

Victorious over our FEARS and worries



By Philip Shields
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(Note: As always, I recommend you hear the audio – but with the printed out notes to follow along with.)

Do you often say “I’m worried about...”, or “I’m afraid that...” or variants of that. What do you fear? Or do you claim to have no worries, no fears? In Jamaica, they say “no problem, man...” But I wonder if they’re really as laid back as that – all the time?

Humorous story of preacher who claimed no fear. (Hear the audio of this sermon for full recounting of the sermon)

You Filipinos who come to this site will appreciate this story. I grew up in San Fernando, La Union, and spoke Ilocano fluently as a boy. My father was Clyde V. Shields, and he had a mission and orphanage on the hill as you leave San Fernando. We would have visits from other preachers – men and women preachers alike – who would come and stay a few weeks and preach as well.

One lady preacher was up there preaching about overcoming fear. With her Bible in her hand she paced back and forth proclaiming loudly how when we look to God, absolutely nothing should ever cause us to fear. Nothing!

Just then, in my mind’s eye I imagine God winking at an angel and so just at the precise moment, one of the very common house lizards that run back and forth on the ceilings as they eat bugs around the lights, fell! I’ve never ever seen one of those house lizards fall. Ever. But one fell from the ceiling –as the lady preacher was waxing eloquent – right on to her open Bible in her hand. She screamed loudly, pitched her Bible up in the air – and went running off the stage in sheer terror!

It was one of the funniest things I’ve ever seen. We all laughed for at least ten minutes before we could gain our composure again. So even she had to learn – that fear can come upon us suddenly!

If you breathe air and bleed red blood – if you’re a normal human being, with or without the Holy Spirit – at times you no doubt slip into fear. Yes, even spirit-filled children of God experience fear. I preach to myself. I also have fears at times. It comes in many forms: worry, apprehension, sleepless nights, terror. How do we gain the victory over fear? Or are these things just normal - and pardon the play on words – something not to worry about?

Fear is not always bad. Sometimes fear produces the “fight or flight” reaction to get out of imminent trouble. Even Yeshua (Jesus) left dangerous situations like when angry Jews wanted to throw him down over a cliff in Nazareth. I’ve been there! Nazareth to this day has a high and nasty scary cliff. Christ got away and left the scene. (Luke 4:28-30)

But usually, fear begets more fear. Fear can immobilize and keep you from doing anything at all! It can spread to others like a plague. It’s not usually a good thing to experience for a long time. The apostle Paul certainly experienced times of fear. We all do.

2 Corinthians 7:5-6

“For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, **inside were fears.**”

So even the strongest of us can fall into fear. David did. Peter did. Paul did. We ALL have. Remember **Elijah** – who called down fire from heaven and killed hundreds of the false priests ... and then ran for his life when the queen said he’s a dead man walking, that she would see to it that he’s hunted down and killed. He ran like a rabbit – in fear and severe depression over that! But that’s very normal. (Story is in 1 Kings 18- 19).

PERILOUS TIMES ARE COMING (2 Timothy 3:1)

WHY should we talk about FEAR and how to handle it?

- We’re in the last days, described as “PERILOUS times” 2 Tim. 3:1
- Ahead of us is the coming time of greatest trouble the world has ever seen (the Great Tribulation).
- In spite of all the promises of a “place of safety” or some believe and teach a rapture that will take believers away from the Great Tribulation – somehow we have to explain how thousands of saints are beheaded, tortured and terrorized. Read Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 for starters. These are not bad Christians. They’re called “saints”. But look what is said about them.

Daniel 7:24 “The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom....

“He shall speak pompous words against the Most High,

Shall persecute (Hebrew word means WEAR OUT - KJV) the SAINTS of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law.

Then the saints shall be given into his hand, for a time and times and half a time.”

Rev. 6:9-10 and Rev 13:7-10 both speak of WAR being allowed or granted against the saints, and those prosecuting the war are described as “overcoming them” (Rev. 13:7).

So don’t think that all the saints are miraculously spared very scary times coming ahead – or how do you explain all those verses I’ve just read? **Psalms 91** is also seen as a prophecy – that 10,000 can fall on your right and 1000 on your other side (v 7), but you won’t let fear overcome you, because we’ve learned to make Yehovah our refuge.

