

The battle between faith and fear
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Introduction: One of the most powerful and deceptive emotions we may face is fear.

- A. God has given us the ability to fear for our good.
 - 1. Fear - a. A feeling of agitation and anxiety caused by the presence or imminence of danger. b. A state or condition marked by this feeling: *living in fear*. c. A feeling of disquiet or apprehension. - American Heritage Dictionary
 - 2. God appeals to our fears that we might be humbled and seek Him. **(Rom 11:20)**
- B. A proper fear always is enlightened by faith.
 - 1. This is how we come to find real knowledge. **(Prov 1:7)**
 - 2. True wisdom will teach us who and what to fear! **(Mt 10:24-31)**
 - 3. Without a biblical faith that keeps listening to God we may well follow fear alone which will bring forth Satan's work in our lives.
 - 4. Our eternity will be determined by our choice between fear and faith. **(Rev 21:8 - ASV)**

I. Fear is powerful

- A. It often brings strong immediate reactions. **(Dan 5:5-7, 9)**
 - 1. Belshazzar's drunken party and merriment changed radically.
 - 2. It did not take long for this fear to be shared by almost all...but Daniel.
- B. It can paralyze. **(Mt 28:2-4)**
 - 1. Great Roman soldiers are now trembling and playing dead.
 - 2. I vividly remember my first IRS audit notice!
- C. It can cause one to act without thinking. **(Gal 2:11-13)**
 - 1. How many have used men's fears to their selfish ends?
 - 2. Good people can easily be caught up in this shared emotion.
- D. It can torment. **(Prov 28:1)**
 - 1. As an evangelist there have been many to attack me out of fear.
 - 2. Fear is a great motivator towards liberalism and worldliness.
- E. It can change reality. **(1 Sam 22:8)**
 - 1. Our feelings can easily take over our reason! Have you ever entered a room and a group of people laughed? (Some will scrutinize others.)
 - 2. You can easily create an image of another person or even an entire church!
- F. It can be easily shared. **(Num 13:30-14:9)**
 - 1. They saw the signs all these years but never came to trust God!
 - 2. How many have died because of shared panic of a crowd?

II. Fear is deceptive

- A. It is not always easy to distinguish between discretion and fear!
 - 1. The man who buried his talent may have seemed wise to some. **(Mt 25:24-25)**
 - 2. Could Abraham have "scripturally" reasoned that this course was better than dying? Were these the only two options? **(Gen 20:11-13)**
- B. Fearful people do not want to see the truth.
 - 1. It is not uncommon for fearful people to be surrounded by "yes" men.

2. When we are convinced that we cannot face a certain consequence then in our minds we will not! I have seen this in home studies. **(Lk 10:29)**

“A man who gives in when he is wrong is wise; a man who gives in when he is right is a coward.”

3. Fearful people do not want open communication! They often will avoid those they fear may bring them a “bad report.” This aloofness will bring more pain!
4. The Lord will test our faith by our fears. Surround yourself with men of faith!

C. We need to see our weaknesses and God’s power clearly.

1. Sometimes the young can mistaken brashness for courage and the old can think of their cowardice as wisdom.

“We all live in the protection of certain cowardices which we call our principles.” - Mark Twain

2. If you were caught up in fear would you be able to see it and fight it?

III. The fruits of fear

A. Satan will take advantages of our fears. **(2 Cor 2:6-10)**

1. He will work to isolate and pit brethren against each other. What could have occurred in Acts 6? **(Acts 6:1)**
2. There will be conflict between the path of faith and the path of fear.

B. Fear will cause a man to be “agnostic” when he can clearly know a matter.

1. What a simple question for the parents of this formerly blind man. **(Jn 9:18-19)**
2. Now they cannot acknowledge the great miracle of our Lord. **(Jn 9:20-23)**

“No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.” - *Edmund Burke*

3. Some churches in fear refuse to deal with public displays of immodesty.

C. Fear will cause you to “sell out” and forsake others.

1. Why did the apostles forsake Jesus? Peter and Barnabus the gentile Christians?
2. Many will not stand unless there is a crowd and “leaders.” In these circumstances there is no attempt at resolution but rather a use of force.

