

Fear vs Faith v3.0

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:**

First, Matthew 26:57-75 ...

⁵⁷ Those who had arrested Jesus took Him to Caiaphas the high priest where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. ⁵⁸ But Peter followed Him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome. ⁵⁹ The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put Him to death. ⁶⁰ But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.

Finally two came forward ⁶¹ and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’” ⁶² Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” ⁶³ But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”

⁶⁴ “You have said so,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. ⁶⁶ What do you think?”

“He is worthy of death,” they answered.

⁶⁷ Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him ⁶⁸ and said, “Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?”

⁶⁹ Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. “You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said. ⁷⁰ But he denied it before them all. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said.

⁷¹ Then he went out to the gateway where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.” ⁷² He denied it again, with an oath: “I don’t know the man!”

⁷³ After a little while those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.”

⁷⁴ Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!” Immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵ Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown Me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Next, Mark 14:53-15:1 ...

⁵³ *They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law came together.* ⁵⁴ *Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.*

⁵⁵ *The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any.* ⁵⁶ *Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.*

⁵⁷ *Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against Him:* ⁵⁸ *“We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands.’”* ⁵⁹ *Yet even then their testimony did not agree.*

⁶⁰ *Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Are You not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against You?”* ⁶¹ *But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.* Again the high priest asked Him, “Are You the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”

⁶² *“I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”*

⁶³ *The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked.* ⁶⁴ *“You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”* They all condemned him as worthy of death. ⁶⁵ *Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, “Prophecy!”* And the guards took him and beat him.

⁶⁶ *While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by.* ⁶⁷ *When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. “You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus,” she said.* ⁶⁸ *But he denied it. “I don’t know or understand what you’re talking about,” he said, and went out into the entryway.*

⁶⁹ *When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, “This fellow is one of them.”* ⁷⁰ *Again he denied it.*

After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean."

⁷¹ He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about."

⁷² Immediately the rooster crowed the second time.^[b] Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice^[c] you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept.

15:1 Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led Him away and handed Him over to Pilate.

Continuing with Luke 22:54-71 ...

⁵⁴ Seizing Him, they led Him away and took Him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. ⁵⁵ And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. ⁵⁶ A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with Him."

⁵⁷ But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know Him," he said.

⁵⁸ A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them."

"Man, I am not!" Peter replied.

⁵⁹ About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with Him, for he is a Galilean."

⁶⁰ Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." ⁶² And he went outside and wept bitterly.

⁶³ *The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating Him.* ⁶⁴ *They blindfolded Him and demanded, “Prophecy! Who hit you?”*⁶⁵ *And they said many other insulting things to Him.*

⁶⁶ *At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and the teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them.* ⁶⁷ *“If you are the Messiah,” they said, “tell us.”*

Jesus answered, “If I tell you, you will not believe me, ⁶⁸ and if I asked you, you would not answer.⁶⁹ But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”

⁷⁰ *They all asked, “Are you then the Son of God?” He replied, “You say that I am.”*

⁷¹ *Then they said, “Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from His own lips.”*

Finally, 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 turns Him 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.” Pete snaps, “Not me. I don’t know the Guy!” 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!”

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!” 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: Describe when you were betrayed as well as 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; Philippians 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 (1 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)! (Jesus fears nothing. Nor should we!) 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 encourage those persecuted for their faith in Jesus, 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. You'll 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 on how you feel. **Let's read one of the most assuring passages from God's Word:**

Here's Psalm 91:1-16 ...

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. ² I will say of the Lord, "He is My Refuge and My Fortress, My God, in whom I trust." ³ Surely He will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. ⁴ He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. ⁵ You will not fear the terror of night nor the arrow that flies by day, ⁶ nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. ⁷ A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. ⁸ You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

⁹ If you say, "The Lord is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling, ¹⁰ no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. ¹¹ For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; ¹² they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. ¹³ You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ¹⁴ "Because He loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges My name. ¹⁵ He will call on Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him and honor him. ¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy him and show him My salvation."

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). To be sure, we even 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 that darned rooster crows.

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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).