We have to get ready for some very, very indescribably tough times. How does one prepare for war? Or the Olympics? By putting ourselves through very tough experiences ahead of time – so we learn how to handle these times and learn where to look and what to do.

So whatever your fears are, let's learn to be victorious over fear. This started out as a personal study for me, because I've had to face a lot of fears over my lifetime. Many of you also have fears. What are they?

- Fear of having a dread disease (I do still have several to deal with).
- Fear of what's coming ahead.
- Fear of hurricanes and tornadoes.
- Fear of not earning enough money to pay one's bills or keep from losing your home.
- Fear of divorce or being estranged from your own children?
- Fear of a worldwide economic collapse and losing everything we have materially?
- Fear that the lump you feel could be cancer – and then finding out it is.
- Fear that maybe God just may not heal you this time?
- And thousands of other fears and worries about our loved ones, about snakes in the yard, or pains we're going through.

It's NORMAL to feel fear in very scary times. It's normal. But you and I have been called to BEAT fear.

“THE ‘IF NOT’ FACTOR”

One thing we need to face up to right away too: what I call “the IF NOT factor”. We all know we should learn to not be afraid since we have a great God watching over us. True. **But here's the kicker:**

GOD - quite often – DOESN'T save us from the pain and scary times but makes us go through them, sometimes even ending in death. That's the truth. We have to accept that from our Maker as part of this discussion. For every Daniel saved from the lions, there were thousands of others who were not saved, but torn apart in the Roman Coliseum. What I'm saying is this: *all the faith in the world may not always keep you from facing some terrifying times – including death.*

John the Baptist was beheaded. The Son of God was crucified. Most of the apostles were crucified, beheaded or tortured before they died. So this is what I call the “But if not” factor about facing fears. *We should look to our God, and quite often He WILL deliver us – but what if he doesn't? That's a prospect every honest believer has to face.*

- Daniel's 3 friends – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – the story of not bowing to Nebuchadnezzar's idol.

So here's the “if not” part of this story.

Daniel 3:1-18 (here's the written account; I'll summarize on audio)

King Nebuchadnezzar had built a large gold idol that he required everyone to worship when the music started. IT was reported to him that three government Jews were not bowing down. In his fury, old King Neb ordered them to be brought to him – and here's where we pick up the story in **Daniel 7:13- to the end.**

13 "Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? 15 Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If that is the case, **our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace**, and He **will** deliver us from your hand, O king.

18 BUT IF NOT, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

So the "IF NOT" factor is that we accept that though our Maker CAN save us and spare us from all pain, horrors and death – sometimes he doesn't. And living by faith says that even that's OK with us.

Faith is not just about believing everything will work out great, right here and now – but being OK even if God tests us by making us go through the painful trial. We can't allow ourselves to remain disappointed with God when he "fails" us, or fails to heal, or lets someone die, or lets Christians be beheaded. Our lives are designed actually to lead us to – no matter what – to trust our God, to trust him, trust him, trust him. Again, no matter what.

So – oftentimes these terrifying trials are tests from our Savior to see if we will remain faithful and looking to him no matter what.

Even Paul recounts the incredible things our great God made HIM go through!

2 Corinthians 11:22-25+

"Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are they ministers of Christ? — I speak as a fool — I am more: in labors more abundant, in **stripes** above measure, in **prisons** more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep..." and he goes on for several more verses.

And through all this, Paul says he learned to be content with food and clothing and whatever life threw at him (**Philippians 4:11**). That's our goal too. Imagine if we can be "content" – even if we're in prison for the gospel's sake, or have our home taken from us or have a painful health condition that won't heal up.

You may have heard of the Navy Seal Team 6, the best trained troops in the world. Several have actually died in training because it's so tough. Well, you and I are being prepped for much more than just an elite military team. How could we possibly be prepared to rule with Christ as his elite team without a rigorous and sometimes painful and frightening life – so we can learn to trust our Lord, to trust him, trust him, no matter what. And we WILL come through it all – stronger and better than ever, in Christ.

