

(A Spiritual Leader) 11. Freed From All Fears

by Zac Poonen

A spiritual leader must not take decisions based on fear, but rather on faith in God and the knowledge that God is in control of everything on this earth.

Scripture: Psalm 91:1, Isaiah 8:12, Matthew 10:28, Galatians 1:10, Hebrews 13:6

Topics: "Faith Over Fear", "Spiritual Leadership"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of not making decisions based on the fear of men or circumstances. He highlights the dangers of fear being a weapon in Satan's arsenal and encourages making decisions based on faith in God. Poonen stresses the need for spiritual leaders to fear only God, not seeking to please men or impress them, but to focus on serving Christ wholeheartedly.

Transcript

A spiritual leader will not take decisions based on the fear of men or of circumstances.

I have a large verse hanging in the front room of my house that reads, "If you fear God, you need fear nothing else". That's the Living Bible paraphrase of Isaiah 8:12 and 13. That verse has been of tremendous help to me in the last 25 years.

Let me share with you some of the truths that I've learnt from the Lord on this matter of fear.

First of all, I've learnt that fear is one of the main weapons in Satan's armoury.

Secondly, I've learnt that I don't need to feel condemned if feelings of fear come to me at times - because I'm still in the flesh. We must be realistic and honest about this. The apostle Paul was quite honest and admitted that he had "fears within" him, at certain times (2 Cor.7:5).

The third thing I've learnt (and this is the most important) is that even if I do have fears, I must never take a decision based on fear. My decisions must always be based on faith in God - the very opposite of fear. And that's how I've sought to live for many years now. And God has helped me and encouraged me tremendously.

I now understand why Jesus so frequently said "Fear not, fear not, fear not". This is as important as the other emphasis in the New Testament : "Sin not, sin not, sin not."

Jesus was always against sin and He was always against fear. He told us to fear only God and no-one else (Matt.10:28). This is a very important lesson for us to learn, because a spiritual leader must never take any decision based on fear.

Another verse that I've had hanging in my sitting room for many years is Galatians 1:10: "If I seek to please men I cannot be the servant of Christ".

If you seek to please men you can never be a servant of the Lord. And I'll tell you it's not easy to break free from seeking to please men.

Many reports of Christian work sent from India to the West are basically meant to impress people there, so that they will support a work here financially. You have to be very careful about your motives when you write a report about your work.

A lot of sermons likewise, are prepared with the motive of impressing men and pleasing them. But those who preach with such motives can never be servants of Christ. It's easy to fool an undiscerning group of immature believers in your church that you're a great man of God. But you can't fool God and you can't fool the devil. Both God and the devil know exactly what type of person you are.

If you've a fear in your heart that someone will harm you in some way if you displease him, then you'll always try to please him. Then you can never be a servant of God. If ever you act on the basis of fear, you can be sure that it is the devil who is guiding you, and not God.

If we look back over our lives, we'll find that we've taken many decisions in the past on the basis of fear. In all those decisions, we were not led by God. The consequences of some of those decisions may not have been serious. But we missed God's best. We should act differently in future.

It's natural for us to feel fear - because we're human. For example, if you suddenly saw a cobra in front of you where you're sitting right now, you'd naturally get a shock and jump up - and adrenalin would rush into your blood stream. That's natural. But you don't live in fear of finding a cobra under every chair - everywhere you go!

We must not live in fear of anyone either.

We must never take a decision based on the fear of men or Satan. Every decision we take must be based on the fear of God and in total faith in our heavenly Father. Only then can we be sure that we're being led by the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 13:6 is a very important verse for all of us who serve the Lord. It says there: "We boldly say that the Lord is our Helper and we will not be afraid. What can any man do to us?"

We must distinguish however, between being cautious and being afraid. We must be wise - as wise as serpents - in this world. But we don't have to fear any man or woman or demon or even Satan himself.

Jesus was cautious. When He heard that people were wanting to kill Him in Judea, He didn't go there (John 7:1). That was sensible. That was wise. But Jesus was never afraid of anyone.

If you were to go into a forest at night, you'd take a torchlight with you. That's caution - not fear. If people are trying to kill you somewhere, you shouldn't go there - unless God Himself tells you to go. Jesus did finally go to Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit led Him to - and He was killed. But that was in God's will and

in God's time.

We're not afraid of any man. What harm can any man do to us if we're doing the will of God and living "in the shadow of the Almighty" (Psa.91:1). The Bible asks, "Who can harm you?" (1 Pet.3:13). God is able to make all that people do to us, work together for our good (Rom.8:28). Since that is true, why should we ever fear?

