

BIBLICAL RESEARCH ON FEAR

I. Question: WHAT DO PEOPLE FEAR? WHAT ARE OUR FEARS? MY FEARS?

- Death: Hebrews 2:15
- Pain, sickness.
- Anxiety over fulfilling my commitments and responsibilities.
- Being ridiculed for my faith.
- Loss of respect, or of prestige. John 5:44; John 12:43,43
- The future. The coming doom.
- Failure.
- Economic difficulties.
- Persecution, loss of place because of the Gospel. John 7:7; John 9:22, John 11:48
- For our families, our children.

II. OBSERVATIONS FROM SCRIPTURE ON FEAR

Gen 3:10I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

Josh 1:6-9 "Be strong and courageous,... 7 Be strong and very courageous.... 8 Do not let this Book...depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night,.... 9 Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Josh 2:9-11 (Rahab) ...a great fear of you has fallen on us,.... 10 We have heard how the LORD dried up.... 11 our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you,...

Psa 23:4-6 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.....

The same bottom line again and again.

6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,....

Jeremiah 38: Zedekiah's fear of people kept him from obeying Jeremiah's prophecy - which could have saved the city and his life! v.14-39:14

Jer 39:17-18 Ebed-Melech spared, was not handed over, because "he feared God and ...obeyed." 18 I will save you; you will not fall by the sword but will escape with your life, because you trust in me, declares the LORD."

So much of people's behavior is fear driven.

Jeremiah 42:18-18 Fear prompts people to take things into their own hands. Then the things they fear come upon them.

Obedience in the midst of fear brings God's deliverance. Jer. 42:12

Ezek 2:3-7 ...I am sending you to...a 4 obstinate and stubborn.... 5 ...house.... 6 ...do not be afraid of them....though briars and thorns are all around you.... 7 You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen,... cf. 3:8,9

Ezek 7:17 (As a part of God's judgement, Israel will experience terror.) v 25 (When it comes they will seek a word from God but it will not come.

Disobedience; the fruit of it, brings just cause to fear. 11:8-12; 12:17-20

Ezek 21:6-7 (God will terrorize a nation: v1-5. He will warn of judgement and then carry it out. His purpose is to make people aware of the seriousness of their sin - and make the same statement to the onlooking world. The righteous can get caught in this. Ex. Believers in Rwanda.

Ezekiel, chapters 22-25: The whole book is intended to put fear in the hearts of the people. God uses fear. He wants love, but it looks like He will settle for fear. Why? His justice requires judgement. His love says, "I don't want to judge. Ezekiel 18:18-32. So by pronouncing judgement, He resorts to fear as a means to bring people to repentance.

God uses terror to elicit repentance from the disobedient. Eg. Micah 1:1-7.

Ezek 30:9 "...messengers will go out from me...to frighten Cush out of her complacency." This is the role of judgement. Prophets are messengers of fear. The objective: "Then they will know that I am the Lord."

Ezek 32:10 I will cause many peoples to be appalled at you,...each of them will tremble every moment for his life.

Evil happens in the world - God works it through evil men, and in the process will clear His name. Ezek 36:19-23 - in order to bring people to confront the reality of their own death and judgement.

Fear of the Day of the Lord: = Judgement. Encourages repentance.

Joel 2:1, 11 War, devastations, are preludes to that Day.

Book of Amos. Israel under Jeroboam II, 770-750 b.c. Israel and Judah in terrible shape. **2 Ki 14:26** The LORD had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel, whether slave or free, was suffering; there was no one to help them.

God states that natural and political calamities are caused by Him. (**Amos 3:6**) "Yet you have not returned to me," is the refrain.

He warns that the Day of the Lord they long for will be against them.

God employs fear to bring people/nations to repentance. And He never makes idle threats.

The ultimate provision for fear: "I am with you." Psalm 23; Romans 8:31-39, etc. What comfort is there in that? Pain is pain. What does it matter, I am with you? Prep a study on this. Acts 6:15. Stephen's stoning. 7:54-56

How to prepare for the trials ahead. Practice the presence of Christ today. Grow in my intimacy with Christ now.

This gives new meaning to Jesus' words on the cross. He didn't have that presence at His worst hour. Matthew 25:46: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Perhaps Christ had to experience something we never will as he worked out our redemption. In taking on the sin of the world, the Father, in His holiness, had to turn away from His Son.

