

Overcoming Sin (Part 9)

Fear

2 Tim. 1:7

I. Introduction: 1, 2

1. 3 According to psychologists we are born with two fears—the fear of falling and the fear of loud noises.

A. However, many of us soon learn many more fears.

B. There are hundreds of phobias recognized today:

- ☛ **Claustrophobia:** the fear of confined spaces.
- ☛ **Altophobia:** fear of heights
- ☛ **Aviophobia:** fear of flying
- ☛ **Hydrophobia:** fear of water
- ☛ **Arachnophobia:** fear of spiders
- ☛ **Ophidiophobia:** fear of snakes
- ☛ **Glossophobia:** fear of public speaking
- ☛ **4 Brontophobia:** fear of thunder and lightning
- ☛ **Coulrophobia:** fear of clowns
- ☛ **Dendrophobia:** fear of trees
- ☛ **Pentheraphobia:** fear of mother-in-law
- ☛ **Phronemophobia:** fear of thinking
- ☛ **Ecclesiophobia:** fear of church
- ☛ **5 Homilophobia:** fear of sermons
- ☛ **Panophobia:** fear of everything

2. ** The Bible uses the word “fear” in two ways:

A. First, the Bible speaks of fear in the sense of reverence and respect (**Eccl. 12:13**: “*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*”). This fear is good and wholesome, leading to knowledge (**Prov. 1:7**: “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.*”) and the salvation of our souls (**Acts 10:35**: “*But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.*”).

B. But, the Bible also uses the word “fear” to speak of “a feeling of anxiety and agitation caused by the presence or nearness of danger, evil, pain, etc.; timidity, dread, terror, fright, apprehension” (Guralnik) cowardice (**2 Tim. 1:7**: “*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*”). It is this second fear that will be the focus of our lesson.

3. This fear should not be confused with caution. Fear of getting run over by a car is a “healthy” fear as it causes us to exercise caution when crossing the street. Fear of getting burned causes us to be careful around fires and ovens. This type of fear is normal, good and helpful. But, when fear paralyzes and renders us unproductive, it’s not normal.

4. There are many different fears that trouble Christians.

A. Fear of failure keeps some from trying new things (e.g., teaching class, evangelism, leading singing).

B. Fear can keep us quiet when there’s an opportunity to teach someone the gospel.

C. Fear causes some to doubt God’s love, care and forgiveness into question.

- D. Fear of criticism causes some to remain quiet when God's word is discussed or when false teaching is being espoused.
5. But, Christians are not to give in to such fears (**2 Tim. 1:7**: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.").

II. Discussion:

- I. **6 What Is Wrong With Fear?** **Prov. 29:25**: "The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe." Fear is not a harmless trait; it is the gateway to many troubles for man. Consider some snares caused by fear:

A. ** It keeps one from confessing Christ:

- (1) We must be willing to confess Jesus is the Son of God (**Matt. 10:32**: "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven."; **Rom. 10:9-10**: "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."; **Acts 8:36-37**: "Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?' 37 Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'").
- (2) Fear can keep us from making this good confession (**John 12:42-43**: "Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."; cf. 7:13; 9:22; Peter). If we cannot muster the courage to verbally confess our faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God before men, we cannot be saved.

B. **7 It keeps our faith a secret:**

- (1) Remember Joseph of Arimathea? **John 19:38**: "After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus."
- (2) How many secret disciples does the Lord have today? How many will face judgment unprepared, never hearing the gospel because some disciples were afraid and kept their faith a secret?
- (3) **8** Remember the hymn "You Never Mentioned Him to Me" (James Rowe/Otis L. McCoy, 1949):
- When in the better land, before the bar we stand,
How deeply grieved our souls will be,
If any lost one there, should cry in deep despair,
'You never mentioned Him to me.'
- O let us spread the word, where-e'er it may be heard,
Help groping souls the light to see,
That yonder none may say, you showed me not the way,
'You never mentioned Him to me.'
- 9** A few sweet words may guide, a lost one to His side,
Or turn sad eyes on Calvary,
So work as days go by, that yonder none may cry
'You never mentioned Him to me.'

