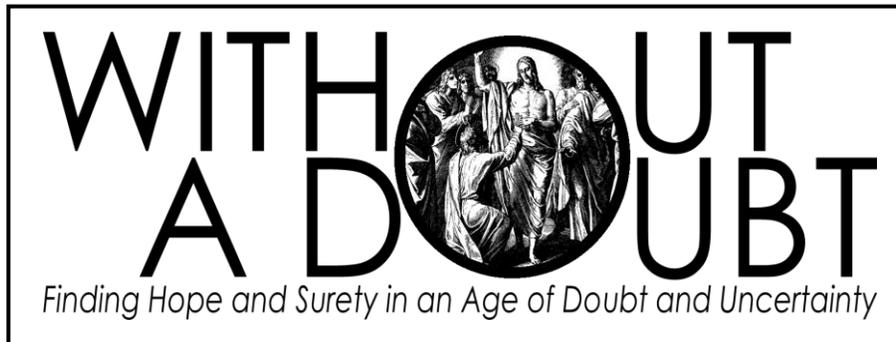


Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, August 22, 2018 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



FEARFUL DOUBT

The Place Fear Plays in Doubt

1 John 5:13, Luke 10:38-42, Matthew 6:25-34, Psalm 37

There are so many things to be “uncertain” about in our day... our future, our health, our finances, our happiness, the direction of our world, cultural woes, the future for our children, and much more. This doubt and uncertainty can literally paralyze one with a fear and keep us from moving forward in our faith and being all that God has called us to be. Famous American essayist, lecturer and poet, **Ralph Waldo Emerson** once said, **“Fear defeats more people than any other one thing in the world.”** And I might add it defeat and paralyze the lives of many professing believer and keep them from enjoying the full benefits of their faith and the victorious Christian life that Christ died to give them.

The famous and well known American pastor/preacher, **Harry Emerson Fosdick** eloquently ties the place that fear plays into doubt with these words, **“Doubt and fear imprisons, faith liberates; doubt and fear paralyzes, faith empowers; doubt and fear disheartens, faith encourages; doubt and fear sickens, faith heals; doubt and fear makes useless, faith makes serviceable.”** Thank of that quote from Harry Emerson Fosdick:

1. **How does doubt and fear imprison?** – **Proverbs 29:25** **“The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts (doesn’t doubt) in the Lord shall be safe.”** **Psalm 27:1-3** **“¹The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ²When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. ³Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war may rise against me, in this I will be confident.”**

2. **How does doubt and fear paralyze?** – Psalm 46:1-3 “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.”
3. **How does doubt and fear dishearten?** - Matthew 14:31 ³¹Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you **doubt**?"
4. **How does doubt and fear sicken?** – Proverbs 12:25 “An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up? Proverbs 3:5-8 “Trust in the Lord with all you heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do no be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to you body and nourishment to your bones.”
5. **How does doubt and fear make useless?** - James 1:6 ⁶But when you ask, you must believe and not **doubt**, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown **and** tossed by **the** wind.

Among all our internal jitters, none is more paralyzing than fear and the doubt it produces. So much of life is accompanied by these fearful and doubt-filled moments. So many otherwise enjoyable and fulfilling experiences are not undertaken because the roads leading to them, as Paul Tournier puts it, are “guarded by the dragons of fear and doubt” (*The Strong and the Weak*).

True, vivid words! The simple fact is... no one is ever completely rid of all fears and their accompanying doubts. Our goal, then, is to learn how to lead victorious Christian life in the midst of these fearful doubts. How to overcome and defeat the fear and doubt when it rears its head and threatens to steal our joy and hope... our faith.

I. LAYING THE GROUND WORK FOR DEFEATING FEARFUL DOUBT (2 Timothy 1:7)

What does the bible teach about fear and doubt? Fear and doubt, do tend to go together. Fear produces doubt. When we become fearful, we become doubtful. We can become doubtful about a lot of things, but the worst thing that can happen, is that we become doubtful about God. Let’s start by posing what may seem to be a very simple question: What is fear and how does it relate to doubt?

A key in the discussion concerning fear and how it relates to doubt is to distinguish the difference between the two... doubt and fear. How are they alike and how are they distinctively different, and how do they play into each other. Perhaps in realizing the similarities and differences, as well as their relation we may begin to deal with our own fears and doubts.

