

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want”
(23rd Psalm, verse 1).

PREFACE

“Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria, nor because of all the multitude which is with him; for the one with us is greater than the one with him. You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”¹

Christians commonly practice fear. Fear is the outgrowth of practicing independence from God. Fear flows from *dis*-ease with God. When you are not at ease with God’s sovereign work in your life, you shall be fearful. Pointless apprehension and paralyzing worry wreck your sacred energy.

Fear disadvantages Christians for it circumvents your reception of God’s revelation of His divine will for your life. At the announcement of the birth of Jesus, fear overwhelmed the shepherds.² They could not receive the message of the angel until their fear was shattered. Even the righteous Zacharias and the virgin Mary knew this fear; Peter would come to experience it.³

A fearful Christian misinterprets godly counsel. The anxious and frightful believer discovers the making and keeping of decisions most difficult. A worried believer rarely experiences consistency in righteousness. He cannot effectively lead men because he refuses the inerrant and infallible lead of God’s Spirit.

Fear is sinful. Sin births nauseating consequences. If your address to life teaches your family fearfulness, you midwife sin for generation upon generation.

God commands His people not to fear.⁴ Therefore, fear is a sin because it confirms one’s refusal to trust God. Lack of trust is an ungodly feeding of fear.⁵ Fearfulness is a mark of juvenile Christianity. The Bible never endorses Christian immaturity. Trusting God strips fear of its fuel.

COWARDICE

“Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them... and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”⁶

Fear engenders cowardice. Cowardice spawns disobedience. Your all-knowing God is sovereignly attending to the details of your life.⁷ “God is the cause of causes.”⁸ He is bringing good to you out of the world’s evil.⁹ His will for you shall be accomplished.¹⁰

God is not ignorant about the sacrifices accompanying your obedience. Fear disobedience and partial obedience for they assure wandering in the wilderness of insecurity. The godly man obeys in the face of seeming defeat.

The Arameans went to Dothan with many horses, chariots and a great army to take captive one meager defenseless prophet named Elisha. They came by night and surrounded Dothan with all the powers of an earthly nation and yet the would-be captors became the captives. What happened? How could such a tour de force be led captive by one disheveled prophet?

God's psalmist furnishes the answer: "For He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways."¹¹ God's angels are "all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation."¹² You know you are saved and God's angels are your angels. Your responsibility is to stand with David declaring, "I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them."¹³

Earlier in his life Elisha had seen God's power displayed via a chariot of fire.¹⁴ He knew the power of the God of heaven and earth. He had no fear for he knew God's perfect love for him had cast aside all his fears.¹⁵

God loves His people. Did not God send His angel to shut the mouths of the lions in Daniel's den of righteousness?¹⁶ God's character is immovable. He will not leave His children. The Holy Spirit is omnipotent and omnipresent.

God's children possess the richness of Goshen in their very bosoms. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."¹⁷

During the season of Pharaoh's chariots pressing down upon the Israelites who were standing on the edge of the Red Sea, Moses cried out to his kinsmen saying, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent."¹⁸

Jesus was 100 per cent human. He knew of the fears of man. Nevertheless, on the night of your Lord Jesus Christ's betrayal, during the occasion of His arrest, Peter took out his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's slave. Jesus rebuked His disciple saying, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"¹⁹

As you battle cowardice in your own life and embrace the courage of the saints, be mindful of Joab's words to his brother Abishai as they did battle with the much stronger Aramean army: "Be strong, and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; and may the Lord do what is good in His sight."²⁰ Your Lord always does what is good in His sight, but you must stay in the battle in order to capture His goodness.

You need not fear "accidentally" becoming a martyr for the cause of Christ. A sovereign God does not allow for chance, coincidence or serendipitous occurrences for "there is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven. He has made everything appropriate in its time."²¹ The number of martyrs is determined.²²

Joseph was fearless; he was sold into slavery. Daniel was fearless; he was thrown into a lion's den. Paul was fearless; he was beaten, stoned and shipwrecked. Jesus was fearless; He was crucified.

Remember Paul's encouraging exhortation: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."²³

The coward cannot be at peace with God or man.

