

FEAR – THE THIEF OF CHRISTIAN USEFULNESS – PART ONE

This is your Friend and Minister, dr. Joshua Uhiara, bringing you healing word from the Master, a program of the Master's Vessel Ministry which lets you know that Jesus loves you as you are, but loves you so much that He will not leave you as you are.

Greetings, friends. Today, we want to look at: Fear – the Thief of Christian usefulness. Our text is taken from Acts of the Apostles 18:9-11

Acts 18:9-11

⁹ Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city." ¹¹ And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

PRAYER:

Father, we have come again to search the scriptures; and we are trusting that Your Spirit is here to teach, for He is the Author of the Word. And so Lord, I yield to You. Have Your way now, in the lives of my friends, in Jesus Name. Amen!

To this short account we read now is the experience of Paul when he was ministering in Antioch, in Acts 18. He was receiving very stiff opposition; and the Lord came to him in the night and encouraged him with the words that we have read.

Fear – the Thief of Christian Usefulness.

I want you to complete this sentence: "What I fear the most is completed", if you will. To those who are afraid to say what they fear the most, I want to say, welcome to my club. That tells me that you are afraid so that people will not know what your fears are. Friend, every one of us is afraid of one thing or the other, at one time or another, or all the time. One dear man of God once said, and I quote him: *the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear*. The Lord's message to Paul in our text is in the present tense imperative or command. And it

is in the negative. In the original, that's the Greek Language, in which the New Testament was written, this statement that the Lord made to Paul or this command He gave him indicates the idea of discontinuing an action that is in progress. What that means is that Paul was afraid, and for a good reason. Some people will be surprised to hear that. By his own admission, in 1 Corinthians 2, a reference to the text we just read now in Acts 18, this is what the Apostle Paul said:

1 Corinthians 2:1-2

¹And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ²For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

That's what he preached. He preached Jesus Christ; and that's what he preached all the time.

³I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.

It was at this time, at this juncture, that the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him in the night by a vision, and He said to him: Do not be afraid. Stop fearing! Discontinue this fear that you are entertaining – but speak and do not keep silent. If he had continued to entertain that fear: that fear would have stolen his usefulness. Remember that the Lord told him, I have many people in this city. There are people that the Lord has already earmarked, but they had not yet come to Him or come into the Kingdom of God; and they needed to be brought into the Kingdom of God; and the agent He would use or He was to use was this Apostle Paul.

Fear is a thief of Christian usefulness. We entertain all kinds of fear: fear of people, fear of failure, fear of illness, fear of losing what we consider precious, fear of height – like myself, fear of open space, fear of small space, fear of getting caught doing the wrong thing, fear of car accidents, fear of death, fear of insects, fear of financial ruin, fear of being alone, fear of commitment; to mention just those few. And people take advantage of others as a result of these fears.

Someone offers a free advice for those who are afraid of financial ruin. He said, if you are afraid of financial ruin, good –then save, invest; keep your expenditure low; control your spending: have a budget. Another person said, if you are afraid of insects, good – keep your house clean. If you are afraid of being alone, excellent: work at your relationships. Be a good friend. Be the kind of friend people value and hold on to where you can. Let your fear motivate you into making your life a good place. We know, however, that the solution to fear is not that simple.

Let me also note that there is a good and bad fear. Good fear keeps you alive. The flight or fight response induced by fear enhances survival. There are times that fear will induce you to run to safety. If there is not this good fear, people will destroy their lives. It is this good fear that prevents you from jumping from a five-storey building. You do not even want to go too close to the edge without railings back. On the other hand, there is bad fear: that is fear that is based on imagination; fear that paralyses – fear that will not let you do useful things. I will break our discussion into three parts:

- The dimensions of fear,
- The direction of fear,
- The disarming of fear.

We may not be able to go through all these in this session. But we will complete it when we return. Let's go on to the dimension of fear.

I perceive that fear has three dimensions. You may find more.

- i. Fear is rooted in the product of the past.

The product of our past experiences has a way of inducing fear. For example, a guilty conscience: as a result of what you did in the past, is a strong weapon of fear. Take for example, the brethren of, or the brothers of Joseph whom they sold into slavery in Egypt. They came to buy food because of the famine that was in Egypt and all around Palestine. And Joseph recognized them but they did not recognize him. And he was giving them a tough time. And they said to themselves,

hmm! Are you sure that it is not what that we did to our brother (they didn't even know it was their brother who was standing before them)...are you sure that it wasn't what we did to him that is bringing all this problem upon us?

Genesis 42:21

And they did so. ²¹ Then they said to one another, "We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us."

The tyranny of the memory of the past! That was what they were struggling with. They were so much afraid as a result of the product of the past.

I have my own illustration: personal illustration. When I was in elementary school, many years ago, my friend and I went to the school one day, and we saw two beautiful cups. And we took them. And for some reason we became sick. And we said to one another: it must be the cups. And we ran back to the school and threw them back through the window.

Fear! We are talking about the dimensions of fear. Three dimensions: the product of the past.

Fear is also rooted, not only in the product of the past, but also in the performance of the present.

We will take it from here when we come back next time.

Friend, what I fear the most is if you will fill in that blank take that fear to the Lord God. He knows how to deal with our fears. We will see how to deal with these fears when we come back.

PRAYER:

Father, we thank You again, for seeing us through this session. Thank you because You have not left us helplessly in the hands of fear; but You have given us a weapon that is stronger – more powerful than fear itself. Thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ. May You draw those who do not know Him to Yourself, today; for He, the Savior, will banish fear far from them, in Jesus Name we pray. Amen!