

The Little Foxes

Lesson 7 - The Little Fox Of Fear

Song of Solomon 2:15 KJV Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines *have* tender grapes.

2 Timothy 1:7 KJV For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

I. INTRODUCTION—MR. FEARING

Another of the many characters in *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan that can give us great insight concerning our journey is Mr. Fearing. This character is found in Part 2 of *Pilgrim's Progress* and his passage is a bit different from Part 1. In Part 1, the journey is basically that of one person, Christian, as he travels through all of the difficulties and struggles that lay along the path to the Celestial City. Part 2 differs in that it is a collection of travelers and it would almost resemble the collection of a congregation in a church.

Mr. Fearing has two other main companions, Mr. Honesty and Mr. Self-Will. They are all from the Town of Stupidity. Mr. Fearing demonstrates some great contradictions in his life. One minute he is very brave and the next minute his courage has left him. He is ushered along the way by Great-heart who is their noble guide. Sometimes he resorts to encouragement and at other times he just pushes Mr. Fearing whether he wants to go or not.

When he came to the Wicket Gate, which was the entrance to the road to the Celestial City, he waited and waited filled with doubt as to whether or not he was supposed to enter. After long contemplation, he finally went through it to begin his journey. In fact, he read the words, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you," a thousand times before he finally knocked to gain entrance. Despite the door being opened to him, it took Goodwill to pull him into the entrance because he thought he could not make it. This is a remarkable thing because all through his travels, anything that was related to spiritual matters, Mr. Fearing would sink beneath his burden of fear and doubt. He was desperately afraid to speak to the

pastor or any of the saints that were in the House Beautiful (a symbol of the Church). He always felt as if he never measured up.

It took Mr. Fearing a month before he finally decided to cross the Slough of Despond and then he shocked all of the travelers because he made it across so fast. Great-heart summed it up when he said the Mr. Fearing had a slough of despond in his head because the slough of despond on the outside was never a problem for him. Fear has the ability to put mud holes in our heads!

But there is an interesting contrast that takes place when he comes to the actual challenges along the way. When he came to the lions along the way, Mr. Fearing wagged his finger at them and pulled some of their whiskers out. When he came to the Hill of Difficulty, his legs appeared to be the strongest and he would outrun all of his fellow travelers to the top. When he went through the Valley of Humiliation, he outpaced all of the travelers; even Great-heart was left behind by Mr. Fearing. He did well when he was *in* the challenge but he had great doubt *before* he went into it.

One scene that Bunyan describes is provoking. It is when Mr. Fearing is in the House Beautiful. Every morning he gets up before all of the other travelers and goes to the Rarity Room with a candle so he can see in the darkness before the dawn. This room is filled with all sorts of past trophies like Moses' rod, Shamgar's ox goad, and David's sling and stones. Mr. Fearing also took great encouragement when he went into the Armory Room whose walls were loaded with helmets, breastplates, belts, swords, shoes, and shields. He would be secretly observed dancing, shouting, and singing in these rooms but when he left, he fell into a dejected state again. He would not eat with those in the House Beautiful because of his fear. Bunyan uses this as a picture of communion and his hesitation of partaking. Mr. Fearing was in a constant state of self-examination that robbed his faith.

He was a godly and reverent man but he was so filled with fear that he could hardly function. When he finally does cross the river to receive his reward, he is amazed at the great reception that he finds. He can only wonder at why he was so weighted down with fear while he was on his journey.

I am certain that Mr. Fearing is not the only one who ever felt the grip of fear as he travels along the way! The little fox of fear can disarm us in such a way that it almost paralyzes our ability to walk faithfully for the Lord.

II. THE LITTLE FOX OF FEAR

The passage in 2 Timothy gives the understanding that there is a spirit of fear. The word for spirit is PNEUMA which means that it can be something that literally from the devil. Thayer's Greek Lexicon indicates that this word can be used of evil spirits that work to do the will of the devil. It is a negative spirit that preys on the mind of the people of God.