PEACE

“The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace.”²⁴

Peace is the product of mortifying your fears. Look to the Lord Christ and capture His peace. Jesus said, “In Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”²⁵

Jesus is your encourager. The means to peace and victory is the short prepositional phrase “in Me.” When you are facing a crisis, cast your mind upon the fullness of Scripture’s “in Me” promises. In the first 14 verses of Ephesians 1, God immerses you in His “in Me/in Him/in Christ” assurances. Jesus is the domicile of God’s entire peace. No rest may be found outside Christ for the genesis of peace is Christ.

In John 16:33 Jesus contrasts “in Me” with “in the world.” Mankind is limited to two realms of existences: “in Christ” and “in the world.” The habitat of the non-Christian is in the world. The Christian is a citizen of two commonwealths for he is in Christ positionally and spiritually, but in the world geographically and physically.

“Peace” (*eirene*) is affixed to the present active subjunctive verb “have” (*echo*). Jesus is literally saying, “These things I have spoken to you in order that in Me you may keep on having peace.” Jesus wants His disciples to have peace even after He is put to death. Nonetheless they cannot capture His peace unless they remain in the Vine.²⁶ Every present-day follower of Christ who loses his awareness of being in Christ shall stumble into emotional confusion and disorder.²⁷

Isaiah writes, “The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in Thee. Trust in the Lord forever, for in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock.”²⁸

Jesus will not allow His disciples to forget the tribulation naturally flowing from a fallen world (*kosmos*). He references the world eight times in John 16. Your world is a flawed congregation of once-born humanity for it is the seed of the serpent.²⁹ Though the Holy Spirit restrains the unrighteousness of the lawless ones, they continue to do battle with the incarnate church victorious.³⁰

You face tribulation (*thlipsis*) daily. Why? This world is not your paradise, but your labor. At every moment you attempt to live godly you will discover the tribulation of attempting to swim upstream in the thrust of a tidal wave. Saints are pilgrims in an unwelcoming ecosystem wrestling inch-by-inch for their Beulah Land because “through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”³¹

Jesus hands down a thrilling command: “but take courage.” Courage (*tharsos*) is not an option for the mature Christian.³² Courage is remaining steadfast amidst difficult circumstances. Christian courage is risking daringly where others express fear.

Perhaps Queen Esther examples the dilemma countless Christians experience. She did not know if she should remain silent and wait for another opportunity to affect public policy or act now? Her silence afforded her protection. But courage confirms faith, and unconfirmed faith is a masquerade.

Mordecai said to Esther, “Do not imagine that you in the king’s palace can escape any more than all the Jews. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?”³³

Unexercised courage is cowardice. God says, “And I searched for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.”³⁴ Heaven comes at the highest cost. Courage is the adhesive allowing a confederacy between life and faith.

Scores of declining Christians have pitched their tents in the morass of indulging consumption. Dare to be courageous regardless of life’s challenges because the man after God’s own heart shall never lack the Lord’s strength.³⁵ “Paul was Nero’s prisoner, but Nero was much more God’s.”³⁶

Jesus continues to bless us with encouragement after encouragement. He declares, “I have overcome the world.” Jesus is *Christus Victor*, the victorious Christ.

To overcome (*nikao*) means to conquer. Why would Jesus label Himself a conqueror? Unlike the British Empire’s transformation of the face of Europe, Jesus did not alter the features of the ancient near east. Unlike the Ottoman Empire, Jesus did not come to dominate and subjugate a foreign land. Unlike the Aztecs and the Egyptians, Jesus was not known for the building of grandiose structures.

Jesus died a Galilean peasant, a shamed man on a shameful cross. Jesus had nowhere to lay His head and in the end He had no disciples willing to follow Him into the jaws of death. He died a defaming death under the charge of being a religious blasphemer.

Look now through the spectacles of Scripture. Trust God’s word rather than your world’s jaundiced perception of the most righteous man who ever lived. What did Jesus intend when He declared Himself a victor over the world?

Jesus lived an abundant life and He died nobly. He never deviated from His commitment to God and He refused to allow God’s truth to become tainted by His culture. His words were clear and His hands were clean. He established His earthly position in direct opposition to this world’s powers and principalities.

