

# "GOD I'M AFRAID"

Many people feel they'll get rid of fear as they grow older. but because fear is one of the base emotions of the human heart, we never seem to be completely free of it.

The dictionary gives three different shades of meaning to fear: (1) Fear is a feeling of anxiety and agitation caused by the presence or nearness of danger. Practically speaking, its the feeling you get in the pit of your stomach when you're called in to see the boss after doing something wrong! (2) Fear is a feeling of uneasiness. For example, when your teenager isn't in by curfew you're afraid something has happened to him. (3) Fear is also a feeling of a respectful awe or dread ---as when you encounter a snake.

Fear is an emotional response which is consciously recognized, stimulated usually by some real threat. Fear is the tense feeling which grips you when you are faced with the tough problems of life. Have you ever felt your emotions were like taut guitar strings? Fear stretches your emotions and leaves you feeling all wound up.

In the New Testament, three different words are translated fear: (1) DEILIA which is always used in a negative sense. It is used of those who denied the faith under duress. It is the anxiety that comes from pressures. (2) PHOBOS(from which we get the English word "Phobia") is more neutral. Sometimes it's good for a person to have phobias. Fear **in** the presence of danger is a good type of phobia. (3) EULABEIA indicates reverence toward God. It is always used in a good sense; as in Hebrews 12:28: "Therefore since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe."

Lets focus on the negative aspect (DEILIA) of fear.

People are afraid of many things ---the dark, high places, the unknown, other people, failure, bad breath, of not being accepted by God, the day of judgment. Our minds can't be at rest when fear is pumping adrenalin into our system with the signal to "fight" or "flee".

I was working on the greenhouse taking the side off and I pulled and opened one side up above my head and thousands of ants fell out and all over me. On my head and face, in my mouth and all over my body. Later I looked all over as I was speaking to my wife and said no bites, thank you, My Father. My wife said to me, one of the reasons you don't get the bites like the rest of us do is you do not become afraid, you do not get your adrenalin pumping like the rest of us so there is no signal of fear. She was right I just took my time brushing them off easy. Results, no bites, but most of all the credit goes to God for His protection He gives us.

In recent years, doctors have found that some fears are caused by physiological problems. When the human system is out of balance, fears may result. A person who suffers from constant fears should first see his doctor for a thorough check up.

But most fears can be traced back to a spiritual problem because the ultimate cause of fear is sin. The first record of fear in the human race is in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve were placed in God's beautiful garden where He had fellowship with them and came to see them every day. It

was a beautiful relationship. Then one day as God came looking for Adam and Eve they were nowhere to be found.

God called out to Adam, "Where are you?" Adam replied from the bushes where he and Eve were hiding, "----I heard the sound of You in the garden and I was afraid ----So I hid myself." (Gen. 3:9-10)

Afraid? Why should Adam be afraid of God, his creator and friend? He had disobeyed God, and now fear gripped his soul. The immediate consequence of sin is fear of God.

Paul tells us that God established governments and we are to be subject to them. As long as we are doing what is right, we have no reason to be afraid of the government. But the rebellious citizen who has violated a command of God should be afraid of the authorities; they are God's ministers to execute wrath upon the evil doer (Romans 13:4). "If you want to dance," says an old saying "you will have to pay the fiddler." Fear is one of the consequences of rebellion against God and government.

Fear does not originate with God, "For God has not given us the spirit of timidity, (fear) but of power and love and discipline" (II Tim. 1:7). Since fear doesn't come from God it must come from Satan, and it's one of his best tools to make you ineffective for God.

Sin causes fear! (But that doesn't mean every fear is a sin.) We don't want to face God when we have sinned against. We don't want to face our parents when we have disobeyed them. We don't want to face the boss when we have failed to carry out our assigned responsibilities, why are we afraid? Because we haven't done what we know we should. We have disobeyed --and the resulting consequence is fear.

Chronic fear wrecks havoc in our lives: "----- fear involves punishment --" (I John 4:18.) When fear is present, we suffer penalties; fear produces physical, emotional, and spiritual problems.

In the physical realm, fear can limit the normal life span. People live under the constant threat of heart failure, and one of its chief culprits is hypertension. Research concerning this silent killer reveals that tensions and fears are contributing causes. Unresolved fear will add to our tension and perhaps be a factor in cutting short our three-score and ten. It can also limit many enjoyable activities. How many people do you know who are afraid to fly in an airplane?

Fear will cause a person to withdraw from daily activities, Some people have phobias (fears) that cause them to hide in their houses and not come out. Their life activities are circumscribed by fears.

Fear also creates emotional problems and impairs a person's ability to reason logically. What happens when we panic? We can't think straight; we're too busy trying to swallow our hearts to think logically.

Fear can produce a persecution complex. I know some people who think everyone is out to get them. Every time they hear a siren they're sure the police are coming for one of the family, or an ambulance is carrying a family member to the hospital. That kind of fear will put you through an emotional wringer.

Fear causes spiritual problems and paralyzes faith. As long as fear is allowed to persist our effectiveness for God is limited. Faith will banish fear, or else fear will banish faith. Some become so afraid that not only can they not trust God for something big, they can't even trust Him for their daily bread. Fear causes many spiritual paralytics.

Fear condemns you to a life of immeasurable misery, and few things are as unbecoming and pathetic as a miserable child of God. (Even the misery of a non-Christian cannot compare to that of the child of God who is heir of the universe, power, love and wisdom of God!)

