

Fear God or Fear Everything Else

Philippians 4:19

There seems to be a lot of fear associated with the virus. People are afraid of getting sick. Others are afraid of getting someone else sick. People are afraid to go to the doctor or to the hospital. There is the fear of loss of income, or job. There is the fear of an uncertain future. There is fear of losing a loved one. There is the fear of dying.

We want this to end so we can stop being afraid!

But life will always include circumstances that cause us to fear: illness, financial hardship, rejection, loneliness, and death are realities every day – not just because of Covid-19.

What are we going to do? The believer in Christ has options.

1. We can fear God or fear everything else.

We can fear God or fear everything else. Are you tired of being afraid? There is one fear that will solve all your fears – the fear of God.

What does it mean to fear God? Fearing God means that we trust Him enough to obey Him – especially when life is hard or when faced with a difficult choice.

Genesis 22:12 *He said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you **fear God**, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”*

Abraham feared God enough to obey Him when God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Because Abraham obeyed God, he was blessed, Isaac was blessed, the world was blessed as Abraham’s obedience allowed a foreshadowing of God providing Jesus to die as a substitute for us.

Exodus 1:17 *But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live.*

At the time of Moses’ birth Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill the baby boys that were born, but they obeyed God rather than the king. God blessed them because of their obedience. The world was blessed because they allowed Moses to live.

Exodus 1:20-21 *So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. ²¹ Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them.*

Fear of the Lord does not mean that we are afraid of God so we dare not approach Him. Fear of the Lord does not mean that God is mad at us all the time or that we never know how God will react. Fear of the Lord means that we recognize God for who He is and we submit to Him. We submit to Him, not because He is an angry tyrant, but we submit to Him because He is a loving God who knows what is best for us.

My Andrew just finished a paper on the first few verses of the book of Proverbs. This, in part, is what he wrote about the fear of God:

Wisdom begins with fearing the Lord. This theme is present throughout the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible ... [Derek] Kidner observed, “The beginning ... is not merely a right method of thought but a right relation; a worshipping submission (fear) to the God of the covenant.”

“The world is looked on not as a household in which God and man are co-workers, but as a realm in which God is king and man is subject.” [Crawford Toy] If one truly believes that the Lord is in control, then the choices one makes will reflect the supremacy of [God] in all aspects.

When we submit to God in obedience, then we are blessed and others are blessed through us.
Fearing the Lord means that we trust Him enough to submit to Him.

Deuteronomy 10:12 *“Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul*

**We can fear God or fear everything else.
If you can't trust God, who can you trust?**

John Donne: “... as Thou hast given me a repentance, not to be repented of, so give me, O Lord, a fear, of which I may not be afraid.”

Once we have repented and followed God – we don't want to ever turn away from God.
Once we fear the Lord (trust Him) we don't have to fear being afraid again.

Asking why bad things happen is futile.
How will I respond? is the question.
Will I trust God?

2. God wants to redeem your pain.

More than we want to know why we suffered, we want the pain removed.
We want God to remove the pain.
God wants to redeem the pain.

It is in times of difficulty and pain that our faith can best grow.
How will we learn that God is faithful until He is all on which we can depend?
How will we know that God will provide until we can't provide for ourselves?
How will we learn that God is ever present until we are all alone?
How will we know that God has conquered death until we face our own death?

God does not promise that we will avoid pain because we follow Him. God does not promise that we will escape trauma or abuse or illness or pain or death. But He does promise a way up. A way through. Or a way out. [Beth Moore, Chasing Vines]

What can we learn to overcome our fear?
That God is faithful.

3. What do you fear?

It is time for us to learn that God has already defeated every enemy we fear.

A. Do you Fear Financial hardship?

God will provide.

Hebrews 13:5 *Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,"*

We get ourselves in trouble when we are not content. Greed and a lack of self-control leads us to spend more than we should, feeds an appetite for more, and acquire unnecessary debt. This causes us to fear financial loss.

God has promised to provide what we need.

Luke 12:24 *Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!*

Matthew 6:31-33 *Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' ³² For the [pagans] eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

B. Do you fear Rejection?

God loves you and has a plan for you.

**If someone cannot love you like you are, you don't need to be close to him or her.
Don't let a person who does not love you replace God who loves you with a sacrificial love.**

1 John 4:9-11 *In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

Note verse 11, we are to be focused on loving others. Loving others makes us more lovable.

C. Do you fear Loneliness?

We need to practice physical distancing, not social distancing.

Get on the phone.

Arrange a small meeting.

Meet in your car and talk through the windows.

Organize a friends Zoom call.

Philippians 4:19 *And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

"All your needs" is more than financial or material needs. This includes social, emotional, and spiritual needs, too.

D. Do you fear Death?

I Corinthians 15:26 *The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.*

John Donne's desire was to serve in the court of King James (KJV Bible). A series of events in his early life caused him to turn away from God and live a life seeking pleasure. Another series of events in young adulthood led to ten years of poverty and struggle. During this decade he turned to God. He was named Dean of St. Paul's cathedral in London. During his time there plague swept through London three times. Over time 1/3 of the people in London died; 1/3 fled to the countryside, but John Donne stayed to minister. Even though the population dwindled, his church began to be packed on Sundays. Then he was diagnosed with the plague. He was told he only had weeks to live. He was bed-ridden and near death. He first cried out to God to remove the disease and asked why God allowed it. He thought maybe it was punishment for his earlier life of sin. He asked himself, "Am I ready to meet God?"

Then he came to a place of confidence in the gospel. While he was not worthy, Jesus had died for Him and John Donne trusted Jesus, so God saw him as worthy. Reaching this place of peace he began to ask God to redeem the pain.

Then it was discovered the doctors had misdiagnosed his disease. He was very sick, but not going to die. He returned to the pulpit for eight more years. Then he fell sick again. The last sermon he preached was titled "Death's Duel." In it he said he would fight to live as long as he had strength and that he would fight with confident faith that death would ultimately be defeated.

He spent the next five weeks preparing to die. He wrote letters, received friends, and wrote his obituary. He wrote of his faith in the gospel and said, "I am therefore full of inexpressible joy, and shall die in peace."

Are you ready to meet God?

If so there is no need to fear suffering or death. God has defeated every enemy. For the Christian death becomes a doorway to new life!

I Corinthians 15:54-85

⁵⁴ *So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."*

⁵⁵ *"O Death, where is your sting?*

O Death, where is your victory?"

⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

⁵⁸ *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

If you are not ready to meet God there is a way to get ready.
You must surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ.