

Living Without Fear

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Presented to:

By:

Living Without Fear

JAMES M. TOLLE

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I

Basic Considerations

NO ENEMY of mankind has caused more misery and unhappiness than fear. In its devastating destruction and disintegration of personality and character, this major sin of humanity has plunged innumerable souls into a veritable hell on earth. It cripples constructive effort; it produces confused and frantic minds; it results in sleepless, restless nights; it expresses itself in selfishness, thoughtlessness, and greed; it paralyzes the will; it destroys inner unity; it upsets physical health and shortens lives. It is first, last, and always a curse and blight on mankind.

But as strong a hold as fear can have on the minds of men, no one has to suffer from it. It is the optimistic and valid thesis of this discussion that we have available the means of living without fear, of securing inner peace and security. Those who refuse to avail themselves of this means only suffer needless pain and misery.

Before we consider the means of living without fear, we must first define what is meant by the word "fear"

in the sense we are considering it in this discussion. The word "fear" is used hundreds of times in the Bible, but not always with the same meaning. In many instances, it is used in a good sense to mean holy reverence and awe; for example, "Blessed is the man that feareth Jehovah" (Psalms 112:1); "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7); "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13); "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34,35). See 2 Corinthians 7:1; Revelation 19:5. A wholesome reverence, an attitude of awe toward God, is a most needful, healthy kind of fear.

The fear of God is reverence, respect, adoration—the awe that fills the mind as it stands in the presence of errorless Wisdom; the instinctive tribute that weakness pays to Omnipotence: the admiration that human frailty cannot conceal, or suppress, when God's flawless goodness rises before it; the impression of the divine on the human; the worshipful stoop of the soul before God, not because it is frightened, not because God has thunder-bolts in His hands, and legions of heaven-bright warriors, with swords that turn every way around Him, but because He has mercy for thousands, because He is holy and good, because He is God—because He is love.

J. Morgan Gibbon

Another use of the word "fear" in a good sense is that of showing respect for civil authority (Romans 13:1-7).

In the sense that fear is evil, the Bible resoundly warns us against it, often with such terse statements as, "Fear not" (Luke 12:32; etc.). The sort of fear condemned in the Bible, which we are considering in this discussion, is the misery, anxiety, and depression one may suffer when confronted by either real or imaginary dangers.

We must not, however, confuse fear with caution, the normal instinct to avoid real dangers. The person who suddenly discovers that he has stepped on a rattlesnake, and instantly reacts by jumping as far away from it as he can, is only exercising normal caution in preserving his life. Every child must learn to exercise caution in crossing the street to avoid being run over by an automobile, but this is quite different from teaching a child to be fearful of automobiles so that crossing the street becomes a depressing, unhappy experience. Caution and fear are diametrically opposed to each other. One is a necessity in successful living, and the other is an unremitting hindrance to it.

In giving due stress in this discussion to what we firmly believe is the valid means of the conquest of fear, we must avoid the error of believing that mere knowledge of a formula, of a set of facts, can remove fear from our lives. Many who have a fine intellectual grasp of the means of overcoming fear are still miserable, fearful, unhappy creatures. The idea that the mere ability to quote passages of scripture on the subject will drive away the demon of fear is preposterous, as much so as the idea that Jesus drove away the devil merely by quoting the scriptures to him. When Jesus said, "It is written," hurling the scriptures at the devil, the power He had over temptation was more

than the fact of His understanding and verbal use of God's word, but the fact that He had translated its meaning into His life. For instance, He quoted certain scriptures to the devil concerning the necessity of living by the Father's words and of worshipping Him (Matthew 4:4,10); but more than this, His life was a perfect, practical demonstration of the meaning of these scriptures. And so it is that the means of overcoming our fears is not merely the understanding and quoting of the pertinent scriptural facts, but the translation of them into our lives.

The role of religion, of dependence on God, as the all-embracing dynamic in living without fear, is axiomatic to all who believe in a Power that transcends the appearance of things, who have truly experienced that Power in their lives. Yet we face the tragic situation of the countless number of unhappy, fearful souls who think of themselves as children of God, who flock to church buildings every Sunday to go through the motions of worship. It would seem that such souls should be the happiest people on earth, yet they are among the most miserable. Fear, anxiety, and dejection of spirit haunt them as surely as if there had never been any religious experiences in their lives. The simple explanation of the incapacity of their religious faith and practice to give them freedom from fear is that they have failed to truly rely on the strength and power of the living, loving God of heaven. Some of them actually worship a deity whom they hate and dread, who can only be appeased by works of human merit and intolerance of heart, an unloving, ungenerous, tyrannical deity who, instead of mitigating fear, actually adds to it. Others nominally pay lip service to an intellectual concept they hold of a loving

God, but their faith is so weak, so unsubmitive, that they never receive any genuine manifestations of divine power in their lives to overcome their fears.

What does dependence on the living God involve? The complete answer to this significant question, which we shall discuss in the chapters to follow, is given in the word of God, the holy scriptures, which, culminating in the supreme authority of Jesus Christ the Son of God, reveals “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3).

*Let nothing disturb thee,
Let nothing affright thee.
All things are passing.
God never changes.
Patience gains all things.
Who has God wants nothing.
God alone suffices.*

Theresa of Avila

*God, make me brave for life: oh, braver than this.
Let me straighten after pain, as a tree straightens
after the rain,
Shining and lovely again.
God, make me brave for life; much braver than
this.
As the blown grass lifts, let me rise
From sorrow with quiet eyes,
Knowing Thy way is wise.
God, make me brave, life brings
Such blinding things.
Help me to keep my sight;*

*Help me to see aright
That out of dark comes light.*

Author Unknown

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom

Lead thou me on;

The night is dark, and I am far from home;

Lead thou me on.

Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see

The distant scene; one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that thou

Shouldest lead me on;

I loved to choose and see my path; but now

Lead thou me on.

I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,

Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long thy power hath blessed me, sure it still

Will lead me on

O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till

The night is gone,

And with the morn those angel faces smile

Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

John Henry Newman

The trouble arises in the case of those people who have no personal resources to draw on. Their lives are so lacking in spiritual power, or so full of intellectual scepticism and distrust, that they cannot help themselves. They have no religious convictions or certainties by which to obtain leverage in their struggles. They have no firm philosophy of life on which they or those who would help

*them can lay hold. They are putty in the hands
of the fears and forces that beset them from with-
out.*

Basil King

*No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled
sphere;
I see heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.*

Emily Bronte

II

Trusting Faith

*A*S a primary consideration, we observe that we must believe in the God who made us, the Creator of all mankind, as the One who perfectly cares for us, who infinitely loves us and desires our well-being, who is all-generous, who has all power to grant us freedom from fear. We must further believe that the greatest expression of his loving generosity was the giving of His only begotten Son to die for our sins so that we can be the recipients of divine grace and power. See John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Titus 3:4-6; Revelation 1:5. You whose hearts are heavy with fear will do well to believably repeat again and again the comforting words: *God loves and cares for me. His Son died to be my personal Saviour, the source of power and strength to conquer my fears.*

In this age of great change and uncertainty, with the constant threat of a cosmic cataclysm from nuclear war precariously hanging over our heads, we are subjected to all kinds of fears. But the Book of books offers freedom from all the stresses, strains, and fears of this atomic age, giving us the assurance that the all-powerful God will

comfort, succor, sustain, and strengthen us in the face of all dangers and troubles.

For he will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover thee with his pinions, and under his wings shalt thou take refuge: his truth is as a shield and a buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor the arrow that flieth by day; for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

Psalms 91:3-6

Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Isaiah 41:10

*A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
Did we in our strength confide
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right One on our side,
The man of God's own choosing.
And though this world, with evil filled,
Should threaten to undo us;
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.*

Martin Luther

In conquering our fears, it is indeed necessary that we *believe* in the *fact* of God's love for us and His power

to remove the dreadful burden of fear from our hearts. But such belief alone is not enough. In order to be the recipients of His fear-conquering power, we must *trust* in God—look to God, depend on God, surrender to God. Such trust in God is highlighted in the following passages: “I sought Jehovah, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears” (Psalms 34:4); “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in Jehovah for ever; for in Jehovah, even Jehovah, is an everlasting rock” (Isaiah 26:3,4). See Psalms 91:1,2.

If you would depend on God for victory over fear, then you must have a faith that causes you to trustingly, lovingly, and submissively surrender your whole life and being to Christ, who, being man’s only access to God (John 14:6), is “the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). Obviously, it was this kind of faith, or belief, that Jesus had in mind when He said, “Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me” (John 14:1). Most emphatically, it is unreserved conversion to Christ that we are pleading for, a conversion that will result in a life saturated with divine power.

The nominal churchgoer is so easily beset with fear because he is not truly converted to Christ. He may be converted to a doctrinal system, but his life is not surrendered to the person of Christ. His life is weak, futile, and ineffective in overcoming fear because he is depending on human weakness rather than on divine strength, because he walks by sight and not by faith.

The individual, however, whose life is surrendered to Christ does not walk in human weakness but in divine strength, not in selfishness but in unselfishness, not in self-

will but in submissive will. His is indeed a walk of *trusting* faith, of thus being “strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might” (Ephesians 6:10). His life in Christ is the very negation of fear, worry, and anxiety, even as God’s strength prevailing in him is the negation of human weakness.

Trying to run from our fears, real or imagined, is like trying to eliminate your shadow. Wherever you go it tags along. But when your shadow is encompassed by a larger one it is swallowed up and disappears. When your fears are surrendered to God, he then becomes the encompassing shadow that swallows up that ever-present dread of the present and future. Our Heavenly Father can be trusted to bless us in our difficult struggles in life. With spiritual eyesight we must believe, expect, and allow him to do so.