He can say now to us; "I will never leave you or forsake you" because He took that part of sin's curse onto Himself.

Question: Why is the promise, "I will be with you," God's last word, His ultimate promise against fear? How does that help when we go through fearsome things?

Mat 6:25-34 "...do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink;...what you will wear.... 27 Who... by worrying can add a single hour to his life?... 32 your heavenly Father knows that you need them.... 34 Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Mat 10:19 ... when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it.... will be given what to say.... 26 "...do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed,.... 28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell....even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Mat 26 Peter's denial. v 33 ... "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." Even if I have to die with you, I won't disown you." v 35 Peter really believed his own words.

Then came Gethsemane. The three fell asleep. "Watch and pray...the spirit is willing, but the Body is weak."

At the arrest, Peter hacked off someone's ear. Bravado. v 9 A servant girl "You also were with Jesus in Galilee." Another girl - "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." Plus a third time. Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Fear can jump across all of my resolve, all of my fervor and grip me unexpectedly. It is like any other temptation in that way.

Fear brings wrong action, often results in denying Christ. Compare this with the Peter of Acts 4. Peter was arrested and questioned. His life was in danger. "Filled with the Holy Spirit...know this: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead...Salvation is found in no one else....When they saw the courage of Peter and John...they were astonished and took note that they had been with Jesus."

What was it about being with Jesus that instilled courage?

Where does courage come from?

Acts 4:23-31: Prayed together. Worshiped God. Recognized who He is. Asked for **Boldness**. The Holy Spirit gave it to them.

Jesus on Fear:

Mat 8:26 ..."You of little faith, why are you so afraid?"

Mark 4:40 They were terrified. Who is this?

Matt 10:26,28/Lk 12:5 Do not be afraid of them. Say what I tell you. (I will give you words. cf Eph 6:19) Do not be afraid. They can only kill the soul. Sparrows

Luke 12:32 Don't be afraid...Father give you the Kingdom. (eternal perspective)

John 12:15 Don't be afraid...your king is coming. (eternal perspective)

Luke 5:26 Healed paralytic. They were filled with awe.

Luke 8:37 People of region of Gerasenes overcome with fear. (His power invoked fear.)

Matthew 14:26 "Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid."

John 7:13 Fear kept people from proper response.

John 12:43,43 Fear of public opinion kept people out.

John 14:27 The counselor...peace I leave with you...Do not let your hearts be troubled....do not be afraid.

Acts 12:1-17 James was killed by Herod. The people liked it so he arrested Peter to do the same. "But the Church was earnestly praying to God for him." James was killed; Peter was miraculously spared. The difference was prayer.

Fear of the Lord

Acts 5:5,11 Great fear seized the whole Church...God a glimpse of God's holiness.

Acts 9:31 The Church lived in the fear of the Lord.

Acts 10:35 God accepts people who fear Him and do what is right.

Acts 19:17 Seized with fear. Openly confessed their evil deeds.

Rom 8:15 ... you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship....

Gal 4:3 Stoicheia.

Gal 4:9

Col 2:8,20

Heb 2:15 Slaves to their fear of death.

Phil 1:14-22 Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.... 19 ... I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. 20 ... but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.... 27contending as one man for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.... 30 ... you are going through the same struggle you saw I had,...

Phil 1:27-30 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved--and that by God. 29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, 30 since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had,...

Eph 6:19, 20 Paul's request. Not for protection, not for fearlessness, but for *words*: ... that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

This reflects a high level of interaction between Paul and the Holy Spirit.

The way out of the paralysis of fear is to listen. To be sensitive to the Holy Spirit: to follow Him. cf Acts 4:13. The courage revealed the fact that "they had been with Jesus." The repeated prayer for *boldness*, for *words*, to speak the Gospel as we ought is a major thread in this subject of fear. It is the one that most gets to me, personally. This would be my Number 1 application coming out of this study.

Often in the name of sensitivity, we fail the Holy Spirit. *One theme is boldness*. Where does it come from? Eg. Peter; Paul. Prayer for boldness in the face of death.

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with *punishment*. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

This is what I've been reading in Ezekiel. God's punishment is fearsome. Verse 17 says we have confidence in the Day of Judgement - the verse implies that a person who fears is fearing judgement, and if God lives in Him, there is no judgement to fear. The person doesn't really grasp God's love.

