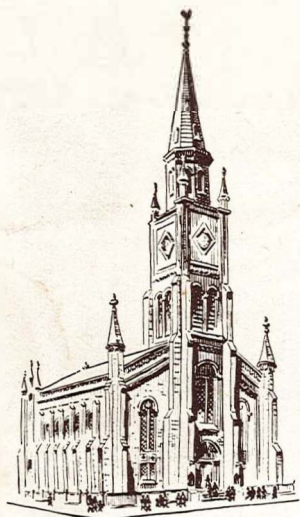


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Never be Afraid



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Scripture: Joshua 1 :9; Psalm 127 :2; Job 3 :25

So many people spend their lives being afraid of one thing or another. This is very pathetic for if a person spends his life being afraid he is keeping himself perpetually miserable and, furthermore, he blocks the full flow of his potential power and is consequently less effective than he might otherwise be.

Fortunately we do not need to be afraid, ever. We can live without fear or at least we can live above fear, for we have something which nullifies fear. That something is God. the first chapter in the Book of Joshua, in the ninth verse we read these dynamic, electric words "Be strong and of a good courage; not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

Now if you knew for sure that God - the great God - was with you every minute of the day and of the night, actually with you, would you be afraid? Not at all. You would have utter confidence and serenity of mind. But the trouble is, we take this only poetically or theoretically. We do not believe that it is really so. That is why we are afraid. But when you get to believing this to be a truth and start practicing it, then you are through with being afraid.

There are two great powers in this world and faith. Fear is a tremendous power. There is only one

power greater than fear and that is faith. If you allow yourself to be fearful, fear cuts a channel across your mind. It dominates your thoughts. Into this all your thoughts are drained and from it they take their quality and color. They come up tinged with fear and fear rides and riddles you.

How do you overcome this? You start a trickle of faith across the mind. Maybe it is only a very thin, almost infinitesimal trickle at first. But if encouraged it will cut a channel of its own in the mind and, because it is more powerful, it will presently cut into the channel of fear, which will collapse into the channel of faith and then every thought you think will come up out of this channel of faith tinged with faith and courage. You will no longer be a fearful person. You will be a person of faith and of courage.

A number of years ago I knew a doctor who told me that from his boyhood days he had been plagued with fears. He had had fears instilled in him as a child. His parents were devoted, loving parents, but they were timorous. They lived in constant fear for their son and they infected him with their fears. These fears plagued him all through his school days, through his time in medical school, even through his days in the hospital as an intern, training to be a doctor. He finally decided that he could never heal people's bodies unless he got healed in his own mind. And he sought, as he expressed it, for a medicine that would cure him of his fears. Finally he came upon what he described as "a great healing combination of words." It was a text from the Bible. "I took this text," he told me, "using the vernacular of medicine, and it permeated my mind and healed me of my fears."

This was the text: "Be strong and of a good courage. Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

I rather like that idea of taking a new thought pattern to change your condition like you'd take medicine to heal you. How do you take medicine? Ordinarily you take it by mouth in the form of a liquid or pill or you take it by an injection into the bloodstream. And how can you take faith, when that is the medicine you need? You can take it either through the eye or through the ear. For example, suppose you read the Bible. The printed words are reflected in an image on the retina of the eye. This is transmitted to the mind where it conveys an idea and the idea affects the diseased area of the mind with its healing potency. That is why you should read the Bible. The other way you can take faith is through the ear. Suppose you come to church. You hear the reading of the Bible, you hear the great music, you hear the sermon, you hear the prayers. All these make impacts on the eardrums. And these travel to the mind by process that I do not pretend to understand and reach the diseased area where the fears are. And if you do this sufficiently and earnestly you can be healed of your fears, your apprehension and your anxieties by the strong message of faith.

This isn't something fanciful, this is the truth. The whole issue of life is in what thought pattern is going to dominate you - one of fear, caution, apprehension or one of faith, strength, positiveness.

One thing that will happen to a person when he begins to develop faith is that he will deliberately set himself against this fears against this old hesitant caution and

timidity. He will practice not being afraid - of any thing or of anyone.

