

Fear and Discord
Sunday School Lesson 2
The Fearful Christian
Proverbs 6:19
4/26/2020

Introduction: As we move into our second lesson on the fearful Christian, we are going to consider how fear can be the source of discord among Christians. The seeds of discord have hindered many churches. Satan loves to cause division and strife in the church. The Lord detests discord among believers so much that He included it in Proverbs 6 in the list of things that He hates. When someone sows discord among the brethren, it is an abomination to the Lord. If the Lord hates it, we can be sure that Satan loves it. The church is supposed to be a unified body. A body that is at war with its own members cannot function as it was intended. The church in Corinth was known for its division. Paul wrote the first letter to the Corinthians for the purpose of dealing with this division, along with a few other issues that they were also encountering. He strongly admonished the church for not standing together. He reminded them that they needed to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment in order to avoid divisions. What happens, then, when some members of the church are afraid while others are not? Naturally, you have a double-minded and unstable church. You have a church divided against itself. Fear can also cause division among Christians who are both afraid. While fear may bind some people together for a period of time, it is not an effective and enduring bonding agent for Christians, unless it is a united fear of the Lord (Col. 3:22). Let's examine some thoughts from the Word of God about this matter of fear and discord.

I. UNGODLY FEAR CAUSES DIVISION AMONG BELIEVERS BECAUSE IT BREAKS DOWN THE COMMON BOND OF FAITH. (MARK 14:27, 46-50; 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-18; EPH. 4:13)

- A. Notice that the disciples scattered because they had lost their confidence in Christ (Mark 14:27, 46-50).** Jesus warned His disciples that they were going to be scattered and offended at Him. What caused this division? It was the arrest of Jesus in the garden. When the disciples saw this take place, they were afraid. That fear caused them to run and scatter. They did not unite together until later. In fact, we don't see their full unity until after their fear was gone. The fact that they were afraid ultimately tells us that they had lost confidence in Jesus. They had seen Him do so many wonderful things. They had believed that He was the Son of God and the Messiah whom they had been looking for. This is why they had left everything behind to follow after Jesus in faith. Yet, that faith was quickly replaced with doubt and fear in the garden. They had failed miserably to understand what Jesus had told them about His need to die for the world. Again, we must be reminded that Satan wants to break down our faith by replacing it with an ungodly fear. He wants to tear down our confidence in Christ.
- B. Notice that believers are yoked together in our faith in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Ephesians 4:13).** Who does the Bible tell the believer not to be unequally yoked with? It's the unbeliever. If we break that down simply, we are only to be unified together with those who have faith. Faith is the sole determinate of our unity together with others. The Bible could have used many different terms to refer to the lost, the ungodly, the foolish, etc. Yet, none of those terms would have made it as clear to us that faith is the bond that yokes us to each other. The disciples came from different backgrounds. Some of them were fishermen. Matthew was a hated tax collector. We don't know the occupation of all of the disciples, but we can assume they came from various professions, locations, and general walks of life. Some were certainly wealthier than others. Despite their differences, these twelve men came together to follow Jesus. Their unity was their faith in Him. As a church, our unity is our faith in Jesus Christ. When that faith falters and is replaced by fear, we can expect the same result as the disciples. We'll scatter. We'll be divided. We must stay united in our faith. We must resist fear.

II. UNGODLY FEAR CAUSES DIVISION AMONG BELIEVERS BECAUSE IT BUILDS UP A SELFISH MENTALITY. (1 JOHN 4:18; 1 SAMUEL 17:23-24; 1 KINGS 1:48-50; ROMANS 12:10)

- A. Notice that ungodly fear naturally lends itself to selfish behavior (1 Samuel 17:23-24; 1 Kings 1:48-50).** What is fear? It is an unpleasant emotional response to someone or something that we perceive will cause damage, pain, or other injury to ourselves or to someone or something we care deeply about. Given the definition of fear, it's obvious that fear lends itself to selfish behavior. There are several instances in the Bible where we see selfish behavior arise as a result of fear. When Goliath came up against the Israelites, they were all afraid. Consequently, they all ran away in an act of self-preservation. They were willing to let others be put in danger in order to save themselves. When Adonijah faced punishment, all of his friends quickly left him behind. They were only concerned about themselves. When we give

ourselves over to our fears, we are likely giving ourselves over to selfishness. We are showing that our primary concern is with how things will affect us personally instead of spending time thinking about others. It's easy to become consumed in our fears. Our flesh wants us to keep our focus on ourselves and with what is in our own best interests.

- B. Notice that believers are yoked together in selfless and fearless love and preference for one another (1 John 4:18; Romans 12:10).** 1 John tells us that perfect love casts out fear. Perfect love is filled with boldness. Jesus has a perfect love for us. Consequently, He was not afraid to go to the cross of Calvary on our behalf. A father ought to have a selfless and fearless love for his family. He ought to be willing to risk personal harm and injury for their protection. The Bible tells us that we are to love each other with this type of self-denying love. It's the very essence of the love of Christ. It runs completely counter to fear. The disciples were willing to lay down their lives for others. They did it for the sake of the Gospel. It was not for personal benefit. It was for Jesus. It was for the lost. It was for their brothers and sisters in Christ. We are not only bound in faith. We are also bound in selfless love for each other. If we are living in ungodly fear, it's not possible to be united in selfless love. Instead, each Christian will be looking out for themselves. This will lead to divisions in the church family.

III. UNGODLY FEAR CAUSES DIVISION AMONG BELIEVERS BECAUSE IT FORCES THERE TO BE SIDES DRAWN BETWEEN THE FEARFUL AND THE FEARLESS. (NUMBERS 14:1-10)

- A. Notice that the Israelites chose to listen and side with those who were afraid (Numbers 14:1).** We ended last week's lesson looking at how fear can be an influencer. Throughout the Bible, there are many examples of an entire group of people being afraid. When one disciple was afraid, it seems like all of the disciples were afraid. Fear encourages group thinking. That's because people need to be able to rationalize and justify their fears. If they can get others to be afraid, it makes them feel better about themselves. Instead of fear showing their own insecurities and lack of trust in God, group fear masks the fear as reasonable and even the most rational behavior. The Israelites had many fears coming out of Egypt. When the spies gave the report, they were inclined to listen to them. It validated the fears that they already had, and they surely felt vindicated in some of their concerns that they had voiced to Moses.
- B. Notice that the Israelites took a hard stance against those who did not share in their fears (Numbers 14:1-10).** After the Israelites made the decision to be afraid, a line was drawn in the sand between them and Moses, Aaron, Caleb, and Joshua. In their minds, these were the men who were being irrational. Decisions had to be made for the group, and these men stood in the way of those decisions. Consequently, they could not allow these men to continue in what they were doing. Something was going to have to be done with them. While the people weren't quite sure how to handle Aaron and Moses, they decided that the easiest answer for Joshua and Caleb was to stone them. They could not allow them to influence the people with their hope. They would not be allowed to hold a different opinion. The only acceptable answer was to be afraid or face the consequences. Fear is intolerant! It demands compliance.

IV. UNGODLY FEAR CAUSES DIVISION AMONG BELIEVERS BECAUSE IT FOLLOWS WITH RESENTMENT FOR OTHERS. (JOB 2:8-10; 1 SAM. 17:28; MK. 4:38; MATT. 26:75; JN. 21:20-23).

- A. Notice that the fearful see the faithful as prideful or careless (Job 2:8-10; 1 Samuel 17:28; Mark 4:38).** As noted in the prior point, fear does not handle faith very well. It's frustrated when all do not succumb to it. The fearful person has to draw some type of conclusion on those who are not afraid. The most common is to conclude pride or arrogance. This was how David's brothers viewed him when he was wanting to face Goliath. The same can be found with Job, his wife, and his friends. For the Christian, though, it's not pride in our own abilities. It's faith in God. The second conclusion is negligence or carelessness. The disciples viewed Jesus' calm condition in the boat as carelessness. How could he not be troubled by the storm? The answer is that He knew the Father was in control. He knew that the Father had given Him the power He needed to overcome the storm. There was no reason to worry or panic.
- B. Notice that the fearful are resentful because others don't have to endure the same number of troubling situations as they do (Matthew 26:75; John 21:20-23).** Peter denied Jesus three times because he was afraid. After that, he was bitter and resented himself. When Jesus talked with him on the shore after His resurrection, Peter was still living in resentment. He was holding on to his fears. As Jesus told him that he would die a gruesome death, Peter was undoubtedly afraid again. When he looked up and saw John sitting calmly by Jesus, Peter was filled with resentment at John. Peter knew he had failed Jesus, but it was not fair that he had to go through something that John didn't have to go through. He demanded to know what was going to happen to John. He was frustrated. He was scared. He probably thought that if John were in his shoes, he'd be afraid too. Everyone goes through situation that can be frightening. Ultimately, it is our individual responsibility to not be afraid. Be strong and of good courage!