Notice in the following chart the commonality between the two:

	DOUBT	FEAR
Definition	A feeling of uncertainty or lack of sureness; to feel uncertain about; to fear or be afraid, uneasiness and apprehension; a wariness	An unpleasant feeling of uncertainty caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat.

Noun	1. Uncertainty 2. Disbelief	1. Feelings of uncertainty and panic 2. Mental duress, anxiety, fright
Verb	1. To lack confidence 2. To disbelieve 3. To question or suspect	1. To be afraid of 2. To be fearful of 3. To be uncertain of
Synonyms	1. Hesitation 2. Uncertainty 3. Mistrust 4. Reservation 5. Misgiving	1. Terror 2. Fright 3. Uncertainty 4. Panic 5. Alarm

Although fear and doubt are separate entities, they are often closely associated. Just like faith, hope and love are attributes of God, fear, doubt and unbelief often run in the same circle and are often the tool of the enemy to defeat the life and faith of a believers. Here are a couple of examples of how this works in relation to this study and the things we have been looking at:

CASE STUDY 1: Johnny is a 18 years old Christian who grew up in the church. He grew up hearing about Jesus, so it was natural that he would follow Christ at an early age. He was “saved” and baptized when he was 7 and has been in church since that time. Every time Johnny hears a particularly poignant (moving, emotionally charged) sermon on the subject of the hell, or the frightening details of the end times, or when he hears verses like, “Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven,” Johnny feels a sense of panic and anxiety rising up in side of him. He tries not to let it show, but inside he is shaking in fear. That fear becomes so pronounced that it causes him to doubt if he is really saved. These fears and doubts are so pronounced that they often keep him up at night.

CASE STUDY 2: Evelyn has been a faithful Christian for many years. She has been known as a prayer warrior, a faithful church member, a tithers to her church. She if faithful to her Ladies Sunday school class, and highly respected by all the other ladies as a stalwart (committed, unfaltering, steadfast) Christian. She has always spoken of heaven and the afterlife with great hope and seeming anticipation... as something she longs for. Recently however, Evelyn was diagnosed with a rare form of Cancer and given a short time to live. The doctors also warned her that this type of Cancer may carry with a painful and difficult passing. Evelyn has always seem “ready to go” but the recent news has shaken her to her core. She has become very fearful and has even said such things as, “Why is God allowing this to happen to me?,” “I’ve been faithful for all these years, why would God put me through this?” At times her fear has caused her wonder of God has forgotten about her, if He really loves her, or even if she is being punished for something. Her fears and doubts have even shaken some around her saying, “If this can happen to such a strong Christian like Evelyn, and she can struggle with these doubt, what does that say about me.” And they too have begun to fear and doubt their own walk with God.

(1) How do fear and doubt relate to one another in these case studies?

- (2) *How do you feel about each of these situations? How common are they, and do these case studies perhaps reflect the lives of many? What does this say to us about fear and doubt?*
- (3) *How might you help each as they struggle with fear and doubt? What might you share with them to help them through this difficult time in their lives?*

1. DEFINING FEAR AND DOUBT

2 Helpful and Important Definitions: *(these definition are based on The American Heritage Dictionary)*

- (1) **FEAR** – “A distressing emotion of uncertainty aroused by impending danger, evil, pain, etc., whether the threat is real or imagined; the feeling or condition of being afraid, concerned or anxious.”
- (2) **DOUBT** – “To be uncertain about; consider questionable or unlikely; hesitate to believe, to fear or be apprehensive about; a feeling of distrust, fear or dread.”

Notice the common ideas and threads that tie these two distinctive entities (fear and doubt) so closely together.

