

Spiritual Exercise

Sharing Our Needs and Fears

Prayer

Introduction

Mature followers of Jesus Christ recognize that there is a fierce battle being waged for the souls of men, women and children. The Scriptures hold great encouragement in regards to the battle preparation that has already been accomplished, as well as the weapons that have been provided. The leaders' responsibility is to carry the truth and faith of this into battle, so that others will be encouraged.

Before we go into battle, we must deal with the issues of fear. Fear can be good... and bad. There are things and beings we should fear, and those that we should not. Fear can paralyze us, and fear can empower us. The truth of this in the Kingdom of God is particularly important, for much is at stake.

Definition

Fear (*yare'*, Hebrew): to fear, revere, be afraid; to stand in awe of, be awed; to be fearful, be dreadful, be feared; to cause astonishment and awe, be held in awe; to inspire reverence or godly fear or awe; to make afraid, terrify. *Outline of Biblical Usage, BlueLetterBible.org*

Fear (*phobos*, Greek): fear, dread, terror (used always with this significance in the four Gospels); reverential fear of God, as a controlling motive of the life, in matters spiritual and moral, not a mere "fear" of His power and righteous retribution, but a wholesome dread of displeasing Him, a "fear" which banishes the terror that shrinks from His presence and which influences the disposition and attitude of one whose circumstances are guided by trust in God, through the indwelling Spirit of God. *Vines Expository Dictionary*

Searching Out the Matter

(All Scripture references, but those noted, are NKJV; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; headings and footnotes excluded)

Fear – Out with the Bad

During the transformation process, the Holy Spirit will work ungodly fear out of us. Along the way, He will expose fears that inhibit our transformation and our obedience to Christ. All the while, Satan will be attempting to leverage these fears to His advantage.

Near the end, there will be what some call a strongman (a more powerful demon) that we must overcome before walking out into our assignment. The Lord will allow this strongman to attack us with the fears that will most inhibit our glorifying the Father in our new assignment. These will not be more than we can bear, but we must courageously face and defeat them. God has given us a number of promises in this regard.

⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded.

James 4:7-8

The process of transformation includes cleansing and purification (in submission to God) that produces power over the evil one.

Fearful and Courageous (continued)

The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them. Psalms 34:7

The strongman is not the only spirit hovering around you – if you have godly fear of the LORD.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

2Timothy 1:7

The Greek word translated “fear” in this verse is not *phobos*, but *deilia*. It means cowardice (more than terror). Fear from a spirit (i.e., demon) is not the same as fear of the Lord. As His children, we have power over them. Our drawing back is cowardice – not the fear God intends. We must remember: Behind every ungodly fear (e.g., man, failure, success) there is a lie. Deal with the lie – with power, love and a sound mind – and the fear will fly.

Fear – In with the Good

While the Holy Spirit is working ungodly fear out of us, He is developing in us a more righteous fear of God. The Holy Spirit began teaching me about this godly fear in the following verse.

¹ Thus says the LORD:

“Heaven *is* My throne,
And earth *is* My footstool.
Where *is* the house that you will build Me?
And where *is* the place of My rest?

² For all those *things* My hand has made,
And all those *things* exist,”
Says the LORD.

“But on this *one* will I look:
On *him who is* poor and of a contrite spirit,
And who trembles at My word.

Isaiah 66:1-2

The LORD is saying that He doesn’t need anything from us. We are not as important as we think. But, there is one He will look on. Most are familiar with the requirement of a poor and contrite spirit, but who is the one that trembles at His word? Does that describe my reading of the Bible and the hearing of His rhema word? Continuing with the word to Isaiah, we find God’s opinion of the ones that are not poor, contrite and trembling.

³ He who kills a bull *is as if* he slays a man;
He who sacrifices a lamb, *as if* he breaks a dog’s neck;
He who offers a grain offering, *as if he offers* swine’s blood;
He who burns incense, *as if* he blesses an idol.
Just as they have chosen their own ways,
And their soul delights in their abominations,

⁴ So will I choose their delusions,
And bring their fears on them;
Because, when I called, no one answered,
When I spoke they did not hear;
But they did evil before My eyes,
And chose *that* in which I do not delight.”

