Overcoming Fear

INTRODUCTION:
A. Two passages:
   1. John 14:1 – “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me.”
   2. John 14:27 – “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, **neither let it be afraid.**”
B. Illustration: A group of 100 college students were asked to list their fears. The group produced a composite list of over 500 fears.
   1. How many fear do you have?
   2. Fear is a major enemy of emotional well being . . . It seeks to destroy our peace of mind.
   3. A physician once said, “The most common and the most subtle of all human diseases is fear.”
   4. Roosevelt was right when he said, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”
   5. Why is fear to be feared? Because of the destruction and unrest it brings to our lives.
C. Illustration: I read about a man who saw a snake about the same time he was pricked by a barbed wire. Thinking he was bitten by the snake, he foamed at the mouth and acted as though he was dying. When a doctor arrived and saw that there was no swelling at the abrasion, he assured the man he had not been bitten. The man became well almost instantly. Herein we see the power of fear.

THE BIBLE AND FEAR:
A. Question: According to the Bible, aren’t we commanded to fear?
   1. Three passages from the Book of Proverbs.
      a. Proverbs 1:7 – “The fear of the **LORD** is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”
      a. Proverbs 9:10 - “The fear of the **LORD** is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the **Holy One** is understanding.”
      c. Proverbs 22:4 – “The result of humility is fear of the **LORD**.”
   2. The fear, however, we are discussing is the kind Paul talks about in 2 Timothy 1:7 – “For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.”
B. There are several Greek words that are translated “fear” in our English translations of the Bible.
   1. The basic word is “phobos.”
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1. “Phobos” has several meanings among which are respect and reverential fear of God (Romans 8:15; Acts 9:31; Ephesians 5:31).
   a. “Phobos” is not the word used in 2 Timothy 1:7
2. In 2 Timothy 1:7, Paul uses the word “deilia.”
   a. “Deilia” denotes moral cowardice and timidity, and is never used in a good sense.
   b. It is an inward sensation of fear.
   c. It is the kind of fear that arose in the hearts of the disciples when a great tempest arose on the Sea of Galilee. Matthew 8:23-26
   d. The fear of circumstances, the fear of others, of the fear of the unknown, often makes a person a coward.
   e. Fear (“Phobos”) (respect) of God, on the other hand, makes the righteous as bold as a lion . . . not a coward.
3. The adjective form of “deilia” is used in Revelation 21:8 where it tells us that “the fearful will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.”
4. Peace does not exist where there is a “spirit of fear.”

NOT ALL FEAR IS BAD.

A. Illustration: Running the two long blocks after Larry turned toward his house. Street light was often out, and did not put out much light when it was working. In retrospect I guess I saved our little town quite a bit on its electric bill.
   1. My emotions pushed the fear button and my legs and feet responded in kind.
   2. I don’t know how many unofficial world records I set on those various occasions. I wish I could have run that fast on the football field and on the baseball diamond.
   3. I am confident that many of you have similar stories about your grouping-up days.
   4. Michael de Montaigne, an influential writer during the French Renaissance, was right when he said: “Fear sometimes adds wings to the heels, and sometimes nails them to the ground, and fetters them from moving.”
   5. A certain amount of fear seems necessary for our growing-up.

B. Fear as a basic human emotion is not wrong per se.
   1. God has created man with the ability to regard certain dangers with protective fear. This is for man’s preservation and safety.
      a. When a barking dog jumps at you, the feeling of fright which comes into your heart is natural. It will cause to you do whatever is necessary to avoid harm from the dog.
      b. As part of their growth training, children must be taught the dangers of playing in a busy street. Through a healthy fear and respect for cars and trucks, they will avoid foolish actions which may lead to harm.
2. We must be careful, however, not to let the reasonable fears turn into destroyers of our peace of mind.
   a. **Illustration**: I read about a caged royal Bengal tiger at an exhibit. The great cat exhibited terror at the sight of a rat in its cage. If the rat moved around, the tiger ran or sprang away, as if it was afraid of its destruction. A drop of the tiger’s paw would have crushed his enemy . . . but fear caused the tiger to miss the fact.
   b. Fear, as a natural emotion, can be destructive in our day to day living.
   c. **Illustration**: If you hear the cry, “Fire!,” rest assured that your mind will push the fear button and you will depart quickly. The challenge is not to hurt, or be hurt, by others in your efforts to escape

**WHAT KINDS OF THINGS ARE PEOPLE ARE AFRAID OF?**

**A. Fear of FAILURE**
1. Some people are afraid to try a new venture because they don’t want to fail.
2. Certainly, no one wants to fail, but a few failures along life’s road are normal.