Earl Packwood, Jr.

In every case where Jesus dealt with man’s fear during His earthly sojourn, He expressly attributed it to a lack of strong, trusting faith. To His disciples who were anxious concerning the material things of life, He said, “O ye of little faith” (Matthew 6:30). He asked His disciples who feared for their lives while riding in a boat beset by a great tempest and mountainous waves, “Why are ye fearful O ye of little faith?” (Matthew 8:26). He exclaimed, on reaching forth His hand to save Peter, who walked toward Him on the sea until he became afraid, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Matthew 14:31).

The great truth we are considering here, *the power of Christ to conquer our fears through the means of our trust-*

ing faith, is expressed in principle in two great passages: “Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57); “For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). See John 15:5.

Lord Nelson of the British Admiralty was once engaged in a very famous battle. He met the French fleet and decisively defeated it. In his report to the British Admiralty he said, “The word victory is not large enough a word to describe what has happened today.” That is what Jesus meant when he said he had overcome the world and that our faith in him can overcome that same world.

M. D. Lawyer

There are many claimant Christians who seek justification for their fears by arguing that it is a natural thing to fear and that, therefore, they cannot help but fear. This attitude is indicative of an unbelieving, untrusting heart. Fear is *not* natural, as the best psychological studies have proved. Fear patterns become part of one’s habit structure through a learning process. Yet by the grace of God the habit of a peaceful mind can be substituted for the habit of a fearful mind. What cannot be done by man alone in gaining victory over his fears becomes a definite reality through divine power working in him.

*Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart,
And lean not upon thine own understanding:
In all thy ways acknowledge him,
And he will direct thy paths.*

Proverbs 3:5,6

The faithful, trusting, loving Christian, whose life is hid in Christ, has the great certainty that there is no reasonable basis at all for being fearful since "to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). From a heart essentially unsullied by fear, he can confidently speak the words of Romans 8:31,32, "If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?"

For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline.

2 Timothy 1:7

*O for a faith that will not shrink,
Tho' pressed by ev'ry foe,
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe.*

*That will not murmur or complain
Beneath the chast'ning rod,
But in the hour of grief or pain,
Will lean upon its God.*

*A faith that shines more bright and clear
When tempests rage without;
That when in danger knows no fear,
In darkness feels no doubt!*

*Lord, give us such a faith as this;
And then, whate'er may come,
We'll taste e'en here the hallowed bliss
Of an eternal home.*

W. H. Bathurst

“When you lie down, you will not be afraid. When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet” (Proverbs 3:24, NASB). There is nothing quite as disrupting as anxious sleep—especially when we are very tired and must get some rest. Those long and sleepless nights are not pleasant to anyone, especially one who claims to be God’s total child. Those of us who put our trust in the Lord need not take tranquilizers in order to get some rest. God promised that he would give us rest. Too many of us are trying to sleep with fearful hearts. God says for us not to be afraid. And those who have tapped his source of wisdom and understanding need not be afraid of the dark again! You can rest easy in God’s tender care. For those who have given their souls and bodies to God, sleep will be sweet.

Steven Clark Goad

III

Freedom from Guilt

A LIFE of dependence on God, of freedom from fear, is a life of freedom from guilt. One of the most powerful contributing factors to the fear complex is the sense of unforgiven sin. At the very beginning of the Old Testament, the story of Adam shows fear to be the result of a guilty conscience. Adam disobeyed God, and when he suddenly heard God walking, he said to Him, "I was afraid . . . and hid myself" (Genesis 3:10).

Shakespeare, practical psychologist that he was, showed clearly the relationship of guilt to fear in his play "Macbeth." Every noise frightens Macbeth after he has murdered Duncan. He hears a noise crying, "Macbeth shall sleep no more!" Then a knocking. Terrified he cries out, "Whence is that knocking? How is't with me, when every noise appalls me? What hands are here? Ha, they pluck out mine eyes!" Then he utters those terrifying words which reflect the sense of overwhelming guilt: "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash his blood clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red."

At first, Lady Macbeth upbraids her husband for being unable to throw off the sense of guilt. But finally, in the last act, her bold nerve breaks, she sleeps badly, and her conscience feels the terrible pain of guilt resulting from her complicity in Macbeth's terrible deed. She washes her hands again and again as she mutters, "Out, accursed spot! Out, I say! Here's the smell of blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh! Oh! Oh!"

The physician who has been watching from a darkened corner exclaims, "Foul whisperings do breed unnatural troubles; infected minds to their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets; more needs she the divine than the physician. God, God, forgive us all."

This is one of the most powerful scenes in all secular literature on the effect of unforgiven sin. Guilt is one of the commonest causes of sleepless, fear-ridden lives. "There is no peace, saith Jehovah, to the wicked" (Isaiah 48:22).

It is the nature and quality of a guilty conscience to flee and be terrified even when all is well, and when prosperity abounds, and change such prosperity into danger.

Martin Luther

It is the deep consciousness of sin, evil in our hearts and lives, that makes us restless and unhappy. The plasters and soothing lotions with which the easy-going philosophy of modern times covers it up, do not heal it; they only hide it. There is no cure for it, there is no rest for the weary soul, except the divine forgiveness. There is no sure pledge for this except in holy sacrifice and

blessed promise of Christ, "Son, daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace."

Author Unknown

The mental state of one who surrenders his life to Christ in penitent, trusting, submissive faith, thus to have his sins forgiven through the blood of Christ, is that of "a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21), the very antithesis of fear. His faith in the righteous God tells him that when God forgives, He forgets. Why then should he fret away his life in worrying about his past mistakes and failures? He assumes the healthy attitude of the apostle Paul: "But one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13,14).

With the freedom from the guilt and bondage of sin that comes from one's conversion to Christ, is the realization that he has been adopted as God's son. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:14,15). The leading of the Spirit, which is the proof of one's sonship, or adoption, does not produce in God's sons the feeling of servitude that was characteristic of their former state in the bondage of sin, but rather the consciousness of the affection, love, and confidence that pertains to members of God's family; not the servile, trembling spirit of slaves, but the calm trust of those who know they are sons of God and can confidently cry, "Abba, Father." Cf. John 8:31-36.

As long as the Christian keeps his faith in Christ alive,

desiring truth and righteousness in his life, he will never be in the bondage of fear. He realizes that all he receives from God—forgiveness, protection, and guidance—is a matter of divine grace and not of human merit. He does not live in a constant state of fear because of any doubt concerning his relationship to God. He believes that a God of love and grace understands his weaknesses and frailties, and that the blood of Christ has the constant power to cleanse him from the guilt of all the mistakes he makes along the way due to the fallacies and imperfections of his human nature. See 1 John 1:7. Come what may, such a faithful, trusting person has the sure confidence that he belongs to Christ and that it is well with his soul. With a guilt-free conscience he can say, “I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12).

*When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll,
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
“It is well, it is well with my soul.”*

*Tho’ Satan should buffet, tho’ trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.*

*My sin—O the bliss of this glorious tho’t!—
My sin—not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to His cross and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!*

*And, Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be
sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll,
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
“Even so” it is well with my soul.*

H. G. Stafford

IV

Christian Living

THE normal expression of trusting faith in Christ, of conversion to Him and of dependence on God, is a life of Christian service and worship of God, summed up by the words "Christian living." See Romans 6:1-19; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 2:14. Such a life is inseparably connected with freedom from guilt, and thus with freedom from fear.

The converted soul no longer lives by his own will, but by the will of Christ. He can say, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). He is God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). It is unthinkable that fear should prevail in a Christ-filled, Christ-dominated soul, to whom the Lord has spoken the comforting words: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful" (John 14:27).

The plain truth is that Christ will not bless anyone with freedom from fear who is unfaithful to Him, who fails to abstain from evil and to do good. "For, he that would love

life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: and let him turn away from evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears unto their supplication: but the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good? But even if ye should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye: and fear not their fear, neither be troubled" (1 Peter 3:10-14).

The valid and inseparable connection between the Christian life and freedom from fear, is plainly evident in the considerations to follow.

1. The Christian life is one of constantly seeking to know the truth that makes men free. By objectively approaching his fears, the Christian truthseeker can intelligently trim out the dead wood of fears which involve no dangers at all, knowing that the fears which do involve real dangers can be removed by dependence on a loving God who protects His children from all harm.

2. The Christian life is one with a sublimely dominant purpose: the service of God through the service of mankind, constantly stimulated by communion with God in worship. Worries, anxieties, and fears tend to disappear with the conception of this great purpose. The happiest of all possible lives is for one to be carried out of his preoccupation with things that cause him to be fearful, by the dominant purpose of Christian service, so that he forgets himself in serving others and so enlarges himself. See Acts 20:35; Galatians 6:10.

3. The Christian life is one of fellowship. The faithful Christian enjoys fellowship with the entire Godhead—

the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 1:9; Philip-
pians 2:1; 1 John 1:3,5-7); but of real significance also is
the fellowship he has with those of a common faith and
salvation. This fellowship involves not only the service he
can render others, but also the service they can render him.
All of us do indeed need the help of our brethren to enjoy
the fullness of life in Christ. God's grace can work mightily
through them in helping us overcome our fears. When our
hearts are troubled and fearful, not only do we need God's
help through prayer, as we shall presently consider, but also
His grace through divinely-empowered, loving brethren
who will give us a listening ear and encourage us to a
deeper faith in the Lord, a closer walk in the light of His
word, and a greater reliance on His fear-freeing power.
Carefully read 1 Corinthians 12:14-26; Galatians 6:1,2; 1
Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:13; James 5:16.