Jesus transformed the poor into the rich and the blind into the seeing. He reversed shame and made it honor, and He overcame death with life. Jesus loved the unloveliest and He took to himself tax gatherers, lepers and harlots. The Son of Man conformed to the standards of righteousness of every era and in every culture. He stands the tests of time and of eternity, and He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

How did Jesus overcome the world? Death was Jesus’ mightiest pulpit. He marched victoriously the Via Dolorosa to Golgotha, the place of the skull.

Jesus was surrendered absolutely to God. Victory is conditioned upon absolute surrender. The less absolute the surrender, the less complete the victory. Shallow surrender guarantees shallow victories. Anemic Christianity is the cursed fruit of a prideful perception that partial surrender to God is sufficient.

God makes absolute surrenderers victorious servants of the new covenant. The more completely the vessel surrenders, the more full the vessel is and the more whole the vessel will be. The Holy Spirit is not going to pour into you what will be wasted due to gaping holes. The feebleness of most Christians is the result of them avoiding their responsibility to fittingly surrender – shallow Christians have surrendered to the flesh rather than to the Spirit. You cannot perfect a Spirit-initiated work by fleshly means.³⁷ Your responsibility is to “lay aside the old self.”³⁸

Scores of Christians think they are living in the power of the Holy Spirit, but they are not. You must ask God to examine your life and show you whether you live more in the lust of the flesh or in the power of the Spirit.³⁹ You must cease striving in your own effort to do God’s will.

Would your Christian friends describe you as being a “man’s man” or being “God’s man?” Would they be more apt to describe you by the term “strong,” or by the expression “spiritual?” Paul says to the Christians in Corinth: “I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh... for you are still fleshly.”⁴⁰

Your responsibility is to walk by the Spirit so as not to carry out the desire of the flesh even if the desire of the flesh appears good.⁴¹ Self-effort fails to render an acceptable “spiritual service of worship.”⁴² When you rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit you shall be benefited by the victory Christ accomplished at Calvary.

Jesus’ victory becomes your victory – His peace becomes your peace:

- ❖ “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. And who is the one who overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”⁴³
- ❖ “You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”⁴⁴
- ❖ “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.”⁴⁵
- ❖ “But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.”⁴⁶

Jesus’ disciples share in His tribulations as well as His victories and His peace. The world is a defeated adversary continuing to fight in a battle it has already lost. You are yoked with Christ’s yoke, you are an heir of His Father and His strong right arm protects you.

You have been baptized in Jesus’ righteousness and the banner over you is love because Christ is both your standard and your captain. You overcome through the blood of the Lamb for He alone is worthy and “was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”⁴⁷

CIRCUMSTANCES

“Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.”⁴⁸

God trusts His children with demanding circumstances. Taxing situations prepare you to welcome a word from the Lord. In the midst of life’s press you come to know that the safest place for you is in the will of God – no longer serving the Egyptians, no longer starving on the

leeks and onions of oppression.⁴⁹ Fears drown a man who remains uncertain of God's will for his life.

God says, Isaiah writes, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."⁵⁰

Christians are being battered by their shameless love affair with greed and covetousness. Your insatiable cravings dispossess you of your contentment with Christ. Christians are fearless in direct proportion to the number of worldly desires they forgo.⁵¹

For some unbiblical reason, Christians live under the misunderstanding that life in this world is supposed to run smoothly. The sin of your first father cursed this world so that only by the sweat of your face would there be any benefit in this world.⁵²

Calm is the aberration, not the norm. Disorder fertilizes fear. Fearlessness is not fruited by you consuming more of this fallen world. You need more of God to live without fear in this collapsing world. Be aware; Adam's choice of the world rather than God is how the disruption occurred. You must now choose God rather than the world to correct the disorder.

The eye of the tiger is necessary to insulate yourself from becoming discontented with God in the midst of trials. King Jehoshaphat allied himself with Ahab because he did not believe God had the strength to deliver him.⁵³ The problem is never with God's ability, but with man's desire. Man's desire for excess manna rather than excess righteousness breeds worms in his food.⁵⁴

Be discontent with your sin rather than your circumstances. He who has Christ has all things that Christ has. God says, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul."⁵⁵ God's intricate design of His precious world assures that all of creation is related in such a way that the slightest pressure at one place affects all others. Look to your own heart when determining pressure points and appropriate courses of action.

