

Fear Part 1

By Wayne Vasilenko

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What does the word “Fear” mean to you; what was the first thing that popped into your mind, fear of failure, fear of embarrassment, fear of injury or death? As you can see by these illustrations of fear, some can be relatively harmless, while some can involve physical danger with possible physical consequences. Fear is a word to which everyone can relate. What prompted this study concerning fear was a conversation I had with my aunt who was instrumental in leading me to the Lord many years ago. She had asked me to compile a list of verses in the Bible pertaining to fear as she went on to explain that fear is still something she has issues with even after 80 plus years, most of them as a “Born Again Believer.” At first, it seemed odd that a person with a strong faith in God and His Word could still have issues with fear, especially after so many years. However, the more I thought about it, I began to realize that I too still at times have some issues with fear, and I feel safe in saying that you do too. In fact, it started to become clear that fear is one of Satan’s most powerful tools in his arsenal to keep us from faith in God at all levels in our spiritual walk! There are so many definitions and synonyms of the word fear that it would fill pages to list them all, this is how far reaching and inclusive fear is in our lives. There is not a person on the planet that has not experienced fear; yet there are over 300 occurrences in the Bible including the words “Fear” and “Not” in close proximity such as “Fear not,” and other similar phrases.

Jesus Experienced Fear

Mark 14:32-36 (AMP)

³² Then they went to a place called Gethsemane, and He said to His disciples, Sit down here while I pray.
³³ And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be struck with terror *and* amazement and deeply troubled *and* depressed. ³⁴ And He said to them, My soul is exceedingly sad (overwhelmed with grief) so that it almost kills Me! Remain here and keep awake *and* be watching. ³⁵ And going a little farther, He fell on the ground and kept praying that if it were possible the [fatal] hour might pass from Him. ³⁶ And He was saying, Abba, [which means] Father, everything is possible for You. Take away this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You [will].

Verse 33 in the passage above, introduces a new level of fear - terror! According to **Wordnik Dictionary**, terror is Intense, overpowering fear, also described as extreme fear; fear that agitates body and mind; violent dread; fright. It is the kind of fear I imagined as I watched a documentary recently about man-eating lions in Africa. To me, that is terror, being approached by such a huge and powerful beast, with no way to defend myself. This is the level of fear experienced by Jesus in these verses. He was to the point of almost begging God the Father to get him out of what He was about to endure! Have you ever thought about what was so upsetting to Jesus? Was it fear of death? He had demonstrated the power to overcome death, so it is unlikely that was what terrified Him, so what was it? Unbelievably you and I contributed to the fear and terror that Jesus was experiencing! Jesus knew that He was about to bear the burden of our sins; He was sinless and the thought of becoming the essence of all the sin of man, past-present-and future was terrifying to Him! It was so repulsive to Him he could hardly bear the thought of it, yet He knew that it was necessary for our redemption and relented saying, “yet not what I will, but what You (God the Father) will.” Praise Jesus... Thank -You Jesus! If the Bible instructs us not to be fearful, why do so many of us still have fear issues, and how does fear affect our walk with the Lord?

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As stated at the beginning of this study, “fear” is one of Satan’s most used, and effective tools that he uses against us. Let us explore how this is so. When asked to explain what it was she feared most, my aunt (previously mentioned) replied, “Criticism,” this prompted by how her father treated her when she was a child. Most of us can relate to criticism by our parents; they meant well in most cases, trying to instruct us in the lessons of life however, there are no perfect parents, and many times criticism is harsh, often referred to as “Censure.” (Meaning strong or harsh disapproval) No one likes rebuke or to be put down, especially in front of peers or siblings, as a result, some people become afraid to act or reply at all in many situations. Satan can, and does use sensitivity to criticism to silence or even destroy our witness to others. This usually happens early in one’s Christian walk when knowledge of Scripture is limited and the new Christian lacks confidence. All it takes is a few times when a “seasoned” Atheist or Agnostic makes someone new to their faith appear as a fool of in front of their peers during a debate to silence them for a long time, possibly forever.

No one likes to be laughed at, or made fun of, and you can rest assured, Satan has a well trained Cadre’ of seasoned debaters up to the task. A religious group that regularly practices going door to door comes to mind as a good example. These people, well trained, are well versed in Scripture although much of what they quote is out of context. They do this in order to steer someone in particular direction towards their interpretation of Scripture, which in many cases deviates from accepted interpretations and translations. One of their favorite tactics is to quote a passage of scripture (Usually from the Old Testament) and then say, “But you already know that, don’t you...” a sneaky way to make you critical of yourself or to appear inferior to them in knowledge. This is especially effective if you are unfamiliar with the scripture they quoted. This tends to make you more submissive to their interpretation, *fearful* to challenge them as your interaction continues. Their goal is to make you continually nod in agreement with them, thus building their credibility while diminishing yours. (This is a Sales Technique) If this happens in front of a group of your peers, it can have disastrous results, not only with your own self-confidence in the future, but also in the lives (*The Eternal Lives*) of the spectators of the debate. The result of this may be reluctance by you to engage in debating them especially in front of others for *fear* of embarrassment. There are ways to overcome this kind of fear, which we will discuss later as we progress in this study. So far we have established that fear is common to all of us. The fact that Jesus experienced fear puts us all in good company so to speak. As we continue this study, we will look into other types of fear and look into how that fear can be good in some situations, even in the ways we have already explored. Come back for Part 2 of this study.