

Psalm 114-2 - Godly Fear vs. Anxious Fear

Last week we examined Psalm 114 and the kind of fear that we should have before God. We called this holy, or Godly fear. What is meant by Godly fear is our sense of awe before God and our respect for his holy righteousness and the fear of offending Him. In a much smaller way, it is like the fear of working with live electric wires. It can be done, but you dare not be casual when you do so. There are many things in life that carry a risk to do if you are respectful of procedures and principles. Having a sense of God whom we fear, however, is not the same thing as living in fear. Unless we are living in sin, we should not walk around fearful of what God is going to do to us next.

1. Living boldly.

Undoubtedly, there have been countless sermons preached about the encouragement to not be afraid. Although the title of this sermon mentions Psalm 114, it is only because the topic is related to the issue of fear. We are going to focus on the problem of the *wrong* kind of fear, which is *anxious* fear. Instead, we can live boldly before God and in this world. Living boldly and without fear starts off with knowing Jesus Christ.

First, Jesus has paved the way with His blood to get to the Father.

Heb 4:14-16 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.

15For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin.

16Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Probably the most significant point is that if the death of the Son of God was not sufficient for the Father, then what would be? If the suffering He did on the cross as the wrath of the Father was poured out on Him for the sins and the sinfulness of all mankind of all ages was not sufficient, then what would be sufficient? I always like to ask, would our sin tainted, sinful self-righteousness be able to perfect what Jesus had done on the cross by the infinitely righteous, infinitely powerful divine Son? In Heb 4:14-16 we see that having become man He was able and qualified to lead the way before the throne of God. Knowing that *He* has given us the right to come before God. To come before Him timorously in fear would be an affront to the power of Christ.

The love of Christ allows us to be confident in casting out our fear. The perfection, or ultimate goal, or end, of love will remove any cause for fear.

1John 4:17-18 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

18There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

We don't have to ask, "Will God accept me?" He loves us. The whole purpose of Christ's sacrifice was to bring us back to Him. His love is perfect which means that the only thing He wants is to receive us.

As a result of the new birth in Christ, God has given us a new spirit, and it is not a fearful spirit but a spirit of power because of that love.

2Tim 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

That new spirit is also a spirit of a sound mind. People in the world might think we are crazy, but we are not part of the craziness of this world. People don't understand our boldness. It is not uncommon for people to mistake confidence for arrogance. Knowing that we are not crazy for having confidence gives us confidence. But, it is the only the confidence and boldness of a sound mind in Christ.

We can live boldly because there is nothing in this world that can take this life in Christ away.

Rom 8:33-39 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth.

34Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

35Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God,

which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So what are the *anxious* fears we boldly face? We will look at some to get an idea of how we can have victory in Christ.

2. Fear of failure.

Just because you cannot *see* your success doesn't mean it is not happening.

- The lack of success.

Consider David before Goliath. In 1Sam 17 Goliath is presented as a fearsome figure. When David heard his challenge, his response was "...who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

1Sam 17:32-40 And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

33And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou *art but* a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

34And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

35And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered *it* out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught *him* by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

36Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

37David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.

38And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail.

39And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved *it*. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved *them*. And David put them off him.

40And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling *was* in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.

This is the standard story I use to point out that you have to be careful how you present a Bible story. I have seen Sunday School literature that asks students to imagine the fear David must have had as he faced Goliath. However, since the Scriptures do not *say* that David was afraid as he approached Goliath then we cannot suggest that *there was* any fear. In fact, the Scripture explicitly describes just the opposite. David felt a holy indignation against the giant.

I would like to point out that there is a difference between being fearless and being foolhardy. In the rest of the passage It is revealed that David had done all he could to prepare for that day. That does not mean to suggest that you have to wait until you have achieved mastery of all of life before you live it, but that if you live life responsibly you will have something for God to bless as you face each challenge. You should not fear if you have prepared to whatever extent you were responsible...which is actually very broad when you consider you should have taken all your studies and opportunities to expand your wisdom.

Prov 4:5-7 Get wisdom, get understanding: forget *it* not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

Remember, though, that the victory comes from God.

Prov 21:31 The horse *is* prepared against the day of battle: but safety *is* of the LORD.

6Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.

7Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

1Cor 3:6-7 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

7So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

There is also the problem of trying to build new spiritual habits. Sometimes we either can do good for a while or perhaps just can't seem to find the gas pedal and get going at all. Paul described it this way:

Rom 7:15-25 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do

I.

16If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good.

17Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

18For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not.

19For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

20Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

21I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

22For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

23But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

24O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

25I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Gal 6:8-9 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

9And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Keep trying: you *will* reap.

- The failure of sin.

Failure to succeed is not the only kind of failure that we fear. There is also moral failure. I very frequently deal with people feeling like there is no getting back to God after they sinned so badly. You might feel like you are alone dealing with this, but you are not. At some time you might face this anxiety that there is no restoration but there is a blessed Scripture that should probably be posted on all our walls:

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

3. Fear of loss of salvation

If you are not a Christian, you *should* fear eternal damnation. However, once you *are* saved, death and eternity should have all fear removed.

Rom 10:17 So then faith *cometh*

by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

John 6:44-45 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

45It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath **learned** of the Father, cometh unto me.

