Abiding over Fear by Taking Thoughts Captive

Monday– by Craig Trierweiler

Read: 2 Cor 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, 6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

Devotion:

Captivity. The NT only uses that word a handful of times. For example, when Jesus warns of the end times, he says that Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies, trampled underfoot, and “be led captive among all nations” (Luke 21:24). This captivity is a reference to being subjugated by a superior force. It is under dominion of a higher power. To be a captive, is to have your hands tied by an opponent and be forced out of your home; exiled to a foreign land.

This is the imagery of 2 Corinthians where the Christian is supposed to ‘take every thought captive to obey Christ.” That is, we are to arrest thoughts that enter our minds and force them into submission. We are to tie the hands of negative thinking by the power of Jesus, and exile them out of our mind.

Apply this to the emotional battle of fear. When fear enters our mind, it is usually because something important feels threatened or we are facing loss. At that moment, we have a choice: We can either allow fear to rule our mind and overshadow the goodness of God, or we can arrest the emotional fear and bring it into submission as we recall the promises of God.

In Psalm 56 when David is seized by the Philistines, he takes fear captive by remembering the goodness of God. He recalls 5 truths about God that help silence the megaphone of fear:

A. God is bigger (When I am afraid I put my trust in you)
B. God is faithful (In God whose word I praise, in God I trust, I shall not be afraid)
C. God is stronger (What can flesh do to me?)
D. God is loving (You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?)
E. God is for me (This I know: that God is for me)

Action Steps:

Read the 5 truth statements again from Ps. 56 – Which truth do you need today to silence the megaphone of fear and exile it out of your mind?

Pray the 5 truths. Use them as a prayer guide as you take negative thoughts captive.

Write out the 5 truths. Memorize them. Put it in a place you can call them to mind easily. The battle to overcome fear is done moment by moment as we take thoughts captive.

Call a friend to help you battle fears.

PRAYER:
Abiding over Fear by Exposing Lies

Tuesday – by Craig Trierweiler

Read: Eph 5:8-13 “Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them...13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible

Devotion:

In his book “Simplify”, Bill Hybels has a chapter titled: “From Anxious to Peaceful.” Hybels gives 3 application steps to battling fear in our lives:

A. Understand Fears Origin
B. Expose Lies
C. Face it Head on

We can’t battle fear if we don’t understand the root cause of it. So we must dig deeper than the surface of fear and go to the depths of why we are afraid. Then we need to expose it. This is where the biblical passage in Ephesians comes to play. It tells us to “expose” the unfruitful works of darkness, which of course would include our battle against fear. But here is where we need to see an interesting note on the word: “expose”.

This greek word is used 17 times in the New Testament. It is a word that means “rebuke or reprove.” Indeed, in 16 of the uses, this is how it is translated. But for some reason, most recent translations come to Ephesians 5 and translate it: expose. And indeed we should expose deeds of darkness. But, may we not miss the key to the whole battle! Once we discern darkness in our lives, we are to do more than ‘expose’ it, we are to ‘rebuke’ it! We verbally renounce the darkness and cling to the light. This is how we face darkness head on. We don’t skirt around the issue. We don’t play with fire. We rebuke it in Jesus’ name and choose to walk in the light, as He is in the light.

This is how we must battle fear. We must discern where it comes from. We must expose it for what it is (an enemy of our soul) and rebuke it. And renouncing the darkness we then choose to walk in a way which pleases the Lord. By doing this, we will move from anxious to peaceful.

Action Steps:

What are you afraid of? Discern the deeper issues at play. What are you afraid to lose? What in your life is being threatened that you are afraid to live without?

Expose & reprove false thinking. The enemy seeks to use fear to cripple and paralyze you. That type of thinking needs to be rebuked and renounced. Do this in Jesus’ name.

Embrace truth. This is where we replace lies of the enemy with truth in what God’s word says. If you are anxious about money, we embrace the truth that our Father cares for us and will supply all we need. Face your fears head on by replacing each one with truth.

