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THE SLAVERY OF FEARS

The world is filled with fears! The things people fear make up an endless list. Fear is a regular part of life for most people. The list seems endless.

We fear things like: getting hurt, getting sick, being attacked, becoming poor, public speaking, snakes, heights, spiders, enclosed spaces, dentists and doctors, close relationships, flying in a plane, certain foods, being touched, elevators, water, criticism and correction, rejection, being ridiculed, wars, famine, loss of wealth and possessions, etc.

Our fears have prompted people to coin a whole new range of words, the "phobias" we are subject to. As new types of fear are identified by health professionals, so new words are coined to classify these new fears.

What about you? Do you have any fears? The chances are that to some degree you may well have fears. Oh yes, you may have sorted them out where you can avoid fearful situations and you can push your fears out of your consciousness. But they may still exist in the background, in the hidden recesses of your mind.

For example: we may have an inordinate fear of dentists, so we just make sure we never go near a dentist. We may have an irrational fear of water, but that is not a problem to us because we never go anywhere near a swimming pool. We may have a fear of developing close personal relationships, and so we have chosen a solitary lifestyle. We may have a fear of dogs, and so we make sure we never get anywhere near a dog.

Yes, we can learn to cope even when we do have hidden fears. We just plan out a way of living where we avoid any potential confrontations with the things we fear.

But that is not the life to which God has called us. God wants us to be free from all fears. God can and will help us to get rid of our fears, to totally eliminate them; not just to carefully avoid any potential confrontations.

There is a way that we can effectively come to grips with **all** of our fears. There is a way to understand.

Fears Enslave Us!

Some fears are good and others are bad. Good fears protect us from harm. For example, we should fear the consequences of doing anything that is wrong. We should fear to knowingly break God's laws. That kind of a fear is healthy and good. It is the foundation for developing godly wisdom. There is also a healthy fear of doing things that will harm us. This is not the type of fear we will talk about in this article.

But there are also the fears that I listed at the beginning of this article, and hundreds of others just like them. Many of these fears are not really rational. These are the fears that enslave us. These are the fears that we have to come to grips with.

Fears restrict and limit our ability to enjoy life! Fears restrict activities and relationships. Fears fence us in. Notice what Jesus Christ said:

The thief comes not, but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: **I am come that they may have life**, and that they may have *it* more abundantly (John 10:10).

God really does want us to experience a "more abundant" life. In another passage the Greek word for "more abundant" is translated as "beyond measure" (i.e. in Mark 6:51). Life beyond measure, life in a superior way is what God is offering us. Is that what you yourself would also like?

Now let's consider:

The very fact that Jesus Christ said He came to enable people to experience life in more abundant and superior ways, must mean that **humanity as a whole is restricted in some way**. So we should ask ourselves: in what way are we restricted from living life abundantly? What is preventing us from living a godly life to the full?

Notice what the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans.

For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption, by which we cry, Abba, Father (Romans 8:15).

The New International Version is based on the Minority Alexandrian Text base for the New Testament. This means it is generally not as reliable as the King James Version. For this reason I generally don't quote it. However, the Greek texts are identical a lot of the time, and for this particular verse the NIV does translate it into more modern language. So here is the NIV text for this verse:

For you did not receive **a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear**, but you received the spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father' (Romans 8:15 NIV).

The spirit God has given to us does not enslave us. But there is a different spirit in the world, which is a slavery to fear! **Fear** is the greatest slave-master of all. It is a slave-master because it limits us and **restricts us**.

Notice also the Apostle Paul's use of the word "again". We need to recognize that fear is the norm for the whole world. It is a regular and "normal" part of life for all people. It is a spirit that we ourselves have also had. But when we submit our lives to God, then God in effect says to us: "I don't want you to stay in slavery to fears. I will give you My spirit, which will free you from the spirit of fear to which the whole world is in bondage. I want you to be free".

The Origin of Fears

To understand this subject more clearly, we should look at the origin of fears. "In the beginning" there were God the Father and Jesus Christ. And at that time there were **no fears!** Fear did not exist anywhere! The thought of fear was not a part of Their existence.

These two God Beings had a lifestyle which is called love. As the Apostle John tells us:

He that loves not knows not God; for **God is love** (1 John 4:8).

Both of Them were fully committed to a way of living that totally excluded all fears. They decided to create other spirit beings, which we know as "angels". To these spirit beings they gave immortal life. They created the angels immortal. This meant that the angels would never have to "fear" for their existence. God had guaranteed their future eternal existence.