If you're not in a terrifying ordeal today – remember this sermon, and come back to it again and again when you do face fearful times. And – you will face tough times! I will. We all will. We enter the Kingdom through MUCH tribulation (**Acts 14:22**).

7 points in DEFEATING FEAR

First again understand that having fear is normal. It's what we do with it, or about it, that makes all the difference. One could come up with 50 points I suppose, but these are the main ones that help me.

- 1. We can face and conquer fear better the more we COME TO KNOW our great God as our loving FATHER and Christ as our incredible Husband-to-be – who do all they can for us.**

Story if my children got scared – I reminded them I would be with them. I know I'd take a bullet – without hesitation – for any one of my children or grandchildren, if I could. When my children were very young, if I was with them they were fine. They felt safe because they knew I would protect them and watch over them.

When we come to really know our Father in heaven and our beloved Master, we should – in this agape love we receive – start to cast out fear. **1 John 4:18** says *"there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear..."* If we are truly experiencing the love of the Father, we should have a peace about us.

His Majesty, our Saviour, commands us --"Do NOT worry". It's one of his commands. So when we worry, what are we saying? We're saying we wonder if our God and our Saviour are up to the task of handling what we face. And SO many times we find our God saying to various ones, "Fear not. Don't be afraid – I'm your full body shield (Gen 15:1). Shalom. Have peace" – things like that. So what do we do? We FEAR! We've got to get on top of that!

Fear IMMOBILIZES at times.

- ***Unconquered fear just begets more fear!***
- **Fear can also lead us to sin** and try to handle things ourselves outside of God's way.
- **Fear spreads to those all around us** – so God actually made a rule that the fearful should be sent home, like he did with Gideon's original army. So we must come to know our God as the loving ABBA, a DADDY. And—*our Abba happens to be ALMIGHTY GOD*, the most powerful and loving Being there is in the universe!

Matthew 7:7-12

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 *If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*"

At the end of **Matthew 6:25-33** – Christ says over and over – DO NOT WORRY at least 4x – don't worry about your life, clothing, food, or anything! If God takes care of the birds and the flowers of the field, how much more will he take care of you and me. Do not worry. He says pagans and unbelievers are the worriers and fearful. Let's not be part of that!

If you look for it, you'll hear the gentleness of God in so many places. He longs for us to really get to know him- and know him as he really is – a God of mercy, gentleness, lovingkindness, as he told Moses on MT. Sinai (**Exodus 34:5-7**) when Moses went up for the 2nd set of 10 commandments. "Yehovah, Yehovah Elohim (LORD God), merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...." – you get the idea!

Even though he was often angry with Israel for their idolatry and disobedience as he lead them out of Egypt, don't forget: Yehovah never stopped providing them with shade from the cloud, a soft light at night and warmth, and water from the Rock, and manna by day for food. Plus their sandals and clothing never wore out. What a loving Creator we have.

Elsewhere Yeshua reminds us that nothing can possibly happen to us without God's foreknowledge, will and plan. He knows the hairs on our head. **Not a single sparrow** falls to the ground without him knowing even that! How much more is he aware of our ordeals? (**Matthew 10:31**). The idea that "time and chance happens to all" is not something I accept – for children of God. MY Almighty Daddy knew – and allowed or willed – whatever has happened to me long before it happened. I wish I had time to read through **Psalms 139** again, one of my all-time favorite chapters. DO take time to write that down and read it on your own after the sermon. He knows our thoughts and everything about us before we do!

And when we understand the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, and his father – we will understand our Abba so much more. The younger son had just squandered the family inheritance on booze, drunken parties, whores and wasteful living. He had brought shame on to the family name. *It was when the son remembered the Father's GOODNESS – that he “woke up” and returned home (repented).* You do the same. Focus on the goodness of God when you are afraid or feel disappointed with Him.

And yet – since the Prodigal's father represents GOD in the story and HIS relationship with us – ***this was the time God ran!*** Ran where? Ran to hug and welcome home his beloved SON, to rejoice with him, to celebrate him and restore him as a full son in his home – in spite of all the horrid things he had done. That's gotta be one of my favorite stories. *That's my story.* And my God RAN to me, and RAN to you, and held me in His arms, and said, “Welcome home, son. I forgive. I want to celebrate you and all's well”.