Chorus

You never mentioned Him to me
Nor help me the light to see

*You met me day by day and knew I was astray
You never mentioned Him to me.*

***Remember Matthew 5:14-16:** *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

C. 10 It keeps one from obeying God:

- (1) King Saul received a clear command from God: *“Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”* (1 Sam. 15:3)
- (2) But Saul spared the king and the best of the livestock. Why? When Samuel confronted Saul regarding his disobedience, Saul disgracefully said, *“I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.”* (1 Sam. 15:24)
- (3) Fear can paralyze us when we are faced with obstacles or responsibilities.
 - (a) The unprofitable servant buried his talent because he was afraid (**Matt. 25:25:** *“And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.”*); and suffered his master’s wrath as a result.
 - (b) Why? Because he allowed fear to interfere with his obedience: The Lord’s vengeance comes on *“those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (2 Thess. 1:8) Why do many not obey? Fear!
 - (c) God will condemn the fearful on judgment day: *“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. 8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”* (Rev. 21:7-8)

D. 11 It makes one’s life miserable:

- (1) King Saul lost his kingdom as a result of disobedience. Then when Samuel anointed David as the next king, it was said of Saul *“...the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him.”* (1 Sam. 16:14) Saul was never the same afterwards. He spent the rest of his life paranoid and obsessed with destroying David.
- (2) *“...God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”* (2 Tim. 1:7)
 - (a) However, when one allows fear to reside in their heart, it erodes their “sound mind” and makes their life miserable, because fear involves terror and dread (**1 Jn. 4:18:** *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”*).
 - (b) Dwelling on fears makes one’s life miserable and that’s not the way of a Christian (**Rom. 8:37:** *“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”*).

E. 12 It renders one useless in his service to God:

- (1) **Judges 7:2-3:** *“And the LORD said to Gideon, ‘The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’ 3 Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.’ And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.”*
- (2) God could have chosen any means of reducing the number of men in Gideon’s army. Why did He chose fear?

- (3) Those who are fearful will have a negative influence upon others and frustrate their achievement of success. The Lord recognized this and made it part of the laws concerning warfare (**Deut. 20:8**: *"The officers shall speak further to the people, and say, 'What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart.'"*). If we are overcome with fear we are of no use to the Lord or to the brethren.

F. 13 It causes one to lose his soul:

- (1) If you were going to make a list of things that would cause one to go to hell, what would you put first in the list? Murder? Adultery? Thievery? **Rev. 21:8**: *"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*
- (2) Consider the sins listed in this passage...what is at the head of the list? Fear! We may not think being a coward is as serious as these other sins, but God does!

2. **14 How to Overcome Fear:** Since God has not given us a spirit of fear, it is obvious we can overcome fear. God Himself is the means by which we can conquer our fears. *"I sought the LORD, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears."* (Psa. 34:4). Let's consider the following ways we can seek the Lord with regard to overcoming our fears.

A. ** Learn to trust in God: Prov. 29:25: *"The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe."*

- (1) Trusting in the Lord is the solution to fear. Our faith has to grow to the point we really believe we are under the watchful care of God (**Lk. 12:4-7**). We are more valuable to God than many of us realize. He loves us and cares for us (**Rom. 8:31-39**). He knows more about us and our needs than we do.
- (2) **Rom. 8:15**: *"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'"* Bondage to sin brings fear, but adoption as a child of God frees us from fear. We are under His divine care.
- (3) Like Paul, we need to be able to say with conviction, *"...I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day."* (2 Tim. 1:12) Have we learned to trust in God?

