

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Psalm 91:1-9**.
- B. Psychologists tell us that we are born with two fears, the fear of falling and the fear of noise; but, we soon develop many more.
- C. It would be interesting to know how many different kinds of "phobias" there are.
- D. Members of a psychology class asked 500 people, "What are you afraid of?" These folks listed 7,000 fears! But, it need not be that way! Christ came to deliver us from our fears.
- E. Too many times we replace faith with fear.

I. THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF TWO KINDS OF FEAR.

A. *The fear commanded.*

This is the kind of fear that involves respect, honor, reverence and a sense of awe. Thus, we are to fear God (Eccl. 12:13; Psa. 2:11; Prov. 9:10; 16:6; Ac. 9:31; 1Pet. 2:17).

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

(Psa 2:11) Worship the LORD with reverence, And rejoice with trembling.

(Prov 9:10) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

(Prov 16:6) By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, And by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil.

(Ac 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.

(1Pet 2:17) Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

This fear leads to holiness (2Cor. 7:1), working out our own salvation (Phil. 2:12) and evangelism (2Cor. 5:11).

(2Cor 7:1) Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

(Phil 2:12) So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;...

(2Cor 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.

B. *The fear forbidden (is not caution).*

Fear that is synonymous with dread, alarm, fright, terror, apprehension, anxiety is forbidden (Psa. 91:5; Lk. 12:32). This fear is not to be confused with caution. For example, the fear of getting run over will cause one to look both ways before crossing the street. The fear of polio will cause one to take the vaccine. These type fears are normal and good.

(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."

II. AREAS WHEREIN FEAR OPERATES.

A. *Fear of failure.*

Fear of failure caused the one-talent man to do nothing (Mt. 25:25). The father of failure is the fear of failure. Do we have any right to be fearful of failure?

(Mt 25:25) 'And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground; see, you have what is yours.'

We do not have the right to fear failure because our responsibilities are according to our abilities (Mt. 25:15).

(Mt 25:15) "And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.

Has not our Lord promised us inevitable and assured success? (Isa. 55:11; Psa. 1:3; 1Cor. 15:58). It is ours to do the best we can and to leave results to God. We never fail when we do our best.

(Psa 1:3) And he will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.

(Isa 55:11) So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.

(1Cor 15:58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.

B. *Fear of responsibility.*

Because of fear the one talent man did not assume his responsibility (Mt. 25:25). Because of fear Israel shirked their responsibility in conquering the land (Deut. 1:22-29). Fear will keep us from fulfilling our responsibility in fishing for men (Lk. 5:10).

(Lk 5:10) ...and so also 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."

C. *Fear due to insecurity.*

Jesus went to great lengths teaching man that he should not have such fears (Mt. 6:24-34). God has always provided for His own (Psa. 37:25; Phil. 4:19).

(Psa 37:25) I have been young, and now I am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Or his descendants begging bread.

(Phil 4:19) And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

D. *Fear of what other men will say and think about them, or do to them*

(Isa. 51:12, 7; Ezek. 2:6; Lk. 12:4-7).

(Isa 51:12, 7) "I, even I, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, And of the son of man who is made like grass;..." 7 "Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, A people in whose heart is My law; Do not fear the reproach of man, Neither be dismayed at their revilings."

This type of fear often precipitates wrong doing. Because of fear, Peter denied the Lord (see Mt. 26:69-75). How many have been led to do carnal things (smoke, drink, etc.) because they feared what others would think or say (Prov. 29:25).

(Prov 29:25) The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.

E. *The fear death* (Heb. 2:15).

...and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

Much of the sting of death will be removed when men realize:

1. It is inevitable (1Cor. 15:22; Heb. 9:27).

(Heb 9:27) And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment,...

2. What it really is (1Th. 4:13-17; 2Tim. 4:6; 2Cor. 5:1; etc).

(2Cor 5:1) For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

3. It is the gateway to bliss and association with Jesus (Phil. 1:21-23).

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better;

4. There will be a resurrection (1Cor. 15:22; Jn. 5:28-29; 2Tim. 1:10).

(Jn 5:28-29) "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, 29 and shall come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment."

III. THE TRAGIC EFFECTS OF FEAR.

A. *Fear makes life a wretched experience and warps the personality.*

The latter days of King Saul are illustrative of this point (1Sam. 28:1-25, esp. 5, 20-21). "*Fear has torment*" (1Jn. 4:18). Fear is the dark room where negatives are developed.