You must labor to assure that all God does brings you pleasure. You live in the year of our Lord's grace. Are you living in the assurance of His grace? Your discontentedness with your circumstances is an alarm alerting you of an undue fondness for what God is not providing.

James writes, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."⁵⁶

How can you experience enduring joy in the midst of trials? When you are in the thicket of testing, do you really care if your faithfulness produces endurance? Who is interested in being made perfect and complete as the hounds of hell are assaulting him?

Your joy in Jesus does not induce you to ignore your trials. Quite the contrary! You are joyful because you know that you are being made perfect by virtue of your trials.

You appreciate the certainty that "to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake."⁵⁷ Christian joy overcomes despair, despondency and discouragement by reason of the Christian having the eye of his soul affixed upon the joy set before him.

You know that your trials come from God, from the devil, from this fallen world and from your own flawed choices. Regardless of the source, your trials are God-allowed strengtheners. He will not allow a test to come your way that is too immense or too frightful for you.⁵⁸

Every trial is going to test your fearless trust so that you might prove your sincere possession of the genuine Christ.⁵⁹ Your boldness in the Lord Jesus Christ is a revolutionary grace serving as the summit of all graces. Fearlessness is the most worked and attacked grace in your Christian armor. Since your faith must be exercised to be proven, only proven faith lacks nothing.⁶⁰ The world, the flesh and the devil do not want God to be pleased; you do.

You are joyful because you know that tested trust develops, perfects and completes the Christian. The larger your trials, the more faithful you persevere, then the more perfect and complete you will become. You will lack nothing when you appear before God's throne.

If you are not willing to trust God here under your present circumstances, where will you trust Him? If you are not willing to trust God now, when will you trust Him?

PERCEPTIONS

**“Though the fig tree should not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vines,
though the yield of the olive should fail, and the fields produce no food,
though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will
exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength,
and He has made my feet like hinds' feet,
and makes me walk on my high places.”⁶¹**

Fear is an emotion birthed by your anticipation of the unknown. People refusing to imagine God's future for them “ambush their own lives.”⁶² Their minds resist wise, thorough engagement in eternal transactions. The consequence of their cerebral inaction is consignment to what is common, current and faddish rather than to the estate peculiarly of God.

Visionary wisdom assaults fear. Conventional perceptions nurture fear. The fearful person thinks conventionally; the Christian thinks the Christ.⁶³ If your thought centers upon society's compelling cravings, your regard for unflagging progressive security in Christ shall be supplanted by present passions.

Godly wisdom is the mistress of fearlessness. One's wisdom decrees and baptizes his standard for perceptive decision-making. Facts and stimuli entering his mind serve as handmaids for carrying out what he perceives to be wise. All people desire wisdom; few pursue their desire. The desire for eternally perceptive wisdom is pursued when God's word becomes your standard.

Paul instructs us with regard to where perceptive wisdom cannot be found. He says that wisdom is “not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away.”⁶⁴ God is the gatekeeper of perceptions assuring fearlessness.

Every believer has received Ezekiel's commissioning: “Now as for you, son of man, I have appointed you a watchman for the house of Israel; so you will hear a message from My mouth, and give them warning from Me.”⁶⁵ You cannot be God's watchman unless you mount the watchtower without fear of what you may see and be charged to proclaim.

Hold to what God says about God.⁶⁶ God always acts like God for He will do nothing outside His own character. He shall provide sufficient light for you to perceive His perceptions.

Rid yourself of ignorant fantasies. Expect trials to improve your perceptions. When the silversmith is refining the silver, he must hold the silver in the middle of the fire over the hottest flames in order to purge the metal of all impurities. The refiner never takes his eyes off the silver. He knows the impurities have been purged when he can see his own image in it. Those refined by God perceive both the alloy and the precious metal.

Scarcity breeds fear. God's provisions disallow actual scarcity though you may perceive a scarcity that is apparent rather than bona fide. God provides for His own so that any scarcity you experience is for your progress, not your harm. David says, "I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, or his descendants begging bread."⁶⁷

You know from God's word that God is for you so in Him you have placed your trust and you shall not be afraid, for what can man do to you!⁶⁸ Misperceptions trigger fear. The enemy of the Lord may appear stronger, better skilled, more numerous and better equipped than the army of the Lord. Nonetheless, "the Lord your God will clear away these nations before you little by little."⁶⁹

Until the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, he could not see the angel of the Lord standing in his way with a sword drawn to kill him.⁷⁰ Balaam was unable to perceive the danger before him because his perception was limited to the eye of man rather than the heart of God. You cannot afford misperceptions and their consequences.

