

Living the Fearless Life in the Midst of COVID-19

Dear Friend,

Fear paralyzes – fear destroys. Because of fear good men and women remain silent as the greed of a few subject the poor and elderly to the ranks of the homeless. Harold Ruopp says, “Fear is private enemy number one, for out of fear comes a whole train of evils,” Shakespeare said, “The souls of men are full of dread.”

Jesus knew the power of fear in the lives of people. That is why He said over and over in times of crisis, “*Fear not, fear not.*” To His followers who live in constant fear of the coronavirus He says, “*Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*” (Matt 10:28).

To fear that paralyzes Paul declares, “*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind*” (2 Tim 1:7). It takes the power of faith, love and a sound mind to overcome fear.

There are so many things we can be afraid of. We can fear crime, the COVID-19 virus, failure and the future. The list goes on and on. Fear will paralyze and destroy. Daily we are presented with the choice of whether we are going to let fear or faith rule our lives. If we are going to live a life of faith rather than fear, then we need to know how faith develops. Romans 10:17 tells us “*Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ.*”

Karen Spears Zacharias in her book, “Where’s Your Jesus Now? Examining How Fear erodes Our Faith,” writes, “Fear was making my world smaller and smaller. I knew if I let it continue that way, I’d eventually become a prisoner of my own soul. I began praying that very day that God would make me a woman of faith. I asked the Creator to give me the courage to move beyond the borders of my confirming imaginations and into the glory of God’s imaginings.”

In order to be a people of faith we must daily be immersed in the Scriptures. There Christ assures us with His presence. In the storms of life Jesus says: “*Take courage. It is I, don’t be afraid.*” (Matt 6:50) He goes on to say, “*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid*” (John 14:27).

Daily we are given the choice whether we are going to believe the assurances of God’s word or the crazy tapes of fear and unbelief that Satan turns loose in our heads each day. In Luke 12:4-7, Jesus tells us not to fear mankind but instead be more concerned about God’s will for our lives. After all we, are extremely value in the eyes of God for while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

When we find fear knocking at the doors of lives, are we going to answer with faith in the words of Christ as Paul did when the Lord spoke to him declaring, *“Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For, I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city (Acts 18:9,10).* What assurance I find in these words as I try to provide for the homeless in communities like St. Louis, and Springfield Missouri where so many of the homeless are left on the streets alone to fight the corona-virus. Daily I have found strength in Scriptures such as Is. 12:2 which declares, *“Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation.”*

We can either lie in our beds at night unable to sleep as fear haunts us concerning the future, or we can accept the promises of God’s Word. *“When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared” (Proverbs 3:24-26).*

It is so easy for fear to wrap its snarling hands around us until we find ourselves suffocating in worry, anxiety and fear. In the middle of the storms of life, Jesus is asking us the same thing He did His disciples in Mark 4:40,” *Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”*

Karen Zacharias goes on to say in her book, *“Where is your Jesus Now?”*, *“Our nation, our world is in desperate need of a safe place to curl up and rest. But in order to do that, we are going to have to figure out who is the greater threat: some imagined intruder? Or the fear we bed down with each night and hang out with each day? How can we separate the imagined threats from the real ones? And even if we are able to distinguish between the two, as people of faith, should our reaction to them differ? Whether we are bobbing in deep water or cowering from a werewolf, shouldn’t our response be the same? Shouldn’t we be calling out to our Father for help?”*

Fear paralyzes. It destroys and keeps us from stepping out in faith and obedience to all that God is telling us to do at this hour. That is why over and over we are told in the Scriptures to *“fear not” “do not be afraid.”* In Matt 1:20 Joseph is told not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife. Both Zacharias and Mary are told to fear not in Luke 1, while the angel declared to the shepherds *“Fear not for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy (Luke 2:10).* Throughout the gospels Jesus told his disciples and each of us not to be afraid no matter what the circumstances might be. The basics for us to be a fearless people in the midst of adversity exists in the fact that God has everything under control.

Unless I be found among the cowardly, the unbelieving and others described in Rev. 21:8 whose place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur I must be in the presence of the Living Christ and the Scriptures and creation, praying and fellowshiping with other believers.

Throughout the Scriptures we see ordinary people who, instead of fearing, chose to believe God. Whether it is Abraham believing for a great nation, Moses leading the Children of Israel through the Red Sea, David facing Goliath, Daniel in the lion's den, the list goes on and on. These heroes of faith chose to fear not and instead threw themselves into the arms of our Loving Heavenly Father. Hebrews 11 describes over and over those who heard the admonishment to fear not and chose to face adversity with faith. Hebrews 11:6 says, "*Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.*"

So now let us not fear but instead by faith, move ahead practicing social distancing, hand washing and other measures in the battle against COVID 19. As we do this stand on the multitude of scriptures promising us that God will protect, guide and direct us in the midst of this pandemic.

Living the fearless life in the midst of COVID-19 involves trusting God to the extent you can be courageous to the point you will do what is right in spite of your fear. It is being able to see that **FEAR** is actually **False Evidence Appearing Real.**

In order to live the fearless life, we must come to the realization that if we are just believing God for the things we can do ourselves, we are limiting Him.

Living the fearless life as the corona-virus sweeps throughout America causes us to reach up and grab a hold of nothing but the promises of God. As we hold on to these promises found in the Bible, they become our substance for victory.

The first step in living the fearless life is allowing ourselves to be put in a place where if God doesn't come through, it's all over for us. This is called living in the faith zone. It is the zone where we find God living and the place where we grow spiritually.

It is in the faith zone that those who have chosen to build their lives upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ become a conscious minority surrounded by an arrogant militant paganism. In the faith zone we learn what a radical lifestyle Jesus demands of those who claim to follow Him.