Here's the song “When God ran”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nTNhIE2GyM> It takes a while to get going into it, but it's very moving (at least to me), since this is my story.

When we see our God for what he truly is – a powerful God, yes, but He's also your very own Daddy God – wow, praise Him, wow – this is why when we understand He is in us and we're in him, and he's there all the time, surely we can face our fears better.

When we worry, when we fear, we are saying those giant troubles are bigger and stronger than our Daddy! NO way! But I did this study for me, remember. I get there too – fearful and worried. Time we all learn how to beat this and glorify our father by facing our fears with Him!

2. So #1 – COME TO KNOW God as a kind, loving God. #2 -- Now FACE what you fear – and look to him all the time – not just in fearful times. Isolate your fears and take them to Christ and our Father and leave them there. PRAY first thing.

Don't you just love it when someone who went through a fearful event is described as “all she could do eventually was pray and hope.” This is so backward.

From our Creator's perspective, what we fear makes NO sense – compared to his power.

Like Zoey, our dog (sometimes timid) – Story about fearing the vacuum cleaner and how I coaxed her that all was OK. (Story is on the audio version.

Psalms 34:4

***“I sought YHVH,* and He heard me, and delivered me **from all my fears.**”**

Yeshua himself says fearfulness is a sign of having LITTLE faith (Matthew's account) or NO faith (Mark's account).

Mark 4:35-41

On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side." 36 Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. **37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling.** 38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. **40 But He said to them, "WHY are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"** 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

WHAT spiritual storm are you facing? What terrifying ordeal are you going through? Don't be among those with no faith.

Last October 2016 – Hurricane Matthew – recount story (available on the audio).

Amazing powerful instantly answered mega-prayer request. What an awesome God we serve. Used this very story to rebuke the hurricane and command it out to sea 50 miles, and within the hour, it did! Supernaturally and suddenly. (Hear the story on the audio)

I have to deal with these things too. I preach to myself as well.

Worrying can make us unfruitful. In the parable of the sower, the seed that fell in the thorny ground eventually got choked by the thorn. Christ compared the thorns to **"the cares of this world...choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful"** (Mark 4:18-19)

So what are we to do with worry? Give it away.

Psalms 55:22

"Cast your burden on Yehovah, And He shall sustain you;
He shall never permit the righteous to be moved."

Peter says the same thing **1 Peter 5:7** – to cast all your cares on to GOD *"for He cares for you"*. Let HIM carry your concerns and you get on with living. I sometimes will write my fears down on paper, present them to my Abba (daddy) in heaven in prayer and proclaim I know He is going to handle it for me. Then I shred the note. Now they're in my Father's hands.

Psalms 27:1-5

Yehovah is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear?

Yehovah is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, They stumbled and fell. 3 Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; *Though war may rise against me, In this I will be confident.*

5 For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock.

Verse 14

“Wait on YHVH; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on YHVH!”

And this one – David admits to severe fear! V. 4-5

Psalms 55:1-7

Give ear to my prayer, O God,

And do not hide Yourself from my supplication.

2 Attend to me, and hear me; **I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily,**

3 Because of the voice of the enemy,

Because of the oppression of the wicked; For they bring down trouble upon me,

And in wrath they hate me.

4 My heart is severely pained within me, And the terrors of death have fallen upon me. 5 Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, And horror has overwhelmed me.

6 So I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.

7 Indeed, I would wander far off, And remain in the wilderness.

But notice where he went with this fear:

Psalms 55:16-17

“As for me, I will call upon God, and Yehovah shall save me.

17 Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud,

And He shall hear my voice.

Psalms 56:3-4 *here also David admits fear.*

“Whenever I AM afraid, I will trust in You.

4 In God (I will praise His word), In God I have put my trust;

I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?”

Elisha – when enemy army surrounded the city he was in – asked God to open his assistant’s eyes. What did Elisha know was up there? THOUSANDS OF ANGELS circling invisibly overhead.