4. The Christian life is one of self-discipline.
When faced with tasks, however difficult and large they
may be, the dedicated, self-disciplined Christian gets busy
and does something about them—*now!* He is “in diligence
not slothful” (Romans 12:11). See Colossians 3:23. He
follows the principle of Ecclesiastes 9:10, “Whatsoever thy
hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” Each day he
attacks every difficulty and faces every task before him
with gusto. He does not get discouraged because he does
not finish every task and overcome all the forces of evil
about him today. He disciplines himself to doing all the
good he can *today*, to accomplishing all the work he can
today, realizing that he will do the same tomorrow, God
willing. Understanding the import of Christ's words, “Suffi-
cient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matthew 6:34), he
does not worry himself about the tasks and difficulties that

face him tomorrow. This does not mean that he makes no plans for the future, but that he is not anxious for the future.

When the undisciplined person sees a difficult task before him, he begins to be fearful whether or not he will be able to finish it. The result of his fear is fatigue and restlessness, and consequently his failure to do anything constructive toward accomplishing the task. His fear produces procrastination and his procrastination produces more fear—an unhappy, miserable, frustrating plight indeed!

5. The Christian life is one of prayer. In prayer the faithful Christian overtly expresses his reliance on the power of God for freedom from fear. All his strivings for a life of freedom from guilt, of searching for the truth, of Christian service and worship, and of diligent application to the daily tasks that confront him, will eventually come to naught should he fail to constantly commune with his heavenly Father through Christ in prayer. In prayer the Christian tacitly admits that he is frail and weak in the flesh, and that he is thus bound to succumb to fear unless he leans heavily on divine strength. In overcoming his fears by the grace of God, he can no more omit prayer from his daily life than he can omit upright living and diligent labor.

No greater passage of scripture can be found that expresses the efficacy of prayer in utilizing God's power to enjoy freedom from fear than Philippians 4:4-7, "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."

In prayer the Christian not only enlists the aid of the Father and Christ in overcoming his fears, but also the aid of the Holy Spirit: "And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). The aid of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit enlisted through the wonderful medium of prayer! How can we possibly fail in conquering our fears?

*Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make!
What heavy burdens from our bosom take,
When parched grounds revive us with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near
Stands forth in sunny outline brave and clear;
We kneel, how weak! we rise, how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others, that we are not always strong,
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee!*

Richard Trench

*Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne
Make all my wants and wishes known.
In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief,
And oft escaped the tempter's snare
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer.*

*Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
Thy wings shall my petition bear
To Him whose truth and faithfulness
Engage my waiting soul to bless;
And since He bids me seek His face,
Believe His word and trust His grace,
I'll cast on Him my every care,
And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer.*

*Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
May I thy consolation share.
Till, from Mount Pisgah's lofty height,
I view my home, and take my flight:
This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise
To seize the everlasting prize;
And shout, while passing thru the air,
Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer.*

W. W. Walford

Verily, a life of dependence on God for freedom from fear is a life saturated with divine love and power, a life free from guilt, a life of humble service rendered to God by abstaining from evil and doing good to men, a life of worship, a life of fellowship, a life of truth seeking, a life of self-discipline, and a life of prayer—*an undefeatable combination in conquering our fears!*

V *Fear of Poverty*

*I*N giving due stress to the practical significance of this discussion, we shall now consider the more common fears confronting man that the Christian can conquer by God's grace, beginning with the fear of poverty.

The man who fears material insecurity, who is afraid that he will not be able to "make both ends meet," is guilty of covetousness, which is idolatry (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5). Since his fear of poverty indicates that his trust is not in the Lord but in material things, he is actually a worshiper of mammon rather than of God. Jesus plainly said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). One who puts his trust in temporal, physical things, depending on them for happiness rather than on the God of love and peace, has every reason for fearing the loss of his material possessions and of having to face poverty; for, after all, the god of mammon whom he serves is entirely undependable, unable to guarantee him any permanency in the possession of food, clothing, money, and other temporal things.

Jesus forthrightly raised His voice against the fear of material insecurity. Immediately after He had referred to the impossibility of serving both God and mammon, He declared, "Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body more than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not of much more value than they?" (Matthew 6:25,26). Faithful Christians have heeded these sublime words of their Lord, and thus they refuse to allow the fear of poverty to prevail in their lives. They understand that real, lasting security can only be gained by trust in the true and living God and not by trust in the false and lifeless god of mammon. They do not "have their hopes set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17).

But godliness with contentment is great gain: for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall therewith be content. But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

1 Timothy 6:6-10

Content with their lot in life, whether of prosperity or poverty, because of their trust in the Lord, faithful Christians assume the healthy attitude that if changes must come through divine providence to alter their economic status, let them come! They accept the possibility of such changes without fear because they accept the Lord at His word: "Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear" (Hebrews 13:5,6). They know that in Christ they will find everything they need. "And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

The apostle Paul expressed contentment with his lot in life, the very opposite of the fear of material insecurity, when he declared, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content" (Philippians 4:11). The word "content" is from the Greek *autarkes*, meaning "sufficient for oneself." Paul did not use this word in any egotistical sense. He did not claim his sufficiency originated with himself, that it was of his own wisdom and power, or that he was the master of his fate. But what he did affirm, and emphatically so, was that he was not dependent on this transitory world for his contentment, but on the strength that God provided him through Christ, no matter what the vicissitudes of his life may have been. He immediately explained himself by saying, "I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound

and to be in want. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me” (verses 12,13). Paul affirmed, in effect, that no matter what his state in life may have been, whether of prosperity or poverty, he had in Christ everything he needed to serve God and to be truly content, free from any fear concerning the passing, transitory things of the world.

What a changeful life was that of Paul's from the time he left his father's house for Gamaliel's school to his imprisonment at Rome. We are all subject to disturbing changes from increase or loss of wealth, friends, position, etc., and only in the school of Christ is there rest for the soul. The believer has "the unsearchable riches," so nothing can disturb him; is "kept by the power of God," so nothing can harm him. He may, therefore, well be content.

W. Cadman

Poverty-fear set aside, Christians can more readily give themselves to the knowledge that “the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he that herein serveth Christ is well-pleasing to God, and approved of men” (Romans 14:17,18).

In denouncing the fear of poverty, we must not make the mistake of confusing it with caution in material matters. It is one thing to accept poverty in the providence of God, according to His will, and quite another thing to accept it as a way of life because of laziness or whatever other reason. God promises to give us what we need in the way of material things, but not apart from our cooperation with His grace and generosity. He gives us our daily bread, but He will not feed us with manna from heaven. It is His will,

as we are able, that we diligently labor to supply our physical needs: “in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground” (Genesis 3:19). For any one to refuse to work and then to challenge God to take care of him, is to disobey Jesus’ command, “Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God” (Matthew 4:7).

One who refuses to work for his physical needs does *not* trust in God; he is in rebellion against God. In his indolence he does not eradicate the fear of going without food, drink, clothing, and shelter; he reinforces the fear. Being without the fellowship of God and his faithful brethren, he is powerless to overcome his fear. He will do well to consider Paul’s forthright teaching in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13, especially noting in the context that “the brother that walketh disorderly” is one who refuses to work for his temporal needs: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat bread for nought at any man’s hand, but in labor and travail working night and day, that we might not burden any of you: not because we have not the right, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you, that ye should imitate us. For *even* when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.” Cf. 1 Timothy 5:8.

It is indeed true that the physical should never take precedence over the spiritual (Matthew 6:19-20; John 6:27; Colossians 3:1,2), but it is also true that no one can truly be spiritually-minded who disobeys the Lord by refusing to work for his daily bread. Jesus declared, following His denunciation of fear concerning man's bodily needs, "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). To obey this command, thus to enjoy its promise, the Christian must strive to cooperate in every way with the grace of the Author of "every good and perfect gift" (James 1:17), which includes his labors for temporal things. Only by so doing does he truly trust in the Lord for freedom from the fear of poverty. Giving himself diligently to his bread-earning responsibilities, he prayerfully trusts in the Lord to take care of him (Matthew 6:11), never doubting that he will receive from the divine bounty everything he needs to sustain him during his earthly sojourn.

*Be not dismayed whate'er betide,
God will take care of you;
Beneath His wings of love abide,
God will take care of you.*

*Thro' days of toil when heart doth fail,
God will take care of you;
When dangers fierce your path assail,
God will take care of you.*

*All you may need He will provide,
God will take care of you;
Nothing you ask will be denied,
God will take care of you.*

*No matter what may be the test,
God will take care of you;
Lean, weary one, upon His breast,
God will take care of you.*

C. D. Martin

VI

Fear of Failure

SUCCESSFUL LIVING is the primary goal of all men; no rational person desires his life to be a failure. But just what are success and failure? What men call success, God may call failure; and what men call failure, God may call success. The rich young ruler and the rich fool would be considered thoroughly successful in the eyes of the world, but in the eyes of God they were dismal, tragic failures. See Luke 12:16-21; 18:18-24. To the world, Jesus failed miserably. Yet in the eyes of God He is earth's greatest success. The faithful Christian seeks always to live successfully in the sight of God. This he does without fear of failure. What is the secret of such a life?

1. DESIRE TO FULFILL GOD'S PURPOSE. God does indeed have a purpose, or plan, for each Christian's life. His basic plan is common to all Christians: to reproduce Christ's life in their lives and subsequently to be with Him forever in heaven. See Galatians 2:20; 1 Peter 1:4; John 14:2,3. The faithful Christian ardently desires that this basic plan be fulfilled in his life. Since such a desire is filled with hope, it is success-oriented, thus excluding the fear of failure.