B. *Fear paralyzes and prevents one from doing the will of God.*

Fear will cause us to become as dead men (Mt. 28:4). Because of fear men seek to excuse and rationalize themselves out of obedience to God. Moses did (Ex. 3:11,13; 4:1-10).

C. *Fear renders one useless.*

God told Gideon, "*Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead*" (Jud. 7:3). There is no place in the kingdom of God for the fearful. We are locked in the heat of battle

with the wicked one; and, in this battle, we will be called upon to stand, fight, endure and conquer (Eph. 6:10-14). This takes courage, not fear!

Finally, **be strong** in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. **11** Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able **to stand firm** against the schemes of the devil. **12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. **13** Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, **to stand firm**. **14** **Stand firm** therefore, **HAVING GIRDLED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,...**

D. *Fear brings defeat* (Mt. 14:28-31).

"He who fears being conquered is sure of defeat."

And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." **29** And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. **30** But seeing the wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" **31** And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said[^] to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

E. *Fear brings on the very thing(s) we fear* (Job 3:25).

"For what I fear comes upon me, And what I dread befalls me."

Peter's fear of sinking brought on his sinking. Fear of dropping the pass often causes the player to do that very thing. Fear of disease often brings on illness. In fact, we are told that 85% of the emotional and physical ills of men are brought on by fear.

F. *Fear spreads and is contagious* (Deut. 20:8; Jo. 14:8).

One elder with fear will often permeate the entire eldership thus, preventing some great work from being done.

(Deut 20:8) "Then the officers shall speak further to the people, and they shall 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."

G. *Fear kills and destroys*.

Suicide has become the 10th ranking cause of death in our nation. One young girl, who had attempted suicide, was asked why, and she replied, "I was afraid to go on living."

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

(Rev 21:8) "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

IV. HOW TO OVERCOME FEAR.

A. *Remember that fear is strictly prohibited* (Jn. 14:1, 27; Rev. 1:17-18; 2Tim. 1:7).

(Jn 14:1, 27) "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me." **27** "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."

(2Tim 1:7) For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

(Rev 1:17-18) And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, [18] and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

In fact, fear is a characteristic of the wicked (Prov. 28:1). "Fear not" and "be not afraid" appear in the Bible almost 180 times. Thus, to fear is to disobey God.

B. *Enthroned Christ*.

In 1Pet. 3:14, the apostle exhorts the early disciples not to fear. Then, in 3:15 he tells them how this is done: "**But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord**" (ASV).

C. *Put your faith and trust in God* (Prov. 3:25-26; 29:25).

(Prov 3:25-26) Do not be afraid of sudden fear, Nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes; **26** For the LORD will be your confidence, And will keep your foot from being caught.

(Prov 29:25) The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.

Faith is the foe of fear. It is either faith or fear!

- D. *Conceive of God as a Father* (Rom. 8:15).
 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"
 What child has not had his fears allayed on some dark night when he slipped his hand into his father's and walked with him side by side.
- E. *Never lose sight of the fact that you are in the presence of God and His help is near* (Psa. 46:1-2, 23; Gen. 26:24; Isa. 35:4). Courage is the very opposite of fear, and fear is eradicated by the consciousness of the Lord's presence (Heb. 13:6).
(Heb 13:6) ...so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT SHALL MAN DO TO ME?"
- F. *Rest in the love of God* (Eph. 3:17-19; Rom. 8:37-39).
(Eph 3:17-19) ...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, **19** and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.
(Rom 8:37-39) But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. **38** For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 "I know not where his islands lift their fronded palms in air. I only know I cannot drift beyond His love and care."
- G. *Never take counsel of your fears.*
 A general who was fearful of an attack planned in the Shenandoah Valley, and expressed his fears to Stonewall Jackson, was told by the courageous Jackson, "General, **never** take counsel of your fears." Instead of doing that, why not with Paul say, "**I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me**" (Phil. 4:13).
- H. *Fill your heart with love* (2Tim. 1:7; 1Jn. 4:18).
(2Tim 1:7) For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.
(1Jn 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.
 The more we love, the less we fear.

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. Replace your fear(s) with faith. Learn to trust God more, relax and do not be fearful.
- B. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), may our fear be a healthy one that respects God and desires to obey Him (Eccl. 12:13).
(Heb 11:6) And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
(Eccl 12:13) The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is*: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to every person*.
- C. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.