2 Kings 6:16-18

So he answered [the servant], **“Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”** 17 And Elisha prayed, and said, "Yehovah, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then YHVH opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, **the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire** all around Elisha.”

I’ve often told groups I’m speaking to, that if our eyes could be opened, we’d see angelic protectors above us, around us, outside the building, along the way....everywhere.

Frankly it angered the teenager David to see a giant gentile insulting the living God. When he focused on GOD, he had no fear of Goliath. What’s YOUR giant problem? What’s your Goliath in your life? You have them... now focus on God instead and destroy those fearful thoughts.

Now some of my favorite verses:

Isaiah 26:3-4

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You,

Because he trusts in You.

4 Trust in Yehovah forever, For in Yah, Yehovah, is everlasting **strength.**”

Jeremiah 29:11-13

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says Yehovah, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon Me

and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”

In fearful times – read and re-read **Psalms 91**. I wish I had the time to read it right now. You be sure you do. Be sure you fill your mind each day with daily STUDY of his word. FILL your mind with scripture. I prefer to hear Cd’s of the Bible rather than talk radio that just upsets me. And I refuse depressing music or anti-God music. Study and listen to scripture instead.

3. **MONITOR AND DIRECT ALL THOUGHTS to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.**
(Set up an armed checkpoint to the gate of your mind)

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”

Your thoughts are so important. If you want to know what your thoughts have been like lately, just check your MOODS and how you’re FEELING lately. What you think about is going to be guiding how you FEEL about things. If you feel wretched, afraid, discouraged, down in the dumps, abandoned, alone, forsaken – change your stinking thinking! It’s our thinking that makes us feel like we do. If you can learn that one point, the sermon’s been worth it.

This applies to far more than just fear. When we covet, or lust, or dwell on vengeance, or think we can’t forgive someone else – hey, those are not thoughts from Christ! Pass those thru the security gate of your mind and tell them they’re not welcome in your mind!

REBUKE wrong thoughts, as Yeshua did to Peter when Peter said, “Oh no, you’re not going to be crucified.” Do you remember how Jesus answered that? He said, **“GET BEHIND me, Satan” – to Peter! Matthew 16:21-23.** Yep, to Peter! Christ knew where those thoughts had started from!

There are times I've had to go to my bedroom and shout out a rebuke to Satan to get out of my thinking! And to call on God to clean up my mind, or to resist the thoughts of fear, or worry, or lust, revenge or anything that is not of God and his holiness!

Proverbs 23:7 says **we are, or we become, what we think about** ("as a man thinks, so is he"). Don't even SPEAK OUT your fears – unless to God. That's it. IF you dwell on fears, something out there seems to bring our thoughts – good or bad – to fruition. Here's what Job said after losing just about everything and everyone dear to him:

Job 3:25

*"For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me,
And what I dreaded has happened to me."*

Job had some stinking thinking going on. As Prov 23:7 said, as we think, so we are. When we dwell on fearful thoughts, the likelihood of those fears happening, increases. So Prov 4:23 says we must keep our hearts with all diligence. So we have to bring every thought into captivity to Jesus Christ. You're in a WAR. Live your life with that awareness!

Our thoughts! They can help put you in line with God – or lead you to sin, worry and defeat. my life.

James 1:12-15

"Blessed is the man **who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life** which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires [starting with our thoughts] and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death"

It starts with thinking. Yehovah made the decision to send the worldwide flood when He determined that humanity's thinking was entirely evil- Genesis 6:5 – "...that every intent of the thoughts of the heart was only evil continually."

So we need to bring every thought to the captivity of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 10:3-6). WE have to make every thought pass through our "security gate" after we put on the armor of God so we can reject the wrong thoughts and not let them inside.

You can always figure out what you're thinking about by simply checking your moods and how you're feeling. If you're angry, upset, worried, depressed, fearful, can't sleep – you're letting stinking thinking get into your head. I preach to myself too.

John 14:27

"Peace I leave with you, MY peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. LET NOT your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

But most of all, to get rid of fearing certain things. Monitor and clean up your thoughts.

