

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON FEAR

LESSON TWENTY-NINE: CONCLUSION

by Sandy Harber

Our Ladies Bible Study Group has spent four months studying fear from a Biblical perspective. More than 400 verses in the King James Version contain the word "fear." The dictionary defines fear as "an unpleasant emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger." I found that no less than 29 different Hebrew and Greek words were translated into the English word "fear." The definitions of those words reveal that there is a variety of types and intensity to this thing we call "fear." It runs the gamut from anxiety, worry, and care to alarm, terror, and dread. When applied to God, it includes the idea of reverential awe.

There is a good kind of fear that God has programmed into man for the sake of survival. This is an internal alarm system that signals our minds and bodies to react to a perceived threat. It is this instinct that keeps us from putting ourselves in harm's way. And when we are confronted by potential danger the fight or flight response is triggered.

The majority of the Bible verses reference the reverential awe type of fear. We are frequently exhorted to "fear God." God is pleased when His children fear Him (Ps. 147:11). And unbelievers can learn to fear and trust Him by observing the behavior of those who let their reverence for God be known (Ps. 40:3).

There is also a bad type of fear. This was the main focus of our Bible study. What causes us to be fearful? And, what can we do about it? The Bible plainly tells us that God is not the source of this type of fear (II Tim. 1:7). We are allowing Satan to make us doubt God when we are afraid. We are not trusting that He is sufficient to handle whatever circumstance we are facing.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus dealt with the fear of lacking basic necessities, such as food and clothing (Mt. 6:25-34). People fear illness, injury, pain, suffering, and death for themselves and their loved ones (Ex. 14:13-14; Ps. 91:5-6; Ps. 23:4). On the spiritual side, we may be fearful to do those things that we know God wants us to do: witness to unbelievers; serve in some capacity in our local church; or, start a new ministry that He has laid on our hearts (II Tim. 1:7). Fear of persecution and suffering for Christ fall into this category (Rev. 2:10). Christians also fear God's judgment (Heb. 10:31; Mt. 10:28). Finally, we fear those situations over which we have no control, those times of trouble, testing and tribulation (Ps. 56:3; Phil. 4:6-7).

So, what can we do to conquer the fear that threatens to overtake us? We can change our focus. Instead of dwelling on ourselves and our problems we need to focus on God. He has assured us that He is always with us (Dt. 31:6; Josh. 1:9; Ps. 46:1-2; Is. 41:10; 43:2), leading us in the way we should go (Ps. 23:4; Jn. 10:27), fighting for us (Ex. 14:13-14; Dt. 20:4), even holding our hands (Is. 41:13). He is on our side (Ps. 118:6). We can call on Him for help whenever we want to (Jer. 33:3; Ps. 50:15; 55:16;). He is available 24/7. We can trust Him (Ps. 34:8; 56:3; Prov. 3:5-6). We simply turn our burden over to Him and let Him take care of it (I Pet. 5:7; Ps. 55:22). Just remember to leave that burden there at the foot of the cross and don't take it up again. It's not our burden any longer. It belongs to our Lord.

We can change our attitude. Instead of looking at our problem as a problem, we can see it as an opportunity. Don't forget that we serve a Sovereign God. Everything in our lives has a God-given purpose (see Job 1:9; 28:28). Rejoice in time of testing (Jms. 1:2-4) as the Apostles did (Acts 5:41). Rejoice (I Thess. 5:16; Phil. 4:4), be thankful (I Thess. 5:18; Phil. 4:6) and sing praises to God (Ps. 40:4; Eph. 5:19). Remember, Jesus has already won the victory (I Cor. 15:57; Jn. 16:33). He holds the keys to death and hell (Rev. 1:18).

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Philippians 4:8