

March 30, 2008

How To Get Rid Of Fear

Dan 10:19 NLT

"Don't be afraid," he said, "for you are deeply loved by God. Be at peace; take heart and be strong!"

As he spoke these words, I suddenly felt stronger and said to him, "Now you may speak, my lord, for you have strengthened me."

Isn't this a great verse? "Well, yeah," you might say, "but it was written to Daniel not me!" Now wait a minute. Daniel wasn't a supernatural being, he was just a human being just like us. So why couldn't it be written to us also? You might be thinking, "he wasn't *just* a human being, he was a great human being, an exceptional person, a giant in the faith, a man with a special relationship with God, a person God used in a mighty way; I am *not* like Daniel." To that I say, then maybe you should strive to be more like Daniel, that these words will be for you also. But these words *are* for you because similar words were written (e.g.) by John. (1 John 4:16-18 NLT) "We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in him. God is love...and as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we are like Christ here in this world."

Such love has no fear because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of judgment, and this shows that his love has not been perfected in us."

These verses tell us that not only can we be like Daniel, we have a higher standard, we must be like Christ in the world. Those who believe in Christ live in God and God lives in them. God is love and, and perfect love expels fear.

What does it mean to be like Daniel? What would it take to make these words ours: 1) "Don't be afraid" 2) "for you are deeply loved by God." 3) "Be at peace; take heart and be strong!"

1. Don't Be Afraid

What might Daniel be afraid of? The first verse of Daniel 10 says (Dan 10:1 NLT), "... Daniel...had another vision. It concerned events certain to happen in the future--times of war and great hardship--and Daniel understood what the vision meant."

Daniel had a vision of times of war and great hardship. Today there is someone here who has fear because of future or present wars and great hardship. You are concerned about the world, our country, your children. You may be afraid of sickness, death, a problem relationship or some other hardship. There is someone here today who is anxious about the security of their job and finances. Daniel had the same concerns. His position was so insecure that he could be a high official in the land one day and thrown into a den to be dinner for some lions the next!

Maybe you fear God. Sometimes there is reason to fear God because we are choosing to disobey Him, walk in a different direction than He wants for us, or we live like He doesn't matter. Sometimes we fear His power and presence. Daniel was afraid of a vision he had of Jesus.

For three weeks Daniel had been in mourning and was fasting and praying. That opened the door for a glorious visit from heaven, and Jesus came to him in a vision. Why do I think it was Jesus? By comparing Daniel's vision with the one John had at Patmos recorded in Revelation (note the descriptions).

Dan 10:4-9 NLT

On April 23, as I was standing beside the great Tigris River, 5 I looked up and saw a man dressed in linen clothing, with a belt of pure gold around his waist. 6 His body looked like a dazzling gem. From his face came flashes like lightning, and his eyes were like flaming torches. His arms and feet shone like polished bronze, and his voice was like the roaring of a vast multitude of people.

7 I, Daniel, am the only one who saw this vision. The men with me saw nothing, but they were suddenly terrified and ran away to hide. 8 So I was left there all alone to watch this amazing vision. My strength left me, my face grew deathly pale, and I felt very weak. 9 When I heard him speak, I fainted and lay there with my face to the ground.

Now let's compare that with John's vision in Rev 1:12-18 NLT

When I turned to see who was speaking to me, I saw seven gold lampstands. 13 And standing in the middle of the lampstands was the Son of Man. He was wearing a long robe with a gold sash across his chest. 14 His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were bright like flames of fire. 15 His feet were as bright as bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves. 16 He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword came from his mouth. And his face was as bright as the sun in all its brilliance.

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the living one who died. Look, I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.

Notice the similarities of the man in these visions and notice that in Revelation (v18) the person in the vision was the Living One who died, and is alive again and forever. The vision is of Jesus, the glorious and Eternal Word, and Daniel describes the same person.

If Jesus was to suddenly appear this morning; If He came walking down the aisle right now, we would not go up to Him give Him a high five and a hug. We would tremble, fall at His feet and worship Him...that's what happen to Daniel and to John. Yet, as we fall at His feet, He would say, don't be afraid.

Look at Dan 10:10-12 (NLT): Just then a hand touched me and lifted me, still trembling, to my hands and knees. 11 And the man said to me, "O Daniel, greatly loved of God,

listen carefully to what I have to say to you. Stand up, for I have been sent to you." When he said this to me, I stood up, still trembling with fear.

12 Then he said, "Don't be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day you began to pray for understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer.

If, like Daniel, you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; if, like Daniel you desire to know God and are committed to God, and trust in God, than don't be afraid Christian believer, be assured that God heard you the moment you humbled yourself before God and began praying. Whatever your concerns are this morning the first thing you need to hear from the Lord is, "Don't be afraid." Why? ..."for you are deeply loved by God."

