

Fear vs Faith

v1.0

The car radio butts in with a bulletin: “A mental patient has escaped Western State Hospital near Memphis. Take no chances. He is extremely dangerous.”

I’m only 12 years old, off on a fishing junket with our 60-something neighbor, Guy Carter, and his brother. That bulletin sobers our mood as we veer onto a dirt road, a free throw from a one-lane bridge over our destination. Juggling poles and tackle, we gingerly skid down the high bank.

Moments later twilight’s eerie hush is pierced by hideous, inhuman moans from beyond the bridge. I scoot closer to the grow-ups. A few yards away a shadowy figure looms, then wades midstream past us, arms swinging gorilla-style until his groans fade from earshot. This easily ranks as my first taste of 100-proof fright.

What do we fear? Failure, rejection, joblessness, illness, crime, loneliness, aging, death, the hereafter, the unknown. Fear can hover like an angry cloud or strike like a lightning bolt. Doctors say 90% of patients come in due to fear. How does the Great Physician diagnose it and prescribe a remedy? **Let’s read Mark 4:35-41.**

35 *As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let’s cross to the other side of the lake.”* **36** *So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (others followed).* **37** *But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water.* **38** *Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with His head on a cushion. The disciples woke Him up, shouting, “Teacher, don’t you care that we’re going to drown?”* **39** *When Jesus woke up, He rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Silence! Be still!” Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm.* **40** *Then He asked them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?”* **41** *The disciples were absolutely terrified. “Who is this Man?” they asked each other. “Even the wind and waves obey Him!”*

“Jesus, Take The Wheel!”

Baptized by cousin John, Jesus drops His carpentry tools, recruits a dozen interns and begins doing miracles and teaching about the kingdom of God. Crowds follow. Bone-tired, He boards a boat, telling His crew to “Shove off!”

Night pulls up the covers on the Sea of Galilee. Suddenly a fierce storm engulfs them, swamping their vessel. We find the Lord aft, catching some z's. Scared silly and irked at Jesus' indifference, Peter, James, John and His other disciples rouse Him. "Teacher, we'll die out here if You don't save us! Don't you care?"

Jesus rearranges Himself, calmly surveys the situation and speaks to the storm as you might chide your family dog: "Settle down!" Like flipping a switch, wind and waves vanish, to the astonishment of His panicky passengers.

DISCUSS: Describe a time when God seemed AWOL.

"Faith Your Fears"

The abrupt halt of this howling tempest terrified the men. It was s-s-o s-s-supernatural! They must be mumbling, "D'joo see that? Teacher even rules the weather!" These gnarly fishermen had just seen Jesus feed 20,000 people from a handful of fish and bread ... but now this!

This frightening cruise had turned their faith inside out. Faith believes something *good* will happen. Fear believes the reverse. The Bible defines **faith** as "confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1) **When we forget that God's in control, our trust in Him peters out and turns into fear.**

Satan, our enemy, is on a jihad to "kill, steal and destroy." (John 10:10) Before sin polluted God's pristine planet, there were no terrors, manmade or otherwise, to fear.

DISCUSS: Why would God allow things that cause fear?

The Master of wind and waves always poses the right question at the right moment. He goes for their jugular. "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" **Fear fills a faith vacuum, and faith erases fear.**

Earlier Jesus had told His mates not to fret about what might happen to them, about what they'd eat or wear. After all, His Father feeds the birds and knows when each one falls. Jesus' next question ices it: "Can any of you, by worrying, add a single hour to your life?" (Matthew 6:25-27)

DISCUSS: Describe a time when you chose fear or trust.

The Boys In The Boat

The late Ray Stedman finds two trustworthy lifelines in this account: “(1) **Your boat will not sink when the Master of ocean and earth and sky is in it.** (2) **The storm won’t last forever.**” *Fear* ignores these facts. Faith rests on them ... and may even catch a few z’s while waiting out the storm.

Have you flunked God’s faith finals? If so, He won’t expel you (Romans 11:29). When your faith peters out, He just keeps repeating the test ‘til you trust Him (Romans 8:28-29).

God knew David would level Goliath, that Daniel would survive the lions’ den, that Jesus would bring Lazarus back to life. In each case fear could have triumphed, but victory is assured when we rely on God’s strength, not our own. As Paul puts it, “**God hasn’t given us a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind.**” (2 Timothy 1:7)

With power, love and a sound mind, how will you defeat fear? **Let’s read:**

“¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:10-12)

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.” (Romans 1:16)

“⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore, God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:5-11)

“³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than

conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35-39

“What, Me Worry?”

Many voices are trying to instill fear in all of us today. When you know who God is, when you trust Him and His promises, you have absolutely nothing to fear, not even fear itself!

Jesus is asking you today, “What are you afraid of? Have you no faith?” Here’s good news: He’ll even GIVE you the faith to trust Him in life and in death (Ephesians 2:8-9). If you haven’t placed your trust in Christ’s love for you and in His sacrifice for your sins, do it today, do it now. If you already have, then thank Him for His unequalled gift.

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“FEAR NOT” VERSES

“After this, Abram had a vision and heard the Lord say to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I will shield you from danger and give you a great reward’” (Genesis 15:1).

“That night the Lord appeared to (Isaac) and said, ‘I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid; I am with you ...’” (Genesis 26:24).

“‘I am God, the God of your father,’ (God) said. ‘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 I will bring your descendants back to this land’” (Genesis 46:3-4).

Joseph to his brothers: “Don’t be afraid; I can’t put myself in the place of God. 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.’ So he reassured them with kind words that touched their hearts” (Genesis 50:19-21).

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

“The Lord himself 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 following Moses’ death: “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).

“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 the earth is shaken and mountains fall into the ocean depths; even if the seas roar and rage, and the hills are shaken by the violence” (Psalm 46:1-3; Revelation 6:12-17).

“Be merciful to me, O God, because I am under attack; my enemies persecute me all the time. All day long my opponents attack me. There are so many who fight against me. When I am afraid, O Lord

Almighty, I put my trust in You. I trust in God and am not afraid; I praise Him for what He has promised. What can a mere human being 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; what can anyone do to me? It is the Lord who helps me, and I will see my enemies defeated. It is better to trust in the Lord than to depend on human leaders” (Psalm 118:6,7).

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

“Tell everyone who is discouraged, ‘Be strong and don’t be afraid! God is coming to your rescue, coming to punish your enemies” (Isaiah 35:4).

“(God) will make you strong and help you; (God) will protect you and save you” (Isaiah 41:10).

“Israel, the Lord who created you, says, ‘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. For I am the Lord your God, the holy God of Israel, who saves you ...” (Isaiah 43:1-3).

Jesus: “So do not start worrying: ‘Where will my food come from? Or my drink? Or my clothes? These are the things the pagans are always concerned about. Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things. So 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).

“So do not be afraid of people. ... Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather be afraid of (be in awe of) God who can destroy both body and soul in hell. For only a penny you can buy two sparrows, yet not one sparrow falls to the ground without your Father’s consent. As for you,

even the hairs of your head have all been counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth much more than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:26-31)!

Jesus: "Don't be afraid; only believe" (Mark 5:36).

Jesus: "Do not be worried and upset. Believe in God and believe also in me." (John 14:1).

Jesus: "Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid" (John 14:27).

"... there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to 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).

"Let us be bold then and say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me'" (Hebrews 13:6)?

"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 (i.e., 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).