Prayer
Abiding over Fear by Walking in Truth

Wednesday – by Craig Trierweiler

Read: Ps 56:3-4 When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. 4 In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?

Devotional:

In Psalm 56, David was afraid. He was facing the Fear Giant in the face. And the pathway to overcoming fear was not a change in circumstances, but a change in perspective. This is what David did. He reoriented his eyes from the Big Problem to his Big God!

Let’s apply this in a practical way. Many people have fear over financial insecurity. What is one to do in the face of financial fears? We are to overcome with a change in perspective. We reorient our eyes from the Giant Fear towards our Giant God. In his book Counterfeit Gods, Tim Keller writes about this change of perspective. He says, “The solution to stinginess is a reorientation to the generosity of Christ in the gospel...the cross proves God’s care for you and gives you the security. Money cannot save you from tragedy or give you control in a chaotic world. Only God can do that.”

Do you see that? “A reorientation to the generosity of Christ! That is the pathway to overcoming fear. Reorient our perspective from the fear to what is true about God and what He has promised to do for us. We don’t reorient around wishful thinking or general platitudes. We reorient around the truth of God’s word and resolve to walk in that truth because it is impossible for God to lie.

The Psalmist says “Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.” When fear creeps into our mind and creates foreboding darkness, we overcome by the light of God’s truth. We light a candle of truth which illuminates into the darkness and gives us the ability to take a step forward. In Psalm 56, David lights a massive candle of truth which dispels the Giant Fear. This is the pathway out of fear and into glorious freedom. Do that today. Reorient your mind to the generosity of Christ in the gospel.

Action Steps:

Reorient to God’s truth. Introduce your fears to the character of God as revealed in the Word. He is gracious & compassionate. He is slow to anger. He is abounding in steadfast love. He has promised to never leave you nor forsake you. Turn from your fears and walk in that truth!

Pursue a Sound Mind. Scripture says: “God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and sound mind.” Really? That means the spirit of fear comes from elsewhere – namely, the enemy. Ask God to give you a sound mind. Ask Him to remove the spirit of fear.

Prayer:
Abiding over Fear by Singing Warfare

Thursday – by Craig Trierweiler

Read: 2 Chron 20:21 And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say,

"Give thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures forever."

22 And when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir…"

Devotional:

An online article at DesiringGod.org is called “Ambush Satan with Song.” When fear raises its ugly head against believers, it surely seeks to force us into submission with its long tentacles. By way of experience, I know of no better way to beat the enemy back than to fight with the power of song. We worship before the Lord. As we raise a triumphant voice, our enemy is ambushed by praise. And soon, our emotions which were so defeated, will follow the voice of worship into victorious battle.

This is what happened in 2 Chronicles. Jehoshaphat put the worshipers in front of the battle and soon they ambushed the enemy. The old Reformer Martin Luther once said: “Experience proves that next to the Word of God only music deserves to be extolled as the mistress and governess of the feelings of the human heart.” Mary Slosser, a missionary to Nigeria said: “I sing the Doxology and dismiss the devil.” And Amy Carmichael, missionary to India said: "I believe...that Satan cannot endure it and so slips out of the room...when there is a true song."

Recently, I woke up in the night hours under the oppressive hold of the enemy. It was one of those times when the power of darkness felt overwhelming, as if fear itself was pinning me to the bed and silencing my muffled voice. For a moment, I was unable to speak. But I knew that there is power in Jesus’ name, so praying for strength I was finally able to call upon Jesus! With that the oppression lifted. Getting out of bed, the Lord put a song in my heart, which I proceeded to sing: “Jesus, your name is power. Jesus, your name is might. Jesus, your name will break every stronghold. Jesus, your name is light.” As I sang it, the fear was evicted and the joy of the Lord returned. My friend, have a song in your heart and be ready to sing. Singing is spiritual warfare.