Interesting, back in 1970 when the twins were born, the Holy Spirit used this verse out of context. He said to me, "I love you, whatever happens here, even if Marge dies, it will be all right because I love you."

Overcoming Fear: Paul, knowing he could expect the worst, went to Jerusalem with this explanation; **Acts 20:22-24** " 24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race.... cf. Acts 21:13

Col 1:13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, **14** in whom we have redemption,...

Eph 6:12-13 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers **13** ... so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground,...

2 Tim 1:7-12 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. **8** So do not be ashamed to testify ... or of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,... **12** ... I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed,...

2 Tim 4:16-18 At my first defense... everyone deserted me.... **17** But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed.... I was delivered from the lion's mouth. **18** The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom....

Paul said this knowing that his own execution was imminent!

Heb 11:27-12:3 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.... **33** who through faith conquered kingdoms, (etc., etc.)... **34** ... whose weakness was turned to strength; (etc.).... **35** Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection.... **12:2** Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith,... **3** Consider him ...

Heb 13:6 So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

Psa 34 **4**...he delivered me from all my fears. **7** The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. **8** ... takes refuge in him. **17** The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. **19** A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all;

Acts 18:9-10 ... "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. **10** For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." Fear silences. God can and does keep us.

Rev 2:10-11 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. **11** ... He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Rev 6:15-17 Then the kings ..., the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. **16**...to... hide ... from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! **17** For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

Rev 12:11 They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

1 Peter is a book on dealing with fear. It was written in ± 65 a.d. from Babylon. Nero's persecutions had started in Rome and were spreading to Asia Minor. Peter's audience; "God's elect...scattered throughout the whole known world! (for fear of the persecution.)"

1:3-4 he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade....

A repeated theme. **HOPE** is the antidote against fear. Hope sees things from an eternal perspective. It puts our present suffering into the eternal context.

1:6-7 ... for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. **7** These have come so that your **faith**--of greater worth than gold,... may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor....

Another repeated theme: Trials refine our faith.

Q. Why is refined faith so valuable?

Even "mustard seed faith" is powerful. What would a person be like who has the pure stuff?!

1:8 Though you have not seen him, you **love** him;... and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

Love is the motivation for us to persevere in our trials.

1:13-22 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. **15** be holy in all you do; **17** live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear (fear of falling). **22** ... love one another deeply, from the heart.

Remember who you are; **2:9** ...a chosen people,... belonging to God, Remember your purpose; glorify God among the pagan world.

Submit to the system. **1 Pet 2:13**

Submit to your masters: **2:18-21** **19** For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God.... **21** To this you were called,... Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example,...

Another repeated theme. It was in the suffering of Christ that we gained our redemption. Cf. Rev 6:11

3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

3:14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened."

4:12-19...do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.... 19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

A key point: Answers the question; what do we do in response to those who want to destroy us?

5:7-9 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls 9 ... your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

This letter has to do with gaining perspective. Overcoming our fears depends upon our seeing things from the eternal perspective, our faith in God's involvement with us in our suffering and our love for Christ and for one another. 2 Peter 3:1

Faith, Hope and Love vs. Fear

1. Faith: Faith and fear are opposites. Fear says, I'm on my own and I might not make it. Anxiety sets in. I've got to get all this done.

The antidote is worship: Getting our perspective on our unfailing God. Asking for courage. The Holy Spirit attending. Acts 4:23-31. His giving us words.

Anxiety over fulfilling my responsibilities - the need to measure up to people's expectations, is my most prevailing fear. When I go to bed at night, the anxious thoughts often come. What do I do with this expression of fear? I need, at these times, to worship. Worship replaces my fear with praise over God's greatness.

I need "food for worship." Memorize some passages that speak of God's greatness.

2. Hope: Keeps the transcendental in the picture. Matthew 10:28-31. Only makes sense when our hope is in place. Hope banishes fear. Luke 12:32; John 12:15

Birth ----- Death ----- Eternity

70 years

The Resurrection was the propellant of the First Century. Acts 4:10-13; 5:3; 10:39, 40.

3. Love: Perfect love casts out fear. 1 John 4. Love and fear are opposites. Acts 4:23. They prayed, worshiped and asked God for boldness in the face of threats - asked for words. Eph 6:19