Isaiah 66:3-4

Do these verses cause me to tremble? Perhaps they should. Those that are described here are not only “out of God’s will”. Their sacrifices are an abomination to Him. And, as we should know, the line separating us from God is a hard one – not some grey area we may have created in our relationship to Him. And this fear is not only an Old Testament concept – as Paul makes clear to the Corinthians.

Fearful and Courageous (continued)

⁹ Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. ¹¹ Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences. 2Corinthians 5:9-11

Paul is making two important points here. First, there is a judgment seat for Christians – not for salvation, but for the works we have done. Second, there is a “terror of the Lord” in this day of the New Covenant. Even if the latter is for the lost, the mention of both concerns together should give us pause. And so, let us consider the fear of the Lord as it pertains to Christians.

How Should We Fear Him?

There are at least four types of God-ward fear that we must allow the Holy Spirit to develop in us – and through us into others. They are the fear of:

1. Entering into His holiness in an unworthy manner

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2Corinthians 7:1

¹⁴ Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: ¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; ¹⁶ lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. Hebrews 12:14-16

²⁷ Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. ³⁰ For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 1Corinthians 11:27-30

2. Becoming His enemy

⁷ Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. Romans 8:7

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1John 2:15

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

James 4:4

3. Inhibiting His work in our lives

²⁵ See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven, ²⁶ whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “*Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.*” ²⁷ Now this, “*Yet once more,*” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹ For our God *is* a consuming fire. Hebrews 12:25-29

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who

Fearful and Courageous (continued)

works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. Philippians 2:12-13

4. Falling into apostasy

³ Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 2Thessalonians 2:3-4

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons... 1Timothy 4:1

⁹ The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹² that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2Thessalonians 2:9-12

²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*" says the Lord. And again, "*The LORD will judge His people.*" ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Hebrews 10:26-31

These verses speak for themselves. There is something beyond awe and reverence that should be reserved for our relationship with God. I am afraid (no pun intended) that the fear of God has been lost on much of the church. We have been taught that 1John 4:18 precludes us from a trembling fear of God. Let's look at the verse in context.

¹² No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *as Savior* of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love Him because He first loved us. 1John 4:12-19

First, it is "perfect" love that casts out fear (v. 18). Verse 12 explains that this perfect love comes from loving one another. Do we qualify, or are we merely on the way? I confess that I am still working this out myself. However, it is clear from these and previously cited verses that love and fear are a part of our relationship with God. I propose that the fear of the Lord leads us to the perfect love that casts out all fear. God is love (v. 16). When we are perfected in Him, there will be no need for fear. In the meantime, let's take a look at...

Fearful and Courageous (continued)

Developing the Fear of the Lord

Jesus said, "Follow me and I will make you..." This includes the development of the appropriate fear of the LORD. Here are a couple of other passages that give us a clue and some wonderful encouragement:

⁸ Oh, taste and see that the LORD *is* good;
Blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him!

⁹ Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints!

There is no want to those who fear Him.

¹⁰ The young lions lack and suffer hunger;
But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good *thing*.

¹¹ Come, you children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

¹² Who *is* the man *who* desires life,
And loves *many* days, that he may see good?

¹³ Keep your tongue from evil,
And your lips from speaking deceit.

¹⁴ Depart from evil and do good;
Seek peace and pursue it.

Psalm 34:8-14

Verses 13 and 14 are the Psalmist encouragement for finding the fear of the LORD. Read them again.

A Call to Repentance

¹ Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together,
O undesirable^[a] nation,

² Before the decree is issued,
Or the day passes like chaff,
Before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you,
Before the day of the LORD's anger comes upon you!

³ Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth,
Who have upheld His justice.
Seek righteousness, seek humility.

It may be that you will be hidden
In the day of the LORD's anger.

Zephaniah 2:1-3

Through Zephaniah, the LORD instructs us to seek Him, His righteousness (sound familiar) and humility (poor and contrite again). And we are encouraged that:

For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Luke 11:10

One final thought: Many are praying for God to "heal our land". I wonder if we are in a position where He can answer the prayer: "...if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face..." Perhaps we should be seeking our own transformation first.

Surely His salvation *is* near to those who fear Him,
That glory may dwell in our land.