God also has a plan for each individual Christian that He has for no other person. Since this plan is not spelled out in the divine word, the desire of the faithful Christian is that where he lives, the length of his days on the earth, his choice of vocation and mate, his opportunities for service, etc., will always be in keeping with God's will. When thus making any plans for the future, he remembers the words of James 4:13-15, "Come now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that." See Jeremiah 18:5,6.

*Man's life is laid in the loom of time
To a pattern he does not see,
While the Weaver works and shuttles fly
Till the dawn of eternity.*

*Some shuttles are filled with silver threads
And some with threads of gold,
While often but the darker hues
Are all that they may hold.*

*But the Weaver watches with skillful eye
Each shuttle fly to and fro,
And sees the pattern so deftly wrought
As the loom moves sure and slow.*

*God surely planned the pattern:
Each thread, the dark and fair,
Is chosen by His master skill
And placed in the web with care.*

*He only knows its beauty,
And guides the shuttles which hold
The threads so unattractive,
As well as the threads of gold.*

*Not till each loom is silent,
And the shuttles cease to fly,
Shall God reveal the pattern
And explain the reason why.*

*The dark threads were as needful
In the Weaver's skillful hand
As the threads of gold and silver
For the pattern which He planned.*

Author Unknown

In desiring that God's will be done in his life, the faithful Christian never prays without the proviso: "Not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). See 1 John 5:14,15. When in answer to such a prayer certain of his plans are thwarted, he does not feel that he has failed; he rather knows that he has succeeded in the very thing he prayed for: the fulfillment of God's will, or purpose, in his life. So why should he fear any such changes that God in His divine wisdom sees fit to make?

*Not all who seem to fail have failed indeed,
Not all who fail have therefore worked in vain.
There is no failure for the good and brave.*

Richard Trench

2. TRUST IN DIVINE POWER. One who has this trust has the certainty that he will never fail in fulfilling God's purpose for his life. Cf. Romans 4:19-21. He recog-

nizes that there are many dangers and obstacles confronting him; but he also knows that whatever temporary reverses he suffers, the ultimate outcome will be glorious, final, complete victory. See Acts 14:22; 1 Corinthians 16:9; Philippians 1:28. He may seemingly lose some battles along the way, but his winning of the war is absolutely certain. Because he stands in the grace, strength, and power of the Lord, his adversary the devil cannot possibly be victorious over him.

These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith. And who is he that hath overcome the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.

1 John 5:4,5

*One who never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted,
wrong would triumph.*

Robert Browning

Christ will win, whether we appear to win or lose. If we are in Christ and true to him, the final victory will be ours. The final victory is ours—even though at the moment it may look like defeat, feel like defeat, and be called defeat by the world. The cross looked like defeat to the apostles, it must have felt like defeat to Christ, and it was called

defeat by the world. But it was not defeat. It was God's greatest victory. Satan may appear to rule now, but God overrules.

Flavil R. Yeakley, Jr.

He who trusts in the unlimited strength of God and the unsearchable riches of His grace has everything he needs for successful, victorious living. "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37); "But thanks be unto God, who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14); "And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8). See 2 Timothy 2:1. With such strength and grace to empower him for victory in the good fight of faith, he does not fear that his life will be a failure. As he faithfully walks with the Lord, he has the assurance of his freedom from guilt, of his acceptance to God, and of the heavenly inheritance that awaits him when life's little day is over. See 2 Timothy 1:12; 1 John 1:7.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being

more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ: whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:3-9

It is lack of trust in Jehovah God that has always produced the fear of failure, thus frustrating His plans for His people. God would not allow the Jews of old to enter Canaan, the land He had promised them, because of their unbelief (Hebrews 3:19). In seeing only their weakness and frailty in the face of the powerful forces that confronted them in Canaan, they failed to see the infinitely greater power of God that would make it possible for them to conquer their enemies. So they feared the failure to possess the promised land—and what they feared came to pass!

It was the Lord's will that Peter walk on the water, which he was able to do as long as he kept his eyes set on the Lord, trusting in Him and not in himself. But when he took his eyes away from the source of his power, feeling only his human frailty, "and saw the wind, he was afraid, and began to sink." Jesus consequently upbraided him for his lack of belief. See Matthew 14:28-31.

Concerning the plans God has for Christians, faith in Him and His Son Jesus Christ confidently looks forward to success; faith only in self fearfully looks forward to failure. See 1 Corinthians 10:12,13; Philippians 1:6.

So many frontiers have been deserted because of fear, so many posts have been abandoned, so many visions of greatness have been allowed to die. Our disbelief, our faintheartedness, has too often driven us, like it did the Israelites, back into the wilderness to wander aimlessly. We have all grown faint-hearted when God has given us some fort to hold. And though God offers forgiveness for our failures, territory has still been lost and much time has still been wasted. We must repeatedly tap God's source of courage.

Leonard Allen

To truly trust in the grace and power of the Lord for successful, fruitful, heaven-bound, fear-free living, is to have the rich prayer life which we considered in a previous chapter. Of special significance here are the words of Jesus: "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22); "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). See Luke 11:9,10; James 1:5-8. Believing prayer offered by the faithful Christian for successful living, in keeping with the divine will, has God's sure promise of being answered.

3. COOPERATION WITH DIVINE GRACE. Not only does the faithful Christian trust in divine grace for successful living and reaching the heavenly destination, but he also cooperates with that grace by doing the Lord's will, fulfilling his divinely ordained responsibilities. Only by so doing can God's purpose be fulfilled in his life. "Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith. . . For

as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead” (James 2:24,26).

After the apostle Peter had exhorted his readers to give diligence to supply in their faith the Christian graces, he said, “Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:10,11). Those who obey this exhortation do not fear that they will fail to reach heaven. See Jude 24.

“God’s fellow-workers” (1 Corinthians 3:9) realize that the results of their labors are of His doing and not of theirs. See 1 Corinthians 3:6,7. Thus they never get discouraged and fearful because their progress in the Lord’s work and in building Christian character is not as rapid as they desire. They are obedient to such injunctions as: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58); “And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9).

Furthermore, each faithful, submissive Christian assumes the function in the body of Christ of which he is capable. He recognizes that no Christian has exactly the same abilities as any of his fellow Christians. See 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. He knows that in the day of judgment he will be given a private examination, to be judged not by the abilities and opportunities of others but only by his own abilities and opportunities (Romans 14:12). But whatever his abil-

ities are, he never depreciates them, no matter how small they may be. He realizes that God can accomplish great things even through limited human means. Thus he does not make the fatal mistake of the one-talent man in the Lord's parable, who was so afraid of failure that he did nothing at all in the service of his master. See Matthew 25:14-30. Putting his whole heart and soul into the Lord's work, trusting in His blood to take away the sins he commits along the way, and depending on His power for victorious living, he courageously lives out his life in the sure and steadfast hope of receiving the heavenly crown.

The man who accepts Christ truly accepts Him as Master and Lord. He believes that Christ has a purpose for him, which will surely be fulfilled; work for him, which will surely be blessed if he only tries to do it. Most of the discords of life come from conflict of authorities, of plans, of purposes. Suppose that a building were going up, and the architect had one design for it, and the builder had another. What perplexity and confusion there would be! How ill things would fit! What perpetual quarrels and blunders and disappointments! But when the workman accepts the designers plan and simply does his best to carry that out, harmony, joyful labour, and triumph are the result. If we accept God's plan for us, yield to Him as the daily controller and director of our life, our work, however hard, becomes peaceful and secure. No perils can frighten, no interruptions can dishearten us.

Henry van Dyke

Christ's power, first, last, middle; our faith in that power, unhesitating, unshrinking, unwavering; earnest prayer to Him whose ear attends the softest prayer, accompanied by the self-discipline which the holiest saint knows he needs, and the humblest Christian should be the last to disdain, these are the secrets of victory.

W. T. Dawson

VII

Fear of Criticism

EVERY PERSON, regardless of how capable, efficient, wise, and good he may be, stands in need of criticism. To be a genuine Christian, thus to face criticism without fear, is to gladly accept all just criticism and to patiently and graciously handle all unjust criticism. When Paul asked his readers, "So then am I become your enemy, by telling you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16), he was aware that some of them feared and resented the justifiable criticism he was giving them, to consider him their enemy rather than friend. And how is it with you? Do you resent your critics who point out your mistakes or are you grateful to them? Do you welcome their criticism or do you fear it? Of the two persons spoken of by Solomon in Proverbs 15:32, which are you: "He that refuseth correction despiseth his own soul: but he that hearkeneth to reproof getteth understanding"?

How apt we are to feel that the man who tells us our faults is our enemy! How apt we are to treat him coldly, and to "cut his acquaintance," and to

regard him with dislike! The reason is, he gives us pain, and we cannot have pain given us, even by the stone against which we stumble, or by any of the brute creation, without momentary indignation, or regarding them as our enemy. Besides, we do not like to have another person acquainted with our faults and our follies; and we naturally avoid the society of those who are thus acquainted with us. Such is human nature, and it requires no little grace for us to overcome this, and to regard the man who tells us our faults as our friend. We love to be flattered, and we shrink with pain from any exposure, or any necessity for repentance. Hence we become alienated from him who is faithful in reproving us for our faults. There is nothing more difficult than to regard with steady and unwavering affection the man who faithfully tells us the truth at all times, when that truth is painful. Yet he is our best friend. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Proverbs 27:6).