Hesitating to trust God's omnipotence, omniscience and loving intentions damages perceptions and assures fearfulness. You can trust God more than you trust the externals. God is truer than your eyes, your feelings and your perceptions.

Fearlessness is both a state of being and the process of becoming more comfortable with God's personality and His design for your life. God will give His children the benefit of all the things they are willing to be without. Godly perceptions prepare the soul to receive the blessings of heaven.

Do you believe that the bride of Christ receives the bounty of Christ? Do you believe that the child of God is also the heir of God?

How do you effectively battle inappropriate perceptions? Suspend your judgment until God reveals His judgment. Are there matters in your life that you have been addressing for some time and yet they remain unresolved? Would it be reasonable to conclude that you have been unable to reach closure because God has yet to reveal the approach He wants you to pursue? Perhaps the Lord God is bidding you to consider more purposefully His desire and design in your struggle. Remember, no impasse can frustrate God or those to whom He has given the heart and mind of Christ.

CONTENTMENT

**"Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.
Before the mountains were born, or Thou didst give birth to the earth
and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God."⁷¹**

Trust is the mother of contentment even as fear is the first cousin of discontentment. The more discontented you are with your life and God's goodness, the more anxious you become. God's holy ones say, "The Lord is for me; I will not fear; what can man do to me? It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you."⁷²

Humility enables you to see God even when your world is collapsing all around you. Contentment is not tied to wins and losses or to possessions and prosperity, but to expectations and desires. The bias of your heart is the determiner of your ability to allow your heart to rest in the comfort of God's sovereignty.

Contentment is not natural. If it were, you would not have to learn it. But Paul says, "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am."⁷³ Have you learned to be content, yet you continue to choose the world? Crucified flesh is released from a discontented world because men dead to the world desire the things of heaven.⁷⁴ Perhaps your fears are nurtured by a soul uncrucified to the world.⁷⁵

Saints have been adopted by God to enjoy a strict diet purged of worldliness. The tour de force of Christianity is a disinterest in worldliness. The psalmist reminds you saying, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."⁷⁶

Worldly advantages and worldly crosses have no influence upon those who are dead to this world. Let the world's most impressive riches and the world's most horrific miseries find your heart being unmoved by either. Disallow inappropriate desires and mis-valued expectancies to pirate the contentment you have in the life God has gifted you. Be mindful, the seasons of men have no impact upon God's designs.

It is not uncommon for even the mature saint to be dissatisfied with his life. He may find himself in a mental or spiritual cul-de-sac. Nonetheless, God says *He* will address the eternal impact of your life. You must remain in His waiting room seeking the pleasure of His company and the gift of His ministry as you become aware of an increased level of His involvement in your life.

Amaziah was 25 years old when he became king "and he did right in the sight of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart."⁷⁷ He loved God and riches. Fear companions with the man desiring God and worldly accumulations.

Christian contentment is the fruit of unbosoming your heart to God. Your desire is to gain a heart quieted by your awareness of God's lovingly providential hand. Your culture is the expression of what you and those around you think and do. No culture is neutral – cultures demand conformity.

Never be content to live where faith is fading. The goal of God's word is to nurture within your heart a culture of contentedness in Him. The devil of discontentment roams about on this earth; this world is his throne room.⁷⁸ Discontentment is a frightfully entombing sin. You must stand with the Apostle Paul declaring, "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ."⁷⁹

Though Job unknowingly was doing battle with the devil, you have a far worse and more present enemy. Your most difficult and untiring enemy is your own flesh. When your fleshly nature battles your spirit, you suffer the *dis*-ease of fear.

