

Overcoming Fear

John 14:1 John 14:27

Introduction:

A. Several generations ago, during one of the most turbulent of the desert wars in the Middle East, a spy was captured and sentenced to death by a general of the Persian army. The general, a man of intelligence and compassion, had adopted a strange and unusual custom in such cases. He permitted the condemned person to make a choice. The prisoner could either face a firing squad or pass through the Black Door.

As the moment of the execution drew near, the general ordered the spy to be brought before him for a short, final interview, the primary purpose of which was to receive the answer of the doomed man to the query: "What shall it be--the firing squad or the Black Door?"

This was not an easy decision, and the prisoner hesitated, but soon made it known that he much preferred the firing squad to the unknown horrors that might await him behind the ominous and mysterious door. Not long thereafter, a volley of shots in the courtyard announced that the grim sentence had been fulfilled.

The general, staring at his boots, turned to his aide and said, "You see how it is with men; they will always prefer the known to the unknown. It is characteristic of people to be afraid of the undefined. Yet I gave him his choice."

"What lies beyond the Black Door?" asked the aide.

"Freedom," replied the general, "and I've known only a few brave enough to take it."

The story illustrates the situation many people face each day--a choice between the known and the unknown. Few have the courage to come alive, to stop being engulfed in a sea of mediocrity--humbled and dulled by failure to recognize their own potential. They lack the fortitude to stop living their lives in a mentally-chloroformed condition in that ignoble mass of humanity . . . the uncommitted. The choice is yours (Phil. 4:13). "By grace ye are saved through faith" (Eph. 4:28). "We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).

I. *The Bible And Fear*

A. Question: According to the Bible, aren't we commanded to fear?

1. Three passages from the Book of Proverbs - Prov 1:7; 9:10; 22:4
2. The fear, however, we are discussing is the kind Paul talks about in 2 Timothy 1:7

B. There are several Greek words that are translated "fear" in our English translations of the Bible.

1. The basic word is "phobos."
 - a. "Phobos" has several meanings among which are, respect and reverential fear of God - Rom 8:15; Acts 9:31; Eph 5:21
 - b. "Phobos" is not the word used in 2 Timothy 1:7
2. In 2 Timothy 1:7, Paul uses the word "deilia."
 - a. "Deilia" denotes moral cowardice and timidity and is never used in a good sense.
 - b. It is an inward sensation of fear.
 - c. It is the kind of fear that arose in the hearts of the disciples when a great tempest arose on the Sea of Galilee - Matt 8:23-26
 - d. The fear of circumstances, the fear of others, of the fear of the unknown, often makes a person a coward.
 - e. Fear ("Phobos") (respect) of God, on the other hand, makes the righteous as bold as a lion; not a coward.
3. The adjective form of "deilia" is used in Rev 21:8 where it tells us that "the cowardly...will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone."
4. Peace does not exist where there is a "spirit of fear."

II. *Not All Fear Is Bad*

A. Fear as a basic human emotion is not wrong per se.

B. God has created man with the ability to regard certain dangers with protective fear.

1. This is for man's preservation and safety.
 - a. When a barking dog jumps at you, the feeling of fright which comes into your heart is natural. It will

cause to you do whatever is necessary to avoid harm from the dog.

- b. As part of their growth training, children must be taught the dangers of playing in a busy street. Through a healthy fear and respect for cars and trucks, they will avoid foolish actions which may lead to harm.
2. We must be careful, however, not to let the reasonable fears turn into destroyers of our peace of mind.
 - a. Fear, as a natural emotion, can be destructive in our day to day living
 - b. I heard a story about a caged royal Bengal tiger at an exhibit. The great cat exhibited terror at the sight of a rat in its cage. If the rat moved around, the tiger ran or sprang away, as if it was afraid of its destruction. A drop of the tiger's paw would have crushed his enemy . . . but fear caused the tiger to miss the fact.

III. *Keys To Overcoming Fear.*

- A. You must believe you can win over fear - Psa 118:6; Heb 13:5
 1. This is the starting place.
 2. Fear cannot win over you unless you allow it to.
 3. Napoleon once said, "He who fears being conquered is sure of defeat.
- B. You must admit the existence of fear - Gen 3:10
 1. This is not easy because it goes against our pride.
 2. This will require honesty, personal examination, and courage on your part.
- C. Name the fear
 1. Don't use the nebulous, "I am afraid." Be specific.
 2. Name your fear . . . it is therapeutic for you.
- D. Try to recognize its origin
 1. It is not from God! - 2 Timothy 2:7
 2. It comes from other sources . . . wrong thinking . . . the flesh . . . the evil one, etc.
- E. Confess your fear to God - Phil 4:6

1. Don't be afraid or ashamed to say, "Father, I am afraid to stand before the Bible class," or whatever the fear may be.
 2. Your fear may have led you into a sinful condition.
 3. Always be honest with God - Heb 4:12-13
- F. Check your love quotient - 1 John 4:18
1. Do you need to work on your love?
- G. Do what you fear
1. This may be very difficult
 2. In some cases, it is the last step to overcoming the fear.
- H. Ask yourself, "What happened the last time I had this fear?" - 1 Sam 3:15
1. I am sure you will discover the answer will be "nothing." Fear immobilizes us and keeps us from acting
 2. That which you feared went on its way until you called it up again.
- I. Work on developing your faith - MK 4:40; Rom 10:17
1. We must trust God and His Word - Psa 2:12
 2. When we fill up on faith, fear does not have a chance.
 3. Fear and faith do not mix
- J. Separate the feeling of fear from the object of fear
1. This will usually prove to us that our fear is the product of our thinking
 2. This will help you recognize fear as an emotion you can handle
- K. Pray for strength to defeat your fear - Jas 1:5-7
- L. Resolve daily to reject fearfulness - Phil 4:8
1. Some psychologists believe that to acquire a new habit, a person must practice it a minimum of 21 times before it becomes part of his subconscious and thus productive in daily living
 2. You must be persistent in your attack on fear
- M. Claim God's power to help you - Eph 3:20; Rev 12:10; 2 Tim 2:7
- N. Be a disciplined person - Prov 12:1; 1 Tim 4:7
1. We are in control of what we think - Prov 23:7
 2. We do not have to let the spirit of fear into our hearts and minds

- O. Turn to others for help - Gal 6:1-2; 1 Jn 4:21
 - 1. This is one of the blessings of being in a spiritual family
 - 2. We can get help when we need it
- P. You may need to see a physician - Matt 9:12; Mk 2:17

Conclusion:

- A. Fear is a very real foe of the Christian's peace of mind
 - 1. It is a pervasive, powerful, and complex foe
 - 2. It does not come from God
 - 3. Through God's power and some simple principles, we can remove this enemy from our lives
- B. Our goal is to win over the negative fears that make spiritual cowards out of us
- C. Fear must be won over because it can arouse other negative emotions such as:
 - 1. Anger
 - 2. Hatred
 - 3. Depression
 - 4. Frustration
 - 5. And a host of other emotions as well