At some point God sent a third of all these angels under the leadership of the one we know as "Satan" to this Earth, to prepare it for human habitation. It started off in peace, but then Satan sinned. To further his own goals of wanting to take over the rulership of all of God's creation, **Satan established a very violent society**. Notice this comment in Ezekiel 28:

By the multitude of your merchandise **they have filled the midst of you with violence**, and you have sinned: therefore I will cast you as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy you, **O covering cherub**, from the midst of the stones of fire (Ezekiel 28:16).

Satan established the most violent environment in the entire history of this planet. He ruled over the age of the dinosaurs. He truly filled the midst of his society "with violence".

Now **why** did Satan create such a violent society or environment? What is **always** the purpose of violence? Do you know?

The purpose of violence is always **to create and to instill fear!** That's right. That is the purpose for violence. Ezekiel 28:16 is very important to take note of because **this verse** shows us the origin of fears!

It was Satan's goal to create fears and to intimidate. What Satan did not understand is that the fears which violence brought into existence **immediately** produced another fear. This is something that God had built into His creation. And that second fear is **the fear of consequences**, the fear of the penalty for sin. It is a fact that those who are violent are themselves also going to have fears. That's the way God set it up.

Let me repeat that! Those who are violent will themselves also inevitably have fears.

Let's backtrack a little way. God lives a lifestyle which excludes all fears. But God also designed it in such a way that **if** that lifestyle is ever transgressed, **then** fear is the automatic inevitable consequence. Thus it was not God who brought fear into existence; it was Satan who by his transgression brought fears into existence. Until Satan sinned, fear had never existed.

Now even before he influenced any of the angels under his control to follow him, Satan himself had already sinned. Satan was the very first being to ever sin. Let's understand something about Satan: as soon as he sinned (i.e. conceived and entertained in his mind the thought of wanting to take over God's position) there was the automatic penalty of **fear!** There was the fear of God finding out his intentions and punishing him. There was the immediate fear of the penalty for sin.

At that point in time Satan was the only being in existence that was experiencing fear. None of the other angels had as yet any fear. So Satan created this violent environment over which he ruled for the express purpose of producing this feeling of fear in everyone else. And as the angels under his leadership sinned, so they too experienced fear.

Satan and the Demons Are Spirits of Fear

Notice the following incident during the ministry of Jesus Christ:

And when He had come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him **two possessed with demons**, coming out of the tombs, **exceeding fierce**, so that no man might pass by that way (Matthew 8:28).

Here are two demon-possessed men who are extremely fierce and violent. This is the effect the demons had on these men. But now notice this insight into **the minds of the demons** in the next verse:

And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? are You come here **to torment us before the time?** (Matthew 8:29).

What does this tell us about these demons? It is showing us that **demons have fears!** They fear the future! So does Satan! When Satan knows that time is running out on him, it is his fear of the future that incites him to "great wrath" (Revelation 12:12).

Satan and the demons are "spirits of fear"! This is also mentioned in the Book of James.

You believe that there is one God; you do well: **the demons** also believe, and **tremble** (James 2:19).

It should be clear that when God created Adam and Eve, **Satan's very first goal was to instill fears into the minds of these two human beings**. And that is what we see in the account in Genesis.

Fears on the Human Level

When God first created Adam and Eve, God placed certain restrictions on them. First God spelled out what their scope of activities was going to be.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: (Genesis 2:16).

These parameters were very broad. They had a lot of scope as far as what was acceptable behavior is concerned. But then God also introduced a restriction.

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die (Genesis 2:17).

We should understand that at that point Adam and Eve had no fears. There were no more fears present than if God had walked them up to a high cliff and told them: "Look, don't ever jump down this cliff, because in the day that you do that, you will surely die." As long as they had no motivation to either go near the cliff or to even contemplate jumping off, they would also not have had any undue fears of the cliff.

At the end of these brief instructions from God in Genesis chapter 2 we see that Adam and Eve, who at that point were still naked, had no shame. **Shame involves fear**. They also had no fears. Keep in mind that fair and realistic restrictions placed on us do not create fears. They may limit our actions, but **restrictions do not produce fears**. So at the end of chapter 2 Adam and Eve were still without fears.

In the next chapter we have the account of Satan tempting Eve. Satan's goal was, amongst other things, to produce a feeling of fear in Eve. In verse 6 we read that both Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit.

Immediately They Had a Spirit of Fear!

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made for themselves aprons (Genesis 3:7).