We know we're not supposed to be afraid, but our efforts to "kick the habit" are fruitless. We cry out, "Why can't I quit being afraid? I know I'm to fear not, but I don't know how to obey god's co=-.and. How can I stop?"

God's solution for dear deals with unnecessary fears. We should have a respect or dread of danger to walk off a ten story building is not fearlessness; it's foolishness. We are supposed to maintain a reverential awe (or fear) of God. God's solution for fear deals with the inner tension that comes to tear us apart emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Three things are essential in coping with fear.

First: Realize fear is not part of God's program for us. We are told emphatically to "fear not" Likewise, we are commanded to be "bold" -- boldness is the opposite of fear.

Since fear is not part of God's plan, we are to do something about it. We can't escape it by taking a daily dose of tranquilizers, nor by a weekly visit to the psychotherapist. We can't defeat our fears by taking a rest at the Sheraton where "busy executives unwind." Deliverance from fears begins with a correct mental attitude.

Second: Recognize we do not face our problems alone.

It makes no difference how severe our problems become, we are not alone. God does not jump out of the boat and leave us to "paddle our own canoe" when the going gets rough. God is with us even when our personal safety is threatened. The survival instinct is a powerful drive and most people will do anything to stay alive. Even though we have the prospect of leaving this life and being with Christ which is far better, most of us are in no hurry to do so.

You know how the old joke goes when the pastor preaching on going to heaven issued this unique invitation, "all those who want to go to heaven, stand up."

Everyone in the church stood up except a little man on the front row.

"Sir, Don't you want to go to heaven?" asked the preacher.  
"Yes," the man replied.  
"Then why didn't you stand up with the rest of the people?"  
"Oh, I thought you were making up a load to go tonight!"

Most people want to go to heaven or to be with God, but are in no hurry to catch the flight.

Our Lord gave some pertinent advice to His disciples when they learned they would face problems and persecutions. "----do not fear those who kill the body ---" (Matt. 10:28). Why shouldn't we be afraid of those who are able to kill us? We are going to die anyway, so why fear those who have the power to bring about death?

We are not to fear those who have the axe or gun to rob us of our physical house. Rather Jesus instructs us to fear the one who has the power to kill the soul! The body is temporal, the spirit eternal. The only justifiable fear is divine fear, because God deals in eternal matters. We need not fear men who can hurt the body because God is the keeper of the spirit.

Many people are anxious and concerned about their personal worth. Jesus made it clear the real worth is measured by God, not those around us. It is nice when our peers confirm our value, but it is nothing to get uptight about if they don't .

Quit worrying about what you're worth to those around .."you; their evaluation isn't what counts. God is the one who places the value on your personal worth.

Jesus continued His comforting words to the disciples: "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? and yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore do not fear; You are of more value than many sparrows." (Matt 10:29).

Even insignificant little sparrows are of value to God; He takes note when one of them falls. But we are of more value than many sparrows. It doesn't matter what value other men place on our lives. We are worth something to God. He is with us always to take care of His investment.

God is with us even though we may only have a few of this world's possessions. People have the tendency to be fearful in the presence of those who have great material fortunes. We fret and stew about what we have or don't have, as though it were important to God.

Let your way of life be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). We are not to be afraid; regardless of what we have, be content. This is a radical departure from contemporary philosophy which says "get more and more and more."

So that we can say confidently, "The lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?" (Heb. 13:6) Once we recognize God is involved in our lives, our point of reference will change from temporary to the eternal. God's omnipotent presence with us when we face problems will remove the poison darts of fear.

Finally: We need to rest\_ in the peace Christ gives. Peace means a "mind at ease." Jesus Christ promised us His relaxed mental attitude toward life's harried moments. It's hard to comprehend Christ's example of peace in the face of problems and danger. He knew better than anyone the kind of agony and suffering He would have to endure on the cross. But with assurance from God and a relaxed mental attitude, He endured the taunts and abuses heaped upon Him because He knew He was carrying out God's will. He faced agony with His mind at ease and thus left a perfect example of a life lived without Tear

The night before His death on the cross, Jesus gathered the disciples together in the upper room for farewell instructions. In the midst of the discourse, Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you; not as the world gives, do I give to you." (John 14:27)

After the promise of peace, He urged them to rest on His peace: "Let not your hearts be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:27). When we can relax in His peace, rest in His peace, we will not be rapped to emotional shreds by the shears of daily tensions and problems. When we allow fear to invade and sear our lives, we admit we're not utilizing the relaxed mental attitude Jesus promised us.

He doesn't guarantee to immunize or keep us from danger and problems; but He does guarantee peace in the midst of danger. Most of us frantically pursue protection from the problems rather than seek God's peace through them. We desperately cry out to God for deliverance but seldom pray for a relaxed mental attitude. Seeking deliverance rather than peace may cause us to miss the lesson God wants to teach us. The next time the bottom falls out, instead of asking God to put the bottom back in, ask Him to grant you the ability to relax and enjoy His peace.

We all face pressures that produce anxiety, uneasiness, and fear. We can't stop the pressures but we can learn to deal with them.

If we want to live above the anxiety producing circumstances, we will have to understand His will.

When fear seeks to paralyze your life, let God bring you out of its darkness into the light of His peace.

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