Psalm 85:9

If we want Him to come on the scene, we better start finding the holy fear He requires.

"Be Strong and of Good Courage"

Mighty (*dynatos*, Greek): able, powerful, mighty, strong; mighty in wealth and influence; strong in soul (i.e., to bear calamities and trials with fortitude and patience, strong in Christian virtue); to be able (to do

Fearful and Courageous (continued)

something, excelling in something, having power for something).

Outline of Biblical Usage, BlueLetterBible.org

Whether we like it or not, we are in a battle. Jesus Himself made this clear.

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. Matthew 11:12

John, in his Revelation of Jesus Christ, was given a vision of the veracity of this epic battle.

⁷ And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, ⁸ but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. ⁹ So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. ¹¹ And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. ¹² Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

¹³ Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*. ¹⁴ But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵ So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. ¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. ¹⁷ And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Revelation 12:7-17

Those "who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" sounds like us. How are we, mere humans, to stand in such a violent battle?

⁵ In that day the LORD of hosts will be
For a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty
To the remnant of His people,

⁶ For a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment,
And for strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate. Isaiah 28:5-6

The LORD of hosts will be our strength. He is in us to will and do to His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13), which is to give us His kingdom (Luke 12:32).

We are to be Mighty Men (and Women) of God

The images of war in the Old Testament are a foreshadowing of the battles that Christians face in the new. My favorite warriors are those mighty men that served under King David. Here are a few of their exploits.

⁸ These *are* the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-Basshebeth the Tachmonite, chief among the captains. He was called Adino the Eznite, because he had killed eight hundred men at one time. ⁹ And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, *one* of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines *who* were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel had retreated. ¹⁰ He arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to plunder. ¹¹ And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite.

Fearful and Courageous (continued)

The Philistines had gathered together into a troop where there was a piece of ground full of lentils. So the people fled from the Philistines. ¹² But he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. So the LORD brought about a great victory.

¹⁸ Now Abishai the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of *another* three. ¹⁹ He lifted his spear against three hundred *men*, killed *them*, and won a name among *these* three. ²⁰ Was he not the most honored of three? Therefore he became their captain. However, he did not attain to the *first* three. ²¹ Benaiah was the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man from Kabzeel, who had done many deeds. He had killed two lion-like heroes of Moab. He also had gone down and killed a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day. ²² And he killed an Egyptian, a spectacular man. The Egyptian *had* a spear in his hand; so he went down to him with a staff, wrested the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear. ²³ These *things* Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did, and won a name among three mighty men. ²⁴ He was more honored than the thirty, but he did not attain to the *first* three. And David appointed him over his guard. 2 Samuel 23:8-12, 18-23

You know these men had to know that the LORD was with them. And David knew it, too. He had no worries when it came to His army. When the call to war was given, his men waded into the battle, full of faith and courage. Any green recruits learn both how to fight and how to have faith by just being in their presence.

The same is true for us today! God is raising up many mighty men (and women) to fight for His Kingdom. His Son is our Captain.

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Hebrews 2:10

¹¹ Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Revelation 19:11-16

His victory is sure. We are blessed in this day to be called to participate. While we all may have different assignments, His mission is clear.

¹⁷ And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ " *The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;*

¹⁹ *To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.*"

Luke 4:17-19

Establish the Kingdom of God, heal and make men free. BTW: This freedom is *sozo* salvation – it includes healing for heart, soul, mind and strength. This makes sense when we consider the greatest commandment – To love the LORD with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.

Fearful and Courageous (continued)

Our Marching Orders

⁶ *Is this not the fast that I have chosen:
To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens,
To let the oppressed go free,
And that you break every yoke?*

⁷ *Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out;
When you see the naked, that you cover him,
And not hide yourself from your own flesh?*

⁸ *Then your light shall break forth like the morning,
Your healing shall spring forth speedily,
And your righteousness shall go before you;
The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.*

Isaiah 58:6-8

Isaiah 58 contains our marching orders: To make men free and healing them of every ill.

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31-32

It is the truth that shall make humankind free.

Knowing Our Enemy

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12

Our enemies are the enemies of God. The enemies of God must be our enemies. These are Satan, the World (systems, not people) and our own flesh.