“Those who love to be feared fear to be loved, and they themselves are more afraid than anyone, for whereas other men fear only them, they fear everyone.”

3. Fear is in essence a form of selfishness. How many churches have been harmed when men act out of fear for their own interests? (Ex. Bill Hall – I would rather leave one year too early than one day too late!)

D. Consider the leadership of fear.

1. It can be subtle. Discernment is needed to distinguish between faith and fear.
2. It puts off and therefore multiplies the problem.
 - a. Many business meeting arrangements resort to this approach.
 - b. One church lost a generation of their young because of this approach.
 - c. In time the church developed a “peer group” that put pressure on the preacher concerning what should be preached.
3. Things that strengthen are removed – the result? --- a weaker faith!
4. It will use any means to accomplish its goals.

“Dishonesty is a coward's way of getting out of trouble.”

5. The lowest common denominator rules. (Particularly in a business meeting)
6. It will in time produce the very thing that they feared! (**John 11:48-50**)
 - a. "Let us avoid any trouble!" Often this means running from our problems and sitting and doing nothing.
 - b. Consider the high price the Jewish nation paid for this leadership.

"Fear makes come true that which one is afraid of." -- Victor Frankl

IV. How to let faith win over fear

A. Learn to look at God and not just at our fears.

1. When we know the presence of God we can face the unknowns of our lives. (**Gen 26:24; Num 14:9**)

"The fear of God makes a hero; the fear of man makes a coward."

2. What did Jesus often tell His disciples and others? (**Mk 5:36; Jn 14:27**)

B. Accept with confidence the tests that God allows you to face.

1. God will cause us to face our greatest fears. (**2 Cor 7:5-7**)
2. We need to be careful in saying that a thing must never happen!
3. God has ways of reassuring you. (**Acts 16:9-11**)

C. We will be able to teach others by our faith in a living God.

1. There is an optimism that faith brings. (**Rom 8:28**)
2. "What if I do not have enough money for my children!" What does faith say? (**Heb 13:5-6**)
3. "Will my children be hurt if they take a stand alone?" What does faith say?
4. God's best work comes in our weaknesses if we will let Him. (**2 Cor 12:7-10**)

Conclusion: There is much God can do in our lives if we would but trust Him.

A. Some would rather live with fear. They may be lost.

B. When we act by faith, in time we will look back and see what God has done!

1. Ex. "Were you called to be a preacher?" No, I was called to be a Christian. Faith then caused me to see what talents God has given me.
2. Will you live by faith today?

Risking Much

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.

To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.

To reach out for another is to risk involvement.

To expose feelings is to risk exposing our true self.

To place your ideas, your dreams, before the crowd is to risk loss.

To love is to risk not being loved in return.

To live is to risk dying.

To hope is to risk despair.

To try at all is to risk failure.

But risk we must, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing. The man, the woman, who risks nothing does nothing, has nothing, is nothing.

Give Me The Truth
by Bill Crews

If you are my friend, if you are concerned about my soul, give me the truth. Do not flatter me. Do not praise my virtues while remaining silent about my vices. Do not fear that the truth will offend me. Do not treasure our friendship, our friendly relations, above my salvation. Do not think that by ignoring my sins you can help. Do not think that being blind to my sins will prove yourself charitable. However I may react to it whatever may be my attitude toward you after you have done it, give me the truth! For the truth, and only the truth, can make men free from the shackles of sin, strengthen me in the pathway of righteousness and lead me to the joys of heaven. If I am wavering, weak, lukewarm, indifferent, neglectful; if I have been overtaken in a trespass, if I have been drawn into the pleasures of the world; if I have left first love; if I have been led astray by error; or if I have done none of these, but simply need to grow in knowledge and be edified, give me the truth!