3 Common Words that Tie Fear and Doubt Together:

- (1) **Uncertainty**
- (2) **Anxiety**
- (3) **Dread**

2. **GOD’S WORD ON FEAR AND DOUBT** - When we are looking to determine the true nature of something, the best place to look is in God's Word. What does the Bible say about fear and doubt? What is fear really? And how does it relate to doubt in Scripture? The Bible has a lot to say on the subject really, but there is one important and I think definitive verse that speaks to fear and doubt. It speaks to “fear” explicitly (obviously, clearly stated) and to “doubt” implicitly” (implied, indirectly stated)

I want you to notice what the Apostle Paul writes about the subject to his young protégé in the ministry, Timothy. This is such a telling word about fear and by implication doubt. It gives us some a good understanding about fear and doubt if we are to lay the ground word toward defeating this enemy in our lives as believers. Notice **2 Timothy 1:7**;

“For God hath not given us a spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” - 2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)

In other words, implied by Paul’s Holy Spirit inspired words is the idea that this “spirit of fear” does not come from God, but from the enemy and it cause us to have doubt, unbelief (or a lack of faith), to be filled with an uncertainty, and a shaky heart and life (mind).

Most times, we know the scriptures that deal with each of these negative attributes. However the "effective working of your faith will silence the voice of the enemy and establish God's parameters around your life and vision. The fact that God has not given you a **spirit of fear**, but of power, love and a sound mind • must become the bedrock to combat the paralysis that fear and doubt intends to release in your life.

Important Scriptural Truths Concerning Fear and Doubt Based on 2 Timothy 1:7:

- (1) **Fear and its resultant doubt is a spirit** – Notice that Paul calls it “a spirit of fear.”
- (2) **Fear and its resultant doubt is a spirit that God did not give to us** – Notice that Paul also says that “God hath not give us...” this spirit, therefore it is not of God.
*Note: I do believe that there is a type of fear (reverence) that comes from God, and I also believe that the emotion of fear is a God given emotion that can be a warning mechanism placed inside of us for protection and for learning/wisdom (see Proverbs 9:10, 10:27, 14:27, 15:33, 16:6, 19:23)
- (3) **Fear and its resultant doubt is the opposite of what God desire to give us** – Paul mentions power, love and a sound mind as our protection from fear. He mentions each of these in verse 7 of 2 Timothy 1. The word “power” reminds us that positively, God has already given us as believer all the spiritual resources we need for every trial and threat. Ephesians 3:20 says, *“²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.”* Divine power – effective, productive spiritual energy belongs to believers. He also mentions “love” – this kind of love centers on pleasing God and seeking others’ welfare before one’s own. And “a sound mind” refers to a disciplined self-controlled and properly prioritized mind. This is the opposite of fear and cowardice that causes disorder and confusion. Focusing on the sovereign nature and the perfect purposes of our eternal God allows believers to control their lives with godly wisdom and confidence in every situation even those that may cause fear in our lives.

*Observation: Fear and it’s resultant doubt is much more than just an emotion (just as most emotions are). Fear and doubt is a spirit, and it is a spirit that does not come from God. Fear is a spirit of torment sent out by our enemy the devil. But, we should not be surprised. The Bible says that *“we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world...and against evil spirits in the heavenly places”* (Ephesians 6:12 NLT). God says that Satan only comes to *“steal, and to kill, and to destroy”* (John 10:10). And that is what the spirit of fear is sent out to do. Fear and the doubt it produces in us is, quite plainly, a spiritual attack designed, not only to steal your peace, but your destiny in Christ. As Believer’s it is our responsibility to learn how to safeguard our mind against these attacks, and reclaim what God has in store for us.*

3. **A BIBLICAL EXAMPLE OF WHAT FEAR AND DOUBT CAN DO (Matthew 14:22-33)** – Fear and fear induced doubt can steal your joy, your peace, your hope, your victory and it can steal your miracle. Fear and doubt has the power to steal the miracles that God wants to do in you, and through you. An excellent example of this is

what happened to Peter in Matthew 14. He was on the edge of greatness, true victory in his life but his fear and doubt stole his miracle and that of the other disciples as well.