The fear of other people is oftentimes the worst. We are afraid of the dark. We are afraid of the unknown. These are old fears that stem from the childhood of the human race. Though we be, fifty, seventy years of age, we may still be children in our fear of the dark and of the unknown. But the fear of people is sometimes terrible. It may be fear of your boss. It may be fear of people you meet socially against whom you think you cannot measure up. Some men are even afraid of their wives. I guess sometimes they may have reason to be! But it shouldn't be that way. And there are women who are afraid of their husbands and children who are afraid of their parents - afraid to talk to them. There are even parents who are afraid of their children - afraid to say "No!" Sometimes the best thing for a child is to say "No." And I mean a resounding "No!"

The other day I picked up a book written by a friend of mine, Henry J. Taylor, called MEN IN MOTION. Henry Taylor is a great news correspondent. During the Eisenhower administration he was for eight years U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland. In MEN IN MOTION he writes at some length about his father, who must have been a very strong, rugged, fearless man. And Henry Taylor says his father gave him this advice:

"Never be afraid. Don't worry too much about yourself and about getting hurt. People who go through life being cautious miss a great deal. Take your chances wherever you have. It's better luck you'll see more and you'll probably live as long anyway."

I honestly do believe that if you are inordinately afraid of something, that something tends to happen to you. In

the Book of Job are the words "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me."

So many people are fearful about their health. They can't do this and they can't do that, they say, because their blood pressure isn't what it used to be or they are getting older and the doctor has cautioned them. Well, it's the business of a doctor to caution you about your health. But I recently read about a man who lived in Broken Bow, Nebraska whose experience is worth pondering. I have never personally been to Broken Bow, but I like the name of the place. This man had done pretty well and had saved some money. But he had worried a great deal, he was very tense, he was very nervous, he was very cautious - and he developed a bad ulcer condition. Three doctors told him his life was in jeopardy. And they sent him to Chicago to see one of the greatest of ulcer specialists. This specialist told the man he could only eat this and that and must be very careful, because it wasn't likely he would live for very long.

"How long do you think I might live?" the man asked.

"I don't know," replied the doctor. "Maybe a year or so if you take good care of yourself."

Well, our friend went back to Broken Bow and meditated on this situation. And he thought, "If I've only got another year or so, what's the use of my taking such good care of myself? It's hardly worth the effort."

Now he had always wanted to travel, but had never been able to. However, he'd saved enough money to take a trip around the world. So he thought, "Why don't I spend it on a trip right now. I've only got a year or so

to go. I can just about get around the world comfortably in one year's time."

He told his doctors in Broken Bow what he was going to do. They said, "That's very bad. You mustn't do it. You'll never get home." Now this was back in the days when people didn't travel by plane like they do now. They crossed the oceans on ships. The doctors said, "You'll probably be buried at sea."

"No," the man said, "I can't be buried at sea because I've promised my children I'll be buried in Broken Bow and I always keep my promises."

So he actually bought a casket from the undertaker and put it aboard the ship. He told the ship's officers that if he died during the trip they were to put his body in that casket, put the whole business in the deep freeze and see that it was brought back to Broken Bow.

So the man began to do everything he wanted to. He stayed up late at night. He danced. He had fun. At the ports he went ashore and ate all the native foods. He climbed mountains. And when he got back to Broken Bow he sold the casket back to the undertaker!

God never intended people to be too cautious. He intended us to throw ourselves into life. Naturally, you've got to use some common sense - but don't use too much, because there is a point which you become a fearful struck person. You esteem yourself more, you respect yourself more, when you live on the basis of not being afraid.

People are also afraid they may say the wrong thing. Say whatever comes into your mind. And if it is the wrong thing, let it pass. People always like an outgoing person even though he does say some stupid things once in a while.

I sometimes think about some of our public men. The great men that have earned the admiration of this country have been men who weren't afraid of anybody. Nowadays the politicians play it close to the chest. They are afraid to take a chance. They don't just say what they think but they have a conference with a committee to decide just how far they should go in what they say. As a result you have a lot of soft people trying to lead the country. But take Grover Cleveland, for example. When he was put up for nomination at the Democratic Convention, what got him the nomination was this priceless statement: "We love him for the enemies he has made." That certainly was an indication that here was a man who wasn't afraid of people.

