

Fear and Dedication
Sunday School Lesson 8
The Fearful Christian
Romans 12:1
6/7/2020

Introduction: As we come to the conclusion of this lesson series on the fearful Christian, we are going to look at how fear affects the dedication of the believer. To this point, we have observed ungodly fear's relationship with decision making, discord, depression, defeat, doubt, discernment, and disobedience. Needless to say, ungodly fear totally demoralizes the Christian. This creates a problem when it comes to the Christian's dedication. Faithfulness and dedication are qualities that the Lord values greatly among His followers. Jesus encouraged His disciples to be faithful. Jesus Himself was very dedicated to the mission that had been given to Him by the Heavenly Father. Our lives ought to be totally dedicated to the Lord as a living sacrifice. While the Lord views dedication as the reasonable thing for believers to do, the truth is that many Christians struggle with dedicating themselves to God. We are often guilty of giving of ourselves only partially instead of wholly. Some believers serve God for a little while, but they ultimately fade and falter along the way. Others serve God throughout their whole lives, but they never fully surrender themselves to the Lord. Both cases are examples of a lack of dedication. To dedicate is to devote ourselves to a specific task or purpose. That task for the believer is doing the will of God. Let's review some principles to help us understand how ungodly fear jeopardizes our dedication to the Lord.

I. UNGODLY FEAR KEEPS US FROM MAKING A TOTAL COMMITMENT TO THE LORD. (MATTHEW 8:18-22; MARK 10:21; PSALM 37:5)

- A. Notice that making a commitment is based upon trust (Psalm 37:5).** No one likes to pour all of their effort out for something that isn't going to yield any fruits for them. This is why people struggle with commitment. It involves trust in the person or thing that you are committing yourself to. A young person does not want to commit his life in marriage to a spouse that he cannot trust. We wouldn't commit our credit card information online to a website that we do not trust. Many high school athletes struggle to commit to a school. Coaches tell them all sorts of untruthful things with the hopes of having them play on their team. Ultimately, the athlete has to decide for himself which coach and school are telling him the truth. He has to find the place to commit to that he trusts. In Psalm 37:5, the Bible encourages us to commit our way unto the Lord. It follows up that admonition by reminding us that we are to trust in the Lord. Trust is the key to commitment. Christians who do not commit themselves to the Lord are telling the Lord that they do not trust Him enough to give Him their lives.
- B. Notice that some were hesitant to become disciples because of their little fears (Matthew 8:18-22; Mark 10:21).** As Jesus preached to the multitude, there were some who showed interest in becoming one of His disciples. One of those was the rich young ruler. When he was confronted with the decision of committing himself to the cause of Christ, he was fearful of a life without wealth. There was also a certain scribe who came to Jesus. He was ready to commit himself to following the Lord anywhere and everywhere. Jesus warned him, though, that He did not even have a place to sleep. While we don't know that the scribe was concerned about where he slept, the fact that Jesus mentioned it to the man leads us to think that it may have been a fear that he had. Ungodly fears will keep a believer from committing himself totally to the cause of Christ. Sometimes, these fears may be relatively small, but they are still troublesome enough to cause us to hesitate in our commitment. We should commit to the Lord without any trepidation or hesitation. If we trusted Christ enough for salvation, then we should not allow ungodly fears to cause us not to trust Him enough in the commitment of our lives to His service.

II. UNGODLY FEAR DISPLACES US FROM OUR FAITHFULNESS AND STEADFASTNESS TO THE LORD. (REVELATION 2:10; GALATIANS 5:7; 1 CORINTHIANS 4:2, 15:58; 2 PETER 3:17)

- A. Notice that faithfulness to the Lord is required of every steward (1 Corinthians 4:2, 15:58).** As mentioned in the introduction, faithfulness is an extremely important quality for every believer to have. What good are talents if you are not faithful to use them? 1 Corinthians tells us that faithfulness isn't just something good or hopeful for the Christian to have. It is a requirement of every Christian steward to be found faithful. Why is it so important? First, it's important because we are doing the Lord's work. He has tasked us with an assignment, and it would be negligent of us as believers to not be faithful with what the Lord has asked us to do. Secondly, it's important because He could return at any moment, and we don't want to be found guilty of being unprepared for His arrival. Since we do not know when the arrival will take place, the best we can do is stay faithful unto the end.