Albert Barnes

Men tend to fear criticism because it strikes at their self-love. According to Felix Adler, the ego-complex is the most fruitful cause of upset and disturbed lives. Our ego is our fortress, and we tend to fear anything that threatens it. We must not conclude, however, that self-love is evil per se. Indeed, self-esteem, ego-strength, or self-love is an absolute necessity for the continuation of life. When it is gone, the person is virtually gone. The word of God certainly advocates self-love in the command, "Thou shalt love thy

neighbor as thyself” (Romans 13:9). Self-love precedes love for others, for how can one love others as himself unless he first loves himself?

Notice the healthy ego, self-love, of the maturing, growing Christian. He has ego-strength without being egocentric. His self-love is not selfishness. Loving himself in the right way, he loves others also in the right way. As one who has been redeemed by the infinite price of Christ’s blood, he recognizes more than ever his personal worth as a human being, made in the image of God and beloved of Him. See John 3:16, Hebrews 2:9; 1 Peter 1:18,19; 1 John 3:1. But the healthy self-love he possesses recognizes also his personal limitations and imperfections, for he is thoroughly aware that he can be wrong and make mistakes. Thus he is not shocked or surprised when any of his shortcomings are pointed out to him. As one whose life is dedicated to the purpose of pleasing God, he does not wish to remain wrong, to continue in sin, or to make blunders and mistakes of any kind. He desires to grow spiritually and to be more competent and efficient in every phase of his life. Consequently, he welcomes any criticism that will help him be a better person, as we shall presently further note. He appreciates sincere praise and encouragement, but he sees through flattery because it is inconsistent with his healthy, reasonable estimate of himself.

Notice the unhealthy ego, or self-love, of the spiritually stagnant, immature person. He is egocentric, self-centered. Any conscious feeling of love he has is virtually given to himself alone; he loves neither God nor his fellow man. The old man of selfishness and sin has yet to be crucified. See Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20; 5:24. In reality, he has a

deep-seated feeling of insecurity, of lack of personal worth. He thus needs his shaky ego constantly fed by praise and flattery. Only those who so treat him can get along with him. He cannot stand criticism, however just it may be, because he sees it as a threat to all the props being knocked out from under him, with nothing left to sustain him. Thus he constantly lives in the fear that he will suffer the pain of criticism.

How does the emotionally mature, growing Christian meet criticism without fear? Recognizing that he is imperfect, capable of making mistakes, he first asks the question, Is this criticism true? If it is true, I shall correct the things being criticised since I want to do better and be a better person. My critics, therefore, become the unpaid watchmen of my soul. Why then should I fear such criticism? It elevates rather than lowers my self-esteem, for the better person I become the more self-respect I will have.

Paul justifiably criticised Peter because of his withdrawal from the Gentiles out of fear of the Jews: "But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned. For before that certain came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision" (Galatians 2:11,12). What was Peter's response? The divine record does not tell us; but we have no reason to doubt that when he soberly reflected on the matter, he was deeply grateful to Paul and resolved never to make the same mistake again.

But suppose the criticism is unjust and untrue? One with an unhealthy ego either retaliates or quietly takes it with

a smouldering, growing feeling of resentment and hate, which is exactly the same way he takes just criticism. But one with the healthy Christian ego bears it without retaliation or resentment. And more than merely bearing it, he takes it into his life and uses it. Cf. Matthew 5:11,12; Romans 8:28. Jesus was insulted, reviled, and crucified on false accusation, twisted meanings, and misquotations. He bore these criticisms patiently and with poise and dignity; but more, He took them all up into His sublime purpose and spelled out the love and truth of God. Cf. Luke 23:34; 1 Peter 2:23. It was perjured testimony that sent Him to the cross, but the world can now read through that cross the loving purpose of God to save men from their sins. To be a genuine Christian, one who has the mind of Christ, is to rearrange our unjust criticisms and turn them back to the world as an affirmation of love, moral courage, truth, and mercy.

If the faithful Christian feels that he must answer his false accusers, he does so not with the intent of hurting but of helping them, in keeping with such divine injunctions as: "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but a grievous word stirreth up anger. The tongue of the wise uttereth knowledge aright; but the mouth of fools poureth out folly" (Proverbs 15:1,2); "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear" (Ephesians 4:29); "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:6); "Not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling; but contrariwise blessing; for hereunto were ye called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:9).

A questioner stood up before a large audience and flatly accused the lecturer of being a liar. It happened in a country where the most degrading thing that can happen to anyone is "to lose face." The lecturer did indeed "lose face," but only for a moment. He regained "face," and much more in the respect and approval of the audience, by smiling, showing no resentment, and dealing with the accusation fairly, patiently, and kindly. Little did he realize the good that was eventually to result from his Christian demeanor in the face of unjust criticism. That night one of the members of that audience tossed fitfully in bed, unable to sleep. He was haunted by the gracious, loving way the lecturer had faced his accuser. He remembered a quarrel he had had with another, in which each had tried to "whittle the other down to size" by vicious insults. At four o'clock in the morning, after a sleepless night, he went to the home of his enemy, aroused him from bed, talked over the matter with him, and asked for forgiveness, which he gladly received and just as gladly gave. The meeting was ended with a warm embrace of Christian sympathy and affection.

The next Sunday morning he stood up in the church service and asked forgiveness of all whom his tongue had offended. The response was electrifying. The contagion of good will generated by that one courageous confession of fault caused others to stand up and ask for forgiveness of those whom they had also sinned against. Thirty-four quarrels were settled. It was a banner day in the history of the congregation. In one glorious hour it was swept clean of bitterness, rancor, and hate. The lecturer who began the chain of events that led to such a wonderful

expression of love, penitence, confession, and forgiveness, did not just bear unjust criticism—he used it to change the whole spirit of a congregation.

And whenever unjust criticism is levelled at any of us, let us transform it into the glorious truth and love of God by presenting to the world the example of Christian decorum, thus to let the light of Jesus shine through us in influencing others to glorify God (Matthew 5:16). So whether criticism is just or unjust, we can use it in God's purpose to serve our fellow men and to ennoble our own lives. Why then should we fear it?

VIII

Fear of People

SOME of the fear we have of people is entirely groundless, based on mere speculation and suspicion. We often expect the worse from people who intend us no harm at all. Such was the case of Saul in fearing that David would take away the kingdom from him, which was not even remotely the intent of David. See 1 Samuel 18:6-9. Such fear tempts us to seek retaliation when there has been provocation. And so we feel unkindly disposed to others, fearing them for no logical reason at all, because we see in our distorted mental vision dangers that are entirely without substance. To fear a person of a different race, for example, just because his skin is a different color from ours, or one of a different culture just because his way of doing things is different from ours, is a kind of insanity, an attitude foreign to any thoughtful, reasonable person who sees others as Christ sees them.

The basic reason for the fear of people is lack of love for them, which in turn is due to the failure to understand and appreciate the incalculable worth of every human being in the sight of his Creator. One who possesses such fear

does not appreciate the redemptive work of Jesus, who “tasted of death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9) because of the greatness of divine love for all humanity. If people, all kinds of people, were not infinitely important to God and Christ, there would have been no saving cross of Calvary.

The faithful Christian, who has been truly converted to Christ, has the same attitude toward all men as Deity. Because he loves God, he loves all those whom God loves and for whom Christ died—*every* human being, regardless of race, nationality, creed, economic and social standing, etc. He sees in every person the image of God; thus he feels with great sensitivity the untold value of every human soul. His is not an attitude of suspicion and fear toward others, of looking for and expecting the worse from them, but an attitude of faith in them, of desiring and expecting the best from them. His love for men is described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, “Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

Can you imagine a scene so remarkable as the one in our scripture (Acts 10:9-16)? Here is Peter standing on the housetop, and a sheet hanging from heaven filled with every kind of filthy animal you can imagine, and a voice crying, “Eat.” If you had been Peter standing on the houstop, and if God had sent down this great sheet from out of the open heaven, what would have been in your

sheet? You know that this is the sheet of prejudice and is filled with all you despise. What would the sheet hold for you? Would it perhaps hold persons of different moral values, educational degrees, races, religious beliefs, political views, occupations, marital status? And if the voice said aloud to you, just as it speaks to you in the Scriptures, "Love," could you say, "Truly now I perceive that God shows no partiality, and henceforth neither shall I."

Gary R. Beauchamp

Although genuine love for others is not suspicious, neither is it naive and credulous. All men are not kindly and graciously disposed toward others. The world is full of vicious, hateful men who pose real dangers to their fellow human beings. Even Christians are not exempt from their threats and dangers. Indeed, "all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). See Matthew 5:10-12; Luke 6:26. But Christians are not to deliberately seek persecution. They are not to borrow trouble. They are to exercise prudence in their relationship with others, and thus to keep from bringing upon themselves any unnecessary harm. This is not fear but caution. Jesus tersely warned, "Beware of men" (Matthew 10:17). See Matthew 7:15. He also said, "Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest haply they trample them under your feet, and turn and rend you" (Matthew 7:6). Solomon said, "Make no friendship with a man that is given to anger; and with a wrathful man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul" (Proverbs 22:24,25). Paul said, "Be not

deceived: evil companionships corrupt good morals” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

But as plainly as the divine word exhorts us to exercise caution toward men, it just as plainly tells us not to fear them, not to be afraid of any harm they can do us. To His disciples, who were to boldly proclaim His word in the face of persecution, Jesus said, “Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in the darkness, speak ye in the light; and what ye hear in the ear, proclaim upon the house-tops. And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul . . . Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are numbered. Fear not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:26-31). God’s love for His children, thus the care and solicitude He has for them, is the basic reason given here why they should not fear their enemies.