If we believe this, it will bring such tremendous authority into our lives. A lot of our spiritual authority is taken away from us by Satan, because we fear men, or seek to please them or impress them, or justify ourselves before them. We must get rid of these attitudes totally.

But this is not easy. It's a constant battle. Once you've decided to stop trying to please A, B and C in one group, you may imagine that you've finished with seeking to please men. But very soon you'll find that you're trying to please D, E and F in some other group! And this is endless! We've got to fight this battle faithfully until the very end, if we want to break free from ALL men. We must be constantly on the alert against this sin and battle it. We must never seek for the approval of any man.

There are some believers who haughtily say that they don't care for anybody's opinion. But such people are not spiritual. They're just arrogant. The opinion of a godly elder brother can be very valuable. He will be able to tell us things that he sees in us that we can't see ourselves. To respect and honour such a man and to be submissive to his authority can actually help us a lot. The important thing is to learn how to submit to a godly man, without becoming his slave.

If we want our church-members to fear only God and to be free from the fear of men and demons, then we must be like that ourselves, first.

It is because God is in control of everything on this earth that we don't fear anyone or anything.

Once, when I was planning to go to a certain country (where preaching the gospel is forbidden), the Lord reminded me of Matthew 28:18-19. I saw then, that it was because the Lord has all authority in heaven and on earth, that He has commanded us to go to every nation and make disciples. If we don't go forth on that basis, we'll face problems wherever we go.

The word "therefore" is the most important word in the great commission in Matthew 28. Most preachers emphasise the word "Go". That's good. But on what basis are we to go? On the basis of our Lord having total authority over all people on this earth and over all demons as well. If you don't really believe that, then it's better that you don't go anywhere!

This verse in Matthew 28 came to me as a new revelation at that time. Then I realised that I could go to that country without any hesitation. There were fears within me - naturally - when I entered that country. But I didn't take my decision on the basis of those fears.

If you think there's some nation in this world where the Lord Jesus does NOT have total authority, then I'd advice you not to go there! I would not go there myself. I'd be scared. But thank God there's no such place anywhere on this earth! Every corner of this earth is under the authority of our Lord.

In the same way, if you think there's some man somewhere (however powerful he may be), over whom our Lord doesn't have authority, then you'll have to live in fear of him always. But thank God there's no such person anywhere. Our Lord has authority over every single human being. Even King

Nebuchadnezzar understood that - as we read in Daniel 4:35.

If there's some demon somewhere who was not conquered by our Lord on Calvary, but who somehow escaped defeat, then we must live in fear of that demon always. But there's no demon like that who was not defeated on the cross. Satan himself was defeated there - permanently. That's what delivers us from all fear of Satan and his demons, and gives us great boldness in our ministry.

So we go wherever God calls us to go. There may be risks in some places. But to the best of our knowledge, if we feel the Lord is leading us there, then we need not fear to go. The question is not whether there is persecution of Christians in a particular place or not. The only question is whether the Lord has asked us to go there or not. If He has, then His authority will back us up totally. We need have no fear whatsoever. But if God has not called us to go somewhere, then we should not go, no matter how much men may try and persuade us to go, or how much the spirit of adventure within us makes us want to go!

We must ask ourselves why we're going to a particular place. If we're going because we want to make disciples, and have no other ambition, then we can be certain that the Lord will be with us always - "even unto the end of the age", as He promised. But we may have other motives. The Lord "examines our heart's attitude" (Jer.12:3) and tests our motives.

The Lord won't commit Himself to everyone who calls himself a believer. We read that in John 2:24. But if you can honestly say to the Lord: "Lord, I'm going to this place only because I feel You've called me to go there. And I'm going there only to make disciples, to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit and to teach them to do everything that You have commanded. I'm not going there to make money or to get a name for myself or for any other personal reason" - if you can say that honestly, then you'll certainly have the Lord's authority backing you always.

And then you won't have to live in fear, wondering what will happen to your wife and children or how your financial needs will be met. The only question that is important is "Has God called you or not?" Is God sending you there or is some man sending you there? Or is it the spirit of adventure that's driving you?

If you've got some program other than God's program, then I can't offer you a single promise from Scripture to comfort you. But if Your program is the same as God's program - to make disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit and teach them to do everything Jesus commanded - then I can assure you, you don't have to fear men or demons.