The very first consequence of sin is always fear! Their eyes were opened to Satan's way of thinking. It is the same way with us: when we sin, then the very first consequence is that our eyes will be opened to Satan's way of thinking. And Satan's way of thinking, ever since Satan first sinned, is a spirit of fear!

In the next three verses we see the fear manifesting itself. As Adam said to God: "...**and I was afraid**, because I was naked, and I hid myself" (verse 10). Fear is the result of sin. Fear is the result of broken laws.

Fear Is Thinking like Satan!

There are a few places in the Bible that give us an insight into Satan's mind and his way of thinking. One of those is in the Book of Job. The account is fairly well known. In chapter 1 God gave Satan permission to take away all of Job's possessions. At the end of this chapter Job has lost everything.

In chapter 2 Satan again appears before God. In verse 3 God in effect tells Satan that he had been wrong in his claim that Job would curse God if he lost all his wealth (Job 1:11). Such a response (to blame God when we lose money and wealth) is indeed a fairly common one, but Job had a higher integrity than that. He had thus far **not** blamed God for his misfortunes.

Now notice how Satan thinks and reasons:

And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, even, **all that a man has will he give for his life** (Job 2:4).

This is an extremely important verse for us to understand. It tells us a great deal about Satan.

First of all, the concept of making a selfless sacrifice is totally foreign to Satan. It would never occur to him. Secondly, Satan is so convinced that this drive for self-preservation overrides everything else because that is the way he himself is! In everything Satan does, his own well-being is the final deciding factor. In this verse we see that **Satan tries to rule through the fear of death.**

The Apostle Paul explained this in Hebrews chapter 2.

Since then the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy **him that had the power of death**, that is, **the devil**; (Hebrews 2:14).

Satan uses the threat of death to rule. The fear of death is the spirit of Satan. It is Satan who wants us to fear for our lives. The only way to break the hold that Satan has on us is to **be willing**, if necessary, to **die**. Christ was willing to die to break that hold.

And deliver them who **through fear of death** were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:15).

The fear of death creates a slavery. **As long as we fear death, we are still in slavery.** For many people

that slavery is a life-long condition. But God expects us to overcome that fear.

Jesus Christ explained that we must overcome this fear that Satan attempts to instill in us.

Then said Jesus to His disciples, If any *man* will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For **whoever will save his life shall lose it**: and whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it (Matthew 16:24-25).

God expects us to overcome this fear of death. Now let's understand this:

When we overcome our fears, then we are overcoming Satan!

When we overcome fears, we are overcoming the slavery that Satan has imposed on us. And this is why God constantly urges us to be strong, bold, courageous and confident. To be courageous is to overcome Satan. And this is the way to have life "more abundantly", to overcome the fears with which Satan has shackled all of humanity.

People have sometimes wondered about the statement in Revelation 21:7-8. There we read:

He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son. But **the fearful**, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and immoral persons, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part **in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone**: which is the second death (Revelation 21:7-8).

Eventually all those who are still fearful will die for ever in the lake of fire. They are in the company of idolaters, murderers and sorcerers. The reason God will also blot out all those who are "fearful" is because they have never been able to shake off the slavery of Satan. They still think exactly the same way Satan does. And for that way of thinking they themselves are responsible. The fear they still have is evidence that they don't have any real faith and that they don't think the way God thinks.

Just a Natural Disaster?

On one occasion Jesus Christ was asleep in a ship. Then a very powerful storm blew up. That's as natural a disaster as you could ask for. The ship was filling up with water.

And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was now full (Mark 4:37).

We all know the story. Eventually the disciples panicked and woke Jesus Christ up. Christ then calmed the storm. Then He turned to His disciples and said:

And he said to them, **why are you so fearful?** how is it that you have no faith? (Mark 4:40).

So is it wrong to be afraid during a violent storm? Have you ever been afraid during a storm? It seems very natural to be afraid under such circumstances. Yet Christ said that their fear was evidence of a lack of faith.

How Satan Instills Fear in People

Satan uses life's everyday circumstances and events to enslave us. The events themselves are unimportant. Often it is just one bad experience that is needed to enslave a person.

For example:

- you are attacked by a dog;
- you fall into a pool and nearly drown;
- you have a painful experience at the dentist's;
- you fall off a bicycle;
- the horse you are riding bolts and throws you off;
- you eat something which violently disagrees with you;
- you form an emotional bond and you are let down;
- you are laughed at and ridiculed in some situation;
- you are attacked and mugged;
- you are neglected or mistreated as a child;
- you get dizzy looking down from a balcony;
- you get stuck in an elevator for a few hours, etc.