In Acts 5:29 we read about the boldness of the apostles in their response to the threats of the Sanhedrin, which had commanded them no longer to preach the gospel: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” This reminds us of Solomon’s utterance in Proverbs 29:25, “The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in Jehovah shall be safe.” Note that “the fear of man” and “trust in Jehovah” are diametrically opposed to each other. If we would eradicate the fear of man from our hearts and enjoy divine safety, we must put our trust in Him whom we recognize as perfectly caring for us, who desires that we face all danger with courageous and peaceful

hearts, and whose perfect power transcends all the power of those who would do us evil.

Jehovah is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Jehovah is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evil-doers came upon me to eat my flesh, even mine adversaries and my foes, they stumbled and fell. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, even then will I be confident.

Psalms 27:1-3

If God is for us, who is against us?

Romans 8:31

For himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: what shall man do unto me?

Hebrews 13:5,6

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good? But even if ye should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye: and fear not their fear, neither be troubled.

1 Peter 3:13,14

Admittedly, evil men can be arrayed against us and cause us harm. But the foregoing passages affirm in effect that no stand taken against us by others, no harm they can ever do us, will frustrate God's plans for our freedom from fear and our eternal salvation. As we discussed concerning the fear of failure, God's power is ultimately victorious over all

the forces that vainly work to defeat us. Even the ultimate harm that men can do us in the killing of our bodies is not victory over us; such harm actually leads to the final defeat of the forces of evil, for “blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them” (Revelation 14:13).

But as we also noted in the chapter on Christian living, trust in God for freedom from fear must be expressed in lovingly doing His will. It is His will that we treat all men by the golden rule: “All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them” (Matthew 7:12). It is also His will that we not only love those who love us but also our enemies, to pray for them and to do them good: “Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you” (Matthew 5:44); “Do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you” (Luke 6:27,28); “But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:20,21). Striving always “to take thought of things honorable in the sight of all men . . . to be at peace with all men” (Romans 12:17, 18), the faithful Christian enjoys the grace of God in being able to face all men without fear.

*The truest way not to be afraid of the worst part
of man is to value and try to serve his better part.*

Phillips Brooks

*My son, let them not depart from thine eyes;
Keep sound wisdom and discretion:*

*So shall they be life unto thy soul,
And grace to thy neck.
Then shalt thou walk in thy way securely,
And thy foot shall not stumble.
When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid;
Yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.
Be not afraid of sudden fear,
Neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh:
For Jehovah will be thy confidence,
And will keep thy foot from being taken.
Withhold not good from them to whom it is due,
When it is in the power of thy hand to do it.
Say not unto thy neighbor, Go, and come again,
And to-morrow I will give;
When thou hast it by thee.
Devise not evil against thy neighbor.*

Proverbs 3:21-29

IX

Fear of Sickness

THE spiritually wise Christian, whose trust in and faithfulness to the Lord give him strength to live courageously day by day, finds no reasonable basis at all for fearing sickness. Primarily, he realizes that this fear is folly because, like the fear of poverty, it is a form of borrowing trouble, contrary to what Jesus taught in Matthew 6:34. The thoughts to follow in this chapter are calculated to help us find freedom from the fear of sickness.

1. HEALTHFUL LIVING. The faithful Christian realizes that he cannot depend on God's grace for freedom from fear unless, in the first place, he cooperates with that grace by obeying the laws of physical health. He is aware that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. He obeys the divine injunction: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service" (Romans 12:1). By so recognizing his body as belonging to God, as being involved in his Christian stewardship, he knows that he cannot mistreat and misuse that which is God's possession without sorely dis-

pleasing Him and suffering the unhappy consequence. See 1 Corinthians 4:2; 1 Peter 4:10. If his body must suffer illness in the line of Christian duty, because he has chosen the higher purpose of self-sacrifice in the service of others, well and good! But for one to cause his body to become ill by dissipation, in the selfish pursuit of pleasure or in the greedy grubbing for material things, is to create the very climate for the fear of sickness.

Why shouldn't the person who commits fornication be fearful of contracting a social disease? Why shouldn't the person who smokes be fearful of contracting cancer or coronary trouble? Why shouldn't the person whose faulty diet leads to obesity and cholesterol-lined arteries be fearful of the onset of heart trouble, high blood pressure, and all related diseases? Why shouldn't the drunkard be fearful of cirrhosis of the liver? Yea, verily, why shouldn't the person who burns the candle at both ends, day after day, night after night, in the squandering of his bodily assets, whose life is licentious, dissolute, selfish, and greedy, be fearful of a broken body and diseased mind?

To seek good health is indeed the basic requirement for the conquest of the fear of sickness. The person who would be free from this fear takes every possible precaution to maintain a strong, healthy body: sufficient sleep, exercise, proper diet, periodic medical checkups, etc.

2. SICKNESS PRODUCED BY FEAR. The knowledgeable, faithful Christian refuses to succumb to the fear of sickness because he is aware that sickness is often the direct result of fear. The constant fear of sickness can produce the ground for sickness to come.

There is not a tissue of the human body wholly removed from the influence of the spirit.

British Medical Journal

Outstanding physicians for quite a while now have been carefully studying the powerful influence that our minds have over our bodies. The evidence they have accumulated is incontrovertible proof that mental and emotional conditions, which include the fear of sickness, can weaken resistance to infection, can upset normal physical functions, and can even cause physical changes in the vital organs. In one study, 1500 patients suffering from a variety of illnesses were carefully examined. It was discovered that emotional upset lay at the root of more than half the cases.

Once again, the patient as a human being with his worries, fears, hopes and despairs, as an individual whole and not only as the possessor of organs, is becoming the legitimate object of medical interest.

Dr. Franz Alexander

The influence of emotional stress on the human body is noted in a partial listing of ailments it either causes or aggravates: peptic ulcer, colitis, high blood pressure, migraine headaches, arthritis, glaucoma, epilepsy, senile dementia, coronary thrombosis, tuberculosis, pain and spasms of the muscles, rheumatic fever, cerebral stroke, apoplexy, etc. One doctor has stated that fear and anxiety place more stress on the heart than even physical exercise and fatigue. Fear of sickness is indeed great folly, if for no other reason, because of its contribution to sickness—reason enough for refusing to succumb to it!

3. TRUST IN GOD. The faithful Christian is also

aware that it is folly for him to fear sickness because he is in God's hands and God will take care of him whatever afflictions befall him. So if sickness does come, whatever the reason may be, he does not worry about it or fear any of its consequences. What has happened has happened, and nothing can possibly be gained by fretting about it. He does the best he can to remove the sickness through medical means and prayer to God, but if it is the divine will that he remain ill or even die from it, he assumes the attitude, *God's will be done!*

But more than accepting sickness as the will of God in a negative kind of submissiveness, he accepts it as a positive good in his life. Whether the sickness is brought on by his failure to obey the laws of physical health or by the providential working of God, if it be God's will that he continue to be ill he turns it into an asset—so why fear it? He regards it as an opportunity to gather dividends and to generate energies that even health cannot always bestow.

Francis Parkman, the great American historian, is a striking example of one who turned his sickness into an asset. During the greater part of his life he suffered so acutely from major digestive trouble, intense rheumatism, and agonizing headaches that he could not work for more than five minutes at a time. His eyesight was so dim that he could awkwardly scrawl only a few gigantic words on a manuscript. But instead of his physical ailments being a hindrance to his accomplishments, they became a positive good, a compensating factor that spurred him on to great success in his chosen vocation. He continued to write nearly twenty great volumes of history. If this can be true of men concerning their earthly accomplishments, how much more

so it can be true of those who seek above all else to accomplish God's eternal purpose concerning them. What great things have been done in the Lord's work by heaven-bound Christians who turned pain and suffering into great spiritual assets!

There is no more striking example of the correct attitude toward sickness on the part of one who trusts in the Lord than the apostle Paul and his thorn in the flesh. Carefully read his words of trust and courage in the face of a painful affliction: "And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch. Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take great pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). With this attitude, how could Paul possibly have been fearful of illness? He accepted the continuation of the thorn in his flesh as the will of God, depending more than ever on the grace and strength of God; and what men would consider a liability, he considered an asset—a positive good in his life that incited him to greater accomplishments in the service of the Lord and by His power. See Romans 5:3-5; 2 Corinthians 7:4.

*God hath not promised skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through.*

*God hath not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.
God hath not promised we shall not know
Toil and temptation, trouble and woe.
He hath not told us we shall not bear
Many a burden, many a care.
But God hath promised strength for the day,
Rest for the labour, light for the way,
Grace for the trials, help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.*

Author Unknown

Do not look forward to the changes and chances of life in fear; rather look to them with full hope that, as they arise, God, whose you are, will deliver you out of them. He has kept you hitherto—do you but hold fast to His dear hand, and He will lead you safely through all things; and, when you cannot stand, He will bear you in His arms. Do not look forward to what may happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow, and every day. Either He will shield you from suffering, or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace, then, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations.

Francis de Sales

Sickness is a hindrance to the body, but not to the will, unless the will consent. Lameness is a hindrance to the leg, but not to the will. Say this to yourself at each event that happens, for you shall

find that though it hinders something else it will not hinder you. . . Remember that you are an actor in a play, and that the Playwright chooses the manner of it: If he wants you to act the poor man you must act the part with all your powers; and so if your part be a cripple or a magistrate or a plain man. For your business is to act the character that is given you and act it well. The choice of the cast is Another's.

Epicetetus

Be willing to have it so. Acceptance of what has happened is the first step to overcoming the consequences of any misfortune.

William James

I thank God for my handicaps, for, through them, I have found myself, my work, and my God.