This foul spirit showed up immediately in the Garden of Eden after the fall of man. After their mistake, Adam and Eve hid from God. When God found them, not that He didn't know where they were in the first place, their response as to why they were hiding—they were afraid (Gen. 3:10). It was the very first negative human emotion that they would feel. Before they felt hate, jealousy, strife, envy, and anger, the spirit of fear disarmed them.

Fear can be a very powerful and debilitating force if it ever gains a foothold in our mind. In fact, sociologists have studied various groups of people in the United States and have discovered that there are things that people fear. They fear diseases such as AIDS and cancer. They are fearful of the effects of drug abuse on our nation. People have been especially fearful of terrorist attacks after September 11, 2001. Other fears are related to the federal deficit, pollution, inadequate resources after retirement, and natural disasters.

If fear is left alone it can reduce even the most stout of individuals of their emotional and spiritual resources. Closely related to the effects of fear is worry. The whole goal of the devil using the little fox of fear is to place such an emphasis on human solutions that it chokes out our faith (Mark 4:7, 18-19). Fear causes our minds to totally box God out of the equation.

Fear causes us to lose sight of the priorities of life in such a way that there is a single-minded focus on the details of that fear. Soon the fear leads our mind down a path of doubts about our own sanity. It will lead to undertaking unimportant tasks that only provide an outlet of escape from seeking a proper

solution to the fear. Perhaps more dangerously, it saps the joy of our relationship with God. In its place, the fear can fertilize a sense of hopelessness and dejection.

A. Quotes on Fear

Michael Pritchard—Fear is that little darkroom where negatives are developed.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones—When a man is defeated by life it is always due, ultimately, to the fact that he is suffering from a spirit of fear. . . The spirit of fear is the real, the ultimate cause of all failure in life, and of all unhappiness.

Fear Creates Bondage

- *It breeds all kinds of insecurities.*
- *It opens the door to demonic oppression.*
- *It will intimidate you.*
- *It will belittle you.*
- *It will lie to you.*
- *It will make you accept living with fear as a normal condition for life.*
- *It ultimately will steal your life.*

Screwtape to Wormwood—There is nothing like suspense and anxiety for barricading a human's mind against the Enemy. (From *The Screwtape Letters*, the "Enemy" being God.)

Paul Tournier—Fear creates what it fears.

B. Scriptures on Fear

The word "fear" occurs in the Bible 400 times in 385 verses. By looking at those verses, great insight is gained into the concept of fear and what it can do to us.

Creates bondage: **Romans 8:15 KJV** For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Takes the mind captive: **2 Corinthians 10:5 KJV** Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; (It creates strongholds [fortresses] in the mind. It is the devil's ticket for control!)

Can lead to depression: **1 Kings 19:2-4 KJV** Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do *to me*, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time. [3] And when he saw *that*, he

arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which *belongeth* to Judah, and left his servant there. [4] But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I *am* not better than my fathers.

Causes man to fear death: Hebrews 2:14-15 KJV Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; [15] And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Torments the Mind: 1 John 4:18 KJV There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

Can be related to our outward circumstances: Matthew 8:25-26 KJV And his disciples came to *him*, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. [26] And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

C. The Motivations of Fear

The devil is an opportunist who will do all he can to prey on our minds. He will use everything he possibly can to take advantage of our fear. Numerous times it has been noted that the devil is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8-9). Yet some of the keys to overcoming those fears are present in 1 Peter 5:5-10. It has to do with our ability to humble ourselves before God and man.

There are various motivations that can lead to fear. The frank reality of the matter of fear is that we lose sight of God. We lose our ability have faith in God. Fear preys on a lack of trust in God's ability to provide for us. Soon fear causes men to have a sense of God's absence when He has never left. Fear will pull at your mind about God's ability to fully allow salvation to sustain us. Perhaps most of all, fear will cause men to forget the love of God.

