

## Escape from Fear<sup>1</sup>

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.

October 13, 2024

Text: Revelation 1:17-18

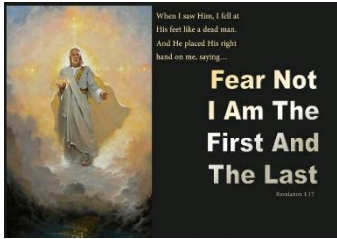
Purpose: All of us have had fear invade our lives at one time. We need to face our fears by accepting change, adapting to the inevitable, focusing on the facts instead of the fear, and placing our trust in God.

The new pastor at the country church was delighted when he received an anonymous gift and he told the church council about it. The pastor proposed it should be used to buy a new chandelier for the church sanctuary.



However, it was put to a vote and the pastor was disappointed when his proposal was narrowly defeated. The pastor noted that the church council secretary had voted against the proposal and when the meeting was over, he asked the secretary why he had not supported it.

The secretary said he had three reasons: "First, I have to write the minutes of the meeting and I can't spell the word; second, there is sure to be an argument over who should play it; and finally, if we are going to spend money in the Church what we really need is some good lighting."<sup>2</sup>



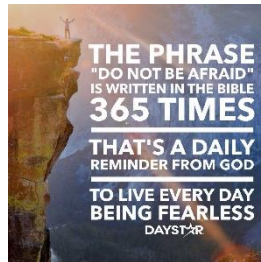
The passage of scripture I read this morning was a scene lifted from the Revelation of Jesus Christ to the Apostle John while he was on the Isle of Patmos. John saw the Lord in a way he had never seen before.

Jesus was clothed with a garment down to his feet, a golden belt around his waist, hair white as snow, eyes aflame with fire, a loud booming voice, in his right hand seven stars, and in his left a two-edged sword, and His countenance shown like lightning.

The two verses I want to re-read say this, *“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.’”* (Revelation 1:17-18)

Jesus approached John in the same way He would approach you and me during our times of fear. “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.” Certainly, the problem of fear is a part of many people’s lives. We live in such a stressful society, that many individuals are operating out of an underlying sense of fear and dread.

Fear is a problem for all kinds of people: prestigious or alienated, rich or poor, educated or ignorant, old or young. All people struggle with the invasive clutches of fear.



The list of fears may include – fear of themselves, fear of others, fear of the past, present, or future; fear of sickness and death, fear of poverty, fear of failure, fear of injury – the list is actually endless.

Some of our fears are normal and actually helpful. Normal fears can be an aid to our safety, comfort, knowledge or health. A person that has no fear is actually in a dangerous position. But some of our fears are abnormal; they undercut our effectiveness, distract us from our goals, hinder us from attempting our goals, and can even affect our mental and physical well being. Our fears can actually paralyze us! These abnormal fears can so pervade our thoughts that they can become enemies of our spirit and flesh.

I guess that is why God has said to us 365 times in the Bible, *“Fear not.”*

- God comforted Abraham with these words, *“Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”* (Genesis 15:1)
- He also comforted Isaac with these words as he dug wells in the wilderness. (Genesis 26:24-26)
- God also comforted Jacob when his son was lost to Egypt. (Genesis 46:3)
- God also comforted the Israelites as they were preparing to cross the Red Sea. (Exodus 14:13)



- David declared to us in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, “*I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*” (v. 4)

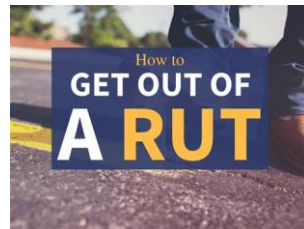
- In Isaiah 41:10 we read, “*Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*”



It is God’s desire for us to trust Him and not operate our lives in the midst of fear. Yet many Christians are tormented by fears. We need to break the habit of fear before it consumes us. We can break these habits of fear by following these four positive techniques.

### **I. We need to recognize and accept the changes that occur in our life.**

*We often love life’s ruts.* We love the familiar scenery, the same route to work, the same foods for breakfast, the same grocery stores, the same beauty shops, the same clothes, the same church seat, the same job even if we hate it, and the same home even if we have outgrown it or our needs change.



We do not like change. I know I can say this because I hate change. I love the same old ruts because they are comfortable and safe. We often become afraid to change, and when change is forced upon us, we become fearful and confused.

*We need to recognize that life itself is a story of change.* As you read through the lives of people in the Bible, their lives were constantly changing. As you look back over your life, it too reflects one change after another. You move through the school years, marriage, children, death of friends or family, a job ends, and another career begins. Our lives are fluid and it moves through time and change. Even nature tells us that life is about growing and change.



This fear habit can be broken when we realize and accept change as normal and a natural part of life. Fear does not stop the changes in our life – it only intensifies our emotional response to it. To live in constant fear is actually a denial of God’s involvement in our lives.

1. We need to acknowledge that change is an opportunity as well as a danger.
2. That there are positive life affirming changes (better job, children, marriage) as well as negative changes (death, job loss, divorce).
3. Change in life can actually make our lives interesting but these changes provide us challenges.
4. The changes we face also make it possible to have a better world.

Embracing  
Change



We should frame in our minds the thought – it is a mistake to try and re-create the past, freeze the present, or even stave off tomorrow. We need to recognize and embrace change as it comes our way.

## II. We need to recognize and adapt to the inevitable.

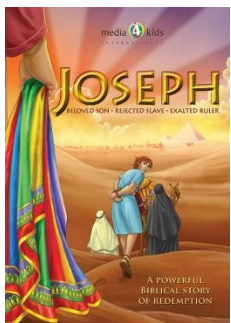
Maybe you have heard it said, “Make the best of any situation.” That is often very difficult to do. It is not simply a weak submission to the whims of fate. It is an adjustment to the changes of life to use them for our best.