5 Important Truths to Grasp Concerning Fear and Doubt from the Story of Jesus

Walking on Water:

- (1) **Fear and doubt causes us to place our focus on our circumstances and situations rather than on God – *What were the immediate circumstances and situations that the disciple found themselves in our passage?*** The waves, the winds, the storm, the possibility of drowning. ***Did they have a right to be afraid and perhaps feel a sense of uncertainty and doubt?*** Yes! We would be too! Remember that fear and doubt is a very real and even necessary emotion that is God given, what is not God given is “a spirit of fear” that come from the enemy that paralyzes our faith and takes our focus off of God and causes us to doubt. ***Did this happen to the disciple in this situation?*** Yes! ***How do you know?*** They saw ghosts! That didn’t come from God, but that thought was placed there from somewhere else. That leads us to the second thing fear can do...
- (2) **Fear and doubt causes us to become obsessed with what is not reality and may never be reality – Like in this circumstance... they saw Ghosts! Remember that statistics have proven that a vast majority of the things we fear never become reality. *What does that tell us about “fear” and doubt?*** That fear is 99.9% misplaced trust!
- (3) **Fear and doubt is always (always) relieved when Jesus enters the picture – Is that the case in this passage of Scripture? Absolutely! When Jesus stepped into the boat His words were (v.27) *“Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid!”*** And Peter’s fear and doubt was calmed and was in fact so relieved that he got out of the boat in the midst of the storm and at Jesus’ bidding began to walk on water with Jesus.
- (4) **Fear and doubt is conquered only by keeping our eyes on Jesus in the midst of our circumstances and situations – So true! It couldn’t be more true, or more graphically pictured that in our story. As long as Peter kept his focus on Jesus his fears and his doubts were stilled and conquered, even in the midst of the wind and the waves and the storm. When he took his eyes off of Jesus his fears and doubts returned.**
- (5) **Fear and doubt will drown your faith – Remember Harry Emerson Fosdick’s statement about fear and doubt, *“Doubt and fear imprisons, faith liberates; doubt and fear paralyzes, faith empowers; doubt and fear disheartens, faith encourages; doubt and fear sickens, faith heals; doubt and fear makes useless, faith makes serviceable.”*** I might add doubt and fear sinks, faith and hope floats!

II. AN OVERALL GLANCE AT DEFEATING FEAR AND DOUBT (Psalm 27)

I come back to this Psalm so often (1) Because I love it, (2) Because I find it so helpful and comforting in my own life, and (3) Because it’s truths and promises so readily apply. **Psalm 27 was apparently composed by David prior to his anointing (installation) as Israel’s king.** This anointing was different from the one performed by Samuel in David’s father’s presence. For some time Israel’s monarch, Saul, had targeted his jealous hatred toward his faithful subject, David. His attacks were savage and perilous, designed to injury – even death. David had every human reason to be afraid and to perhaps doubt.

1. **SCOPE OF THE PSALMIST** – David’s thoughts traveled along two subjects We could call this psalm a song of contrasts:

2 Subjects of Psalm 27:

- (1) **Faith... *the antithesis/opposite/contrast of unbelief and doubt* (vv.1-6)** – The first half of the psalm reflects David’s faith in the face of great challenges... challenges that could have caused him to have great fear and doubt. Reminders such as *“The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?”* (v.1) are a reflection of David’s faith in the face of his many doubts and fears. It is almost as if David is reminding himself, while afraid and doubtful, why he shouldn’t be.
- (2) **Fear... *the agitator/rouser/provocateur of doubt and uncertainty* (vv.7-14)** – Obviously from this psalm we can see that David was in trouble. He speaks of adversaries, enemies, evil men who wish to devour his flesh and attack him, and war against him, and the toughest part is that David was not imagining this terrifying scene... it was a reality for his life. Perils were all around him. He walked on the edge of danger for much of his life and faced very really fears that no doubt were agitator and provocateurs of his own doubts. Some fears and uncertainties may be imaginary, but these were not and many of ours are not either. The reality is there are many, many things in this life to fear and be afraid of, to cause doubts and despair in our lives... very real and frightening circumstances and situations.

