perplexity and distrust.
- b. This fear is condemned. (Psa. 91:5; Lk. 12:32).

Psa. 91:5 You will not be afraid of the terror by night, Or of the arrow that flies by day;

Lk. 12:32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

- c. Love casts out this fear. (1 Jn. 4:18).

1 Jn. 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love

- 1) Fear here is not reverence for the Lord and His commandments. (Prov. 1:7).
- 2) This fear here is a fear of punishment even when trusting in the Lord and His blood.
- d. This kind of fear is not to be confused with caution.
  - 1) The fear of overdose causes one to read the label on a prescription bottle.
  - 2) The fear of getting run over will cause one to look both ways before crossing the street.
  - 3) The fear of measles or polio will cause one to take the vaccine.
  - 4) These types of fears are normal and good.

## **Areas Of Fear**

1. Men fear failure.

- a. Fear of failure caused the one talent man to do nothing. (Matt. 25:25).
- b. Many today are afraid to fail.
  - 1) Career
  - 2) School

3) Athletics

4) Leadership

c. The greatest failure is not trying and failing, but it is never trying!

2. Men fear the unknown future.

a. This fear has kept many congregations of the Lord from growing, expanding, building, adding missionaries, and otherwise doing more work for Christ.

b. Some are afraid to build or afraid to add a work program because they fear a depression or something else looming on the horizon.

c. Based on an unknown future, the church could grow.

3. Men fear truth.

a. Truth often puts us or someone else we love in a bad light.

b. Truth demands we admit we are wrong and demands change.

c. I understand children fearing darkness, but it is tragic when men fear the light.

d. John 8:32; James. 1:18.

Jn. 8:32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Jas. 1:18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

4. Men fear responsibility.

a. The one talent man did not out of fear want to assume responsibility. (Matt. 25:25).

b. Fear kept the Israelites from their responsibility of conquering the land. (Deut. 1:22-46).

c. Fear will keep us from fulfilling our responsibility in fishing for men. (Lk.5:10).

Lk. 5:10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men."

1) We are not required to be successful, but to try.

2) We are not required to know all the answers, but to sow the seed of God's word in love.

5. Men fear old age.

a. Yet, the Bible teaches us that honor and glory are attached to old age. (Lev.19:32; Prov. 16:31; 20:29; 1 Tim. 5:1).

Lev. 19:32 'You shall rise up before the grayheaded and honor the aged, and you shall revere your God; I am the LORD.

Prov. 16:31 A gray head is a crown of glory; It is found in the way of righteousness.

Prov. 20:29 The glory of young men is their strength, And the honor of old men is their gray hair.

1 Tim. 5:1 Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers,

b. Men often achieve some of their greatest accomplishments in old age. See Abraham and Moses

c. Old age is an indication that one is nearer his home.

d. It is not wise to fear what God has planned for us.

e. God allows us to get old for a purpose - not just to occupy space.

6. Men fear insecurity.

a. They fear hunger and not having enough.

b. See Matthew 6:24-34; Psalm 37:25; Philippians 4:19).

7. Men fear growth.

a. Some fear the church will become sinful if it gets "too big."

b. Sinfulness has little to do with "bigness" or "littleness."

c. It relates to our love for God and His word.

d. It may be possible to get too big, but many congregations have been destroyed by dividing or by being afraid to grow.

e. The early church did not have fear of growth. (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 8:4).

f. It is vital that God's people never let fear stunt their numerical or spiritual growth.

8. Men fear what others will say and think about them, or do to them.

a. Jesus forewarned us that men would speak against us and warned us against all men speaking well of us. (Lk. 6:26).

Lk. 6:26 "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

1) One would have to be a real hypocrite to be liked by everyone.

2) Paul said to avoid all evil we would have to go out of this world. (1 Cor. 5).

3) The same is true of criticism. It is impossible to please every one.

b. Fear led Peter to deny Christ. (Matt. 26:69-75). See John 19:38.

c. Fear of rejection by peers leads people to smoke, drink, use drugs, steal, commit fornication, etc.

9. Men fear death. (Heb. 2:15).

Heb. 2:15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

a. The Christian need not fear death. (1 Cor. 15:50-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-18)

b. See Matthew 5:10-12; Psalm 23:4; Revelation 21:4.

### **The Tragic Effects Of Fear**

1. Fear makes life a wretched experience and warps the personality.

2. Fear has torment. (1 Jn. 4:18).

3. Fear will prevent one from doing the will of God.

a. Talents

b. Confession

c. Teaching & personal work

d. Forming friendships or relationships

e. Living the transformed life (Rom. 12:1,2).