B. 15 Learn to live in the presence of God:

- (1) Remember when you were really young and how you were never afraid of anything as long as Dad (or Mom) were around?
- (2) We cannot physically see God, but if we truly walk by faith, we know God is always with us (**Heb. 13:5-6**: *"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' 6 So we may boldly say: 'The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'"*).
- (3) Remember Elisha's servant in 2 Kings 6? When the Syrians surrounded Elisha and his servant, the servant saw the enemy and cried out, *"And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, 'Alas, my master! What shall we do?' 16 So he answered, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' 17 And Elisha prayed, and said, 'LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.' Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."*
- (4) Elisha was not afraid because he was aware of the spiritual realities that existed beyond his physical sight. His faith gave him confidence.

- (5) **Psa. 46:1-2:** *“God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;”*

(a) It does not matter what happens around us because God is with us.

(b) He truly is our refuge, our strength, and a very present help **IF** we believe!

C. 16 Sanctify the Lord in our heart: 1 Pet. 3:13-15

(1) Instead of the threat of harm troubling us, we are to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts.

(2) The word *sanctify* means “to consecrate or set apart.” The word *lord* means master.

(a) By totally focusing our lives upon serving and pleasing our Master, we will not be troubled by the threats and fears caused by man, Satan, or the world.

(b) Instead of fear distracting and paralyzing us, our concern is serving and pleasing God.

(c) Requires our total focus and effort! **Matt. 5:6:** *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.”* (Matt. 13:46: *“pearl of great price”*)

D. 17 Learn to use our spiritual armor:

(1) Along with sanctifying the Lord, we are to *“always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear”* (1 Pet. 3:15).

(2) Requires more than knowledge! Matt. 16:26; 13:46

(3) Knowledge gives us confidence and confidence is a powerful tool with which to fight fear (me, scared of school). Armed with a correct understanding of the truth, sufficient to defend our faith, we have nothing of which to be afraid.

(4) Paul tells us to be strong in the power of the Lord and put on the whole armor of God that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (**Eph. 6:10-17**).

(a) God’s armor protects us. The word of God (*“sword of the Spirit”*) is our only offensive weapon, but a mighty weapon indeed! **Heb. 4:12-13:** *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”; 1 Pet. 1:25:* *“But the word of the LORD endures forever.”*

(b) The more we learn to use it, the less we have to fear. (Notice: God’s armor protects our front, so we must face our fears in order to overcome them!)

E. 18 Pray:

(1) After putting on the whole armor of God, we are to *“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...”* (Eph. 6:18)

(2) Prayer is essential in making God’s armor effective (arming a bomb or missile); there is great strength in prayer:

(a) If inspired apostles needed prayer, then I surely need it!

Acts 4:29-31: *“Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.’ 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”*

(b) Prayer brings peace of mind and eliminates fear:

Phil. 4:6-7: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

(c) David prayed to overcome fear:

Psa. 55:4-5: Problem

“My heart is severely pained within me,
And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
5 Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me,
And horror has overwhelmed me.”

Psa. 55:16-17: Solution

“As for me, I will call upon God,
And the LORD shall save me.
17 Evening and morning and at noon
I will pray, and cry aloud,
And He shall hear my voice.”

Psa. 55:22: Result

“Cast your burden on the LORD,
And He shall sustain you;
He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.”

(3) How about you? How about me?

Lk. 18:1-8: “Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, 2 saying: ‘There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. 3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ 4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, 5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’ 6 Then the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unjust judge said. 7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? 8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?’”

III. 19 Conclusion:

1. If we have a problem with fear it is not insignificant. It keeps us from pleasing God, it hinders our service to Him, and it can keep us from going to heaven.
2. Remember, “...God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” (2 Tim. 1:7)
 - A. Let us all follow what the Bible says to overcome fear: learn to trust in God, take courage in His promises, and focus on serving Him knowing He has already gained the victory.
 - B. Let us use the whole armor of God and lean upon the Lord in prayer.

Adapted from *Overcoming Sin*, by Heath Rogers, 2013, One Stone Press, Bowling Green, KY (pp. 75-79).

References:

Guralnik, David B. *Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language*. New York, NY; 1986.