SOMETIMES THE BAD THINGS THAT HAPPEN IN OUR LIVES PUT US DIRECTLY ON THE PATH TO THE BEST THINGS THAT WILL EVER HAPPEN TO US.

WALK BY  
Faith  
NOT BY  
Sight

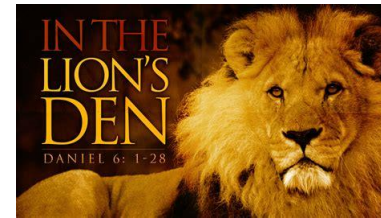
Maybe you have heard it said, “Walk by faith and not by sight.” The child of God must remember to do this. When we walk through the pathways of life, we need to be of good courage, even in the face of death. Our walk in life is by faith. A faith that trusts God.

If we examine the Bible, we are reminded of people that faced difficult changes and triumphed.



Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. Was betrayed by his master’s wife and was cast into prison. He was forgotten by a fellow prisoner, but eventually became the second in command in the nation of Egypt. Joseph made adjustments along the way, but trusted God no matter what.

Moses, born an Israelite, adopted into the royal family, had to flee Egypt due to his killing of an Egyptian. While on the back side of the desert, Moses met God in a burning bush, and was re-commissioned to set his people free from slavery. Accepting the task involved risk and ridicule. But Moses trusted God along the way and brought the people through the Promised Land.



Daniel faced the lion’s den when he refused to worship the image of the king. Paul faced all types of persecution, ship wrecks, snake bites, stoning, and imprisonment; all for the cause of advancing and proclaiming the gospel. But in every situation, these people found trusting God as the key to facing their fears.

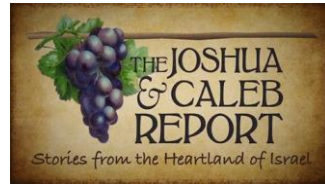
## III. We need to learn to live our lives out of the facts we face instead of the fears we imagine.

Many of our fears are not about existing situations. Our fears arise out of imaginary circumstances and events that we are afraid might happen.



When the Israelites were ready to enter the Promised Land, they sent out twelve spies and returned with a report. They reported that the land was filled with milk and honey. The vineyards and fruit trees were abundant. But the people cowered when they heard how

tall and strong the inhabitants were. Only two out of the twelve felt it possible to take the land as God promised. Even though God promised to deliver the land into their hands, they froze in fear and were terrified at the prospect of conquering the “giants in the land.” Their imagination got away with them, and God rebuked them. As a result of their lack of trust in God, they were not allowed to enter the Promised Land. Only Joshua and Caleb, and the children 20 years of age and younger were allowed to enter.



We need to have the faith and trust of Joshua and Caleb if we are to face our fears and move into a place God has promised.



There is another aspect of fears which may stem from our prejudices. We allow our preconceived ideas about people, groups, or races to cloud our judgment and actually fuel our fears. Our prejudices can allow us to pre-judge others and assume they will hurt us, steal from us, take advantage of us, or even harm us. We need to live our lives on the basis of facts and the way things actually are instead of letting our imaginations or prejudices feed our fear.

#### **IV. We need to orientate our lives and cultivate the habit of complete trust in God**

We find in the *Old Testament* examples of people that fully trusted God.



- Isaiah 12:2 says, “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid.”
- Psalm 27:1 says, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?”
- Psalm 34:4 says, “I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.”
- Psalm 56:3 says, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.”



What we need to do when fear creeps into our life, is to turn to God and trust Him. He is faithful to us, and He will be with us.

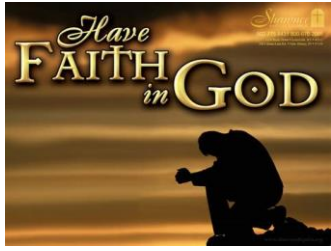
We also find the same advice in the *New Testament*. Jesus often told his disciples not to fear. He reminded them that God cares for the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, and He would care for them as well. (Matthew 6:25-30).

Paul said in Romans 8:15, “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

The writer of Hebrews said, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” (13:6) In 1 John 4:18 we find,

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.” How can we obtain this perfect love? We ask God to fill us with His Holy Spirit.





We can trust God because He is faithful to us. God gives us stability and direction in life. We need to build up the faith habit instead of the fear habit. By trusting God at every turn in life – good or bad – we can grow in our faith in God.

Throughout the ages, people have found light for their path when they trusted God. We need strength to face our fears and our unknown tomorrows. This comes through exercising our faith and trust in God.

### **Trusting Jesus (# 417)**

Words: Edgar Page Stites (1836-1921)

Music: Ira D. Sankey (1840-1908)

Tune: TRUSTING JESUS  
(7.7.7.7. with refrain)



Simply trusting every day, Trusting thro' a stormy way;  
Even when my faith is small, **Trusting Jesus that is all.**

Brightly does His Spirit shine, Into this poor heart of mine;  
While He leads I cannot fall, **Trusting Jesus that is all.**

Singing if my way is clear, praying if the path is drear,  
If in danger for Him call, **Trusting Jesus that is all.**

Trusting Him while life shall last, Trusting Him till earth be past;  
Till within the jasper wall, **Trusting Jesus, that is all.**

Trusting as the moments fly, Trusting as the days go by;  
Trusting Him what e're befall, **Trusting Jesus that is all.**

May that phrase, “Trusting Jesus” be your guiding thought as you encounter your fears in life.

### **LET US PRAY**

#### **Notes:**

<sup>1</sup>Sermon outline by T. T. Crabtree (Pastor's Annual, 5/6/2007, Zondervan 2007)

<sup>2</sup>Micky's Funnies, A Lighting Funny, 5/15/2019