

FEAR
Prov. 29:25

Introduction:

1. In 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the new president of the United States, faced a difficult situation. The nation was in the depths of the depression. What would the new president do to move things in a positive direction?
2. In the first paragraph of his first inaugural speech he came directly to the point. "This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."
3. Fear, nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror often paralyzes efforts to advance.
4. Fear can be a good thing. It prevents us from getting too close to the edge of a cliff for fear that we might fall to our death.
5. It can be a bad thing, when it paralyzes us from doing what needs to be done. How do we face it, conquer it and even use it in a constructive way? What does the Bible say? What wisdom is there to give insight into our negotiation with fear?

Discussion:

- I. First, we must recognize that the fear of God is a good thing.
 - A. Scripture always commends the fear of God.
 1. Prov. 9:19 and Psa. 11:10 say, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."
 2. Psa. 33:18-19 says, "The eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him . . . that He may deliver their soul from death, and keep them alive in famine."
 3. Prov. 10:27 says, "The fear of the Lord prolongs life."
 4. Prov. 15:33: "The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom."
 5. King David wrote: "He fulfills the desire of all who fear Him; He will hear their cry and will save them" (Psa. 145:19). "O how great is Your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear You" (Psa. 31:19; cf. 34:9).
 6. In the N.T. those who fear God are recognized, like Cornelius (Acts 10:2) and the people in the congregation at Pisidian Antioch (13:16, 26).
 - B. This is the most prevalent use of fear in the Bible.
 - C. What does it mean to "fear the Lord?"
 1. The primary Hebrew (yirah) and Greek (phobos) terms.
 2. These words carry a variety of meanings and carry the connotation of such English words as "fear," "terror," "alarm," "awe," "reverence," and "respect."
 3. "To fear the Lord," means to recognize His awesomeness, to show respect and reverence to Him.
 4. The fear of the Lord requires: keeping His commandments (Ex. 20:20); serving Him and keeping His statutes (Deut. 6:13, 24); worshiping at His temple (Psa. 5:7).
 5. This fear restrains us from evil and moves us to walk in the way of the Lord.

- a. Prov. 16:6 says, “By the fear of the Lord a man keeps away from evil.”
- b. Moses asked, “What does the Lord require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, and to serve the Lord . . . for your good” (Deut. 10:12-13).
- 6. This fear is no mere observance of commandments. Isaiah wrote, “The Lord said, ‘Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with the lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence (fear) for Me consists of tradition learned by rote’” (29:13). Insincerity is no substitute for genuineness.
- D. First, we must understand that the fear of the Lord is a good thing and must be cultivated in our lives.

II. Second, we need to face the reality that there is a fear that is harmful and destructive. This fear is man’s foe. It debilitates, disorganizes, demoralizes, and destroys.

- A. A current example of this is the Covid-19 virus.
 - 1. I read an article recently entitled, “The Psychology Behind Why Some People Refuse to Wear Face Masks.” The article observed that in our present circumstances of mixed messages, uncertainties, muddled information and distrust we have felt a need to take control. That’s what we do when we are fearful. Some have attempted to take control by wearing a mask. Others have attempted to take control by not wearing a mask.
 - 2. Much like the depression of 1933 we are feeling disorganized, demoralized, and debilitated.
 - a. Many are feeling economic uncertainty. What’s going to happen to my business? How am I going to pay my rent? These are serious, but only material concerns.
 - b. Many are feeling educational uncertainty. What about the education of my children? What’s going to happen when school starts?
 - c. Many are feeling uncertainty regarding their health. What if I get the Corona Virus? What if I bring it home to my friends and relatives? What if I die?
 - 3. What does the Bible say? Not much about the Corona Virus, but a lot about fear.
- B. It has affects on both the people of God and the people of the world.
 - 1. Prov. 28:1 says, “The wicked flee when no one pursues.”
 - 2. When Cain was exiled, he was seized with fearful dread. “Whoever finds me will kill me” (Gen. 4:14). He had killed his brother and was afraid someone would kill him.
 - 3. Herod had beheaded John the Baptist and thought Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead (Matt. 14:2).
 - 4. In our fears we imagine all kinds of evil, destitution, desolation, destruction.
 - 5. Fear disorganizes people. Remember when Belshazzar saw a man’s handwriting on the wall? “The king’s face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together” (Dan. 5:6). When the Chaldeans and the conjurers and the diviners could not read the inscription the king’s face grew even paler, and his nobles were

perplexed (Dan. 5:9).

6. "Mr. President what are we going to do? Fix our problem." He turns to the specialists and one says one thing and another says something else. And the critics say, "He doesn't know what to do, elect me and I will fix it." Fear disorganizes.
7. In the laws on warfare as Israel came into the promised land, Moses said, "Who is the man that is afraid and fainthearted? Let him depart and return to his house, so that he might not make his brothers' hearts melt like his heart" (Deut. 20:8).
8. In Judges when God sent Gideon to fight the Midianites he said, "Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart" (7:3).
9. Fear paralyzes even God's people.
 - a. Joseph of Arimathea was a secret disciple for fear of the Jews (Jn. 19:38).
 - b. The blind man's parents declined to testify after Jesus healed their son for fear of being put out of the synagogue (Jn. 9:22).
- C. "Well what are we supposed to do?" You ask.

III. Third, we are to conquer the destructive force of fear, by faith (Prov. 29:25).

- A. David said, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psa. 23:4).
- B. Am I a naive optimist? Or is this what God has always taught his people?
 1. "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield" (Gen. 15:1).
 2. "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine" (Isa. 43:1). "Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth" (Isa. 43:5-6).
 3. Do you remember when the Arameans with horses and chariots encircled the city where Elisha was? His servant said, "My master! What shall we do?" Elisha said, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed and the Lord opened the eyes of the servant and the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (2 Kings 6:15ff).
 4. You might remind me that although Jesus had at His disposal 12 legions of angels, He still died on a cross (Matt. 26:53). Yes indeed! You are right. Those in Heb. 10 and 11 lost their property and possessions, they endured a great conflict of sufferings, gave up riches, were destitute wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. (And we are afraid we are going to run out of toilet paper???)
 5. "Do not fear what you are about to suffer," Jesus said to the church at Smyrna. "Be faithful, until death and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).
- C. Are we to act recklessly in this life. No! We are to act faithfully. We are to act courageously. What was it Prov. 29:25 said? "The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted."

Conclusion:

1. And No! We do not deny the dark realities of the moment.
2. But neither do we give in to the confusion, disorganization, and the destruction of turning on one another. Instead, in faith and unity we will proceed forward. With courage and self-sacrifice, let us devote ourselves to the things of greater value, than money, education, and health, and in so doing we will both conquer our fears and accomplish the Lord's work of bringing life, peace and hope to the people He loves.