

Fear and Defeat
Sunday School Lesson 3
The Fearful Christian
Proverbs 6:19
5/3/2020

Introduction: So far, we've examined how fear affects our decision making, and we've considered the potential for discord to grow within a church when its members are fearful. In this third lesson, we'll be taking a look at how fear leads to defeat. The underlying thought about fear is that it is the antagonist to faith. Consequently, it's safe to say that if fear leads to defeat, then that means that faith will lead to victory. 1 John 5:4 tells us that our faith in Jesus Christ is the victory that overcomes the world. We have access to the power of God through our faith (1 Peter 1:5). The Lord told His disciples that their faith could move mountains. Faith can bring victory over illness (James 5:15). Our faith in Jesus Christ makes us more than conquerors (Romans 8:37). Needless to say, the Bible is rife with examples that clearly demonstrate to us that faith leads to victory. On the other hand, an ungodly fear never leads to victory. The reality is that fear often leads to defeat before the battle even takes place! If it were not for faithful men standing up in times of need for Israel, the Old Testament would be filled with story after story about their defeat. Even still, there were certain times in Israel's history where there was nobody willing to overcome fear and put their trust in God. The results were not pleasant for Israel during those times. The same is true in the New Testament with the disciples. If it were not for the Lord, there would certainly be many accounts of the defeat of the disciples. We've already seen how quickly they were defeated once they gave into their fears at the arrest and crucifixion of the Lord. There is absolutely no reason for a Christian to live a defeated life. There is no reason for a Bible-preaching church to be closed down. There is no reason for Satan to have any victories at all over the church. Yet, sadly, there are instances where Christians and churches suffer defeat. Many of these instances are a result of fear. Let's take a look at the lesson this morning.

I. UNGODLY FEAR IS A TOOL USED BY THE ENEMY TO CAUSE BELIEVERS TO QUIT THE FIGHT. (NEHEMIAH 2:9-11, 4:7-18, 6:1-19; REVELATION 12:10)

- A. Notice that the enemies of Nehemiah were frustrated because they had no means to stop the work that he and the people were doing (Nehemiah 2:9-11, 4:7-18).** When the Lord burdened the heart of Nehemiah to oversee the rebuilding of the wall in Jerusalem, there were certain men who were grieved to hear of this project. Sanballat and Tobiah were enemies of Israel, and they desperately wanted to stop the Israelites from rebuilding the wall. At first, they laughed and scorned the work that the Israelites were doing because they expected that the king would be angry and would deal harshly with the Israelites. However, when they saw that the king was supportive of this work, they were especially frustrated. From that time forward, Sanballat and Tobiah were intent on finding some means by which they could stop the work from continuing. They began to make plans to come and fight against the Israelites. Nehemiah received word of their plans, and he made sure that the building project was guarded around the clock. He did not give them any opportunities to spoil the work of rebuilding the wall. When it became obvious that they were not going to be able to stop the work by violence, they determined to find another way to defeat the Israelites.
- B. Notice that the enemies of Nehemiah tried to use fear as a way to stop the rebuilding of the wall (Nehemiah 6:1-19).** Sanballat and Tobiah next tried to trick Nehemiah into meeting with them, but when that strategy failed, their only tactic left was to make Nehemiah and the people afraid. They wrote a letter to Nehemiah accusing him of trying to rebel against the king, and they told him that they were going to report this rebellion to the king. They were hoping that this would cause the people to be afraid and to stop doing the work. Nehemiah prayed and asked the Lord to strengthen their hands. He knew what the enemy was trying to do. When that failed, the two men hired a man to come and prophesy against Nehemiah and warn him that he was going to be killed. The man told Nehemiah that he needed to stop the work and hide from the men. Nehemiah perceived that this man was not a true prophet of God, and he refused to allow the man to cause him to be afraid. Others came to prophesy against him as well, but Nehemiah refused to be afraid. Not long after that, the wall was finished. Nehemiah was victorious!

II. UNGODLY FEAR IS A TOOL USED BY THE ENEMY TO CAUSE BELIEVERS TO COMPROMISE THEMSELVES. (ACTS 5:12-42; REVELATION 2:12-17; I PETER 3:14)

- A. Notice that the ministry of the disciples was thriving in the city of Jerusalem to the dismay of the Jewish council (Acts 5:12-17).** After the events on the day of Pentecost, the early church was thriving in Jerusalem. The Bible tells us that many signs and wonders were being done by the hands of the apostles. They were all united in Jerusalem on Solomon's porch, and many of the people were being

converted every day. The multitude that was following the disciples kept growing at a rapid pace. This excitement caused great consternation for the Jewish high council. They were very frustrated at what was taking place. They thought that they had dealt with this when they crucified our Saviour. Yet, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ was being magnified even more now. How were they going to stop this? Could they kill these men in the same way that they had killed Jesus?