All men have to walk through troubling circumstances in life. They can be summed up in the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job, insufficient financial means, marital difficulties, problems with children, and a host of other problems. Fear can point an accusing finger at God and charge Him with the fact that He knew all of this was going to take place. Fear trumps faith when it demands that God should have prevented the dilemma to take place. However, when we can understand that trouble will come to our lives it does not mean that God has left, in fact, He is present all the time with us (Matt.28:20). Furthermore, our circumstances of life do not change God because He never changes and He can be solely depended on (Heb. 13:8). The trials and circumstances may change but God will always be present to lead us through them!

Isaiah 58:11 KJV And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

There are other times that fear is motivated because of the actions of another person. As previously mentioned that fear can lead to depression, Elijah had to battle with this spirit because it was coming from Jezebel. She was a woman who was quite involved in immorality and witchcraft (2 Kings 9:22). Witchcraft in its most basic form is demonstrated when it wants to come against people through means of control. Jezebel had such a strong and controlling spirit that the king, the leaders, and the people all fell under her control. In fact, even the great prophet Elijah found himself being controlled by it.

That form of fear on Elijah caused him to lose his peace, confidence, courage, endurance, resolution, and security he found in God. In fact, it put him under a juniper tree. Those dark, bleak moments that we feel in life sometimes is nothing more than an attack from a hellish world that is motivated by a spirit of fear! Oddly enough, far too many people allow that spirit to control them or they are willing vessels to be used by that spirit of fear.

Another motivation of fear can be caused by our imaginations going places that God never intended for them to go. Fear works primarily with the unknown and we end up worrying about all of the unknown things that never take place. The imagination is a powerful gift that we have been granted from God.

However, when our imagination mixes with ignorance of God's ultimate plan, we always end up giving in to our fear.

III. THE SOLUTION TO OVERCOMING FEAR

The little fox of fear will continue to run rampant through our lives unless we are willing to take control and authority over fear. There are some passages that we must take solace in when we are overwhelmed by our fear.

Psalms 23:4 KJV Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Psalms 91:5-7 KJV Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day; **[6]** *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness; *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday. **[7]** A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee.

One might ask what place should we come to "fear no evil" (Psalm 23:4) and "not be afraid for the terror by night" (Psalm 91:5). The answer is found in the opening verses of Psalm 91.

Psalms 91:1-4 KJV He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. **[2]** I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. **[3]** Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *and* from the noisome pestilence. **[4]** He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler.

The Coyote's Wail

When businessman Allen Emery was in the wool business, he once spent an evening with a shepherd on the Texas prairie. During the night, the long wail of coyotes pierced the air. The shepherd's dogs growled and peered into the darkness. The sheep, which had been sleeping, lumbered to their feet, alarmed, bleating pitifully. The shepherd tossed more logs onto the fire, and the flames shot up. In the glow, Allen looked out and saw thousands of little lights. He realized those were reflections of the fire in the eyes of the sheep.

*"In the midst of danger," he observed, "the sheep were not looking out into the darkness but were keeping their eyes in the direction of their safety, looking toward the shepherd. I couldn't help but think of Hebrews 12: 'looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.' (Robert J. Morgan, **From this Verse**, Dec. 4th.)*

It is a matter of where we choose to dwell!

A. A Three-Pronged Defense

When we receive the Holy Ghost, we are promised spiritual power (Acts 1:8). That power is primarily to be used by us to be witnesses so that disciples are made for the Kingdom of God. With this power comes an element of authority that is God-given. In fact, 2 Timothy 1:7 reflects this:

2 Timothy 1:7 KJV For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

God has given us power, love, and a sound mind to overcome the spirit of fear. The Holy Ghost creates a three-pronged defense against the spirit of fear. The power of God is the prime mover behind everything that is accomplished for Him. When Paul was addressing the Ephesians (1:18-20), he did not pray that they would be given divine power, he prayed that they would be aware of the power that they already had. Fear seeks to cause us to forget our position in the Kingdom of God. The indwelling power of the Holy Ghost gives us this ability. I might add as a side-note that there is great inspiration for a minister to look to the prayers of Paul throughout his epistles. He routinely prayed for God to do many and much things in those young churches. I believe that if the Scriptures are written for our admonition and instruction that any pastor can pray these pastoral prayers for the local church that he may be serving in. If it was a precedent in that first century church it can be fleshed out and prayed out for the 21st century church.