Action Steps:

Battle fear today with song. Sing worship music. Even if you emotionally feel weak and unable to sing, begin to sing a hymn to the Lord and ask him to help you battle.

Sing the song of Jehoshaphat. Give Thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His love endures forever. This is a Biblical song, repeated in Ps. 136. Do this today as you ambush Satan with song.

Gather in Worship on Sunday. The gathering of a church assembly for worship is part of regular warfare. As we sing, strongholds are broken, fear is overcome, and hearts are filled with praise.

Prayer:
Abiding over Fear by stopping negative thinking

Friday – by Kori Trierweiler

Read: Philippians 4:6-8 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

Devotional:
Have you ever been in charge of something and it seems bigger than you can handle? Stayed awake at night thinking of all the scenarios of the many things that could go wrong? I know the feelings of anxiety. I am not sure why I think stressing out about it will help the situation, especially when I know they are things beyond my ability to control, but dread creeps up on me anyway. It robs me of the present. It robs me of joy! It either makes me want to crawl into a hole and quit everything or drives me forward to try harder, do better. The feelings of dread can surround and hound me of the coming doom, the inevitable reality that very soon everything is going to come crashing down and I’ll be exposed as a fraud, a failure…labeled forever as a loser! Ever been there?

This is when we must say: “STOP! Enough already!” This way of thinking only leads to a pit of sin. In these times, the Bible instructs us to pray. So stop and pray right now: Jesus come into this and help me! Tell Him everything, explaining the situation as if He has never heard of it before. Go into detail, spill the beans, name all your concerns, fears, frustrations and feelings of powerlessness. Then thank Him for this trial – yes, you read it right - thank Him! This too is Biblical (James 1:3). After that ask Him for what you want to happen here, don’t forget to give Him all the details, even your hidden hopes and any desired outcome of the situation. After that, this verse promises God’s peace. Not a peace of this world, but a supernatural peace that will guard your heart and your mind! It will protect you. And isn’t that what we desire most? Isn’t it the lack of protection over our hearts and minds that cause us the most fear? These verses are a step by step process in how to handle fear, if only we follow it. Then we will experience the promise of God, and then some!

Action Steps:

Read the above passage 5 times in different translations. Let it speak to you and change you each time.
Talk to God out loud and in great detail about your fearful situation and what you want Him to do about it.
Change your focus by thinking about GOOD things. Verbally list 10 things you are thankful to God for today.

PRAYER:
Abiding over Fear through the God of Peace

Saturday – by Kori Trierweiler

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.”

Devotional:

When we experience fear it's usually because we have our eyes on ourselves or circumstances instead of on God. That is the key here to battling fear. There has to be a shift in our thinking. I love this verse because the emphasis isn't on us but on God and what He's willing and capable of doing.

First of all it says "May God Himself." It doesn't say “God and I”! The focus here is what God can do entirely by Himself, without my help, without my advice, and without all my fearful "what if" scenarios. This phrase alone gives great comfort and builds my faith if I allow it!

The next phrase is "the God of peace". (Big Sigh!) Isn't that what we need in the midst of fear. Someone to come into our confusion, pain and panic to speak PEACE: “Be still, my child.” God will sanctify us, that is, make us holy, set apart, righteous and perfect in every way. We do not make this happen, HE does! And He does this work throughout our entire body, heart, mind and soul. This means that God can use my fearful, anxious situation to bring about the deep purifying work He is currently doing and will continue to do in me. I can relax in His capable hands, choose faith in God even in the midst of fear, because this verse promises: “the One who calls you is faithful; He will do it”! This sounds like a done deal to me! We must keep our focus on the God of peace Who makes things happen! Will you chose today to believe this truth?

Action Steps:

Where is fear showing up in your life right now? Why is this?
Ask the Lord if and how He might be using this fear to bring about the sanctifying process in your life?
Do you trust God to handle this fear area in your life? What do your thoughts and actions tell you about how well you trust God?

Prayer: