

Fear Fighters

Intro: One of the most powerful emotions people feel in this life is fear. There are so many ways that we may experience it. We may fear loss, an uncertain future, a frightening diagnosis, a hostile enemy, the prospects of failure, that something bad will happen to someone we love, even death itself. With all those possibilities of fear around us there are two things we need to know.

God's people have always had to confront fear.

God has constantly offered to them a basis to overcome fear with faith.

It is in fact one of the most common exhortations of Scripture, "Do not fear! Do not be afraid"

With that in mind let's consider some Scriptural fear-fighters. God has given His word to help us...

Fight the fear of inadequacy

When the Israelites found themselves scattered about the nations in captivity, it is understandable that they might feel fearful.

"Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

God responded to Israel's fear of inadequacy by affirming His power to help them. Though they were small and swallowed up by the nations, God promised to strengthen, help and uphold them, so that His promises of the coming Messiah and His kingdom would be fulfilled.

When we are afraid of our own inadequacy we need to remember that God has the power to make us adequate. Paul wrote:

"Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Corinthians 3:5-6)

And Paul would apply that assurance in every aspect of his life.

"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

We can fight the fear of inadequacy because God's strength is available to help us meet the challenges we face.

God has given His word to help us...

Fight the fear of failure

We must not only fight the fear of inadequacy; we must fight the fear of failure.

God had given Solomon an awesome task. It was his calling to build the Lord a temple in keeping with the promise God had made to his father David. No doubt Solomon felt inadequate for such an enormous undertaking; and it appears he was afraid he might fail at the task. He was relatively young and lacked the experience to oversee such a great project. David took notice of Solomon's fear and sought to encourage him:

“Then David said to his son Solomon, “Be strong and courageous, and act; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished.” (1 Chronicles 28:20)

David assured his son that God would be with Him until the task of building the temple was completed. He would not fail with the Lord’s help.

We have an equally awesome task to fulfill, to take the gospel to the whole world as Jesus commanded his disciples:

““Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;

But we also have the same promise they had of the Lord’s presence that assures our success.

and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”” (Matthew 28:19–20)

And with this promise we can fight against the fear of failure.

God has given His word to help us...

Fight the fear of defeat

When we see the power of evil in our world, we may feel very much like the Israelites when given the fearful task of conquering Canaan. Moses spoke to Israel with these words:

‘Hear, O Israel, you are approaching the battle against your enemies today. Do not be fainthearted. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble before them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.’” (Deuteronomy 20:3–4)

Just as God sought to assure His OT people that He would give them victory, so He likewise seeks to encourage us to remember that victory is ours! He knows that the forces of evil can be intimidating. He knows the power that Satan has and the evil spiritual forces that are aligned with him. Yet we are urged to be courageous and strong.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.” (Ephesians 6:10)

We can overcome the fear of defeat through faith in Him.

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” (1 John 5:4)

God has given His word to help us...

Fight the fear of deprivation

Here we are living in a time of inflation and economic uncertainty. Such times are often accompanied by fear of loss and the need that comes from that loss. But God has a scripture for our fear.

“Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,” so that we confidently say, “THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT SHALL MAN DO TO ME?”” (Hebrews 13:5–6)

Jesus urged his followers not to be afraid of having to go without their needs being met. He urged them:

“For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?” (Matthew 6:25)

And He gave them the reasons, namely, that life is more than physical things, that God knew their needs, that God provides for His creation, and that He will meet the needs of those who seek His kingdom first. On the basis of these things Paul assured the Philippians:

“And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)

God has given His word to help us...

Fight the fear of unfulfilled hopes

During the captivity the Israelites struggled with the fear of men. They had been defeated by the cruel Babylonians. They had lived for decades in captivity. And in that condition they felt trapped and vulnerable. How could God fulfill His promises to them? How would they ever escape the shame and reproach of captivity? God responded again and again through His prophets to assure them and encourage them not to be afraid; but to give them hope that He could fulfill His promises to them.

“‘And fear not, O Jacob My servant,’ declares the LORD, ‘And do not be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar, And your offspring from the land of their captivity. And Jacob shall return, and shall be quiet and at ease, And no one shall make him afraid.’” (Jeremiah 30:10)

“Say to those with anxious heart, “Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; The recompense of God will come, But He will save you.”” (Isaiah 35:4)

“BUT now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!” (Isaiah 43:1)

““Fear not, for you will not be put to shame; Neither feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced; But you will forget the shame of your youth, And the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.” (Isaiah 54:4)

What God made clear to His people is that He had a plan and that His plan would be accomplished.

And so today we can live with that same assurance. Our future is certain; we are destined for eternal life with God!

God has given His word to help us...

Fight the fear of danger

In Genesis 14 we read about how Abram made the heroic move of gathering a few hundred men and going and rescuing Lot and his family from an alliance of Mesopotamian kings. It was an incredibly brave moment for sure; but did Abram have second thoughts? Can you imagine him saying, “What have I done? I have angered the kings of these city-states and now

here I am like a sitting duck waiting to be attacked!” At that moment God intervened:

“AFTER these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.”” (Genesis 15:1)

Later the Scriptures tell us about Isaac and how he sought to settle in the southern part of Israel near the location where the Philistines lived. He would industriously dig a well and then the Philistines would encroach upon it, claim it for themselves and quarrel with his servants. It happened again and again. Did he wonder “When will these Philistines just decide to take me and all my servants out and take everything for themselves?” God sought to alleviate his fears.

“And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham; Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, For the sake of My servant Abraham.”” (Genesis 26:24)

Though the king of Israel, David had many personal enemies. There were those who did not approve of His choice to rule, and would have seized the opportunity to take his life. How would David deal with the possibility that at any moment someone could step out and take his life? He answers in the psalm.

“THE LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?” (Psalm 27:1)

David put his personal safety into the hands of the Lord. He trusted in Him to be a light to His path and a deliverer from evil. Like these believers of old, we too can trust God’s providence to keep us from harm.

God has given us Scriptures to help us...

Fight the fear of persecution

I’ve wondered how Timothy felt as he watched his mentor Paul goes through so many times of suffering. How did he feel about the prospects of continuing his ministry without His example and encouragement? Many a person finds strength and comfort in the presence of someone who is stronger; but Paul would soon be out of the picture and Timothy would be on his own. Paul encouraged him with these words:

“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,” (2 Timothy 1:7–8)

Likewise Peter wrote to Christians who lived in the midst of those who would slander them and mock them. He encouraged them not to be afraid of suffering. Instead he urged them:

“But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to

everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;” (1 Peter 3:14–15)
God has given His word to help us...

Fight the fear of death itself

The fear of death is real. The desire to preserve life can even empower Satan to enslave us.

“Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.” (Hebrews 2:14–15, NASB)

But God has given us fear fighters to help us overcome that fear. No doubt you will remember the words of David:

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4)

Or maybe even more relevant to death itself is the assuring promise of Jesus:

“”LET not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” (John 14:1–3)

And we know He can fulfill that promise because He is the living Lord of Revelation.

“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.” (Revelation 1:17–18)

Conclusion: What we can see is that all throughout Scripture God’s people have had good reasons to be afraid, but in each case God has responded with a promise to assure them. As a result they could overcome their fears by faith in the Lord’s word. Let these Scriptures unlock your faith and destroy the giants of fear that rise within you. Memorize them! Repeat them! Stand on them! And you can use these “fear-fighters” to become a fearless fighter for the Lord.

Let us also let our faith overcome our fear. Let us say with the psalmist, “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear.” (Psalms 118:6)