... and as a result you develop a fear of whatever it is that was involved. None of these events in themselves justify the development of a full-blown fear or phobia, but it happens anyway. It is **Satan** who **uses such events** to instill his spirit of fear in us.

And the result is that we become enslaved. We limit our activities in certain areas. To follow the above examples, we avoid all places where there are dogs, we never get into a swimming pool, we avoid going to the dentist, we refuse to ride bicycles, we are afraid of horses, we avoid certain foods, we avoid situations which might lead to forming close friendships, etc. Whatever area affects us specifically, our lives are going to be restricted in some way. Our freedom has been curtailed.

It is ordinary common events that Satan uses to chain us down, to limit our activities and our relationships. That's what the Apostle Paul explained. Let's take another look at Romans 8:15.

For you did not receive **a spirit** that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15 NIV).

In the King James Version it is rendered as "the spirit of bondage". Understand that this slavery is **a spirit!** This tells us that it is **the mind** which **becomes shackled** and enslaved. And fears are the means Satan uses to enforce this slavery.

Because it is the mind that is enslaved, therefore what is required to free us from that slavery is another spirit. And that is what we can learn in 2 Timothy 1:7, where Paul wrote:

For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).

Both spirits are contrasted in this verse. Satan enslaved people through a spirit of fear. And God frees us from this slavery through a spirit of power, love and a sound mind. That is God's spirit. In this way God's spirit overcomes and conquers the slavery of Satan-imposed fears.

God's Laws Set Us Free

I mentioned earlier that fear is the automatic consequence of breaking God's laws. There is pain in fear. And every single transgression of every single one of God's laws will produce pain or anguish for somebody. And it will continue to do this until the original transgression is forgiven by God and thereby blotted out of existence.

It is not sufficient to deal with the consequences of broken laws. Unless the causes of broken laws are removed, the fears and anguish they produced will continue. Or they may affect other people. It is only when the cause has been removed that the consequences can also be permanently eliminated.

This requires forgiveness by God. And forgiveness is conditional on genuine repentance. So what is needed to break the cycle of fears is God's forgiveness, which is conditional on genuine repentance. Nothing else can break that cycle of fear.

James tells us:

But he who looks into **the perfect law of liberty**, and continueth *in it*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed (James 1:25).

And:

So speak you, and so do, as they that shall be judged by **the law of liberty** (James 2:12).

It takes obedience to God's laws to really set us free from fears. The more fully we obey God's laws, the more we will be set free from fears.

The Apostle John explained it this way:

There is no fear in love; but **perfect love casts out fear**: because **fear has torment**. He that fears is not made perfect in love (1 John 4:18).

By "perfect love" John meant whole-hearted obedience to the laws of God. This is what he explained only six verses later:

For **this is the love of God**, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3).

Total whole-hearted submission to the laws of God eliminates fear. It eliminates Satan's tool for enslaving mankind. It will set us free. That is why it is "the perfect law of liberty".

And that is also precisely why Satan does his utmost to pressure us into sinning. In sinning we become his slaves, but in resisting Satan's temptations we achieve freedom.

Have We Faced Our Fears?

Fear is unpleasant. We want to be free of fears. It is common for us to push our fears into the background, to ignore them and to pretend they don't exist. But it only takes a crisis to bring them to the fore. Let's look again at the man Job.

Before anything went wrong in Job's life, he gave the appearance of a God-fearing, confident and successful businessman. Many people would have envied him his wealth and status. But Job, like the rest of humanity, was also on Satan's wavelength. Satan had actually managed to instill some fears into this God-fearing man. But they were hidden well below the surface.

The trials Job went through then brought these fears to the surface. In chapter 3 Job made this admission:

For **the thing which I greatly feared** has come upon me, and **that which I feared** has come to me. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came (Job 3:25-26).

Job had actually felt insecure all along, in spite of his enormous wealth. His physical circumstances had enabled him to suppress this fear. It took this crisis for Job to come to terms with this fear.

Today, when people tell us that they "greatly fear" something, then we say they have a "phobia". Job's particular fear is not at all uncommon amongst wealthy people, a fear of losing their wealth! This is something poor people often don't understand about rich people. Satan can use wealth to instill a fear in people, just as he can use poverty to instill fears.

One of the most common fears amongst adults, one that is almost universal, is a fear of correction. It seems we will do almost anything to avoid facing this fear. We will argue, we will justify ourselves and we will excuse ourselves, all because we fear being proved wrong.

