

# The Old Paths

Volume 9, Issue 42

December 15, 2002

## “Fear”

Jarrod Jacobs

All of us have experienced a sense of dread and foreboding at some point in our lives. Most children have a fear of the dark. After we gain some age, we might still have fear as some people fear certain kinds of animals, bugs, snakes, etc. Perhaps we fear the unknown and what we cannot control. Many people fear death, of course.

Fear is a part of the human experience, and in fact can be helpful. When we are in a dangerous situation, we are faced with the question of “Fight or Flight.” Our adrenaline gets flowing, and we can either run away from danger, or stand and fight, depending on our split-second decision.

The Bible speaks of fear in one form or another some 524 times. In fact, as we look at this subject, we find different kinds of fear discussed in the Bible. Let us study this together, and then may we apply these Bible truths and be better people for it.

### **The Bible Definition Of Fear.**

When we read in the Bible about fear, we find that there are times when the Bible discusses fear from the standpoint of being afraid of something or someone. This is the meaning of the word when the Bible says Lot feared to live in Zoar, so he and his girls lived in a cave (Gen. 19:30). Another occasion was when Abraham was afraid that someone might kill him and take Sarah, so he lied, calling Sarah merely his sister

(Gen. 26:7). Isaiah 2:10-21 speaks of people being in fear of God, or being afraid of Him. They were afraid because they were guilty of wrongdoing.

The Bible also speaks of fear from the standpoint of being in awe of something, or to show reverence to someone. Primarily, when the word “fear” is used on those occasions, it has reference to God. Solomon said, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecc. 12:13). In the New Testament, Peter said, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). Peter would later write to the Christians scattered abroad, and tell them in no uncertain terms to “fear God” (1 Pet. 2:17).

What is interesting to note is that when one does a study concerning this reverential fear, we find that it is often coupled with the idea of being afraid. In other words, one who fears God as he ought (reverence/awe), will also be afraid to leave the Lord’s presence. He/She will not want to do anything to jeopardize the relationship he/she has with God. Conversely, when we see people who seem to have little problem leaving the Lord, their claim to reverence the Lord and fear Him as the Bible says, is nothing more than mere words. As we know, people can say anything!

### **Times When God Said, “Fear Not.”**

While a healthy dose of fear is not

a bad thing at times; in the Bible, we read of occasions where God told people not to fear.

Back as far as the time of Abraham, God said to “fear not.” He said, “Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward” (Gen. 15:1). Later on, when Joshua was to take Moses’ place and lead the people into Canaan, God said, “Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest” (Josh. 1:9).

There were times in the New Testament when God told people not to fear. When John saw Christ in a vision in all His glory, he fell down as a dead man. It was then that Christ said, “Fear not; I am the first and the last” (Rev. 1:17). After Zacharias saw the angel, he was told, “fear not ... thy prayer is heard” (Lk. 1:13).

Notice that these occasions when people were told to “fear not” have reference, not to the reverential fear we show to God and Christ; but to the fear, dread, etc., which originates from within us. When it comes to that kind of fear, we ought to do our best to avoid it and overcome it. This is because such fear can hinder our service to God. If we allow our fears to overcome our will to serve and please God, then we will certainly not be suited for His kingdom. Remember, that the “fearful” are the first group of people mentioned by Christ who “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8). To be “fearful” is to be: “timid,” or a “coward” (Thayer’s, p. 127). If one’s actions are such that his fear prohibits him from serving God as he ought, Christ said he is in danger of “the second death”! Let us examine ourselves, and see whether or not we are allowing fear to get in the way of our serving God.

Is it fear ....

- ◆ That is hindering us from being baptized? (Mk. 16:16)
- ◆ That keeps us from talking to a friend or neighbor about the truth? (II Tim. 2:2)
- ◆ That is holding us back from trying to win an erring sinner back to God? (Jas. 5:19-20)
- ◆ That makes us "worried" that a visitor today might hear the truth, but not like it and get mad?
- ◆ That motivates us to apologize to these people when the truth is preached?

God told Abram, Joshua, Zacharias, John, and others not to fear because He was with them. What about us? If we're Christians, don't we realize that God is with us, too? (Heb. 13:5) When God is with us, there is no need for fear. When God is with us, we can "boldly say, *The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*" (Heb. 13:6).

### ***"Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear."***

John said, "*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*" (I Jn. 4:18). In writing about this passage, John Albert Bengel states that there are four conditions of man: "without fear and love; with fear without love; with fear and love; without fear with love" (Bengel, Vol. 2, p. 803). Friend, where do we find ourselves at this time?

This phrase translated "casteth out" actually carries the idea of "driving out." It is perfect love which drives out fear! It does this because love and fear are oppo-

sites. Love implies attraction, and fear implies repulsion. Therefore, they cannot be together.

How then is love "perfected"? The answer is given to us twice in this chapter. "*If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.... And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world*" (I Jn. 4:12, 16-17).

John tells us that our love is "perfected" when we love God and love one another. Now, we must ask, "How do we show our love for God and one another?" Let us let John answer this question also. "*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous*" (I Jn. 5:2-3).

Therefore, when we are ready to do the will of God, and are willing to love our brethren completely, this love will drive out our fear. True love does not compromise with sin and error (Eph. 4:15, 5:11). True love strives to bring lost and erring people back to the right way (Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19-20). True love, in fact, is described as "*the bond of perfection*" (Col. 3:14). In contrast, it is those who are unloving, uncaring and

fearful who say, "Let's just leave everyone alone, and allow them to do what they want in spiritual matters. After all, no one is perfect." If I have this attitude, I need to repent without delay.

### **Conclusion**

May we all strive to be better servants of God, striving to be loving, and loyal to His cause. May we truly fear God, love the brotherhood, and do our duties as Christians. May the Lord wear us out in His service that one day we can hear, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant ...*" (Matt. 25:21)!

Friend, has fear kept you from doing what you know you need to do? Is it fear that is a stumbling block in your way? Why not repent of that, and begin today to serve the Lord in loving obedience. No, it is not the easy way, nor the fun way. It is, however, the only way if we wish to see Heaven when this life is over (Matt. 7:13-14). Don't allow fear to rule over you anymore. "*Be of good courage, "fear not," and yet "fear God and keep his commandments"*! If we put God first, all the other things in this life will find their place (Matt. 6:33). Perhaps when we set our priorities straight by seeking God's kingdom and righteousness first, we'll learn that the things we thought were so important really don't belong in our lives after all! Let us do this before it is too late. "*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*" (II Cor. 6:2).

**Tell Your Friends About:**  
[www.southside-churchofchrist.com](http://www.southside-churchofchrist.com)



***I want the truth, give me book, chapter, and verse!***

Come and meet with the church at Southside.

Our address is: 2920 New Hartford Rd. Owensboro, KY 42303.

#### **MEETING TIMES:**

**Sunday Morning Bible Study ————— 9:30 am**

**Sunday Morning Worship ————— 10:20 am**

**Sunday Evening Worship ————— 6:00 pm**

**Wednesday Evening Bible Study ————— 7:00 pm**

Don't forget the call-in radio program on **WBIO, FM 94.7**, Sunday afternoon from 12:30-1:00 pm. **Call: 683-5200** with your Bible question.

**Preacher/Editor:** Jarrod Jacobs

**Phone:** (270) 683-5386

**Website address:** [www.southside-churchofchrist.com](http://www.southside-churchofchrist.com) (Updated weekly!)