Helen Keller

Just as so many rivers, so many showers of rain from above, so many medicinal springs do not alter the taste of the sea, so the pressure of adversity does not affect the mind of the brave man. For it maintains its balance, and over all that happens it throws its own complexion, because it is more powerful than external circumstances.

Seneca

The spirit of man will sustain his infirmity.

Proverbs 18:14

Whenever evil befalls us, we ought to ask ourselves, after the first suffering, how we can turn it

into good. So shall we take occasion, from one bitter root, to raise perhaps many flowers.

Leigh Hunt

The ideal man bears the accidents of life with dignity and grace, making the best of circumstances.

Aristotle

X

Fear of Old Age

JHERE is a certain sadness in seeing our physical frame wither and decay with the coming of old age. Whatever subterfuges that science offers in the way of pills, hormones, face lifting, and beauty paraphernalia, nothing can be done to stave off the inevitability of weakened bodies and withered limbs and faces. The Bible graphically describes the physical deterioration of old age: "Men in whom ripe age is perished" (Job 30:2); "In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders shall cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened" (Ecclesiastes 12:3).

In facing the physical weaknesses that come with the passing of the years and the pressures of life, men find it devilishly easy to fear old age. As Dean Swift piquantly expressed it, "Every man desires to live long, but no one would be old." From the disabilities of age men have a natural shrinking, and in many instances this natural shrinking amounts to a positive horror. The pagan fear of old age is voiced in the philosophic wail, "When once the appointed

time of youth is passed, it is better to die forthwith than to live." Such an attitude is foreign to the thinking of anyone whose life is hid with Christ in God, as we shall note in the remainder of this chapter. When we consider what men tend to fear about old age, we shall emphasize the folly of such fear to faithful, knowledgeable, loving Christians.

I. PHYSICAL INACTIVITY. For one who has lived energetically and zestfully during his earlier years, the thought of spending his last days as an invalid or semi-invalid can be most disheartening. The assumption of this fear is that there will be no compensating satisfactions in old age—that one will be useless, merely a burden on others. This assumption is, of course, patently false. True, we won't click our heels, trip the light fantastic, engage in vigorous athletic contests, etc.; but life is much more than physical activity. Remembering that the basic purpose of our lives is to love, honor, and glorify God and to serve Him by serving our fellow men, we must recognize that old age has something truly worthwhile to contribute to the Christian calling: its poise, experience, understanding, and deep sympathy. The Christian is not merely to bear old age; he is to use it. See Titus 2:1-5. Instead of fearing old age, he is to welcome it. Its spiritual fruits are more than ample compensation for physical inactivity.

*Age is not all decay; it is the ripening, the swelling
of fresh life within, that withers and bursts the
husks.*

George MacDonald

*Gone, they tell me, is my youth,
Gone is the strength of my life;*

*Nothing remains but decline,
Nothing but age and decay.*

*Not so; I am God's little child,
Only beginning to live.
Coming the days of my prime,
Coming the strength of my life,
Coming the vision of God,
Coming my bloom and my power.*

William Newton Clarke

Much more rewarding than physical activity are the enhanced contemplation and appreciation characteristic of gracious old age. Friendship, great music and art, the grandeur of the masterpieces of God's physical creation such as Niagara Falls and the Grand Canyon, etc., are much more meaningful and enjoyable to the old than to the young. Then, too, old age does not have to mean mental stagnation and the cessation of constructive endeavor. Judge Oliver Wendell Holmes at the age of 90 when asked by a newspaper reported why he was reading Plato, heady stuff at any age, responded, "I'm trying to improve my mind." Alfred Tennyson wrote his short masterpiece "Crossing the Bar" when he was 81. Michaelangelo was 76 when he became the architect of St. Peter's in Rome. Ignaz Paderwiski was still playing the piano skillfully and beautifully at 81. Fritz Kreisler was thrilling audiences with his violin when he was 72. We could go on and on giving illustrations of the rich contribution to human life and culture of mentally alert men and women who did not simply bear their old age but constructively used it.

Also, one of the finest compensations for the loss of physical activity in old age is the satisfaction of the honor that

comes from a life that has been well lived in the loving service of others and in the presence of God. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man (Leviticus 19:32). Cf. Romans 13:7; 1 Timothy 5:17.

The real strength of a person is not physical, but moral and spiritual.

Author Unknown

2. LOSS OF PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS. This fear is based on the false assumption that life is bound up with appearances, that mere physical attractiveness is of great importance. Those who carry this fear into old age find themselves doing everything they can to destroy the signs of their age; in so doing they do not remove the fear, but only intensify it. This does not mean, however, that the elderly person must let himself go, so to speak, and become slovenly in dress, unclean in body, and of generally untidy appearance. A clean, neat, orderly appearance is proper and appropriate at any age for those who would "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour" (Titus 2:10). But the extreme concern for one's physical appearance is only an expression of fear and not of confidence.

The Christian's basic, principal concern should not be his outward appearance but his inward condition—not outward beauty but inward beauty. See 1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Peter 3:3-5. The fact of fading physical attractiveness with the renewing of inward beauty, is the import of 2 Corinthians 4:16, "Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day."

Is there anything more truly beautiful than a face now grown old, with its furrows, wrinkles, sallowness, and tired

eyes, yet radiating the spiritual beauty from within, clothed into tenderness, kindness, sympathy, and understanding.' In minimizing the importance of physical appearance and emphasizing the beauty of the hidden man of the heart, one actually becomes more appealing to look at than ever before; for there is nothing lovelier, more comely and beautiful, on the earth than a face that bears the marks of love and purity.

A certain Christian lady was entertaining some friends at her home. One of the visitors was so impressed by her poise, kindness, sympathy, and dignity that she said on leaving, "You are so beautiful." The hostess graciously replied, "Why shouldn't I be? I'm seventy-two years of age." How could such a person possibly fear the loss of physical attractiveness that comes with old age!

*When grace is joined with wrinkles, it is adorable.
There is an unspeakable dawn in happy old age.*

Victor Hugo

3. LONELINESS. One of the reasons we tend to fear old age is the loneliness that comes with the passing of loved ones and friends. This fear can especially haunt the person who has to face life without a spouse whom he has lived with and loved for many years. Then, too, the aged are often cut off from the main stream of life, being ignored and treated as useless by many in our society. The loneliness that they face can indeed be excruciatingly painful and poignant. But it need not be. Although the Christian may lose loved ones and friends, he still has the abiding presence and comfort of the One who infinitely loves him, the Friend of friends who has promised, "Lo, I am with you always,

even unto the end of the world. . . I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee” (Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5). One who so trusts in the Lord is never really lonely. Through the strength and comfort of divine grace, he has no fear of whatever future God has in store for him in this world, even though he should face the loss of all human companionship.

*I have been young, and now I am old; yet have I
not seen the righteous forsaken.*

Psalms 37:25

Henry Francis Lyte, after a long life of serving his fellow men, was old and tired. His doctor had told him he was terminally ill, having only a few months to live. One evening as he was thumbing through the Bible on the desk in his study, it fell open at one of his favorite verses: “Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent” (Luke 24:29). As he read and reread these words, he no longer felt old, tired, or lonesome. In just a few minutes, inspired by the occasion, he wrote the words to one of the most beautiful hymns of all time, “Abide With Me”:

*Abide with me, fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide;
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh abide with me.*

*Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.*

*I need Thy presence every passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?*

*Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.*

*I fear not foe with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness;
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.*

*Hold then Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.*

Those who face old age with trust in the Lord and adherence to His will, thus to enjoy freedom from fear, can well understand the import of the words from Robert Browning's poem, "Rabbi ben Ezra":

*Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made;
Our times are in His hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God:
See all, nor be afraid!"*

Like every other natural change, age comes on gradually. We glide into it. Often one who is ripe in years is blissfully unconscious of being old. He lives in the present, enjoying it from day to day without taking care of what is coming. Were this attitude more frequently maintained, age would wear a more friendly aspect to others; its premonitions would no longer be dreaded; and to the dolor-

ous reminder that "the May of life blooms once, and never again," the answer would be given: What of that if each successive month has a beauty and glory of its own! When thought of at all, old age is to be "greeted from afar," and welcomed for what it is to bring. No place is to be given the funeral view of Cicero, who said, "Before old age I took care to live well; in old age I take care to die well." A modern would say, "Before old age I took care to live well; in old age I take still greater care to live well; dying I leave to take care of itself." When age is anticipated, welcomed, provided for, it yields its best, and its best is sometimes better than anything else that life has to offer; for it is the way of the Master of life to keep the best wine to the last of the feast. To say that a well-spent life takes the sting out of age is not enough; it crowns age with a glory which belongs to those only who have triumphed.

James M. Campbell

Not to youth, but to age, belongs the vision of the other world given by Harriet Beecher Stowe in the lines:

*It lies around us like a cloud,
The world we do not see;
Yet the sweet closing of an eye
May bring us there to be.*

*Its gentle breezes fan our cheek
Amid our worldly cares;
Its gentle voices whisper love,
And mingle with our prayers.*

*Sweet hearts around us throb and beat,
Sweet helping hands are stirred,
And palpitates the veil between,
With breathing almost heard.*

*The silence, awful, sweet, and calm,
They have no power to break;
For mortal words are not for them
To utter or partake.*

*So thin, so soft, so sweet they glide,
So near to press they seem,
They lull us gently to our rest,
They melt into our dream.*

XI

Fear of Death

THE principal sufferings of life come from the fear of death. All who have feared “the king of terrors” (Job 18:14) can well understand the feeling of David when he exclaimed, “My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen up on me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me” (Psalms 55:4,5). We know that death will come to us all, except to those who are alive at Christ’s coming; but few seem to face it with Christian courage, confidence, and faith.