- B. Notice that the Jewish council tried to intimidate the disciples into not speaking the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:16-19, 5:18-42).** Knowing that it would be difficult to kill all of the disciples, the council decided to intimidate them instead. They told them that they were free to go, as long as they did not preach the name of Christ. When the disciples ignored this order, they had them thrown into prison. However, an angel of the Lord delivered them, and they went right back to preaching. When they were brought before the council, the Jewish leaders were stunned and frustrated. They reminded the disciples about their previous warning to them. When that still didn't work, they were ready to find a way to kill them. The Lord worked in the heart of Gamaliel to thwart their wicked intentions. Ultimately, the council could not kill the disciples at that time, so they tried their threatening tactic one more time. To make it more intimidating, they beat the disciples before letting them go, and then they again threatened them not to preach in the name of Jesus. Without the name of Christ, there is no power in the believer's message. When a believer compromises, he loses the fight. There is no compromising on the Bible.

III. UNGODLY FEAR IS A TOOL USED BY THE ENEMY TO CAUSE BELIEVERS TO TAKE OUR EYES OFF OF JESUS AND TO PUT THEM ON OUR OBSTACLES. (MATTHEW 14:22-33)

- A. Notice that Peter was able to accomplish the impossible as long as he looked to the Lord (Matthew 14:22-29).** There are only two people in the world who have ever walked on the water – Jesus and Peter! How was Peter able to accomplish this impossible feat? He did it by looking to Jesus. When Jesus told him to come out of the ship, Peter stepped out and began to walk to Jesus. None of the other disciples were able to share in this victory with Peter. He was the only one who stepped out in faith. As long as Peter had his eyes fixed on the Lord, everything was fine. As Christians, we know that all things are possible with God. When we keep our eyes on Him, we are able to accomplish amazing things. We are able to have complete victory over all of life's challenges. He is our Commander in this spiritual battle, and we have total confidence that He has already won the battle against Satan.
- B. Notice that Peter started sinking in the very moment that he looked at his obstacles and began to be afraid (Matthew 14:30-33).** What caused Peter to fail in his mission to reach Jesus by walking on top of the water? The answer is his fear. He took one look at the boisterous wind, and that was all it took to cause him to sink. Satan uses fear to distract us from following Christ. He throws obstacles in our way in the hopes of catching our attention. He knows that we will be defeated if we do not follow after Christ in faith. Of course, it's not just Satan that uses this tactic against us. We have a great enemy called our flesh. Our very own flesh works against us in our spiritual battle. It wants you to give in to the emotion of fear. It wants you to look at all of the challenges of the Christian life because it wants you to stop following after Christ. It does not like the sacrificial living. It does not like taking a back seat and having the Holy Spirit lead you. The best thing that a believer can do is to block out the many distractions that this world has to offer you that might cause you to fear.

IV. UNGODLY FEAR IS A TOOL USED BY THE ENEMY TO CAUSE BELIEVERS TO BE DEFENSELESS IN BATTLE. (EPHESIANS 6:10-17; JUDGES 8:20-22)

- A. Notice that the Lord has given us the whole armour of God to stand up against the Devil (Ephesians 6:10-17).** Ephesians 6 tells us that we are in a spiritual battle, but we can win the battle because we have the whole armor of God. We have the truth. We have the breastplate of righteousness. We have the preparation of the Gospel for our feet. We have the helmet of salvation. We have the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. All of these items are necessary in our fight against the Devil. Above all, though, we have the shield of faith. A shield is a defensive object. It protects us from the enemy. Our shield is our faith. Fear is not a shield that will work against the enemy.
- B. Notice that the Devil has an easy target when our shield is down (Ephesians 6:10-17).** We know that the Devil looks for an easy prey in the same way that a lion seeks out a prey. What type of person is the easiest one for the Devil to attack? The person without a shield is most obviously the easiest prey. The Devil wants for us to put down our shield of faith. His fiery darts cannot withstand the shield. When a Christian allows ungodly fear to reign in their lives, they are open for attack. They are easily defeated. Fear does not keep you safe in the spiritual battle. As we go into daily combat, let's always remember to take the shield of faith with us. God does not give us the spirit of fear!