Nor will you let thoughts that question God linger. Don't let thoughts that make you ask "WHY Lord", linger. The "WHY did you do, or allow, that God?" – kind of question will end up often depressing you. We have to simply trust. We cannot know and understand all the ways of God. We just cannot. But we can trust. (See my brand new blog on "Why, God, why?"

4. GET RIGHT PERSPECTIVE ON THIS LIFE – it's not about this life anyway. LOOK instead to ETERNITY; to what awaits us, AHEAD OF US in eternity.

OK, so we know that. But you ask, "but you said God still allows pain, suffering, catastrophes, and anguish. So now what?"

Great question and we DO have to face this point. Get the right perspective on this life. It's not about this life. And we all will someday die. Most of us – not quietly in our sleep. And yet - -yes, though we have a wonderful Abba who is all powerful, he is toughening us up and wants us to learn, NO MATTER WHAT, to TRUST HIM, TRUST HIM, TRUST HIM.

Let's learn the lesson of HEBREWS 11. Those folks were willing to go through all the things they did – because they saw a city whose builder and maker was GOD! They looked to the END RESULT, the GREATER reward coming ahead. Paul urges us to remember that;

Romans 8:18

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

So – yes, we will have sufferings. Yes, Hebrews 11 lists so many tests and trials – but it's not about this life. They looked ahead.

So if our child dies, he or she dies. But the child only sleeps, and we'll see him or her again! But we should not become disappointed with God (Hear my sermon, "When God Disappoints"). But humanly it's so NATURAL to feel like – "Hey God, where were you?" Why did I have to have the horrible car accident? Couldn't you have prevented it?" That's all part of your TEST. Don't fail it! I have a recent blog "Why, God? Why?" that goes into this concept. (Yes, I hope you do check out the Blogs on this site).

Even Yeshua did say – "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" – but he was able to endure the incredible pain, shame and horrors of the cross, how? **Hebrews 12:2** – "...who, for the JOY set BEFORE HIM endured the cross...." He looked ahead. That's our example.

Romans 8:37-39

"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither **death** nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other

created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Look at this example in Hebrews 10.

Hebrews 10:32-36 Holman Bible Publishers

“Remember the earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. 33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to taunts and afflictions, and at other times you were companions of those who were treated that way. 34 For you sympathized with the prisoners and accepted with joy the confiscation of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves have a better and enduring possession. 35 So don't throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36 For you need endurance, so that after you have done God's will, you may receive what was promised.”

I wanted to save that to the end, but I sensed some of you were having thoughts of – “OK, so our God is a powerful Almighty God, but if he doesn't save us when he can, ...so what?” In the pain, that's a normal thought. But learn, learn, learn – it's all a test. It's to toughen you up. It's to build your faith and trust in Him NO matter what. Some things you and I are just going to have to go through. That's OK.

That's what our Jesus our Example did – His Majesty, our Beloved, Yeshua the Son of God himself. Be turning to Hebrews 12. After all the cloud of witnesses portrayed for us – here's what we read about how Yeshua himself got through the horror, terror and pain of the cross:

Hebrews 12:1-2

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 **looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross**, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

So whatever our fear, we have this example. We're told we have cancer? Get people praying for you. Do what you can do. But look ahead. If worse comes to worst, we look to eternity.

The next point is a way to be sure our thinking STAYS positive.

5. A GREAT WAY TO CHANGE STINKING THINKING IS TO PRAISE AND GIVE THANKS EVEN BEFORE WE SEE THE ANSWER.

Philippians 4:6-9

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the **peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus**.”

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.”

Hear my sermon –Praising God before we see the answers. Paul and Silas were such a great example of this – read their story in last half of Acts 16.

I promise you, nothing seems to get you out of fear and worry and depression faster than just start finding things – everything – to start saying out loud how grateful you are for.... Your kids, your wife, your home, your Savior, the red cardinal that comes to your bird feeder, for EVERYTHING!

Changing your fearful thoughts to ones of THANKSGIVING is a definite problem-solver. Find things to be thankful for. Say it. You’ve heard the saying –“I was upset I had no nice new shoes, until I saw the war veteran with his legs blown off, no feet.”

