

**Fear and Depression**  
Sunday School Lesson 4  
*The Fearful Christian*  
*Nehemiah 8:10*  
5/10/2020

**Introduction:** Through the first three lessons, we've examined how ungodly fear affects our decision making, how it causes discord in the church, and how it leads us to defeat. In this fourth lesson, we'll be taking a look at how fear lends itself over to depression. In society, today, there is a very real struggle with depression. It is estimated that millions of Americans struggle with depression every year. As believers, we are not to live in depression, discouragement, or dismay. We are to be joyful. We are expected to keep ourselves encouraged. Our faith in Christ is the source of our joy (2 Corinthians 1:24). The Bible also tells us that one of the fruits of the Spirit is joy. Unfortunately, there are many Christians who are not producing fruits of joy like they ought to. Instead of submitting to the Spirit of God, they have given themselves over to the fruits of the flesh. Ungodly fear is the work of the flesh. Consequently, we know that ungodly fear never produces joy. It only produces misery and despair. The world even understands that fear causes depression. In many cases where a person is diagnosed with depression, they are simultaneously diagnosed with some type of anxiety disorder. Fear and depression go hand in hand with each other. We can understand this simply by applying the previous two lessons. Discord does not produce joy for believers. Discord does not allow for encouragement among believers. Defeat is not enjoyable. Defeat does not uplift us. It is easy to see how the natural result of ungodly fear will be depression. In the Bible, the term *depression* is not used specifically, but the Bible uses other terms such as dismay, despair, discouragement, troubled, sorrow, and sadness. This morning, we'll be examining some principles from the Bible regarding fear and depression.

**I. UNGODLY FEAR WILL CREATE A FEELING OF HELPLESSNESS IN THE HEART OF A BELIEVER. (2 CHRONICLES 32:7-8; ISAIAH 41:10-14; JEREMIAH 30:10; HEB. 13:6)**

- A. Notice that ungodly fear makes us feel helpless because we have given the object of our fear great power over us (2 Chronicles 32:7-8).** As we observed last week, fear leads us to defeat. The object of our fear holds great power over us. If it didn't, we would not be afraid of it! Fear naturally causes us to have a certain sense of helplessness. If I felt that I could do something to solve the situation, it's likely that I would not be afraid of it. When Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, came up against Israel, the feeling among the people was helplessness. The king and his army had surrounded the city of Jerusalem. Thankfully, the people had a king named Hezekiah who shook them of their fear. He charged them to take courage and not to be afraid. He reminded them that they absolutely were not helpless. The people found comfort in the words of the king, and they laid aside their feelings of helplessness. As a result, they were able to seize the victory against the Assyrians. A feeling of helplessness is a key component of depression. Our minds and our hearts grow weary and saddened when we are faced with something that we feel that we have no ability to properly respond to. Many people stay in a state of depression because there are many things that they feel helpless to combat in their lives.
- B. Notice that believers are not helpless: we have the Lord as our Helper (Hebrews 13:6; Isaiah 41:10-14; Jeremiah 30:10; Philippians 4:13).** While we understand that we can do nothing of ourselves, believers must remember that we are not helpless. We have help from above. God has enabled us with everything that we need in order to face all of the challenges that this life might throw our way. Philippians is very plain when It tells us that we can do all things through Christ. He is our strength. There is a fundamental difference between being humble and being insecure. Godly humility does not produce depression. It finds encouragement in knowing that we have help from a great God. Insecurities bring about depression in the lives of Christians. Insecurities are little fears that speak to our own abilities. If we are having insecurities, it is because our security has been placed in the wrong area. We are looking to ourselves to handle matters instead of looking to Jesus Christ. Ungodly fear comes as a result of a lack of faith in Christ. The end result then is that it produces a multitude of insecurities that bring about depression in the life of a believer.

**II. UNGODLY FEAR WILL CREATE A FEELING OF HOPELESSNESS IN THE HEART OF A BELIEVER. (1 THESSALONIANS 4:13; ACTS 27:20; JEREMIAH 18:12; RUTH 1:11-13; TITUS 2)**

- A. Notice that ungodly fear makes us hopeless because we are unable to see past the object of our fear (Acts 27:20; Ruth 1:11-13).** Helplessness deals with our immediate personal capabilities. Hopelessness deals with our long-term view of a certain situation. I may be helpless at first, and that helplessness might eventually lead to an overall hopelessness in a situation. The progression goes like this: there is nothing I can do; there is nothing anybody can do. When we looked at fear and discord, we recognized that

ungodly fear expects for others to be afraid as well. Consequently, ungodly fear leads us to believe that there is nothing anyone can do. When this mindset sets in, severe depression often follows. When hope is taken away from an individual, that person is no longer on solid footing in life. It often leads to a general hopeless mindset in all areas of life. Naomi got to that point in her life. She was afraid for the future, and she was in great sorrow and hopelessness. The men on the ship with Paul made it to that point as well. They thought that all hope was lost that they would be saved from the terrible storm that had come their way.