Carnal minds are unwilling to wait for the Lord to gain new strength.⁸⁰ Saul impatiently took matters into his own hands when he refused to wait for Samuel to offer sacrifices to the Lord.⁸¹ When Saul wanted guidance concerning the battle with the Philistines, he relied upon the witch of Endor instead of the Spirit of God.⁸²

The Christian captures fearless contentment when in the valley of the shadow of death he praises God for his very life. Job blessed his God because he knew that all he lost had been the gift of God's hand. In his season of greatest affliction, he exercised the most sublime faith because he trusted in the God he loved rather than the universe that continues to be a mystery to us all. Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."⁸³

Have you been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ? If you are a Christian you have. Does your fear-free lifestyle resemble a Christian who has been blessed with every spiritual blessing? Christians live like Christians when they are content with the blessings of their God and Father.

Fearlessness is not so much the result of effort as it is a trustful resting in the wisdom of God, the sacrifice of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. The value of contentment cannot be measured in the shekel of this world, and it is not for purchase via the coin of your culture. The more fully you are being transformed into the image of Christ, the more content you are with your life.

Christians are the most discontented people in the world *with* the world. The world does not have the capability to advance contentment in the soul of the Christian. Why? His soul has become dis-fitted for worldly satisfaction. When the Christian attempts to find contentment in this world he will discover himself plagued with restless fearful irritating unhappiness.

Esau sold his birthright because he was discontent with being hungry. The Israelites forfeited the Promised Land because their diet lacked variety. Saul tried to kill David because he was discontent with his position in the eyes of the people though he was king. David took Bathsheba to himself because he was discontent with the concubines and wives he already enjoyed.

Christian contentment reveals one's awareness of this world's finiteness and his willing joyful pursuit of God's infinite eternity. Contentment never can be found outside God's will. Be fearless in your joy for the graces God allows in your life.

"Do not let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."⁸⁴

PERSEVERENCE

**"If God is for us, who is against us?
He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all,
how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?"⁸⁵**

God's work will be opposed.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, it is always too soon to quit.⁸⁷

Anyone can start well; the difficulty is in persevering to the finish. You grow weary when you neglect, ignore or abandon your trust in God's word. Refuse to believe the devil even when he tells the truth! Weariness is a hazard to fearlessness. You are never beyond the Spirit's reach of grace for God shall provide the sacred energy you need to persevere.

Non-perseverers are weighed down with fears because they know they have failed. Guilt is a gruesome taskmaster. Their tribe of people known as Christians are "strangers and exiles on the earth" suspending their fallen assessments of their wins and losses in this world for they do not have the fullness of God's revelation.⁸⁸ Christians do right and continue to do right even when others do not. If you are amongst this Christian tribe and are willing to live what others strongly desire but lack the persevering courage to implement, you will become both a target for jealousy and a reformer of your culture.

Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."⁸⁹ You do not persevere in your strength but in the strength of God's provisioning Spirit.

When you find yourself closest to despair, living in the blackest darkness you could ever imagine, without energy to take another step, you are most near to the victory you can have in Christ Jesus. It is in a dungeon that Joseph is gifted with discernment; it is in the belly of a fish that Jonah recognizes grace; it is in a wilderness that Jesus defeats Satan.

The child of God is a shepherd of God's flock. You have custody of and responsibility for the care of Jesus' bride, the church. Nonetheless, you cannot be a leader on the field of inaction. The Moseses, the Esthers and the Amoses were placed in the public arena in the fullness of God's time.

Never fear the arena. Only after you have invested yourself in an eternal cause will you know the triumph of fearless dependence upon God that the timid can never experience. Fear is one of sin's most fertile wombs. Fear verifies unbelief that in turn isolates commitment from perseverance. Fearful unbelief distances man from God.

Perseverance battles disobedience because disobedience disables the best of intentions. Mankind is dying to know the name of the God whom the fearless call blessed. Rely upon the Holy Spirit to provision your perseverance for "the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment."⁹⁰

Be encouraged! "Since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."⁹¹ Do not be pressured by your societal traditions to "shrink back to destruction."⁹²

You are not alone in your Christian walk. You have a cloud of witnesses surrounding you – Christian martyrs from all the ages are encouraging you. The church triumphant, the church invisible, the communion of the saints are all cheering for you. Every person who has ever lived and died in the Lord is your encourager.

Some of those members of God's great cloud of witnesses have their stories told on the pages of Scripture just so you can be revitalized in your march to Zion. They have seen their own blood flow in the streets, and they are assuring you that every labored step you make in the direction of your Lord Jesus Christ is worth the effort.

