

“CONQUERING FEAR”

Read Isaiah 41:10-13

Such phrases as “do not fear” and “do not be afraid” occur more than three hundred and twenty-five times in Scripture. Is God trying to tell us something?

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” When President Franklin Roosevelt spoke these words on March 4, 1933, there were actually many things to fear. The United States was in the depths of the Great Depression. Millions of Americans were hopeless, homeless, jobless, living in makeshift shanties and standing in long, meandering soup lines. At the same time, the Great Plains states were suffering the worst drought in U.S. history; the so-called “Dust Bowl,” which severely damaged farming and food production, and displaced an estimated 2.5 million Americans.

Economic hardship led to a rise in crime. Accordingly, the 1930s witnessed such legendary criminals as John Dillinger, Baby Face Nelson, Machine Gun Kelly, Pretty Boy Floyd, Ma Barker, and Bonnie and Clyde. And to make matters worse, in 1933 Adolph Hitler became “der Fuhrer” of Nazi Germany. World War II and the Jewish Holocaust were less than a decade away.

Roosevelt recognized all these problems; but he also understood that none of the problems could be solved if Americans surrendered to fear. And so he told the nation: “Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

Not all fear is wrong. God equipped us with the emotional response of fear to alert us to imminent danger. Prayerfully, we all have a healthy fear of downed electrical lines, intoxicated drivers, and the spinning blades of a power lawnmower. However, a healthy fear becomes unhealthy when it takes control of us; when our lives are characterized by gloom, doom, despair, and the expectation of the absolute worst. If fear is creeping into your life, what should you do?

Take Your Fears to God in Prayer

And be specific: “God, I’m afraid of losing my job. I’m afraid of illness. I’m afraid of dying. I’m afraid of temptation.” Articulating your fears to God in prayer will not only help you distinguish between real fears and



imaginary ones; it will bring you the peace of heart and mind that can only come from giving your fears and worries to God.

The apostle Paul wrote, “**Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,**” Philippians 4:6-7. Moses prayed, and God parted the Red Sea. Joshua prayed, and God made the sun stand still. Elijah prayed, and God brought nourishing rain to a land devastated by drought and famine.

God Doesn’t Want You to be Afraid

Paul told Timothy, “**For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline,**” 2 Timothy 1:7. Fear is not the type of life to which God has called us. In fact, when we read our Bibles, we find God telling us “do not be afraid” in every

conceivable situation, from the smallest task to the most impossible endeavor.

When Abraham faced the impossibility of fathering a child in his old age, God told him, **“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward,”** Genesis 15:1. When the Israelites were trapped at the Red Sea, with Pharaoh’s army in feverish pursuit, Moses said, **“Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today,”** Exodus 14:13.

Isaiah 41 was written at a time of great fear for the southern kingdom of Judah. The mighty Assyrians stood at the very gates of Jerusalem, threatening the Israelites with captivity. **“Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?”** they asked. Yet, amid such opposition and evil, God assured His people: **“So do not fear; for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand,”** Isaiah 41:10.

God is with You

In times of trouble we often wonder if God is with us. But His solemn promise is, **“Do not fear; for I am with you,”** Isaiah 41:10. And again, **“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you,”** Hebrews 13:5. And again, **“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age,”** Matthew 28:20. God is not a temporary helper. He

does not arrive for the good times and depart for the bad. And if almighty God is with you, whom should you fear? A petty dictator in North Korea? A pesky problem at the office?

God is Your God

“For I am your God,” said the Lord. And how did God become your God? By choice, not by accident. He became your God by sacrificing His own Son, Jesus Christ, to atone for your sins. And if God the Father was willing to sacrifice His only Son for you, will He withhold any other blessing? No. Each time you feel fear creeping into your life, place it into the great equation of Romans 8: **“What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?”**

God will Strengthen You

You have God’s word on it. He declared, **“I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand,”** Isaiah 41:10. When we say “I can’t fix this problem” or “I can’t endure this burden”—there is entirely too much “I” and too little God. **“I will strengthen you,”** He said. **“I will.”**

No matter what, God will be with us. No matter what, God will protect us. No matter what, God will strengthen us. These are the great realities that enable us to conquer our fears.

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