- B. Notice that believers are not hopeless: we have a hope that is significantly different from that found in this world (1 Thessalonians 4:13; Jeremiah 18:12; Titus 2:13).** It is understandable that there are those in this world who struggle with depression as a result of hopelessness. For many of them, they have placed their hope in something in this world that has failed them, so the natural result is to feel hopeless. After every election, you can find a few articles that discuss the feeling of hopelessness that a certain portion of the country's population is experiencing. If your hope is in politicians, you will definitely be hopeless and depressed at some point. Others put their hope in a career or in their social engagement. When these things let them down, there are many who will enter into despair. As believers, the Bible tells us that our hope is different from the world's hope. It is a blessed hope. It is built upon a foundation that cannot be destroyed. When a Christian is showing feelings of hopelessness, it speaks to where their trust was really placed in. God will not and cannot fail us. Thus, we have no reason to be afraid, and we have no reason to be without hope.

### **III. UNGODLY FEAR WILL CREATE A FEELING OF DESPONDENCY IN THE HEART OF A BELIEVER. (1 KINGS 19:4-8; JONAH 4:1-9; 1 SAMUEL 17:29; ROMANS 8:28; MARK 16:15)**

- A. Notice that ungodly fear makes us despondent because we have allowed our fear to quench our zeal and purpose (1 Kings 19:4-8; Jonah 4:1-9).** Have you ever seen a person quickly go from being enthusiastic and zealous to despondent and apathetic? I certainly have seen it. How does this quick transformation take place? The answer is that ungodly fear is involved. That fear produces the helplessness and hopelessness. The hopelessness then leads to despondency. An example of this would be a person openly wondering whether there is even a reason to keep trying. Elijah was a mighty man. He was a zealous man, too. In 1 Kings 18, we find him calling fire down from Heaven and openly mocking the false priests of Baal. In 1 Kings 19, we find him sitting under a tree and lazily waiting to die. Where did all of his passion go? When he heard the words of the queen, he allowed himself to be afraid. That brought him to a place where he had given up all hope. He had preached, and nobody listened. There was no hope for Israel now, as he was all alone. What was there left for him to do? He lost his purpose and his will to live and serve God. Jonah was afraid. He did not want the Assyrians to be saved. His response was to go and sit under the gourd. He went from running out of the whale's mouth to moping.
- B. Notice that believers are not to be despondent: we have a clear purpose and cause that must be accomplished (1 Samuel 17:29; Romans 8:28; Mark 16:15).** While all of Israel was despondent at the words of Goliath, David stood up and asked a question. He wanted to know if there was a cause. Was there something worth fighting for? Ungodly fear wants us to forget our cause. It wants us to forget our purpose. If it can do that, it will create despondent and apathetic Christians that are doing more to hinder the cause of Christ than to help it. When a person loses his purpose, there is really not much to live for. What good is a lawn mower if it can't mow the lawn? What good is a light bulb if it can't bring light to a room? What good is a Christian if he isn't bringing souls to Christ? We must not let fear take control, as it will quench the zeal in our hearts to accomplish our purpose.

### **IV. UNGODLY FEAR WILL CREATE FEELINGS OF SUDDEN ANGER OR FRUSTRATION IN THE HEART OF A BELIEVER. (1 SAMUEL 18:12-16, 19:1-11; NUMBERS 21:4-5; EPHESIANS 4:31)**

- A. Notice that ungodly fear makes us have times of sudden anger because we allow our fear to cause us such great frustration (1 Samuel 18:12-16; Numbers 21:4-5).** Sudden fits of anger are a common side effect of depression. What brings on these sudden fits of anger? It's a combination of the other items we have discussed in the lesson. Being helpless and hopeless is frustrating. Feeling like you are stuck with no place to go in life can bring about anger and bitterness. King Saul definitely understood this. He was afraid of David. He had been told that he was going to lose the kingdom. There was seemingly nothing for Saul to do now. This drove him to great frustration and anger.
- B. Notice that believers are not to be given to sudden anger: we have the love of Christ (Ephesians 4:31).** We are to put off behavior that lends itself to sudden fits of anger. We are only allowed to be angry if it is without sin. The type of anger that comes with depression is a very fleshly and emotional anger. It is a bitterness due to things in life not going the way that we want them to. Fear not!