4. Fear renders one useless.

a. God told Gideon, "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Gilead." (Jud. 7:3).

b. There is no place in the kingdom for the fearful.

5. Fear brings defeat. (Matt. 14:28-31).

6. Fear brings on the very thing we fear.

a. Peter's fear of sinking brought on his sinking.

b. Fear of dropping the pass often causes the player to do that very thing.

c. Fear of disease often brings on illness.

7. Fear spreads and is contagious. (Deut. 20:8; Josh. 14:8).

Deut. 20:8 "Then the officers shall speak further to the people and say, 'Who is the man that is afraid and fainthearted? Let him depart and return to his house, so that he might not make his brothers' hearts melt like his heart.'

Josh. 14:8 "Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear; but I followed the LORD my God fully.

a. The fear of one elder or a few members can permeate the church and keep some great work from being done.

b. Fear can paralyze.

1) "I was so afraid that I could not move."

2) Fear can virtually immobilize a church and make it inactive.

8. Fear kills and destroys.

a. Thousands kill themselves every year.

b. Many say, "I am afraid to go on living."

9. Fear will cause a person to be lost. (Rev. 21:8; Matt. 25:25,30; Deut. 1:26-46.).

## **How To Overcome Fear**

1. Remember fear is strictly prohibited. (Deut. 1:21; Gen. 15:1; Isa. 44:8; Psa. 91:5; 1 Pet. 3:13-15; Lk. 12:4,7, 32; Jn. 14:27; Rev. 1:17,18; 2 Tim. 1:7).

a. It is a characteristic of the wicked. (Prov. 28:1).

b. Prov. 28:1 The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, But the righteous are bold as a lion

2. Enthroned Christ. (1 Pet. 3:14, 15). "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts"

a. With Christ enthroned in our hearts we need not fear to live, for He is the living One. (Matt. 28:20).

b. We need not fear death, because He died and is alive forevermore.

c. We need not fear the hereafter, for He has the keys of Hades and death. (Rev. 1:17, 18). See Jn. 11:25

1) Christ is coming for us. (Jn. 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:17,18).

2) We will be with Him forever. (1 Thess. 4:18).

3. Put faith and trust in God. (Prov. 3:25, 26; 29:25; Psa. 56:11; 112:7; 46:1-3; Matt. 8:26; 2 Tim. 1:12; Isa. 12:2.)

a. Faith is the foe of fear.

b. Faith leads to victory (1 Jn. 5:3,4), but fear leads to utter uselessness and defeat.

c. It is either faith or fear! (Isa. 26:3).

Isa. 26:3 "The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You.

c. It is God's will and desire that we live a life trusting in Him.

4. Recognize God as our Father. (Matt. 6:9; 7:7-12; Rom. 8:15).

5. Never lose sight of the fact that we are in the presence of God and His help is nigh. (Psa. 46:12; 13; Gen. 26:24; Isa. 35:4; 1 Cor. 10:13; Jas. 4:8).

a. Courage is the very opposite of fear, and fear is eradicated by the consciousness of the Lord's presence.

b. Josh. 1:9; Isa. 41:10; Matt. 14:27; Acts 18:9, 10; Heb. 13:5,6.

Josh. 1:9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Isa. 41:10 'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

Matt. 14:27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

Acts 18:9 And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent;

Acts 18:10 for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city."

Heb. 13:5 Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,"

Heb. 13:6 so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?"

c. Deut. 20:1; 31:6; Neh. 4:14; 2 Kgs. 6:16; Exod. 4:13, 14.

d. Psa. 118:6; Rom. 8:31.

Psa. 118:6 The LORD is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me?

Rom. 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

6. Rid ourselves of sin.

a. Sin and fear are inseparable. (Gen. 3:6, 10).

b. Much fear comes from a sense of guilt. (Acts 2:37-47; 1 Jn.1:7-10; Acts 8:22.).

7. Work at the job of living a day at a time. (Phil. 3:13, 14; Matt. 6:34).

8. Fill our heart with love.

a. The more we love, the less we fear.

b. The mother who has a child in a burning house will forget her fear of fire, and rush to rescue her child.

9. Pray (Psa 3:4,6; 55:4,5,16, 17, 22).

a. Fear led Peter to deny the Lord 3 times. (Matt. 26:69-75).

b. Later we see him fearlessly preaching Christ. (Acts 2:14; 5:29).

c. What made the difference in Peter's life?

1) He became fearless after the resurrection of Christ and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

## 2) Prayer (Acts 1:13, 14).

Acts 1:13 When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.

Acts 1:14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

### **Conclusion**

1. Yes, the Christian has a problem of fear.
2. But he can overcome it with the help of God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

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