2. **Outline of the Psalm** –

- (1) **Statement of Truth and theme of the song (v.1)** – The phrase, *“... whom shall I fear...”* and *“of whom shall I be afraid?”* in verse 1 is the key to understanding the psalm.
- (2) **Declaration of trust (vv.2-6)**
- (3) **Prayer for strength (vv.7-13)**
- (4) **Conclusion: Wait! (v.14)**

III. AN INTERNAL ANALYSIS OF FEAR AND DOUBT

1. **Statement of Truth (v.1)** – *“The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?”*

2 Statements of Truth:

- (1) **Truth Statement of our Strength** – David mentions light, salvation, and stronghold – note that David didn’t say that the Lord provided these benefits, but that He Himself was those very things – at all times. The understanding of this is critical.
- (2) **Truth Statement of our Fear and Doubt** - Observe that each phrase is trailed by a probing question, *“... whom shall I fear?”* *“... of whom shall I be afraid?”* Though these appear similar, each is actually quite different and he speaks of the reality of

fears we face in this life and their accompanying doubts. Note that David does not deny the presence of fear and doubt, but he identifies them and calls them by name

2 Types of Fears:

- **Fears and doubt about life** - The term “fear” is used in David’s first question in it’s normal, everyday sense – “a feeling of anxiety, agitation and uncertainty (doubt) caused by the nearness or presence of danger or pain.” Hence fears and doubt of life.
- **Fears and doubts about man and circumstances** - On the other hand, the term “afraid” means “to be in awe... intimidated by someone (people) or something (circumstances), that may lead to doubt... doubts about ourselves and doubt about others.”

2. **Declaration of Trust (vv.2-6)** – David’s conflict was intense. He was alone. Saul’s army was against him solely. He spoke of the intimidating forces in such terms as “evil men” out to “devour my flesh” and as “enemies” in verse. 2. In verse 3 he refers to them as a “army” besieging him.” David was having some doubt here! They were an ever-present source of threat. Looking ahead to **verse 10** we see that even his parents had forsaken him. He was rejected on all fronts – except by God. However David’s reaction is worth noting in the second half of **verse 3**, “... *though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.*” *He wasn’t going to let fear and the doubt produced by those fears seize his life... He was going to trust and believe!* **Verses 4-6** describe his mindset of security – the single source of that security was his Lord. David’s life wasn’t polluted with deceptive techniques and clever reactions. Invariably, when intimidated we are more conscious of the person or event “shouting” the threats than we are of the Lord. Not so with David.

David’s single source of security and trust in the face of fear and doubt was the:

L O R D

3. **Prayer for Support (vv.7-13)** – At certain times, subjects are not enhanced by technical analysis or verse-by-verse dissection. In these verses we observe David requesting God’s support. His prayer wasn’t complicated, loaded down with religious words and clichés. He used everyday words which revealed a heart fully given to prayer. The verse alone reveal this...

- **“Hear... be merciful... answer me” (v.7)**
- **“Do not hide...turn... reject... or forsake me” (v.9)**
- **“Teach me... lead me” (v.11)**
- **Do not turn me over to... my foes” (v.12)**

David expressed bold, unrestrained fervency in his communication to God, but we often act in powerless fashion. We need to catch a bit more of David’s heart.

4. **Conclusion: Wait! (v.14)** – David comes back to a quiet stance in his own situation. All the activity he could generate couldn't solve his problem with Saul. So he said to himself (and says to us also), *"Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord" (v.14).*

IV. PRACTICAL RESPONSES TO FEAR AND DOUBT

Fear and doubt is extremely common. There are fears and uncertainties all around us that threaten to take us captive. They can be relentless. So, what can we do to ward them off, or handle them successfully when they war against us?

Practical Steps For Dealing With Fear and Doubt:

1. **When fear and doubt occur, admit them (v.1)** – Identify and openly call them by name (v.1) Do this... identify your fears and doubt right now. What is it that you fear and doubt? Identify it and openly call it by name. You actually pull some of the power away from it just by naming it!
2. **When fear and doubt have been admitted, commit them (v.7)** – Commit it to the Lord! The Lord awaits this, so give it to Him.
3. **When fear and doubt have been committed, release them (v.11)** – As you commit it to the Lord this should lead to release. Are you feeling freed from it?
4. **When fear and doubt have been released, resist them (v.13)** – What can you do to resist the return of these fears and doubts? Think through this very carefully. It will bring future victory.
5. **When fear and doubt have been resisted, stand strong** – Reread Psalm 27 and ask God for strength in this area of your life. Claim Ephesians 6:10 and following and *"Stand strong in the Lord and the power of His might."*, then get fully clothed in the armor of God as you battle your fears and doubts.