

FEAR is FAITH

That's Peter'd Out

3.0

In the mid-1960's David Frost hosted the TV show, "That Was The Week That Was," a satirical look at current events. Arguably, the top two game-changer weeks of all time are (1) Creation Week when God the Son, Jesus Christ, spoke the world into existence and (2) Passion Week when the Creator willingly went to the cross to be the only acceptable Sacrifice for our sin.

Our Lord was **HAILED** on Palm Sunday, **HUNG** on Good Friday and **HIGHLY EXALTED** on Easter Sunday. That Thursday at the Last Supper Jesus tells His disciples that they all will forsake Him. Peter swears he'd die first.

Dreading the agony of shouldering *every* sin ever committed, and of being temporarily separated from His Father by our sin, Jesus takes His core group aside to pour His heart out to His Father. As He prays, they snooze. Roman troops arrest Him and haul Him off to the first of six overnight trials.

Jesus' men scatter, but Peter and John follow Him at a distance, fearing their fate by association. Jesus had warned Peter not to tag along (Matthew 26:31). Had he obeyed, he would've averted his coming collapse. All four gospel writers acknowledge Peter's three disavowals of knowing His Mentor. Each has elements the others omit. **So let's read all four: Matthew 26:57-75; Mark 14:53-15:1; Luke 22:54-71; John 18:15-27.**

Peter and the Supremes

Peter and John pull up at the palace of high priest Caiaphas who, as president of the Sanhedrin, will put Jesus on the stand. Leaving Peter at the gate, John is ushered into the home of Jerusalem's senior religious VIP. Until a quorum of the supreme court's seventy justices can assemble, Jesus is arraigned before Annas. After this preliminary hearing Annas bucks Him on over to Caiaphas.

As Jesus is being grilled, Peter will have three chances to speak up for his Lord. Sensitive to Peter's insecurity, John emerges from the palace and speaks to a servant who promptly opens the gate for Peter, saying, "I know *you*. You're with Jesus." Shoot-first Pistol Pete snaps, "Not me. I don't know the guy!" (**DENIAL #1**) Had Peter agreed, he could've joined John inside and never lied.

DISCUSS: Describe a time when you spoke first and thought later.

Paranoid with fright, Peter slips in with others around a fire to ward off the chill. A second servant notices him and announces, "That man was with Jesus." Seething with an oath, Peter barks, "I am NOT with that man!" (**DENIAL #2**)

Caiaphas calls witnesses who testify falsely that Jesus said He'd "destroy this temple and within three days build another," inferring that Jesus meant their house of worship. Not true; He was predicting His own death and resurrection.

Running out of illegal options, Caiaphas demands, "Tell us if You're the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus answers, "Yes, it is as you say." That does it! The Chief Justice has heard enough and concludes, "Blasphemy! He's worthy of death." At once the guards start mocking, slapping and spitting on our Lord (Isaiah 50:6).

An onlooker speaks up, "This guy's with Jesus. Just listen, they have the same accent." Cursing, veins popping, Pete protests one last time, "Hey, I do NOT know that man!" (**DENIAL #3**) Instantly, a rooster crows as Jesus is led away to face Pilate. Christ turns to see Peter's tear-filled eyes. It's a look of love, not rebuke, because He's about to suffer and give His life on an unforgiving cross for Peter ... and for you and me.

DISCUSS (group of 3): Describe when you were betrayed and the outcome.

Play Chicken, Eat Crow

Peter had spent three years with this gifted Teacher, Miracle-worker, Water-walker, Winemaker, Feeder of 20,000 using only the meager contents of a lad's lunch. How could salty Peter dare claim that He didn't know Jesus? What's the point of this disappointing chapter in his life?

DISCUSS: How would being with Jesus for three years change you?

Fear is an emotional response to potential danger. It can be life-saving or life-threatening, robbing its victim of health, happiness, even life. Satan delights in using fear to undermine the peace God offers us.