If the door you’ve been praying for and hoping for doesn’t open – then it’s not your door. But start thanking anyway! Our Abba may have something far better – now or later.

But what do we do? We sit and stew over the “why” question. “WHY, WHY Father do you not help me? Why didn’t you help me when you could have? Why are you not answering our prayers” – we beg of God – and our moods change to negative.

THANK him instead.

6. Don’t do this alone if you can help it. 2 are better than one. Certainly FOCUS ON GOD – at all times, and especially when you feel abandoned by people or all alone.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

“Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor.

10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.

But woe to him who is alone when he falls. For he has no one to help him up.

And if two lie down together, they will keep warm; how can one be warm alone?

12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him.

And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

With our Beloved, we truly are never alone. He sees all and is in us, and we’re in him. We’re part of him, part of his body. He feels, sees, hears, and experiences your life, your thoughts, your fears. You’re not alone. He’s right there. REALIZE that.

Reach out to others, to friends, to family, to your minister – but most of all, cry out to your Beloved. “Behold, I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine.” –Ecc 6:2. Never forget that, and it will help in fearful times.

7. TAKE ACTION on your fears. Fear immobilizes. GET OUT OF that stranglehold by action. Taking action is such a relief at times. Ask, “What would Yeshua do? What does my God want me to do right now?” PRAY about it. Ask for steps.

There’s a time to wait and just see what God will do. Absolutely. But there’s also a time to move. In **Exodus 14:13-16** –please read it – Moses told everyone to stand still at the Red Sea and see God’s deliverance, and then God said to Moses, “Why are you all standing still. MOVE! Go through the Sea!” So we tend to get it all wrong. We act when we should pray and wait. Or we just sit doing nothing when there are things God is leading us to do!

This is the true GIDEON story. Did you realize that Gideon had NORMAL fears!? God first of all gives the fearful the opportunity to leave his army. But believe me, you don’t want to leave God – or HIS army. Remember Gideon’s battle? When the FEARFUL were allowed to leave, 22,000 left!

Judges 7:2-3

“And Yehovah said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.' 3 Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.'" **And 22,000 of the people returned, and 10,000 remained.**”

TWO THIRDS of his army LEFT. TWO –THIRDS, folks. Then he lost even more -- almost ALL but 300 of the 10,000 remaining – by the next test of drinking the water, remember? How do you think GIDEON was feeling by now? The False Evidence Appearing Real (FEAR) would say –“Gideon, you are going to get CREAMED!”

Was Gideon – whom we memorialize in Children’s Bible stories – afraid? YES, and I’ll prove it. But notice how we START in fear, then ISOLATE the cause, rebuke the thoughts and refocus back on our God. That’s the “formula”.

As we read this account in Judges 7, notice the graciousness of God and patient kindness to his servant Gideon.

Judges 7:9-18

It happened on the same night that Yehovah said to him, "**Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. 10 BUT, IF you are AFRAID to go down [and do battle right now], go down to the camp with Purah your servant, 11** and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp." **Then he went down** [i.e., he was AFRAID to do battle right then and there] with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who were in the camp. 12 Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude.

(Summarize the rest of the story)

13 And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, "I have had a dream: To my surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed."

14 Then his companion answered and said, "This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp."

15 And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Arise, for Yehovah has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand." 16 ***Then*** he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet (shofar) into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers. 17 And he said to them, "Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: 18 When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, 'The sword of YEHOVAH and of Gideon!'"

In the end, we can accept trouble, pain and even death, because we're preparing for a different life – eternal life – where there will be no more sorrow, no more pain, no more suffering and no more pain. And – like Abraham – we look for a city whose maker and builder is GOD. In fact, ALL of Hebrews 11 is about our spiritual forefathers and mothers who went before us, looking past this life.

How on earth did Yeshua get through the crucifixion? We're told in **Hebrews 13:2** – "who for the JOY that was set BEFORE HIM, endured the cross, despising its shame." He looked beyond that life. Thank God HE DID.

Let's respond to this ... and start to live in a life of wonderful, peaceful, happy FAITH in him – and stop the worrying, stop the fearing, stop the moodiness... and experience the JOY of his salvation and the JOY of being IN HIM.

Closing prayer.