The love of God is a selfless and sacrificing love that moves us into places where the love of God cannot go. The love of God is a constant force that does not fluctuate like the love that humanity is associated with. Love that is motivated by carnality only seeks to fulfill its own desires. It will work continuously to preserve its own welfare, comfort, and success. The love of God causes us to seek the best for others even though it will cost us our own comfort and success.

The last prong of that defense is that of a sound mind. The rendering might be changed to the idea of a disciplined mind. A disciplined mind moves against fear because it allows self-control (temperance) to take complete control of all the circumstances of life. It allows a man to experience success without becoming arrogant and proud or it will take failure in stride so that bitterness or hopelessness becomes his lot in life. The only way that a disciplined mind will truly function is for it to be so Word-saturated that notes a Scriptural directive for every situation you have to endure. All of these belong to the Spirit-filled saint but he will have to walk in them.

B. Walk In Authority

The first way to overcome fear is to understand what has been given to you through the promise of 2 Timothy 1:7. The second aspect of overcoming fear means that we will have to walk in that authority. We must walk in our God-given authority or the devil will seek to use it against us.

Ephesians 4:27 KJV Neither give place to the devil.

James 4:7 KJV Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Both of these Scriptures give the strong implication that fear cannot be allowed to control us but rather it has to be confronted. As long as the fear remains unchallenged it will continue to wreck the life of a believer. The Old Testament example for this could be Gideon (Judges 6-7). The Midianites would have continued to pillage the towns and steal the crops at harvest until there was a confrontation. Gideon seemed to be the most unlikely person to confront them but when he understood the calling of God through the angels and then he submitted to the plan of God for deliverance, the Midianites no longer had any power over them.

We cannot give place to the devil! We have to submit to God! We have to resist the devil! All of these components from the Scripture when they are put together can work so that fear can be overcome and defeated. Fear will always attempt to remove us from serving and protecting. If you are a God-called servant, there has to be the action of protecting through confrontation of that

fear. No one can back down from the mandate of confrontation because to do so will nullify the power, love, and sound mind that God brings to us through the work of the Holy Ghost.

When fear has the upper hand, it challenges the authority of the Spirit-filled believe in such a way that his mind is tormented (1 John 4:18). Fear causes us to focus on ourselves. However, perfect love casts out all fear because the focus becomes God-ward and leads to our own self-denial. In moments of confrontation of fear, the mechanism the devil chooses is for us to focus on our own reputation and our concern that we might look “bad” in the situation. We must pray for boldness to enter us just like the apostles had (Acts 4:13; 4:29; 4:31; Eph. 3:12; Php. 1:20).

If we do not walk in the authority of the Spirit, the little foxes will have the ability to pillage and plunder the vineyard that God has given to us. As with most of the devices of the devil, they are subtle, camouflaged, and hidden as best as they can be—fear is in that category.

C. Stir Up the Gift!

The last thing that can help us to overcome fear is to stir up the gift that God has placed within us.

2 Timothy 1:6 KJV Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

Stirring up the gift awakens boldness in our heart. Fear causes men to be pensive, hesitant, and reactive. Boldness causes one to leap to the offensive and confront the opposition. You stir the gift by reading the Bible. Scripture has the ability to refresh your spirit and put your doubts to rest. You also stir the gift by meditation on the Scriptures. Think on those great men and women of Scripture and how they overcame their challenges and difficulties. You can stir the gift through fervent prayer meetings. These are to be both private and corporate. The secret closet of prayer brings great strength to the soul.

You can also stir the gift with godly fellowship. There is a kind of godly fellowship over the Word of God and conversation about the power of God

working in the church that can serve as a great encouragement to all who do it. You can stir the gift by finding godly examples that you want to follow after. Find some godly saint or preacher to look up to. Stir your gift by with disciplined resolution. Sit down and write down some spiritual goals that you would like to accomplish in your life. In all probability you won't reach them but you will set your life in a direction to reach them and by pursuing them you reach a higher mark than if you did not seek them at all.