A family lost six children in a landslide. They set up a stone memorial at the site with the words of 1 Corinthians 15:57 inscribed on it: “Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” They knew the real meaning of the message of glad tidings in Jesus Christ the Saviour! Do you?

Most of the early Christians had caught this note of victory with Christ over death. Approximately 200,000 early Christians were buried in the catacombs of Rome. Archae-

ologists have examined the inscriptions on these subterranean tombs without finding a single lamentation among them. Every one, without exception, eloquently and joyously expresses faith in the power of Christ to conquer death and the grave. Those early disciples believed in the divine promise: "For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death." (1 Corinthians 15:25,26). Yes, they *really* believed in the eventual victory of Christ over every enemy, including death, so that there was joy in their hearts even in the face of death. Many of them had faced the certainty of death in a Roman arena, to be torn to pieces by wild animals, spending their last moments with shining faces turned to heaven and singing joyous songs of praise to God.

It was the faith of those early Christians in the resurrection of Jesus Christ that made it possible for them to face death without fear. They accepted the grace and power of the living Christ to see them safely through all of life's trials to their heavenly home because they believed he had triumphantly come forth from the tomb to be their forerunner into heaven. See John 14:1-6; Hebrews 6:17-20. His resurrection was a victory—a complete and decisive victory over death. God's last word is not the cross, but the resurrection—the most stupendous fact in all history! Now death is also a fact. Jesus never denied the reality of death, as do certain false religionists of our day. An example of his forthright affirmation of the fact of death is noted in regard to His friend Lazarus: "Then Jesus therefore said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead" (John 11:14). But death is not the ultimate fact; *the ultimate fact is life, life everlasting!*

Jesus personally faced the fact of death when He died

painfully and shamefully on the cross. But on the third day later he broke the bonds of death, coming forth from the tomb to finalize His declaration, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). Those who truly believe *on* Him, to depend on His grace and to follow His will, have no fear of death. They merely see it as the transition from this imperfect earthly state to the perfect state of heaven. Thus they can confidently affirm in the words of the apostle Paul: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

Paul knew and preached, and countless Christians since have known that because Jesus suffered death and then conquered death in his resurrection, we need have no fear of death. Death has already been laid low, knocked out. It is no longer our doom; its doom is sure.

Cecil May, Jr.

A Bible school superintendent and his wife had lost their only child, and the next Sunday morning the superintendent went about his duties as usual—yet not really as usual for there was an attitude of special zest and joy about it all. Even his wife was more radiant and happy than ever before. As they walked home that day, one little lad suddenly said to his mother, "They really believe it, don't they?"

"Believe what?" asked the mother.

"Why, the resurrection and something wonderful in the next world."

"Certainly! We all believe it. It's in the Bible, and we believe all that the Bible teaches."

The boy paused and then said very thoughtfully, "Yes, but not that way; they *really* believe it."

Do you honestly and sincerely believe in the resurrection unto eternal life for those who are the Lord's? Do you *really* believe? Such *real* belief is the negation of the fear of death. When we *really* believe in the triumph of Jesus over the grave, then nothing can ultimately make us fearful, for through Him "who hath been made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" (Hebrews 7:16), we have victory over the ultimate enemy death. "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15). See John 5:28,29.

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:51-57

And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me. Since then the children are sharers in flesh

and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Hebrews 2:13-15

Is there no escape from Death, the Tyrant, the autocrat, the destroyer, the last enemy? Why love, why look upward, why strive for better things if the emperor of failure, ultimate extinction, rules the universe? No hope beyond the grave means no peace this side of it. A life without hope is a life without God. If Death ends all, then there is no Father in Heaven in whom we can trust. Who shall deliver us from the body of this Death? . . . He who was crucified in the cause of righteousness and mercy, lives on and forever. The message of His resurrection is "the power of an endless life." It transformed the handful of Jesus' followers from despair to confidence. It gave Christianity its growing influence over the heart of humanity. It is this message of immortality that makes religion vital to the human world today, and essential to the foundation of peace on earth.

Henry van Dyke

*Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar
When I put out to sea,*

*But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep,
Turns again home.*

*Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell
When I embark;*

*For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.*

Alfred Tennyson

*Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so:
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flow;
And soonest our best men with thee do go—
Rest of their bones and souls' delivery!
Thou'rt slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate
men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell;
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well,
And better than thy stroke. Why swell'st thou
then?*

*One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And Death shall be no more: Death, thou shalt die.*

John Donne

Alas! for him who never sees

*The stars shine through the cypress trees;
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day,
Across the mournful marbles play;
Who hath not learned in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever Lord of death,
And Love can never lose its own.*

John Greenleaf Whittier

*What is our death but a night's sleep? For us
through sleep all weariness and faintness pass
away and cease, and the powers of the spirit
come back again, so that in the morning we arise
fresh and strong and joyous; so at the Last Day
we shall rise again as if we had only slept a night,
and shall be fresh and strong.*

Martin Luther

XII

Conclusion

THE whole of what we have written can be summed up by this one thing called *love*. Love inspires confidence. It enlightens, purifies, and elevates the soul. Indeed, the entire relationship of God and the Christian is involved in the meaning and significance of love. "And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. . . We love, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:16,19). To abide in the love of which the apostles here speaks is to truly know God, to abide in Him and He in us, and thus to have the grace and power that give freedom from fear. How can fear prevail in the life of the Christian when he knows that he is surrounded by the love of God, and that nothing can happen to him which He at least does not permit?

And when we truly know God's love for us, we then respond in love for Him. Love for God, and God in Christ, who first loved us, transforms us into the same image from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18), which signifies con-

fidence and not fear. It causes us to have the confidence of being *faithful* children of God, for it prompts us to obey God and to love and serve our fellow men. Such love is inseparable from genuine trust in the Lord, without which there can be no divine power for freedom from fear. See John 14:15; Galatians 5:6; 1 John 4:7,11,20.

*Love, which is the essence of God, is not for levity,
but for the total work of man.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

*O love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths that flow,
May richer, fuller be.*

*O Light that follow'st all my way,
I yield my flick'ring torch to Thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in Thy sunshine's glow its day
May brighter, fairer be.*

*O Joy that seekest me thro' pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee;
I trace the rainbow thro' the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shall tearless be.*

*O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to hide from Thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,*

*And from the ground there blossoms red,
Life that shall endless be.*

George Matheson

The incompatibility of love and fear is expressed in 1 John 4:18, "There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love." Perfect love will absolutely exclude fear. But since no Christian loves perfectly, it necessarily follows that no Christian is perfectly free from fear. Just as the lack of perfect love keeps the Christian from being absolutely sinless, so it keeps him from being absolutely fearless. See James 3:2; 1 John 1:8. Throughout this general discussion of living without fear, we have mainly considered it from the standpoint of the absolute, perfect, or ideal. But imperfect that he is, no Christian has ever reached this ideal condition of complete freedom from all fear. This does not mean, however, that he must face life with the fear of fear. Neither does it mean that he must be threatened by any fear he possesses with the expectation of being among the fearful who will be eternally lost (Revelation 21:8). The grace of God through the merits of Christ can as surely remove the guilt of his fear as well as the guilt of all his other sins (1 John 1:7).

We must remember that the Christian who genuinely desires to fulfill God's plan in his life is not a *perfect* Christian but a *growing* Christian (2 Peter 3:18), who constantly is striving for and aiming at the ideal of perfect appreciation and realization of God's love for him, perfect love for God, and perfect love for all men. As he constantly moves in the direction of this goal, he will always rely on the fear-freeing power of the Lord, striving to do His will

and to pray without ceasing. He will consequently find his life less and less encumbered with fear and more and more filled with the peace that passes understanding. His will always be an *essential*, though imperfect, life of freedom from fear so that he will “rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4). His life will indeed be a house built upon the rock instead of upon the sand, “and the rain descended, and the floods came; and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock” (Matthew 7:24,25).

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his
name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence
of mine enemies:
Thou anointest my head with oil;
My cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

Psalms 23

*I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains:
From whence shall my help come?*

*My help cometh from Jehovah,
Who made heaven and earth.
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:
He that keepeth thee will not slumber.
Behold, he that keepeth Israel
Will neither slumber nor sleep.
Jehovah is thy keeper:
Jehovah is thy shade upon thy right hand.
The sun shall not smite thee by day,
Nor the moon by night.
Jehovah will keep thee from all evil;
He will keep thy soul.
Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in
From this time forth and for evermore.*

Psalms 121

*He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath
no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths
shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall
utterly fall: but they that wait for Jehovah shall
renew their strength; they shall mount up with
wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary;
they shall walk, and not faint.*

Isaiah 40:29-31

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is
for us, who is against us? He that spared not his
own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall
he not also with him freely give us all things? Who
shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?
It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemn-
eth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that
was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand*

of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we were accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:31-39

For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

1 Corinthians 3:21-23

Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you.

1 Peter 5:7

Those who trust and obey Christ Jesus need never wonder about course or destination. He is at once the roadmap and the rest stop at the end. On the journey he gives confidence to us because he knows the road, the obstacles, the dangers. The assurance to keep on making our way through life comes with the ability to live with joy and pur-

pose. For his disciples the goal is sure and the path clear; it is Christ the Lord, our Savior.

Jerry W. Neal, Sr.

Christ has turned all our sunsets into sunrises.

Clement of Alexandria

We shall steer safely through every storm, so long as our heart is right, our intention fervent, our courage steadfast, and our trust fixed on God. If at times we are stunned by the tempest, never fear. Let us take breath, and go on afresh.

Francis de Sales

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