

FREEDOM FROM FEAR



Find keys to overcome the fears that control your life

The world is plagued by fear. Fear of what the future may hold. Fear of pain. Fear of loss. Fear of disease and death. And the media plays on our fears, leaving many people living under a dark veil, leaving our days and nights tinted by the sunglasses of fear. Of course, a certain amount of fear is natural and even healthy. The reality is, there is danger all around us. Every time we get behind the wheel, play sports, go for a swim, or even leave the house we take a risk, but when fear begins to infringe on our normal daily lives it becomes unhealthy. The good news is that there are methods to overcome our fears.

President Roosevelt said, "Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear," as illustrated by this beautifully tragic story. I read about a child who was standing in the road in front of their house when a speeding truck came over the hill, heading straight towards the child. Unable to stop in time, the child's father dashed into the road, throwing the child out of the way, only to be hit and killed by the truck. What led this father to act so bravely in the face of fear, and even death? As Roosevelt said, there was something more important than fear. This is the key to conquering fear.

We will only overcome fear when we are driven by a higher motivation than fear, and the Bible gives us the three great motivators. The three great antidotes to fear are “faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13). The father was motivated to jump in front of a speeding truck and face certain death out of love for his child. Real love will move us beyond fear, but sadly real love is lacking in our world today. While we claim to be loving, we let fear control our decisions and our lives because human love is weak. True love extends itself to all people, even its enemies.

Jesus says, “Love your enemies” (Matt. 5:44). Of course, Jesus does more than say the words. He “demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:9). Jesus resisted the fear of death, even the death of the cross, out of love for people. While we were still His enemies, living in sin, Christ loved us, and this love moved Him beyond fear. This was continually seen in the life of Christ. Christ would come close to lepers, sick, and diseased people, putting his hands on them without fear because He was motivated by love. When we have this kind of love, then fear will no longer control us.

Through Christ, we not only have the weapon of love, but we also have the weapons of faith and hope to fight our fears. To illustrate, think about a man who lost his job. He has many bills, no way to pay, and begins to grow fearful. After months of looking for work, he gets a call from a company that offers to pay him ten times more than his previous job paid. Now this same man is in the same situation. He has not signed the contract yet, but he is no longer fearful because he is hopeful that his situation will change and he believed the promise of the man by faith. Faith and hope are enough to remove his fear for the future.

Still, there is a deeper issue involving fear that human love cannot extinguish. It is the fear of death. This fear is what drives most people. It is a greater force than love, hope, or faith in the lives of most people today. The vast majority of people alive are controlled by a fear of death. It drives us like addicts. The media knows this. This is why the media and politicians play on fears, using them to drive their political agendas, leading us to live in constant fear. The only way to break free from this addictive cycle is to overcome our fear of death, but how can we do this if death is the end of hope?

If there is no God, then this life is all there is. There is no hope after this life. However, if Jesus is real, then death has been defeated and we no longer have to live in fear. That's what the Bible says. Jesus came that "He might... release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14, 15). While the Bible affirms what we already know, that all our lives we are slaves to our fear of death, it adds that Jesus came to release us from this fear! How? By defeating death! Through the resurrection Christ not only showed us that death is defeated, but He gave evidence that we will live again after death.

Through Christ, we can have a new life that is free from fear. We no longer have to be controlled by a fear of death because Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25). Those who don't believe in God we will have no hope after death and we will live their lives under the grip of fear. Those who believe in God nominally but don't live the love of God in their lives will still be controlled by a certain sense of fear. But those who believe in God, love as He loved, and trust His promises, we will no longer live under the control of fear.

Jesus Christ is the key to defeating our fear of death. When we accept Christ, we no longer need to fear death because Christ has promised to give us a new life after we die. For the Christian, death then becomes, not the end of life, but the beginning of a new and better life. Once death is defeated, then fear of death is defeated. That is why, when we die to the ways of this world, and accept Jesus Christ, “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54). When Christ comes into our heart, He puts new desires and motives in us that are “more important than fear,” which Franklin D. Roosevelt said was the key to courage.

With Christ in our hearts and lives, putting His faith, hope, and love inside us, we are no longer slaves to fear, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7). That’s why the Bible consistently tells us not to fear man, or things of this world. While fears will plague the world, Christ has overcome the world, so Christians are called to be “of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Josh. 1:9). Through Christ we may live above the fears that plague the world, as illustrated in the following story.

There was once a man who was brought before a king and told to recant his faith in Christ. When the king said that he must recant or he would banish him, the man replied, "You cannot banish me, since Christ says He will never leave me or forsake me." The king then warned that he would take away his property, but the man replied, "My treasure is laid up in heaven." Finally the king said he would kill him, but the man, looking beyond this temporary life, replied, "My life is hid with Christ, and you cannot take it." What a beautiful illustration of how fear is defeated through faith in Christ.

Yes, there will still be times of fear. There will still be times when we feel afraid, but through Christ we can rise above fear. Winston Churchill once said, "Fear is a reaction. Courage is a decision." The decision comes in putting out faith in Christ and trusting Him. When we do this, hope will sprout, faith will grow, and love will fill our hearts so strong that even fear itself cannot stop it. Like a plant breaking through a rock, love will break through fear because "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18).

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