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. ⁷ Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:5-8

¹ Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members? ² You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. ⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. James 4:1-4

It is important to recognize just who we are called to fight. Even our worst human enemy is simply a captive agent of the enemy we have been called to fight. So, how do we fight the captives?

²⁷ "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. ²⁹ To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. ³¹ And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

³² "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even

Fearful and Courageous (continued)

sinner do the same. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. ³⁶ Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Luke 6:27-35

We fight them with the forces that we have been given: Love, blessing, humility, forgiveness, generosity, kindness and mercy. The power behind these forces cannot be over-estimated.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Ephesians 6:10

Strong in the Lord = Holy Spirit's gifts and fruit; and the life of Christ that is in us.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

¹ Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: ² You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴ There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. ⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*: ⁸ for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. 1Corinthians 12:1-11

Strong in the power of His might = Prayer; Your Kingdom come. The Greek word for "power" here is *kratos* – the power of God's authority. When we are strong in His authoritative power, we are calling on Him to establish His Kingdom in the places He has called us to invade – from the alley way to the board room.

¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. James 5:17-18

⁹ Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty men. So he went up to him; and there he was, sitting on the top of a hill. And he spoke to him: "Man of God, the king has said, 'Come down!'" ¹⁰ So Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, "If I *am* a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men." And fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty. ¹¹ Then he sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty men. And he answered and said to him: "Man of God, thus has the king said, 'Come down quickly!'"

¹² So Elijah answered and said to them, "If I *am* a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men." And the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty. ¹³ Again, he sent a third captain of fifty with his fifty men. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and pleaded with him, and said to him: "Man of God, please let my life and the life of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight. ¹⁴ Look, fire has come down from heaven and burned up the first two captains of fifties with their fifties. But let my life now be precious in your sight." 2Kings 1:9-14

⁹ In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come.

Fearful and Courageous (continued)

Your will be done
On earth as *it is* in heaven.

Matthew 6:9-10

Elijah was a man like us. If he was a “superman”, then we have the capacity to be the same. Praying the LORD’s will unleashes power in the earth that no man or weather pattern can resist.

A Soldier’s Focus

Lastly, as soldiers of the God’s Kingdom we are called to focus on pleasing our Commander.

¹ You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. ³ You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴ No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

2 Timothy 2:1-4

We must be careful not to entangle ourselves in the affairs of this life. These may be different things for each of us. It is up to each one to hear from the Lord regarding the things that should be avoided.

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

Acts 2:42-43

The soldiers of the First Century church focused on doctrine, fellowship, communion and prayer. We would do well to do the same. The results will amaze everyone.

And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

Acts 4:23

Not just power and grace, but “great” power and “great” grace. Oh, how I yearn to see the day when this is true for the 21st Century church in America. As we have mentioned, it will require sacrifice.

¹² Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. ¹³ Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. ¹⁴ For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. ¹⁵ Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name. ¹⁶ But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Hebrews 13:12-16

As Christ said, we must take up our cross and follow after Him. He is outside the camp. What does that mean to you? What is the camp that you must leave behind? Quoting several Old Testament prophets, Paul makes it clear that the soldiers of God’s Kingdom must separate themselves.

¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

*“I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people.”*

¹⁷ Therefore
*“Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you.”*

¹⁸ *“I will be a Father to you,*

Fearful and Courageous (continued)

*And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the LORD Almighty."*

2Corinthians 6:16-18

Conclusion

The metaphors that God has chosen to tell His story are for our edification and encouragement. Through the metaphors (and realities) of war, He has made it clear that we are soldiers engaged in a violent battle for His Kingdom. His ways and thoughts in battle are above our own. In fact, they run against our natural inclinations to respond in kind. This is why we must be careful to measure our success in our obedience, and the effect that obedience has on the unseen. It is His war, so we must fight it His way. As we do, He empowers us to enjoy the victories with Him.

As we battle the enemies of our God, we will face many fears. Fear is one of our enemies' most powerful weapons. God created us with the capacity to fear, but not for the purposes of the enemy. In fact, He has made it clear that His children have nothing to fear in the enemy. We are to be more than conquerors in Christ Jesus.

