

Fear and Decision Making

Sunday School Lesson 1

The Fearful Christian

2 Timothy 1:7

4/19/2020

Introduction: Instead of continuing in a mini-series on truths from the resurrection, the Lord has been speaking to my heart this week about tackling the matter of fear for the Christian. Several weeks ago, we were reminded in a Sunday message about our need as believers to not be afraid. Satan uses fear to drive believers away from God. We know that God has not given us the spirit of fear. He's given us the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Fear is the antagonist of faith, and without faith, we know that it is impossible to please God. Through this lesson series, we'll take an in-depth look at how fear can negatively affect the Christian. During this first lesson, we will see how fear can impact a person's decision making. Christians need a sound mind when making decisions. That sound mind ought to be established on the Word of God. It ought to be the mind of Christ. It is not possible to have a sound mind and a spirit of fear at the same time. Therefore, when we have a spirit of fear, it can be concluded that our decision making will be unsound and irrational. The Bible gives us several examples to look at when it comes to this matter of fear and decision making. Let's look at the thoughts of the lesson this morning.

I. FEAR MAY LEAD A BELIEVER TO DECIDE TO PUT HIMSELF IN A POSITION MORE HARMFUL THAN HE WAS ALREADY IN. (1 SAMUEL 21:10)

- A. Notice that David had an unsound mind when he was afraid of Saul (1 Samuel 16:11-17).** David had no reason to be afraid of King Saul. While it was true that the king was powerful and had great authority, David had been anointed by the prophet Samuel to be the next king over Israel. The threat of injury was certainly real, but the chance of injury was non-existent. If God says it will happen, a believer must trust God at His Word. Unfortunately, David was faced with a difficult situation. He probably never expected to have King Saul seeking to kill him. Additionally, David had already shown his craftiness in battle by defeating Goliath. King Saul had the opportunity to do it, but he was too afraid. While David's character would not have allowed him to bring harm to Saul, it's still clear that David had the upper hand if it ever did come to a physical confrontation with the king.
- B. Notice that David decided that it was better to be in the land of Gath than to be with Saul (1 Samuel 21:10).** In David's fear, he made the decision to go into the land of Gath. Keep in mind that these people hated David. He was responsible for killing their hero, Goliath. David traded one enemy for another that probably hated him more. This certainly wasn't a sound decision by David, and it led to a precarious situation in Gath. David had to act as a mad man just to escape. A fearful Christian may make a similar unsound decision like David. His fear may drive him to a place more fearful than the place where he was at before. This creates a compounding situation. The fears eventually weigh down so heavily on the believer that he can't think clearly at all. The correct approach is to confront the fear and give it over to the Lord. When you run from your fears, you will likely just run right into a greater fear. Running from fear to fear is no way for a Christian to live.

II. FEAR MAY LEAD A BELIEVER TO DECIDE ON MATTERS PREMATURELY BASED ON CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES. (EXODUS 14:10-14)

- A. Notice that the Israelites' fear caused them to think that their situation was hopeless and already lost (Exodus 14:10-12).** As the Israelites left the land of Egypt, they were excited for what their future held. They had just seen God bring terrible plagues onto the Egyptians. They were now headed to this land that had been promised to their forefathers. Sadly, all of their excitement was quickly replaced when they realized the Egyptians were pursuing them. In just a short period of time, they went from hopeful to totally fearful. As the Egyptians approached, the Israelites' fear caused them to look at the situation with a defeated outlook. In their minds, it was already over. There was no point in going any further. Ungodly fear is incredibly shortsighted. That's because the object of its fear is so large and looming that it can't see anything past it.
- B. Notice that the Israelites' conclusions look foolish to us today (Exodus 14:13-14; Proverbs 18:13).** As we look back on this story, it's easy to see just how foolish these people were. The Bible tells us that it is folly and shame to answer a matter before you hear it. The Israelites thought they already knew the answer before they had even listened to what Moses said. It was obvious to them that this was some type of trick. They just knew that they should have stayed in Egypt. Fear has made many Christians look rather foolish. Fear is deceptive. It can make a person genuinely believe that they are making a good

decision or assumption because the issue that they are afraid of is all they can see in their decision-making process. Even without fear, it is difficult to have long distance vision. Consequently, we must diligently pray and seek wisdom from God. We must pray and ensure that we are not making decisions from the position of fear. Moses told the Israelites that the Lord would fight for them. They just needed to hold their peace. That Biblical advice would be great for many Christians to grab onto in their moments of fear and desperation.

