

“DON’T BE AFRAID”  
Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17, Romans 6:1-11, Matthew 10:24-39  
June 20 & 21, 2020

“The **DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS OF FEAR** on our Christian faith is vividly illustrated by Daniel DeFoe’s character Robinson Crusoe. Rejecting his father’s pleas, Crusoe had left home in search of wealth and adventure. His life was one of recklessness and godlessness until, following a terrible storm and shipwreck, he found himself stranded on a deserted island in the Caribbean. There his soul began to respond to the Lord, and finding a Bible among the effects salvaged from the ship, he was converted and grew into a thankful, devout, hard-working Christian. His life, though missing human companionship, was peaceful and prayerful. His faith grew strong.

“But one day Crusoe found a footprint in the sand, and he suddenly realized that he was not alone on the island. Knowing the fierce, cannibalistic practices of the native tribes, he grew into a fearful man. He looked over his shoulder with every step. He no longer slept peacefully. He altered his habits and patterns. He visualized himself being captured, boiled, and devoured.

*“Thus my fear banished all my religious hope. All that former confidence in God, which was founded upon such wonderful experience as I had had of His goodness, now vanished, as if He that had fed me by miracle hitherto could not preserve, by His power, the provision which He had made for me by His goodness...”*

“That is what fear does to us – it is diametrically opposed to our faith.”<sup>1</sup> And we live in a world that thrives on creating fear and worry and controversy and chaos. If it is not fear of invasion from another country, it is fear of losing all of our savings or retirement earnings. If it is not fear of contracting a deadly disease, it is fear of our fellow human beings who may differ from us in nationality or skin color.

Our media whips us up and **CULTIVATES FEAR AMONG US** to the point that we are willing to change our whole life patterns to try to stay safe. We’ve heard stories. We’ve seen newscasts. We

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<sup>1</sup> (Robert J. Morgan, *Stories, Illustrations & Quotes*, [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000] pg. 296)

come to notice our differences more readily than we see our similarities, and we become afraid of those who are different. And we find ourselves reacting to that fear, sometimes in violence, rather than quelling that fear with the confidence of Christ Jesus' presence with us.

**Fear causes us to forget the promises of the Lord.** We become so focused on what is going on around us that we trust in what's happening rather than turning to the Lord for help. We trust what we hear on the news and what is being told to us on the internet, and we forget to turn to the Lord in His Word to find His promises of protection and peace. We lose the memory of how God miraculously saved His people time and time again when the odds were 100 to none. But because God loved those who were His, He fought for them and brought victory after victory.

**Fear causes us to rely upon our own wisdom and strength.** We seek to solve the problems at hand with our own resources or our own wisdom, and we often misuse our strength, which often causes more harm than good. But when we get to the end of our resources, when we get to the end of our strength and wisdom, and we turn to the Lord for help, He opens our eyes to new solutions and new possibilities that we did not have on our own before.

**Fear causes us to give up and become occupied by it.** Often, when we see no way out of a situation, we become completely occupied by fear, and it takes over in us. Then we become completely consumed by the fear, often becoming paralyzed in our life, in our relationships, in our occupations, and in our reasoning. When fear takes over, we become spiritual zombies, just following orders given to us. When fear takes hold of our lives, we become trapped in hopelessness.

BUT **GOD DESIRES FAITH** so that fear might not take over our lives. God is ready to step in and bring His assistance and His help. He is ready to open the doors of escape and encouragement, but it demands that we turn to Him rather than to give in to fear.

And that is what we see in Psalm 86 today. **David admitted his helplessness and weakness and turned to the Lord** for His help. He cries out to God to save him and to be merciful to him because he knew how good God is. He says, *"You are good to us and forgiving, full of constant love for*

*all who pray to you*” (86:5). David recognized the strength and the power that God has, so instead of turning to fear, he turned to God.

You see, David realized that *“There is no god like you, O Lord, not one has done what You have done”* (86:8). He had seen the work of the Lord, had experienced wonderful and miraculous deliverance from the Lord already in his life, so David returned to the One he knew could do it again. He observed accurately that no one on earth is like the Lord our God. Everything was established and created by Him, and no one else can do the marvelous works that God does.

Likewise, David understood that *“all the nations that You have created will come and bow down to You; they will praise Your greatness”* (86:9). So the leader of the nations are not the ones we are to become afraid of. It is God who has given them earthly authority. And if God is Lord over all of them, then whom do we have to fear but God Himself? The time will come when every leader and every nation will stand before the Lord our God, and then they will recognize His majesty and His glory and will bow down to Him.

And David once more understands that God is *“mighty and [does] wonderful things; You alone are God”* (86:10). I don’t know about you, but THIS is the One I want to humble myself to. God is over all people, over all things, over the whole universe, so He is the One that is the ultimate authority. So He is the One who I want to put my trust and faith in. Everyone and everything else will fail and fall short of expectations, but God exceeds everything.