As we start living a fearless life we experience Jesus' love which involves the changing of human nature. This is the result of the inward power of His Spirit which transforms from the inside out.

The church of the first century took this revolution of love seriously. It believed in the transforming power of Jesus Christ. No one signed articles of faith in the early church. Instead, they acted in faith. They did not gather to study healing of the inner child or psychosomatic diseases, they simply went forth by faith and healed the sick. They fearlessly lived as they fed the hungry, housed the homeless and declared, “Thus says the Lord” in the face of the elitists. Living in the faith zone, the first century Christians were frequently imprisoned. They were more concerned about saving faith than saving face.

Living a fearless life in the faith zone caused every early believer to consider herself or himself a Freedom Fighter in God’s Revolution of Love. First century believers knew that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ existed a power that was second to none. It was the manifestation of the power of God unto salvation for all who repented and trusted Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

The message of the resurrection is a call to arms for the Fearless Freedom Fighters of Jesus Christ. Armed not with knives or guns, but with the sharp two-edged sword of the Word of God, they charge the very gates of hell. They have found in God’s word the power to live a fearless life.

The true Freedom Fighters of the Lord are those who are able to march forward under the same banner Paul did and declare, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation.”

All around people are dying while we claim to have the message of life. What kind of message is this anyway if we are more concerned about personal health and wealth than the multitudes who are dying without hope? Instead of being called the Fearless Freedom Fighting Christians, when it is all said and done, will judgement day simply reveal that all along we have been practical atheists who are doomed to hearing the Savior say, “Get away from me, I never knew you”?

God forbid! The declaration *Christ is Risen* is a call to action! A revolutionary call to arms for those who believe. After all, we did not choose Him, Jesus chose us. We are no longer our own. We have been redeemed through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. This shed blood now commands us to attack the domains of Satan and set the captives free.

It is not easy living the fearless life. All of us are tempted daily to give into fear. Perhaps that is why we are told over and over in the Bible to “*fear not*” or “*do not be afraid.*” Daily, we are given choices whether we are going to believe the assurances of God’s word or the crazy tapes of fear and unbelief that Satan turns loose in our heads each day.

We can either lie in our beds at night unable to sleep as fear haunts us concerning the future, or we can accept the promises of God's word. "When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the Lord who is your confidence will keep your foot from being snared" (Proverbs 3:24-26).

It is so easy for fear to wrap its snarling hands around us until we find ourselves suffocating in worry, anxiety and fear. In the middle of the storms of life, Jesus is asking us the same thing He did His disciples in Mark 4:40, "*Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?*"

As I try to live the Fearless Life I have to daily battle fear. I remember one battle this year where the temptation to panic was ever present. Fear kept knocking at the door, but I knew I could not give in to it. Instead, I chose to reflect on past experiences where I had witnessed God's faithfulness. I thought about the miracles that He has done in my life, I meditated on the scriptures that said, if we believe in Him, then His words will not come back void.

As I did this, the thoughts of the reality of \$100,000 in bills for New Life Evangelistic Center would try to fill me with fear. These included due dates on utility and credit card bills, plus repairs that needed to be done. These circumstances dictated I had every reason to panic. Faith, personal experience, the promises of scripture, and the wonders of creation all revealed the faithfulness of God.

As day after day passed, and prayer after prayer was said, the results appeared to be the same—expenses kept overwhelming the income. Then when hope seemed to be a product of the past, we received \$45,000 from an estate settlement for NLEC that I had not even been aware of. Once again, God demonstrated His faithfulness as He had done thousands of times in the past. Along with this miracle He directed me to John 16:23 where it says, "*In that day you will ask Me nothing.*"

Then I came across Oswald Chamber's interpretation of this verse in his work My Utmost for His Highest. He asks, "*When is that day? It is when the ascended Lord, makes you one with the Father. In that day you will be one with the Father just as Jesus is, and He said, 'In that day you will ask Me nothing'. Until the resurrection life of Jesus is fully exhibited in you, you have questions about many things. Then after a while you find that all your questions are gone—you don't seem to have any left to ask. You have come to the point of total reliance on the resurrection life of Jesus, which brings you into complete oneness with the purpose of God. Are you living that life now? If not, why aren't you?*"

I knew that the day Jesus is speaking of is that one in which the peace of God becomes so real in my life, that even in the most difficult situations I will not fear, but rely on the reality and certainty of Romans 8:28, where it says, "All things work for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose."

Knowing that many of us have not yet arrived at living the fearless life, Jesus in His love and mercy, goes on to assure us in the rest of John 16:23 & 24 with these words, “I am telling you the truth: The Father will give you whatever you ask for in my name. So far, you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask now, and you will receive that your joy will be complete.”

I must now make every effort to resist fear until I consistently live the Fearless Life. It is then that through the power of the Holy Spirit I am awakened to the fact that God is in control, and there is no need for me to fear. As I do this, my joy can be complete.

How hard it is to live a fearless life when day after day we hear on the news how many more people have died from the corona-virus. Yet we are told, “Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelations 2:10).

Those living the fearless life in the midst of the corona-virus are the ones who are on the front lines reaching out to the poor, the fatherless, the widowed, the hurting and the homeless. They are the ones who are able to declare, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

Don’t give up my brothers and sisters, hang on—trusting God as He declares, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Now we must be overcomers for Christ who declared, “It is done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost for the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be My son” (Revelations 21:6 & 7). That is His promise to those desiring to live the fearless life.

Now we must live the fearless life in the midst of the corona-virus by standing steadfast, immovable; always abounding in the work of God. We must determine in our hearts today that no matter what happens, we will through the grace of Jesus Christ live this fearless life. We can do this by remaining faithful to God as we trust in Him for victory through the power of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ,



Larry Rice