III. FEAR MAY LEAD A BELIEVER TO DECIDE AGAINST THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF GOD (ACTS 9:25-27).

- A. Notice that the purpose of the disciples was to make more disciples (Matthew 28:19-20).** Jesus left His disciples with a very specific commission. They were to go out and make more disciples of Jesus Christ. The book of Acts is written to record the efforts of the early church in carrying out the Lord's command. The disciples were going from city to city and preaching the Gospel. Jesus told them that they would be met with some resistance. He encouraged them not to be afraid. He gave them the Comforter to help to endure through affliction. Satan was actively working against the early church through the persecution exacted on them by Saul and other Jewish religious leaders. To their credit, the accounts in Acts show the bravery of many of these early Christians. They watched as Stephen was stoned to death for preaching the Truth, yet they did not deny their faith. They understood that God had a specific purpose for them.
- B. Notice that the conversion of Saul was a great victory for the purpose of God in reaching the lost (Acts 9:25-27).** When the apostle Paul was converted, it was a great victory for the work of the Gospel. This was the most unlikely convert. One would think that the disciples would be excited to add such a man to the list of disciples. After all, Paul would have a powerful testimony when sharing how Christ got his attention on the Damascus road. Unfortunately, the disciples were gripped with fear, and that fear caused them to make a decision against their very own purpose of being a disciple. They refused to allow Paul to be one of their disciples. One might argue that their fear was a reasonable fear, as Paul posed a legitimate threat. However, they had already been told not to fear persecution or imprisonment for the name of Christ. Shouldn't their faith have been consistent in this matter? A spirit of fear may cause a believer to make a decision that directly contradicts what they know to be God's purpose or plan.

IV. FEAR MAY LEAD A BELIEVER TO DECIDE TO SEEK COUNSEL OR TAKE CONSIDERATION FROM THE WRONG SOURCES (JOHN 7:13; 1 SAMUEL 15:24).

- A. Notice that the Jews made their decisions based on the Jewish leaders (John 7:13).** There were certain Jews who believed in Jesus, but they were afraid to speak out about it. Ultimately, this means that they were making their decisions based on these leaders. Fear will cause us to consider the opinion of sources that we ought not to consider. It did not matter what the Jewish leaders thought about Jesus. If these Jews believed, they should have been willing to speak up. However, none of them were willing to stand alone and speak out. They were speaking privately among friends about Jesus, though. Imagine what would have happened if a few of them had just determined to stand and let their faith in Christ be made known. Oftentimes, group thinking wins out when people are afraid. We'll even listen or consider the opinion of those that as believers we know that we ought not to consider.
- B. Notice that King Saul claimed to make his decision based on the people (1 Samuel 15:24).** When Saul was confronted by Samuel, he referenced the people. Aaron did the same thing when confronted by Moses. Both of these men were placed in positions of authority to make decisions for the nation of Israel. How often did King Saul consult the opinion of the people outside of the situation with Samuel? I believe the answer is that he likely rarely sought their collective opinion. In the case of Saul, it is likely that he used fear of the people as an excuse for his decision. Ultimately, it did not matter, though, as fear was not a valid justification. He was supposed to decide to do what's right. Being afraid makes us vulnerable to the opinions of those that are not trusted sources of wisdom for the Christian. We must give our fears to the Lord and put on the sound mind of Christ. The mind of Christ does not make decisions that contradict what is right.