But there is a fear – a godly fear – that we must allow the Holy Spirit to cultivate in our lives. That fear is the fear of the Lord – the beginning of wisdom, provision, protection, and many more of His promises. In some cases, that fear is the fear of terror and trembling. It is the fear of the humble Christian that dares to enter into the presence of God. It is the fear of knowing that we are the temple of the Living God – who is a consuming fire. And it is the fear of knowing that, as God's children, there is much to be gained and much to lose.

Lastly, the fear of the LORD is a fear that is grounded in love and, therefore, it is a mystery. It does not paralyze us. No, much the opposite. It empowers and makes us free – to do the same for those we disciple.

Assignment

1. Review your notes and the Scripture passages from this week's module. Share the ones that are most meaningful to someone you are discipling.
2. What are the things or beings of which you have an ungodly fear? Can you identify the lie behind your fear? Deal with the lie and the fear will fly.
3. Seek God for the holy fear that leads to wisdom, protection, fruitfulness, etc.
4. Ask God to reveal those things that stand between the Spirit's fruit and those around you.
5. Meditate on the meaning of the Kingdom suffering violence, your place in the battle, and the weapons God has given you to be one of His mighty men.

Devotion

Speaking Against the Inhibitors

From 40 Days of Fasting and Prayer Devotion; New River Community Church

The last week or so, I have had a growing concern for those that might not "go outside the camp". I have wondered about what would inhibit them, and what I could do to help them "trust and obey" Christ's call to come out to Him. In fact, I have been casually surveying those I meet to see what they think.

Before we get to the list, I want to assure you that my motives are selfish. I have an agenda here. Simply put, I don't want to go anywhere without all of you (and some that have already found the road less traveled too hard for their liking). In my response to each inhibitor, I intend to arm you with the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, so

Fearful and Courageous (continued)

that you might be able to stand against the wiles of the Enemy yourself, and encourage others to do the same. So here goes:

Inhibitor #1 – The perceived cost in finances, time, and all other comforts of this world:

My first suggestion is to change the word “cost” to “investment”; see the parables of the pearl, and the hidden treasure (Matthew 13: 44-46). Secondly, let’s keep in mind that this investment is guaranteed, by the promises of God, to produce off-the-chart returns (Malachi 3:10,11 and Matthew 19: 29). Lastly, let’s be careful not to allow the Enemy to paint worse case scenarios, when our Provider is, above all, a lover of our souls.

Inhibitor #2 – A lack of vision or understanding of where we are going:

As before, let’s change the language. For God’s people, “vision” is really “promise”. With this in mind, review Joshua 1: 3-9 and 24: 12-14. Secondly, as much as we want to know where we are going before we commit to go there, it is simply not God’s way to distract us with unnecessary details. With Him, it is always a question of “Who”. Is it not enough that He is where we are headed?

Inhibitor #3 – A lack of faith, generally in Him being with us in the journey:

In business, it is a requirement to have a good end-to-end plan before you begin a major change. We have been trained by the world to expect the same from God. However, in His Kingdom, we are only shown enough to require our trust and obedience. Satan will try to discredit our LORD by suggesting He is unfair in not revealing it all. But the One Who is Greater has promised not to forsake us (Joshua 1: 5).

We must recognize that it is for our good that we are called to walk in faith with Him. The journey is, in itself, a test of our faith. Its exercise creates strength and relationship with the Most High God. The best advice I can give is to cry out, “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.” It is in His faith that we walk. He is eager and able to answer our cry.

Inhibitor #4 – Not knowing Him:

As it turns out, this is the most truthful of all the inhibitors. We simply do not know the LORD well enough to run out to Him. It is like a toddler whose Father has been at war or on the mission field for the last two years. This little one will hide and cry before he will be picked up, much less run to meet this perceived stranger. The obvious answer is getting to know Him. That is the purpose of these 40 days of fasting and prayer. Take full advantage of the season. You will be amazed at His love, gentleness, power and encouragement. He is all we need for every step. He yearns for us to join Him.

One last point in closing: It has been suggested that we actively seek out those that need an encouraging word. If you have been encouraged, then you cannot dismiss yourself from this critical responsibility. Helping others find their way is perhaps the most important “out of the camp” act we are called to at this time. Don’t get distracted by fear or doubt. Be bold in your love for your brother and sister in Christ.