During the campaign advisers kept reminding Cleveland that in order to be elected he would have to carry New York State and they told him that the bosses of Tammany Hall wanted a little private get-together to see how everything was going to be handled (what Cleveland was going to do for Tammany Hall). Cleveland refused to meet with the Tammany Hall people. His advisers told him this was political suicide. But he continued to ignore them. Then when Cleveland's campaigning brought him to New York City there was a big political dinner at which two of the leading Tammany Hall bosses were present. After dinner these two men got Cleveland into a corner and asked him if he didn't realize that in order to be elected President he would have to make a deal with the men who could carry New York State for him. And they wanted to know, "What will you give us?" Cleveland answered, "I will not give you a single, solitary thing," Cleveland answered.

Well, afterwards it seems those men of Tammany Hall reasoned among themselves like this: "This man's a queer bird. He won't do anything for his friends. we'd better be for him anyway. Maybe he'll pick up something along the way so they got behind him and they gave him New York State. Or did he just take the state by his appeal to the voters? American people honor a man who isn't afraid of them or of anybody.

"Be not afraid ... for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." That is the great antidote to fear: the presence of God. It is the greatest thing in the world, friends, when you come right down to it. What could be greater than this? You are not alone in this great big universe. God is with you. If that becomes for you something more than a theological idea - becomes a great actual practical experience then you can stand in the presence of difficulties, pain, on slaughters, resistance, criticism, anything, and be afraid. But a person has to have a big mind to get this. This is such a simple idea that a small mind can't get it. Only the first class mind can be simple. It was one of the greatneses of Jesus, that He could take complicated philosophical ideas and make them simple. this is a great simple fact: God is with you.

Some years ago a man came repeatedly to our Sunday services and always sat in the balcony. I wasn't aware of him until one day after the service he handed me his card. Though I didn't know him, I immediately knew who he was. He was president of one of the biggest corporations in the United States. He said, "I would like to have a talk with you if you have the time to bother with me."

"I'll see you as soon as I can," I assured him. And I made an appointment.

As he sat down in front of me he said, "I don't want to ask you a question and I want a straight answer. Do you think I'm losing my mind?"

"Well," I replied, "I don't know you very well. Why would you think you're losing your mind?"

"Because I can no longer make a decision without being full of fear," he told me. "Always I've made decisions. I've thought them through carefully at a conclusion, decided - then I would put the matter out of my mind. But now I'm afraid to make a decision.

When of necessity I do make a decision I worry about it: I'm afraid I made the wrong decision. I can't sleep.

I'm getting more and more nervous. Why am I so afraid?

When I'm sick physically I go to a doctor and he hands me out a prescription. Well, you've got a 'Doctor' in front of your name too. Does that mean that you're a healer?" I had never had it put up to me just that way. And he asked, "Can't you give me a prescription that will cure this trouble?"

"I guess I can write you a prescription," I answered.

"Here's what I would like you to do: The first thing when you wake up in the morning relax your body. Lift your feet up and let them fall limply a half-dozen times, each one. Put each arm up and let it fall limply a half-dozen times. Then let your eyelids fall down limply and repeat this over your body from your head down to your feet saying to yourself, 'The Lord is now touching my head, my chest, each part of my body, making it peaceful and relaxed.'

"Then," I continued, "pray to the Lord saying, 'Lord, I'm going to get up now and go to my office. I have

decisions to make today and don't feel competent to make them, but the Bible tells me that You will be in the office with me. So when I have to make a decision I will ask Your guidance and do what I think You are telling me to do. And I will be confident that the decision will prove to be a good one and I'll forget it.'

"Then," I told him, "after you have been to lunch come back and lie down (and if you haven't got a couch in your office go out and buy one) and go through the same relaxing process as in the morning. Say, 'Lord, we had a good morning together. I made some decisions. You were with me and I know these decisions are good because You helped me make them.' And ~~everything~~ when you get into bed, relax again and tell the Lord something like this: 'Lord, You were with me all day long. I'm not going to have a single post-mortem. I made decisions and these decisions are all right because You were with me when I made them.' Say these words from the Scriptures: 'He giveth his beloved sleep.' Then turn out the light and go to sleep knowing that He will watch over you all night long."

"Will you writethis out for me?" the man asked. And I did. He put the paper in his pocket.

Well, two or three years later he was still carrying that "prescription" around with him. And one day another businessman showed me a sheet of paper saying, "You see that? It's the prescription you gave Mr. He is passing out copies of it everywhere."

You too can overcome your fears by realizing that you are not alone, that God is with you. You are not alone. "Be strong and of a good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." And He is. Amen.