Old Testament *fear* usually means "to honor or worship." "Fearing God," in that sense, is the source of wisdom that shapes our inner being and outward behavior (Joshua 1:9; Proverbs 4:20-27, 9:10-12). New Testament usage conveys respecting and obeying God (Romans 13:7). Jesus advises, "Don't fear those who can kill the body but not the soul. Instead, fear the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Knowing that God's well-deserved judgment for our sin has been fully and forever satisfied by Christ relieves the believer from the fear of ever again being condemned for his sin (Romans 8:1). Jesus' followers fear nothing but God (Deuteronomy 7:21; Isaiah 8:13).

DISCUSS: How does "fearing God" look when you do it?

Lessons From Peter's Long, Dark Night Of The Soul

Paul says if you're experiencing fear, just know that it's not from God. He gives you His power, love and sound mind to eradicate your fears (2 Timothy 1:7).

Power -- God is in control. Trust Him, His plan and His timing. In your weakness He **IS** your strength (**2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Philipians 4:12-13**). It matters not who's against us since God is all for us (**Romans 1:16, 8:31**). **Sometimes God permits in His wisdom what He could prevent with His power.** Don't demand to understand. Peter had seen his Lord's authority over wind and waves, disease and death. God's power trumps our problems (I John 4:4). Peter was very bold, so that's what Satan attacked. Abraham's strength was his faith in God. **Let's read about his test in Genesis 22:1-19.**

Love – As God the Father's adopted son by faith in Him, you're loved by Him just as much as He loves Jesus (John 17:21-23)! (Does Jesus fear anything? Exactly! Nor should we!) One day you may hear that "fowl" wake-up call. God is at work in your failure and is eager to restore you. Despite Pete's loyalty lapse, Jesus had big plans for him to be a "rock" in His kingdom -- to energize victims of religious persecution, to lead thousands of Jews to Christ, and to write two letters which still guide us today two millennia later!

Sound mind – Stay alert for opportunities to lift up, not cover up Jesus. When you welcomed Christ to be the Lord of your life, He **GAVE** you His mind (1 Corinthians 2:14-16; Romans 12:2)! Saturate your soul with Scripture, and gain *true* wisdom to see life from God's perspective and begin to actually think God's thoughts (Philippians 2:5)! It sounds weird, but it revolutionizes you when you live based on what you know, not how you feel. **Let's read one of the most assuring passages from God's Word, Psalms 91:1-16.**

As dearly loved sons, we have God's guarantee that He's orchestrating each detail of our lives for our ultimate good (Romans 8:28). We have His Word on it.

Have you cast your lot with Jesus Christ? Put your faith in Him, and He promises that "you will be saved!" Today is your best opportunity to do just that. Before the rooster crows.

His Deal

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“FEAR NOT” VERSES

God: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I will shield you from danger” (Genesis 15:1).

God to Isaac: “I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid; I am with you” (Genesis 26:24).

God to Moses: “I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go to Egypt; I will make your descendants a great nation there. I will go with you to Egypt and bring your descendants back to this land” (Genesis 46:3-4).

Joseph to his brothers: “Don’t be afraid ... You plotted evil against me, but God turned it into good in order to preserve the lives of many people who are alive today because of what happened. You have nothing to fear. I will take care of you and your children” (Genesis 50:19-21a).

“Don’t be afraid for the Lord your God will fight for you” (Deuteronomy 3:22).

“The Lord will lead you and be with you. He will not fail you or abandon you, so do not lose courage or be afraid” (Deuteronomy 31:6).

God to Joshua: “Remember that I have commanded you to be determined and confident! Do not be afraid or discouraged for I, the Lord your God, am with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

“Elisha's servant saw Syrian troops with their horses and chariots surrounding them. He went to Elisha and exclaimed, ‘We are doomed, sir! What shall we do?’ ‘Don't be afraid,’ Elisha answered. ‘We have more on our side than they have on theirs.’ Then Elisha prayed, ‘O Lord, open his eyes, and let him see!’ The Lord answered his prayer. Elisha's servant looked up and saw the hillside covered with horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (2 Kings 6:15-17).