David turned to the Lord to have mercy on him. He sought out the strength of the Lord to save him. He put his faith and trust in the Lord to serve Him. So David’s prayer was that God would demonstrate His faithfulness and goodness to those who serve Him, so that the enemies and those who desire to destroy God’s people would be ashamed of all their ways (86:16-17).

And we hear the same thing from the Apostle Paul. Upon his conversion to Christ Jesus, Paul realized that it was no longer about him being the important one, but about him serving Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of the world. He came to understand that a choice needs to be made to either follow

the ways of this world or to follow the ways of God. So He writes to the Roman Christians and tells them, “*For surely you know that when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus, we were baptized into union with His death*” (6:3). That means that we “*were buried with Him and shared His death*” (8:4). Our life lived for ourselves dies the instant we claim Jesus as our Savior. We are no longer our own, but we belong to Jesus, and we are His servants to do His work and follow His ways. As we share in Jesus’ death, our sinfulness also must die because Christ Jesus died to pay the price for our sin. So we live according to His teachings, we follow His commands, and we let the Word of God in the Bible be our guide for every part of our life.

And then, as we are buried with Jesus, “*in the same way we shall be one with Him by being raised to life as He was*” (6:5). We willingly take our place with Jesus in His grave, realizing that He has all authority in heaven and on earth, we die to ourselves, and then are raised to new life with Him so that sin no longer has lordship of our life. Our sins are redeemed, “*the old things pass away and behold new things come*” (Rom. 6:6, 2 Cor. 5:17). We are no longer of the world; we are children of God to live differently than the world. And as we live differently than the world, we have no need to be afraid. We need not be alarmed by the news reports, or the media hype, or the latest projection, or the eminent danger from other countries. When we have our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have no reason to be afraid.

But that means that we are also dead to sin. Paul says, “*For when a person dies, he is set free from the power of sin*” (Rom. 6:7). So we are no longer to “*live in sin so that God’s grace may increase*” (6:1). No! We are to live in Christ. For if we have died to sin, “*how then can we go on living in it*” (6:2)? Once we put sin to death, we are not to become enticed again by its ways – it is dead to us.

And in that way, when we put sin to death by being baptized into Jesus’ death, sin no longer has power over us (6:10-11). We become “*dead, so far as sin is concerned, but living in fellowship with God through Christ Jesus*” (6:11). We are resurrected with Jesus into fellowship with God. We are not to resurrect sin again in our life, but rather move from darkness to the light of Christ.

You see, **GOD DOES NOT WANT US TO LIVE IN FEAR** because fear casts out faith and we live subservient to the ways of the world. We cannot be both fearful and faithful! It is one or the other, but not both. And God desires that we give up on our worldly ways and follow Him so that we might have new life, abundant life, eternal life! So Jesus teaches His followers not to fear so that we can live in peace with Him. Listen to His words as recorded by Matthew in chapter 10:26-39. (READ Matthew 10:6-39)

Jesus has just taught about persecution coming to His disciples. He said, “*Everyone will hate you because of Me...*” (Matt. 10:22a). Jesus was warning those who follow Him that because His ways and His teachings are so radically different than the ways and teachings of the world, that those living in the ways of the world will desire to kill anyone who disagrees with them. They did it to Jesus, so they will seek to do it to us, too. But Jesus tells us clearly, “...*do not be afraid of people...*” (10:26). Now why would He say that? Isn't it good for us to protect ourselves? Isn't it right that we save our own lives? Shouldn't we prevent others from bringing hurt to us?

Well, look at it this way – if we fear others, we will try to protect ourselves from others and as we do that, we begin isolating ourselves from others, thereby growing fearful of more people. When we are afraid of people, no matter who they are, we lose our faith in God, and fear takes over.

Jesus explains it this way. “*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul...*” (Matt. 10:28a). Why? Because when we have faith in the Lord our God, our soul belongs to Him, and no one can take us away from Him. We will all die sometime, so this life is short-lived. So when we put our trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are trusting in Him for eternal life. So the body we have here is really not that important; it is the soul of a person that is paramount to the Lord. The people of this world can only kill the body.

But there is danger when we do not trust in the Lord our God and find ourselves at a distance from Him. We then decide that God is not really God Almighty, but just some unreal thing that we have no need for in our lives. That decision is what determines what will happen beyond this life. We have

only this life to decide about God and Jesus, so when we die and we have turned our backs against Him, we are on our own and we are then in jeopardy of not only finding our body killed, but our soul, too. God has the power to kill both body and soul, but we make the choice of life or death by how we receive Jesus (Matt. 10:28)

However, you are valuable to God! God loves you so much that He made a way for the separation of us from Him to be redeemed by sending Jesus to us to take our sin upon Himself so that we would not have to pay the eternal price of our sin, which is death – eternal death. God provided a way for us to return to Him, and it is in the forgiveness that Jesus provides when we accept Him as our Savior and Lord. That choice of ours, to have Jesus as our Savior, protects us from eternal death, and allows us to have eternal life. It's not anything we can do on our own – it is only through the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross for us. He has already paid the price for our sin, so we can be free from its effects if we choose Him as the One who saves us.