**B. Fear of CRITICISM**
1. Some people are so concerned with what others think, that they never attempt a new challenge.
2. What others think is their problem . . . not yours.
   Your relationship with God should never depend on what others think, but what God thinks and teaches in the Bible.

**C. Fear of REJECTION**
1. Consider:
   a. Some will not try out for an athletic because they are afraid of rejection.
   b. Some will not ask a person out on a date because they are afraid of being rejected . . . even in their forties, fifties, sixties, etc.
2. By fearing rejection, one is rejected trying.

**D. Fear of AUTHORITY**
1. Some people panic when they are approached by a person of authority.
2. A boss, a policeman, a principal, etc., may bring about such a reaction.

**E. Fear of DEATH**
1. At one time or another the fear of death comes into everyone’s heart.
2. Some people, however, live in a constant fear of death. They torture themselves day after day with this fear.

**F. Fear of a NATIONAL DISASTER**
Numbers of people across our land live in a deep fear of war, riots, another 911, another depression or stock market crash, etc.

**G. Fear of SUCCESS**
1. This is an avoidance motive. Some believe success will have negative consequences, disappointments, rejection, and even abandonment if we achieve it.
2. “He can’t handle success.”

**H. Fear of THINGS GOING TOO WELL**
1. Some people feel that if everything is going too well, then something bad must be about to happen.
2. They cannot enjoy the sun for expecting the clouds.

**I. Fear of LOSS**
1. People fear the loss of:
   - Job
   - Benefits
   - Friends
   - Respect
   - Property
   - Money
   - Health
   - Approval
   - Friends
   - Host of other things, etc.
2. Some losses are beyond our ability to control.

**J. Fear of PROBLEMS**

**K. Fear of the UNKNOWN**
   This challenges all of us from time to time.

**L. Fear of CHANGE**
   People do not want to get out of their comfort zone.

**M. Fear of the PAST**
1. This is a form of guilt that people live with.
2. They live with dread that the past will, in some way, harm them.
3. Others are afraid of the future . . . the unknown.

**N. Fear of PUNISHMENT**
1. Some live in fear of being accused of doing something they did not do.
2. Some live in fear hell . . . or their perception of God’s wrath.

**O. Fear of a DEADLY DISEASE**
1. Some people live in fear of cancer, heart trouble, a stroke, and a host of other diseases.
2. Many are afraid to go to the doctor for fear that they will be told they have one of their feared diseases.

**P. Fear of AGING, OLD AGE**
1. Public media would have us to subscribe to the idea that youth is in and aging and old age are out.
2. The suicide rate of retired men is twelve times that of those who are employed.
3. General Douglas MacArthur is reported to have had over his desk: “Youth is not a time of life—it is a state of mind.

Q. PHOBIAS
Millions of people are possessed by phobias. A phobia is a fear of some object, situation, place or thing which, in itself, poses no actual danger to the person. A person with a phobia usually knows that his fear is irrational, but he can’t seem to do anything about it. People with such fears will do about anything to avoid the objects of their phobias. Their fear may rage from mild to very serious anxiety. They may have physical symptoms such as nausea . . . dizziness . . . backaches . . . headaches . . . skin rashes . . . fainting spells . . . and other pains. Some common phobias are:

1. Fear of heights . . . . Acrophobia
2. Fear of public places . . . . . Agoraphobia
3. Fear of thunder, lightning or storms . . . . . Astraphobia
4. Fear of enclosed places . . . . . Claustrophobia
5. Fear of water . . . . Hydrophobia
6. Fear of solitude . . . . . Monophobia
7. Fear of darkness (night) . . . . . Nyctophobia
8. Fear of crowds . . . . . Ochlophobia
9. Fear of disease . . . . . Pathophobia
10. Fear of death . . . . . Thanatophobia
11. Fear of snakes, reptiles . . . . . Herpetophobia