It is not just those who have heard, but who have also learned. The word for *learned* in vs. 45 has the same basis as the word for *disciple*. We are drawn by the Word when we have *learned* it as disciples. Another thing I regularly find is that people who have seriously questioned their salvation it is because they do not have a sound understanding of God's Word. Eternity is big enough that it is not surprising that the thought of Hell should make anyone shudder, but the well versed Bible student will find comfort faster than someone who has not spent time learning both in formal settings like Sunday School and Bible study as well as *informal* settings like the times of fellowship we can have.

So what would you find if you knew the mind of God through the Word of God?

Rom 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Rom 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

John 10:27-29 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.

29My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand.

Eph 1:13 In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your

salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Jesus Christ is in you and you are in the hand of the Father, sealed with the Holy Spirit. If you called upon Christ to save you then if someone wanted to try to separate you from God they would first have to break the seal of the Holy Spirit, open up the hand of the Father, and pull Jesus Christ out of you. That is why Jesus said that you will *never* perish.

Heb 10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

4. Fear of man.

- What people will do to you.

Ps 56:11 In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.

If death is the worst thing that man can do to you then the worst that man can do would be the best. The thought of having to die for the testimony of our Lord could be an exciting thing. We should be able to say in that time, "You can't scare me with heaven!"

Now, we might be okay with the idea that the worst that could be done is to kill us. But our fear might be: what if they stop short of the worst? What if there is something devastating we have to go through? What if they bring us to earthly ruin? I say earthly because, remember, you can't ruin heaven. As terrible as the times could be that we go through, there is actually no earthly ruin...just redirection in ministry.

- What people will think of you.

Fearing what people will think of you is yet another common source of anxiety. This is the one that stops us the most often from serving God in boldness. It's what turns us into appeasers. We don't want people to think we don't care about them, or that we are fanatics, or whatever, so we set Christ aside to cater to them. They say, "Let's party" and we ask "What time and where?" We fall for the old kindergarten threat, "I won't be your friend" and shut our mouths because they don't want to hear the Gospel.

Jer 1:7-10 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I *am* a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.
8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

10See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

Gal 1:9-10 As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

10For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

1Thess 2:4-6 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

5For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God *is* witness:

6Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor *yet* of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

5. Fear of the past and the future.

- Fear of the past.

Will my past catch up to me? You are not doomed to repeat the past, although as Mark Twain is reputed to have said, "History doesn't repeat itself but it often rhymes." You cannot fix the past, though you can learn from the past. Admit your failure and forget it because you are a free agent to choose the right thing now.

Some people fear that you can't be forgiven for the past. However, we can learn from Paul. He had hunted down the people of God before he was saved. He owned up to his past and praised God that it was *in* the past.

1Tim 1:15-16 This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

16Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Phil 3:13-14 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

- Fear of the future.

We might feel justified in feeling afraid of the *Cancel Culture* today. People are afraid to speak up now because the radical elements of society will harass you and try to not only get you fired but also not able to get work again.

All around us we are reminded to be fearful with messaging posted everywhere to be safe during the Corona-virus pandemic. This is followed up with a lot of action that has people scratching their heads, wondering about how this mentality might be wrongly used in the future. We are surrounded by people who sound like the world is coming to an end. The fact of the matter is that the world *is* coming to an end...just not the way *they* think it is.

I am very confident that we are not going to see the world destroyed by nuclear holocaust. We are not going to see the world destroyed by world wide plagues that make Corona virus look like a common cold. We are not going to see the world destroyed by world wide financial collapse beyond the scope of the crash of 1928, etc. Don't get me wrong: I am not saying those things aren't going to happen, just that *we* are not going to see them. I find it interesting that the world has been using the phrase "of Biblical proportions" to describe some of the conditions we are seeing. What we are seeing is terrible, but they are not of "Biblical proportions." Biblical proportions are described in the book of The Revelation. The good news is that, if you are saved, *you* are not going to see it.

1Thess 5:8-9 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

9For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

We know this one thing: no matter what, Christ will be glorified in whatever we go through before then.

Phil 1:14-20 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

17But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and

will rejoice.

19For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, *so* now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death.

As Paul came close to the end of his life, he wrote to Timothy and asked for prayer:

Eph 6:19-20 ...that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,
20For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Fear will disappear in the face of preparing, confessing quickly, praising God for His forgiveness, putting the past behind you, getting back on track *again*, living for God's praise and not man's disapproval, knowing that no matter what happens, we may go boldly forward. While we are here on this earth we can count on one thing: that Jesus Christ is with us and that our joy will come with the eternal morning in heaven.

1. Living boldly. Heb 4:14-16, 1John 4:17-18, 2Tim 1:7, Rom 8:33-39
2. Fear of failure. 1Sam 17:32-40, Prov 4:5-7, 21:31, 1Cor 3:6-7, 1John 1:9
3. Fear of loss of salvation Rom 10:17, John 6:44-45, Rom 5:8, Titus 3:5, Rom 10:13, Gal 2:20, John 10:27-29, Eph 1:13, Heb 10:14
4. Fear of man. Ps 56:11, Jer 1:7-10, Gal 1:9-10, 1Thess 2:4-6
5. Fear of the past and the future. 1Tim 1:15-16, Phil 3:13-14, 1Thess 5:8-9, Phil 1:14-20, Eph 6:19-20