God's alumni scale the heavens declaring the worthiness of His glory and the fullness of His provision. They know what it means to remain steadfast when there is darkness all around. They care about your eternal soul and they want you to "obtain a better resurrection."⁹³

Heaven's witnesses are no longer aliens, foreigners, pilgrims or strangers. They know the encumbrances you must overcome and they have "endured a great conflict of sufferings."⁹⁴ They have been poured out as a drink offering; they have fought the good fight, finished the course and kept the faith.⁹⁵ They know you can be more than a conqueror, too.

God calls those who have gone before you "men of whom the world was not worthy."⁹⁶ Those preceding perseverers are the spiritual titans upon whose shoulders you stand. They are the fearless scaffolding you climb to touch the face of God.

Who composes this cloud of witnesses? They include the Old Testament prophets, the New Testament apostles, the early church fathers, and the protestant reformers, those whom God employed to usher in the Great Awakening, the evangelists and the steadfast from all eras of Christendom. Every one of them is an active participant in your support team.

These veterans of victory have surrendered their lives in order for you to be encouraged in your fearless pursuit of righteousness. "They overcame because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death."⁹⁷

You have the blood of Jesus; you have the word of their testimony; you also can fearlessly and perseveringly surrender your life to death in order to capture the victor's crown.

EPILOGUE

"Though He slay me, I will hope in Him."⁹⁸

God says, "Perfect love casts out fear."⁹⁹

Elijah had just secured a miraculous victory over King Ahab. He witnessed the power of God over the impotent Baal. He participated in the God-honoring deaths of 450 false prophets upon Mt. Carmel. Elijah saw the fire of the Lord fall.

But then he took his eye off God and placed his focus upon the paltry strength of this world. "And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life."¹⁰⁰ Even God's leaders are frail.

Fear imprisons its possessor. Elijah became a prisoner to his own fear. Elijah should not have been fearful, but he was. He did not handle his stunning victory well. He may have fallen prey to the lie that earthly victories have permanency, though he knew that nothing of this world is everlasting.¹⁰¹

Elijah fertilized Jezebel's threat. His mental perceptions, not his physical conditions, suffocated him. He nursed the littleness that is in the soul of every fallen man. This man of God measured Queen Jezebel's power to effectuate her threat against his own ability to escape her cruelty. The power of God should have been his standard of measure.

God is very honest in His Bible about the weaknesses of His people. Christians experience the same emotions as non-Christians. Christians are fallible and fragile.

John Bunyan was imprisoned in Bedford, England. Nevertheless, from his prison cell he possessed one of the most splendid views of the Celestial City ever to flow from the pen of man.¹⁰² He experienced freedom because he fixed his mind upon the things of God.¹⁰³

Why do some Christians address their circumstances better than others?¹⁰⁴ How can some of your brothers and sisters in the Lord exhibit exalted joy even when their world is crumbling around them? Is it possible that they have decided to trust in God's provisions rather than their own strength?

Meditate upon the worthlessness of Elijah's approach to his fear of Jezebel. Appreciate the truth that his fears never became reality. Consider how this single fear crippled one of the two men who never died.¹⁰⁵

Make a list of your three greatest fears. Read the book of Philippians every day for the next thirty days. Before and after you read, ask God to take away your fears and gift you with the blessing requested by the father of the demon-possessed son: "I do believe; help my unbelief."¹⁰⁶

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."¹⁰⁷

SOLI DEO GLORIA!

"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."¹⁰⁸

¹ II Chron. 32:7; I Jn. 4:4

² Lk. 2:10f.

³ Lk. 1:12; 1:29f.; Jn. 18:15-27

⁴ Mt. 10:28

⁵ Dt. 2:7; 3:22; Prov. 21:1; Ro. 8:38f.

⁶ II Ki. 6:16f.

⁷ Mt. 10:29f.; Isa. 46:11

⁸ Christopher Neese, *The Puritan Remembrancer* ed. by H. J. Horn (London: Stanley Martin & Co., Ltd., 1928), p. 176.

⁹ Gen. 50:20; Acts 4:27f.

¹⁰ Ps. 115:3; Isa. 46:10; Phil. 2:13

¹¹ Ps. 91:11

¹² Heb. 1:14

¹³ Ps. 34:4,7

¹⁴ II Ki. 2:11

¹⁵ I Jn. 4:18

¹⁶ Dan. 6:22

¹⁷ Ps. 46:1f.; Js. 4:8

¹⁸ Ex. 14:13f.