We will do this far more often in our minds, in our thoughts, without even voicing these thoughts, than we do it outwardly in our words. It is a common universal phenomenon. The Apostle Paul understood this and referred to this tendency.

Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and **their thoughts** the mean while **accusing or else excusing** one another; (Romans 2:15).

These are the two main ways we try to cope with this common fear of correction, of being told that we are wrong. In our minds, if not outwardly, **we accuse other people** of being the really guilty ones, **and we excuse and justify our own conduct** and our own failings.

It was painful for Satan to be told that he was wrong! Satan's way of dealing with this pain was to accuse others and to justify himself. And it is no wonder that he has influenced all of mankind to basically respond the same way; to perceive correction as painful and to do anything to avoid it.

Of course, Satan's method never works. It doesn't really get rid of the pain of being corrected. It only leads to a lifetime of constantly, in the secret recesses of our own minds, in our hearts, either "accusing or else excusing". That's what Paul explained.

The way to be set free from this fear is to apply God's law of liberty. It is to confess our guilt, our inadequacies and our short-comings to God. It is only when we repent and are forgiven by God that **the**

causes of our fears are removed. It is only then that all our fears can be truly removed.

A Strategy for Overcoming Fears

Satan has used fears, all fears, as a means of enslaving humanity. The ultimate fear he attempts to instill in us is the fear of death. But there are thousands of lesser fears along the way, fears to restrict our lives and to limit our enjoyment of the existence God has given us. God offers us freedom from all these fears. God offers us eternal life to banish that ultimate fear of death.

Here is a strategy for overcoming fears:

We need to recognize and to identify our fears. We need to admit them to ourselves and not bury them in obscurity as Job had done. We need to identify the defense mechanisms we have built up to protect ourselves from these fears. Such defense mechanisms can never fully eliminate these fears from our lives; they can only attempt to keep our fears "in check".

We need to recognize the origin of and the purpose for our fears. The origin is from Satan. It is Satan who broadcasts a spirit of fear to our minds. **The purpose of fears is to enslave us to Satan's way of thinking.** That way of thinking will cut us off from God and perpetuate the spirit of fear.

We need to recognize Satan's tactics in working towards this goal. Satan's tactic is **to force us** to fight for our lives. His tactic is to force us to put self-interest first. Paul tells us to be aware of Satan's tactics. Notice:

Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for **we are not ignorant of his devices** (2 Corinthians 2:11).

God wants us to understand how Satan works and how he tries to enslave us. The expression "of his devices" is a translation of the Greek expression "autou ta noemata". "Noemata" is the plural of "noema," a word that has been used from the time of Homer. In Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament it is defined as: "a mental perception, thought, a purpose, that which thinks, the mind".

This word refers to **how we use the mind**. So in plain English, Paul admonished us to not be ignorant about how Satan uses his mind, how he thinks, how he schemes to influence us.

In the Book of Job we saw that Satan thinks that people will do **anything** to save their lives. It is on this premise that Satan has built his whole strategy for enslaving humanity.

To overcome Satan we must understand the truth. Jesus Christ explained:

And ye shall know the truth, and **the truth shall make you free** (John 8:32).

It takes the truth of God to free us from Satan. The truth explains the way to overcome Satan and his influence. The way to overcome Satan is to overcome all of our fears, including that ultimate fear of death. That is something all of God's servants in the past had to do, and something we too must do.

And **they overcame him** by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and **they loved not their lives to the death** (Revelation 12:11).

The context of this verse is Satan being cast down to this Earth. This verse shows that the way God's servants "overcome Satan" is by overcoming the fear of death. When we overcome that fear, then we

have completely shaken off the hold that Satan had over us.

Jesus Christ gave the same admonition during His ministry. He said in Matthew 10:28:

And **fear not them who kill the body**, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28).

Don't let Satan manipulate and rule over your life through the fear of death.

With these points in mind, we need to confront all our fears, many of which may be irrational. Satan instilled them in our minds through one or more bad experiences.

Realize that we can be freed from these fears. God has provided a way. That way is repentance towards God and a life of obedience to the laws of God. That way is faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that His sacrifice does indeed blot out all our guilt.

When we do this, then God gives to us His Spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind. "A sound mind" will banish all irrational fears. And "the power" will overcome the hold that Satan had on us and release us.

God wants us to be free from the slavery of fears. But we have a part to fulfil in this process.

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