

COURAGE THAT EXPELS OUR FEARS

Recently I received a letter from a nine-year old girl in our church. She had some interesting questions, however, the one that caught my attention was this: "What do you do when you are scared and you pray and it doesn't work; what do you do?" In the context of her question, it seems that she gets scared at times, then prays for help through her fears and the fears remain and therefore it appears that her prayers have not been answered. One of the beautiful things about children is that they have not learned the fine art of inhibition. The truth is, we all get scared and, frankly, if we all are honest, there are times it seems as though our prayers have not worked. I have asked this precious little church member if I may use her question for a public teaching and she graciously consented. Therefore, let's talk about it.

1. DESPITE OUR FEARS AND OUR QUESTIONINGS, GOD HAS NOT DIMINISHED IN HIS OMNISCIENCE (ALL KNOWLEDGE) OR HIS OMNIPOTENCE (ALL POWER).

God allows us to entertain the question: "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" (Jeremiah 32:27). Not only is this a rhetorical question, but God answered this question ten verses before He allowed the questioning as discovered in Jeremiah 32:17: "Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee."

It should give all of God's children great comfort to know that God not only knows what is making us fearful, but He also knows how to control what or who is making us fearful.

2. FEAR IS THE ABSENCE OF FAITH; THE INCULCATION OF THE WORD OF GOD IS A FAITH BUILDER.

Romans 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Psalm 56:3: "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." Isaiah 12:2: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

II Timothy 1:7: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Romans 8:15: "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."

3. COURAGE IS A MATTER OF DECISION, AND FREEDOM FROM FEAR FOLLOWS THE DECISION TO BE COURAGEOUS.

As we meditate over Psalm 27, we see that confidence is built on trusting the strength of the Lord. "...The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1b). Psalm 27:3 teaches us to make a deliberate decision to be confident, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not

fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." When the decision is made to be courageous, strength from the Lord is provided as seen in Psalm 27:14: "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

4. GOD DOES ANSWER PRAYER AND IT IS NOT DETERMINED BY HIS RESPONSE OR OUR FEELINGS.

1. Sometimes God answers our prayers with "No."
Luke 22:42: "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." John 18:11b: "...The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"
2. Sometimes God gives an immediate "Yes."
Matthew 14:30, 31: "But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"
3. Sometimes God answers with "Later."
John 16:12: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

4. GOD'S RESPONSE TO OUR FEARS IS ALWAYS RIGHT AND ALWAYS FOR HIS ULTIMATE GLORY.

Mark 7:37: "And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

1. It is human to doubt God's plan at times. John 11:21: "Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." John 11:32: "Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."
2. Always know that God cares about our fears and misgivings. John 11:35: "Jesus wept." Mark 4:38: "And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?" I Peter 5:7: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."
3. God moves, seldom early, never late! John 11:39-43: "Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that

thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.”

5. IN THE PROCESS OF TIME, OUR FEARS WILL SUBSIDE AS OUR WILL IS SYNCHRONIZED WITH GOD'S WILL

John 15:7: “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

Psalms 37:4-7a: “Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him....”

In Isaiah 40: 22-28: God encourages us to lift our eyes and behold the heavens and see the glory of His creation that he has arranged in perfect symmetry like a caring father has constructed a protective tent and canopy of protection for His family whom He loves unconditionally. Our Lord gives this amazing promise, especially to the youth who have not yet learned the ways of the Lord: “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:29-31).

Psalms 147:4: “He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.” Amos 5:8: “Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name.” Jeremiah 33:3, “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

-Pastor Pope-