¹⁹ Lk. 26:53

²⁰ II Sam. 10:12

²¹ Ecc. 3:1,11

²² Rev. 6:11

²³ Phil. 4:13,19

²⁴ Nu. 6:24-26

²⁵ Jn. 16:33

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²⁷ Jn. 14:1; 16:1
²⁸ Isa. 26:3f.
²⁹ Jn. 8:44
³⁰ II Thess. 2:7; Ro. 1:24-32
³¹ Acts 14:22
³² Mt. 9:2,22; Mk, 10:49; Acts 28:15
³³ Esth. 4:13f.
³⁴ Eze. 22:30
³⁵ Ps. 139:10
³⁶ William Gurnall, *The Christian In Complete Armour* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), p. 9.
³⁷ Gal. 3:3
³⁸ Eph. 4:22
³⁹ Ps. 139:23
⁴⁰ I Cor. 3:1,3
⁴¹ Gal. 5:16
⁴² Ro. 12:1
⁴³ I Jn. 5:4,5
⁴⁴ I Jn. 4:4; II Chron. 32:7
⁴⁵ I Cor. 2:14
⁴⁶ Ro. 8:37. Paul uses the Greek verb *hupernikomen* oftentimes translated “more than conquer.”
⁴⁷ Rev. 5:12,13
⁴⁸ Isa. 40:30f.
⁴⁹ Ex. 14:10-12
⁵⁰ Isa. 43:2f.
⁵¹ Nu. 16:8ff.
⁵² Gen. 3:17-19
⁵³ I Ki. 22
⁵⁴ Ex. 16:20
⁵⁵ I Pe. 2:11
⁵⁶ Js. 1:2-4
⁵⁷ Phil. 1:29
⁵⁸ I Cor. 10:13
⁵⁹ Hab. 2:4
⁶⁰ Heb. 11:6
⁶¹ Hab. 3:17-19
⁶² Prov. 1:18
⁶³ Mt. 16:24-27
⁶⁴ I Cor. 2:6
⁶⁵ Eze. 33:7
⁶⁶ Job 19:25
⁶⁷ Ps. 37:25
⁶⁸ Ps. 56:9-11
⁶⁹ Dt. 7:22. See also Ex. 15:1-18; Nu. 13f.; I Chron. 16:8-36.
⁷⁰ Nu. 22:31
⁷¹ Ps. 90:1f.
⁷² Ps. 118:6,9; I Pe. 5:6f.
⁷³ Phil. 4:11
⁷⁴ Lk. 16:24
⁷⁵ Gal. 6:14
⁷⁶ Ps. 73:25f.
⁷⁷ II Chron. 25:2
⁷⁸ Job. 1:7; Rev. 2:13

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- ⁷⁹ Phil. 3:7
⁸⁰ Isa. 40:31
⁸¹ I Sam. 13
⁸² I Sam. 28
⁸³ Eph. 1:3
⁸⁴ I Cor. 10:9f.; II Chron. 16:9
⁸⁵ Ro. 8:31f.
⁸⁶ Lk. 4:28f.
⁸⁷ II Thess. 3:13
⁸⁸ Heb. 11:13
⁸⁹ Jn. 14:27
⁹⁰ II Pe. 2:9
⁹¹ Heb. 12:1
⁹² Heb. 10:39
⁹³ Heb. 11:35
⁹⁴ Heb. 10:32
⁹⁵ II Ti. 4:6f.
⁹⁶ Heb. 11:38
⁹⁷ Rev. 12:11
⁹⁸ Job 13:15
⁹⁹ I Jn. 4:18
¹⁰⁰ I Ki. 19:3
¹⁰¹ II Cor. 4:18
¹⁰² A must reading for all Christians is the classic by John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. This writing can also serve as a splendid daily devotional for children and adults of all ages.
¹⁰³ Phil. 4:8f.
¹⁰⁴ Phil. 1:12-14
¹⁰⁵ II Ki. 2:11
¹⁰⁶ Mk. 9:24
¹⁰⁷ Phil. 4:6f.
¹⁰⁸ Rev. 1:17f.