- B. Notice that ungodly fear has hindered some from remaining steadfast (Revelation 2:10; Galatians 5:7; 2 Peter 3:17).** It is sad to see a faithful or steadfast Christian falter in their service to the Lord. What are some of the reasons that a faithful man stumbles? The most obvious and general answer is sin. However, within that, we see that ungodly fear causes the faithful to stumble. The Lord warned the church in Smyrna that their faithfulness could falter as a result of fear. It does not take much fear to displace the faithful man because man's faith overall is weak. Satan hates the faithfulness of the believer. He will do anything in his power to try to prevent us from being faithful. He'll work to utilize different objects of fear until he finds that thing that gets our attention. We've already explored how ungodly fear leads to defeat and a desire to quit or compromise. It is not the unfaithful that Satan is targeting, as he has no reason to fight against them. Instead, he targets the faithful.

III. UNGODLY FEAR CAUSES US TO QUESTION WHETHER IT IS WORTH IT TO SERVE THE LORD. (LUKE 1:68-74; REVELATION 4:11, 5:2; MATTHEW 10:37-38; PSALM 18:3)

- A. Notice that dedication to the Lord requires us to recognize His worth (Matthew 10:37-38; Psalm 18:3; Revelation 4:11, 5:2).** In our first point, we recognized that commitment requires trust. Now, we must notice that dedication requires recognition of worth. Would a person dedicate so much of his time to a cause or task that is not worth the effort? Sometimes, we commit to start something that we think is worth our time and effort, and then we later realize that it is isn't worth it. What do we do in those situations? We may still decide to finish the task to honor a commitment made, but we will struggle to be as dedicated to the task as we were before. Dedication to the Lord requires us to continually recognize the worth of serving Him. Dedication requires zeal. Are we zealous of things that we don't view as valuable? Sadly, there are some who initially dedicated themselves to Christ, but they later decided that dedicating to Him was not worth it. Some of these still purport to "serve" God, but they are not truly dedicated to Him. Hopefully, everyone listening to this lesson recognizes that Jesus is worthy of our dedication. He's just as worthy today, as He was yesterday and every day before that.
- B. Notice that ungodly fear causes some to question the value of their service to the Lord (Luke 1:68-74).** The children of Israel in the wilderness are a great example of those who questioned whether dedicating their service to the Lord was worth it, but since we have mentioned them often in this lesson series, we'll note another passage in the Bible. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, had a message to share once he finally got his voice back. His message was one of excitement over the coming Messiah. Specifically, he mentioned the oath that God made to Abraham. God told Abraham that He would deliver him from the enemies. What did Abraham have to do? He had to serve God without fear. Service to God and fear do not go together. We saw this last week in our lesson on disobedience. If Abraham would have feared the things and people around him, he would have struggled to continue serving God. If Abraham would have feared leaving home, he would have never dedicated himself to service to the Lord. Fear wants us to question whether the cost to serve God is really worth it. Friends, God is worthy to be praised. He's worthy to be served faithfully each and every day. We must not let fear cast doubt on the worthiness of our Saviour.

IV. UNGODLY FEAR DOESN'T ALLOW US TO TRULY BE DEDICATED TO ANYTHING AS A RESULT OF ITS MANIFOLD AND PASSING NATURE. (PSALM 34:4, 56:3; IS. 66:4; 2 COR. 7:5)

- A. Notice that ungodly fear is usually not limited to one object (Psalm 34:4; Isaiah 66:4; 2 Corinthians 7:5).** When we open the door to ungodly fear, it does not contain itself to one object. It may start that way, but it usually grows into many fears. At the beginning of this lesson series, we focused our attention on what the Bible calls a spirit of fear. That is not just being afraid one time. One ungodly fear leads way to a spirit of fear. The moment that we open the door to fear, we are opening the door for Satan to bring about every fear that he can to keep us from dedicating to the Lord. Truthfully, we cannot dedicate to anything because the ungodly fears are different and will lead us down different paths to follow. This lends to a life of chaos and no direction, which is exactly what Satan wants.
- B. Notice that ungodly fear is seasonal (Psalm 56:3).** We end this lesson series back in the familiar verse in Psalm 56. What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. There is a time of fear. It is seasonal. Ungodly fears are not concerned with being sustainable. They only need to be there long enough to cause the believer to be distracted from his purpose. Ungodly fear does not want us to be dedicated to the Lord. It realizes that the believer may ultimately see through its guise and recognize that its object is not really that frightening, but by that point, ungodly fear has already moved on to a new object to keep the believer afraid and distracted. There are many things in this world that a believer can choose to be afraid of. Let's determine to fear the Lord and trust that He is the One in control. He is the One who has power over the souls of men. Fear not what men can do. Fear not what this world can do. Fear not what Satan can do!