“Even if I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, Lord, for You are with me. Your shepherd’s rod and staff protect me” (Psalm 23:4).

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; I will fear no one. The Lord protects me from all danger; I will never be afraid” (Psalm 27:1).

“I prayed to the Lord, and He answered me; He freed me from all my fears” (Psalm 34:4).

“God is our shelter and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not be afraid, even if earth is shaken and mountains fall into the ocean depths; even if seas roar and rage, and the hills are shaken by the violence” (Psalm 46:1-3; see Revelation 6:12-17).

“Be merciful to me, God, I am under attack; my enemies persecute me all the time. When I am afraid, O Lord Almighty, I put my trust in You and am not afraid; I praise Him for what He has promised. What can a mere human do to me” (Psalm 56:1-4)?

“When I am anxious and worried, You (Lord) comfort me and make me glad” (Psalm 94:19).

“The Lord is with me, I will not be afraid ... It is better to trust in the Lord than to depend on human leaders” (Psalm 118:6,7).

“You will not be afraid when you go to bed and will sleep soundly through the night. You will not have to worry ... ” (Proverbs 3:24-25).

“It is dangerous to be concerned with what others think of you; if you trust the Lord, you are safe” (Proverbs 29:25).

“Tell all who are discouraged, ‘Be strong, don’t be afraid! God will rescue you” (Isaiah 35:4).

“Do not be afraid—I am with you! I am your God—let nothing terrify you! I will make you strong and help you; I will protect you and save you” (Isaiah 41:10).

God to Israel: “Do not be afraid. I will save you. I have called you by name. You are Mine. When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you; your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through fire, you will not be burned; the hard trials that come will not hurt you. I am the Lord your God, the holy God of Israel, who saves you” (Isaiah 43:1-3).

God: “I am the one who strengthens you. Why should you fear mortals who are no more enduring than grass? Have you forgotten the Lord who made you, who stretched out the heavens and laid the earth’s foundations? Why should you constantly fear those who oppress you, those who are ready to destroy you? Their fury can no longer touch you“ (Isaiah 51:12-13).

Jesus: “Do not start worrying: ‘Where will my food come from? Or drink? Or clothes? Your Father knows you need them. Instead, be concerned above all with the Kingdom of God and what He requires of you, and He will provide all these things. Do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings” (Matthew 6:31-34).

Jesus: “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather be in awe of God who can destroy both body and soul in hell. ... not one sparrow falls to the ground without your Father’s consent. ...even the hairs of your head have all been counted. Do not be afraid; you are worth much more than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:28-31)!

“Martha welcomed Jesus into her home. Her sister Mary sat at His feet and listened to His teaching. Martha was upset over all the work she had to do and said, ‘Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me!’ The Lord answered, ‘Martha, Martha! You are worried and troubled over so many things, but just one is needed. Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will not be taken from her” (Luke 10:38-42).

Jesus: “Do not be worried and upset. Believe in God and believe also in me ... it is My own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does ... do not be afraid” (John 14:1,27).

“... there is nothing in all creation that will ever separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39).

“Don’t worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking with a thankful heart. And God’s peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6,7).

“For the Spirit that God has given us does not make us (fearful): instead His Spirit fills us with power, love and self-control” (2 Timothy 1:7).

“Do not be afraid of anyone, and do not worry. But have reverence for Christ in your hearts, and honor him as Lord” (1 Peter 3:14b-15a).

“Leave all your worries with (God) because He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

“Perfect love (God’s love) casts out fear ...” (1 John 4:18).

Jesus: “Don’t be afraid! I am the first and the last. I am the living one! I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever. I have authority over death and the world of the dead” (Revelation 1:17,18).