Jesus uses the example of sparrows being sold two for a penny. Now how much is a sparrow worth to us, today? Not much. And some of us feel about as important as a sparrow in our world. Some feel like the world has limited their value to that of a sparrow. But when you look at how much God loves you, Jesus tells us that even the hairs on our heads are all counted. What that means is that there is nothing too small about our lives that God does not know about and care for. Some of us have lots of hairs up top of our heads, but there are others with fewer hairs. Doesn't matter! God knows each hair on your head and has them all numbered. So every aspect of your life is important to God because He cares so much for you (Matthew 10:29-31). And since God loves us, we are valuable to Him, even more than thousands of sparrows.

So while the world will eagerly seek to destroy you when you choose Jesus as your savior, **do not be afraid to confess Jesus** as the One who has saved your soul.

What that means is there is no fence to walk upon about the decision of having Jesus as Savior and Lord of your life. There are many who say that they are followers of Jesus, but their lives are far

from showing it. They reject Jesus' teachings, but still claim the name of Christian. Or, they claim to be a follower of Jesus, but they really don't know what that means, so when confronted about their faith, they cannot express it, and usually end up denying it. And Jesus has a very difficult saying about that, as we see in Matt. 10:32-33. "*If anyone declares publicly that he belongs to Me*" Jesus says, "*I will do the same for him before My Father in heaven. BUT if anyone rejects Me publicly, I will reject him before My Father in heaven.*"

What that means is if we are for Jesus, He is for us. He will claim us as His brother or sister if we make it publicly known that we follow Him. But that is more than just with our words! It is with our words AND our actions that we claim and live for Jesus - how we treat one another, how we deal with others on the job, how we consider the needs of others, how we speak to one another, or how we live our lives. Is it proclaiming Jesus in all that we do and all that we say? If people can see that you are a Christian without you even telling them about it, then you are professing Him publicly.

But if you are living in a way that shows the world that you reject Jesus and His teaching, watch out! You might easily claim to be a follower of Jesus, but unless the world can see it because your actions and lifestyle demonstrates it, they may never know you to be one of faith. Do you use coarse language or swear, using the Lord's name in vain? Do you cheat your customers out of fair prices for your work? Do you gossip about others? Do you spend more time on the golf course on the weekends than you do in church or in God's Word? Do you treat your husband or wife with disrespect? Do you pay all of your taxes? Do you see a need for your neighbor and let them deal with it on their own without any assistance from you? A "yes" answer to any or all of these and many more, would indicate to the world that you have a problem letting Jesus be the Lord of your life? If your life shows that Jesus really isn't that important to you, then you are rejecting Him publicly. And if we stand up against Jesus, sadly, He stands against us before God the Father.

So the **Division will come** and Jesus will be the determining factor is the division. Jesus calls each one of us to make a choice. Will we be for Him and live according to His ways? Or will we be

against Jesus and ignore His teachings and His commands (Matt. 10:34-36)

If we claim Jesus and live following His teachings, He tells us that we WILL have enemies. Jesus is the deciding factor as to which side we will be on (the world's way or God's way) and the war between the two sides will rage. Not only will it be between those who do not know each other, but it will even be within a person's own household. Families will be divided based upon how they believe, so that even brothers and sisters will be at odds with each other, children will turn against their parents, and in-laws will be at odds with one another. It has happened throughout history ever since Jesus walked the earth, where family members have turned in other family members to the authorities because of how they believed about Jesus. And it is even happening in our world today, even here in the United States. Jesus Christ will be hated so much that anyone who chooses to follow Him will then have a target on their back, and sometimes a gun or a bomb aimed at that target.

But Jesus tells us, "Don't Be Afraid! Live For Me No Matter What!" A poem by Josiah Gilbert Holland states it well what Jesus desires of us. The poem is entitled, "God, Give Us Men!"

God, give us men! A time like this demands Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands; Men whom the lust of office does not kill; Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy; Men who possess opinions and a will; Men who have honor; Men who will not lie; Men who can stand before a demagogue And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking! Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog In public duty and in private thinking; for while the rabble, with their thumb-worn creeds, Their large professions and their little deeds, Mingle in selfish strife, Lo! Freedom weeps, Wrong rules the land and waiting Justice sleeps.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus invites each one of us, men and women, to stand firm in our faith in Him. We are to have **Nothing more important in our lives than Jesus.** Not family. Not material stuff. Only Jesus! For if we put anyone before Jesus as more important in our life, we are not worthy to be called His disciples.

Jesus wants to be first in your life, but He does not want you to be afraid to do that. So let Jesus be first in you, and He has promised to be with you, guiding you, protecting you, encouraging you, and leading you into eternal life with Him. Trust Him and follow Him, to God's glory. AMEN

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<sup>2</sup> (Charles Swindoll, *Swindoll's Ultimate Book of Illustrations*, [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998] pg. 120)