Every servant of God must know how to deliver those who are possessed by demons - by exercising the authority there is in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Demons aren't afraid of you or me. They're only afraid of the Lord, Who defeated them on the cross. That's why it's important to know clearly that Jesus Christ took away all of Satan's power on the cross (Col. 2:14,15). This is the good news of the gospel that we must experience first of all and then proclaim to all men. If we believe it, we can deliver others from Satan's power.

We should not be afraid of what demons may try and do to us - because they cannot touch a hair on our heads without God's permission. But many believers in India are afraid that someone may do some witchcraft on them some day. Why do they have such fears? Because they do not know that Satan was defeated on the cross.

I remember meeting a pastor once who had been sick for a long time, who blamed his sickness on witchcraft that his enemies had done on him. How could that be? Is the Lord less powerful than the power of black magic and witchcraft? No. It was that pastor's unbelief that made him feel that way. No demonic power can stand against the authority and power of our Lord - either on earth or in the heavenlies where the demons operate from (Eph.6:12). If you don't believe that, I'd suggest that you stop serving the Lord and go and do something else. Stop being a preacher because you'll transmit your fear and unbelief to others. Fear is Satan's weapon. Don't let him ever use it on you.

Demons may at times be permitted to harass a believer under the permissive will of God - as in the case of Job. God permitted a messenger of Satan to trouble even the apostle Paul (2 Cor.12:7). That was as irritating to Paul as a thorn in his body. It may have been a sickness or a person who troubled Paul continuously, wherever he went. If we have a thorn in our flesh and we can't pull it out ourselves, we should ask God to remove it. But God may at times say "No", as He said to Paul, if He sees that that thorn is accomplishing the greater purpose of keeping us humble. Satan was even permitted to hinder Paul from travelling to Thessalonica once. But Timothy could go instead and God's purposes were still fulfilled there (1 Thess.2:18; 3:2).

Let me emphasise this however, that a born-again Christian can never be possessed by a demon. Unfortunately, many preachers these days, are preaching the unScriptural doctrine that believers can be "demonized - and thus bringing many believers under fear and condemnation.

Such preachers cannot quote a single Scripture to justify their teaching. But they say that they've come across such cases in their experience. Thus they exalt their experience above the Word of God. This itself proves that they are wrong.

Christ and a demon can never dwell together in the same heart. Light and darkness cannot co-exist in one place. It is true that some of the Jews in the synagogues where Jesus preached, were demon-possessed. But we don't read of a single case of a born-again believer (after Acts 2), being demon-possessed.

A Christian may be harassed from outside by demons, as Paul and Job were - but that too, only with God's permission. And if God permits such harassment, you can be absolutely sure, as in the cases of Job and Paul, that it will work for your spiritual benefit.

If ever you're in doubt as to whether someone is demon-possessed or not, just ask him to make these three confessions with his whole heart:

1. Jesus Christ is my Lord.
2. Jesus Christ came in the flesh and overcame sin.
3. Satan, you were defeated by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. I don't belong to you any more.

Demon-possessed people will not be able to make these three confessions with their spirit.

Every time we're sick, we should pray to be healed. But we can tell the Lord that if He plans to bring some spiritual profit to us through the sickness and thus glorify His Name, then we will accept it joyfully.

Under the old covenant, God promised a long healthy life to all those who honoured their parents. What did that involve? It meant that God would watch over such children as they grew up, ensuring that no fatal

accident or sickness came upon them. Did God keep a special watch over those children who honoured their parents? Yes. It was a real and meaningful promise that God kept. God controlled circumstances so that a child who honoured his parents lived long on the earth.

In the same way, God can control the circumstances of our lives too, so that we don't die before we have finished doing God's will - whether that be at the age of 33 or at the age of 90.

Under the new covenant, we know that long life is not the greatest thing, but a life spent in doing the will of God, whether it be short or long. Jesus Himself lived only up to the age of 33, but He finished the task His Father gave Him.

David Brainerd lived to the age of 29 and Watchman Nee to the age of 70. The important thing however was that (as far as we know) each of them completed the task God had assigned them, before they left this earth. And God sovereignly controlled all the circumstances of their lives until then, so that no sickness or accident shortened their lives until their task on earth was done.

There are many germs and bacteria on this earth that invade our bodies. Some of them even have the potential to kill us! But God is powerful enough to control those germs so that they don't kill us.

God is powerful enough to control the drunken drivers on the roads so that they don't run us down and kill us either.

He watches over us every moment and never slumbers or sleeps. If we believe that, we'll be free from the fear of circumstances, fear of sicknesses, fear of accidents and from every other type of fear.

If you fear God, you really need fear nothing else.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/a-spiritual-leader-11-freed-from-all-fears/>

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