2. You Are Deeply Loved By God

The word translated "deeply loved" is the Hebrew word, *chamad* (khaw-mad') and it means: to delight in, desire, a precious thing, greatly beloved. This is how Daniel is described. God says to Daniel, "I delight in you, greatly beloved. You are precious to Me, I desire you, you are deeply loved." Daniel had a relationship with God. He knew God from a very young age (so important for our children to know God early). Now, at the time of this vision, Daniel is in his nineties. He has remained faithful to God for all these many years. He not only knew God, he was completely devoted to God. Even as a young man he committed himself to:

A) A Pure and Undeclared Lifestyle In The Midst Of A Wicked Society.

As a young man he was taken captive and brought to Babylon. I am sure that when he first arrive he couldn't believe the immorality he saw there. He could have been easily tempted to enjoy the pleasures of this wicked society, perhaps other captive young men did. He was selected to be an elite member of young men chosen to serve the king. They were offered the best of everything. "But (Dan 1:8 [NLT] Daniel made up his mind not to defile himself..." The words, "not to defile himself" suggests "freeing through strongly renouncing any connection with something offered, denying, or rejecting something that is offered." In other words, Daniel, though free to indulge in the pleasures offered him, saw that any compromise of his standard would actually rob him of his freedom. He would not disobey his God. No wonder he was deeply loved by God. Are you willing to commit yourself to a pure and undeclared lifestyle in the midst of a wicked society? It is not enough to believe in God, you must be completely devoted to Him.

B) Become A Seeker After God – A Person Of Prayer

Dan 9:3-5, 20 NLT

...I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and fasting...I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: "O Lord, you are a great and awesome God! You always fulfill your promises of unfailing love to those who love you and keep your commands... I went on praying and confessing my sin and the sins of my people, pleading with the LORD my God for Jerusalem, his holy mountain."

Here is proof that Daniel was a praying man. His first commitment to live a pure life had to be backed up by a second commitment to be a seeker after God. It is impossible to live a holy life without spending much time in prayer, seeking God for the power to live such a life. Don't be mistaken – faithful praying will not keep you from troubling times, you may still face a fired-up furnace or a lion's den. But prayer will prepare you to face troubles with faith and trust in God. Daniel was probably in his eighties when he was thrown in a lions den (for praying and seeking God). Sorry, but trials will not end until we die or Jesus comes. This is why prayer is so important. You can read books, hear sermons, attend Bible studies, but everything will fail – unless you have committed yourself to be a dedicated seeker after God. How can you love God if you don't seek Him or talk to Him, or listen to Him? How can we love God if we neglect Him for days on end? We need to hear the Word of God to build faith, but prayer is the way we yield ourselves to God and His Word.

C) Wholly (completely, solely, and exclusively) Trust God – Live or Die

I know this was not said by Daniel, it was said by his three friends, but Daniel would have had the same trust:

Dan 3:14-18 NLT

Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? 15 I will give you one more chance...But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. What god will be able to rescue you from my power then?"

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. 18 But even if he doesn't, Your Majesty can be sure that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

Daniel and his friends had faced many terrible situations. Here his friends are facing one of the worse situations any human could face. If God did not deliver them by some miracle they were dead! What are you afraid of today, a physical affliction, a marriage in crisis, or something else that is beyond your power to solve or heal. If you are going to bring God into that situation you must make the same commitment and have the same trust as we read here. The situation looks hopeless. Without a miracle we're dead. Yet, we believe our God is able to deliver us from any fiery trial. But even if He doesn't, we still will not quit on Him. Live or die, we will trust Him! This is the kind of faith and trust you must have. It is the confidence that, no matter what comes, we are in His hands.

I know some would say that we must not be negative, we must name it and claim it we must say, "God is able" – period! That's not what these young men said. They said, "God is able...But even if He doesn't..." I believe with all my heart that God is able, but even if He doesn't will we keep the faith? We will only if we are wholly trusting God.

If you are committed to a pure lifestyle, if you are a seeker after God, and are solely trusting God then don't be afraid, for you are deeply loved by God...instead of being afraid...

3. Be At Peace; Take Heart And Be Strong

These are words of encouragement for those who are afraid of a vision of the Lord. Be at peace, take heart, take courage and be strong, you are loved.

Be like Daniel:

Commit yourself to a pure and undefiled lifestyle

Become a seeker after God – a person of prayer

Completely, solely, and exclusively trust God – live or die

And this promise is for you:

"Don't be afraid" (what are you afraid of today, don't be afraid)

"For you are deeply loved by God (hear that, believe that and...)

"Be at peace; take heart and be strong!"

The only thing to fear is judgment by God, and we don't have to fear that either. By faith in and a commitment to Jesus, God is in us, and God is love and perfect love expels fear.