KEYS TO OVERCOMING FEAR.
A. You must believe you can win over fear.
   1. This is the starting place.
   2. Fear cannot win over you unless you allow it to.
   3. Napoleon once said, “He who fears being conquered is sure of defeat.
B. You must admit the existence of fear.
   1. This is not easy because it goes against our pride.
   2. This will require honesty, personal examination, and courage on your part.
C. Name the fear.
   1. Don’t use the nebulous, “I am afraid.” Be specific.
   2. Name your fear . . . it is therapeutic for you.
D. Try to recognize its origin.
   1. It is not from God! . . . It is not from God! . . . It is not from God!
   2. 2 Timothy 2:7 tells you He has not given you a spirit of fear.
   3. It comes from other sources . . . wrong thinking . . . the flesh . . . the evil one, etc.
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E. **Confess your fear to God.**
   1. Don’t be afraid or ashamed to say, “Father, I am afraid to stand before the Bible class,” or whatever the fear may be.
   2. Your fear may have led you into a sinful condition.
   3. Always be honest with God.

F. **Check your love quotient.**
   1. John wrote in 1 John 4:18 – “There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears has not reached perfection in love.”
   2. Do you need to work on your love?

G. **Do what you fear.**
   1. This may be very difficult.
   2. In some cases it is the final step to overcoming the fear.

H. **Ask yourself, “What happened the last time I had this fear?”**
   1. I am sure you will discover the answer will be “nothing.” Fear immobilizes us and keeps us from acting.
   2. That which you feared went on its way until you called it up again.

I. **Work on developing your faith.**
   1. We must trust God and His Word.
   2. When we fill up on faith, fear does not have a chance.
   3. Fear and faith do not mix.

J. **Separate the feeling of fear from the object of fear.**
   1. This will usually prove to us that our fear is the product of our thinking.
   2. This will help you recognize fear as an emotion you can handle.

K. **Pray for strength to defeat your fear.**
   1. James promises that God will answer prayers prayed in faith.
   2. James 1:5-7 – “Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.”

L. **Resolve on a daily basis to reject fearfulness.**
   1. Some psychologists believe that in order to acquire a new habit, a person must practice it a minimum of 21 times before it becomes part of his subconscious and thus productive in daily living.
   2. You must be persistent in your attack on fear.

M. **Claim God’s power to help you.**
   1. God gives power to His children to help them defeat the evil one and thereby live the victorious life.
      a. Ephesians 3:20 – “Now to Him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think—according to the power that works in you . . .”
b. Revelation 12:10 – “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: The salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Messiah have now come . . . ”

c. 2 Timothy 2:7 – “For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.”

2. Too often brethren go to everyone but God for help with their issues.

N. Be a disciplined person.
   1. We are in control of what we think.
   2. Proverbs 23:7 – “For as he thinks within himself, so he is . . . ”
   3. We do not have to let the spirit of fear into our hearts and minds.

O. Turn to others for help.
   1. Galatians 6:1-2 – “Brothers, if someone is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so you won’t be tempted also. Carry one another’s burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”
   2. This is one of the blessings of being in a spiritual family . . . We can get help when we need it.

P. You may need to see a physician.
   1. If you suspect some organic or physical problem, your family doctor will be able to determine if this is the source of your fear.
   2. Be careful, however, of tranquilizers, depressants, and physical energizers as cures for your fears. They may, in fact, deal only with the symptom rather than the problem itself.

CONCLUSION:
A. Fear is a very real foe of the Christian’s peace of mind
   1. It is a pervasive, powerful, and complex foe.
   2. It does not come from God.
   3. Through God’s power and some simple principles, we can remove this enemy from our lives.

B. Our goal is to win over the negative fears that make spiritual cowards out of us.

C. Fear must be won over because it can arouse other negative emotions such as:
   1. Anger
   2. Hatred
   3. Depression
   4. Frustration
   5. And a host of other emotions as well

D. God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation