

## PURSUIT OF PEACE

"Seek Peace and Pursue it" - Psalm 34:14

by Dorothy H. Pentecost

Copyright @ 1962

THE MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

### CHAPTER SEVEN -

#### LOVE AGAINST FEAR OR ARE YOU EVER AFRAID?

IS IT EVER RIGHT for a Christian to be afraid? The answer may seem simple at first glance. But a study of GOD's Word shows at least three outstanding kinds of fear mentioned. We will have to determine the kind of fear we are talking about before we can correctly answer the question.

There are three Greek words in the New Testament which mean fear, discussed in an article by Dr. Charles C. Ryrie, which appeared in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, published by Dallas Theological Seminary. The first, *eulabeia*, means a reverence for GOD. This is illustrated in Hebrews 12:28, "**Whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.**" It is also used in Hebrews 11, where we are told Noah "**moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house.**" The same word was used in reference to CHRIST. He "**was heard in that he feared**" (Hebrews 5:7). This is a proper fear of GOD and shows an anxiety to be pleasing to Him by obeying His will.

The second word, *phobos*, means being struck with terror or a state of alarm. This can be used in a good and a bad sense. The unbeliever or unsaved man stands in fear of death and future judgment. The Christian is passed from this state of fear concerning these things into a position of peace, for he knows that he stands secure in CHRIST JESUS.

There still is a sense in which the Christian should fear GOD by giving Him respect which comes as we are awed or impressed with Who He is. In I Peter 2:17, we are plainly told to "**fear God,**" meaning to give GOD proper respect.

The third word, *deilia*, means cowardice. "**For God hath not given us the spirit of fear**" (II Timothy 1:7). "**Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid**" (John 14:27). "**Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?**" (Matthew 8:26).

These are Dr. Ryrie's conclusions. "Should a Christian be afraid? Yes and no. He must never be cowardly; he should always be reverent; he need never fear the things of condemnation and judgment; yet he should live always in the protracted state of awe that results from having been struck with GOD."

It is the purpose of this chapter to pursue the subject of cowardly fear and to show how Christians can be helped to conquer this in their lives.

It is important to make a clear distinction between the two kinds of this type of fear. There is the natural, perfectly normal fear which is born in us and learned in childhood for self-preservation. We parents feel it is necessary to teach our children a fear of speeding cars, of trains, of poisons. We teach them not to put unknown things into their mouths, or lean out over a window sill, or touch a fire. Dr. Smiley Blanton says, "To fear wisely is the best mental hygiene." It makes the driver of a car careful, the airline pilot cautious for the safety of the passengers, and the druggist more alert when filling a prescription.

This kind of fear alerts the bodily functions for action to avoid whatever danger that lies ahead. It speeds the pulse and produces certain chemical changes in our bodies that prepare us for mobility. We have all had experiences when, under special fear of danger, we have had unusual strength or endurance. In this way a normal fear is a blessing to mankind and is constructive. It safeguards our health and life. When the danger is removed the bodily functions return to normal and the person does not suffer any ill effects.

The other kind of fear is abnormal and this is always destructive. This is an inappropriate anxiety that arises within the person without danger from outside and which is not based on reality. There is one sure way of determining which fear you are suffering. The normal fear leads to a happy, effective life. The abnormal fear leads to confusion, unhappiness, and inefficiency. The normal fear disappears as soon as the obvious danger is passed, but the abnormal fear remains without any apparent cause.

Doctors tell us not to try to forget our fears or to repress them as many friends often suggest. It is far better to have an honest look at them and find out just why we are constantly experiencing fear. When we try to push it under the conscious level of the mind, we are asking for trouble. It will only find another way of expressing itself, and it may produce a different symptom.

Dr. Little, a Christian psychiatrist, in his book, *Nervous Christians* suggests where the Christian should look first when he suffers from fear. Sin is often at the bottom of such troubles. When we look at the account of the fall of Adam and Eve, there are a number of very telling things revealed (Genesis 3:6-12). This is the first record we have of fear. Adam and Eve were without fear until sin entered their lives. After they had disobeyed GOD and eaten the forbidden fruit, they no longer wanted to be in GOD's presence. They hid, thinking that they could get away from GOD. When GOD called to them in the cool of the day, He asked, "**Where art thou?**" Notice Adam's answer. "**I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself**" (v. 10).

On closer examination, you will see Adam only mentioned his symptom (fear) and the reason why he was afraid (he was naked). He either didn't see the true cause as his sin or he was unwilling to admit that it was the reason for his troubles. Even when GOD brought him face to face with the reality of his sin, Adam refused to admit it or to ask forgiveness. He went on to blame Eve, and in so doing he was also blaming GOD. "**The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree**" (v. 12). In other words, "GOD, this is all your fault because you were the One who gave me this woman."

There is something else very interesting in this account. When Adam began to fear, he tried to cover up what he thought was the source of his fear - his nakedness. "**And they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.**" They were afraid, and they did all that they could in their own wisdom, but still they knew that they would stand condemned before GOD and were afraid to face Him.

I have read so many books by psychiatrists and ministers as research for this book that I have lost count. There is one thought brought out in all of them. In many cases where there is fear and anxiety for no apparent cause, there is some deep, dark sin either in the past or present. These people have borne this knowledge for years and sometimes it has caused many types of emotional symptoms. They have tried all kinds of remedies. Many of them have tried to atone for those sins. But, the result was always the same - no release and no peace.

There is one plain, unmistakable answer for the Christian who has sinned. It is given to us in I John 1:9. "**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**"

Where there is sin, it must be brought out and confessed to GOD. Many of these patients found a great relief in just confessing to the minister or the doctor. That is not enough for final release and forgiveness. The sin must be named and told to GOD.

Confession denotes a regret for the deed and a decision not to fall into that sin again. I am sure that we have all had the experience of confessing a sin when deep in our hearts, if we are honest, we know that given the opportunity, we would do the same thing again. The writer of Proverbs gives us a little clearer meaning of confession. "**He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy**" (28:13).

The idea of wanting to forsake the sin is included in true confession. We may fall again, but at the time, it is not our purpose or pleasure to do so. John does not tell us to ask for forgiveness. The asking is unnecessary since forgiveness has been promised the moment confession is forthcoming. Our forgiveness comes not from bitter tears, and begging, or promises not to repeat the sin; it comes because GOD is faithful and just. GOD must forgive our sins when we confess them. Why? Because CHRIST has died on the Cross for those sins. "**The blood of Jesus Christ, His (God's) Son [still] cleanseth from all sin**" (I John 1:7).

Many people believe themselves to be so wretched and miserable that it is almost impossible for them to accept GOD's forgiveness. They think that what they have done is beyond GOD's grace and power to forgive. A careful reading and studying of verses on forgiveness will gradually show these people that the trouble is not in a lack of GOD's forgiveness. It is in their power to forgive themselves. Eventually complete healing and freedom from these abnormal fears come to most of them who are sincerely looking for the answer to their troubles.

You may dismiss this part of the chapter by merely saying, "I don't have any deep, dark sin in my past." Maybe you do not. I hope that is true. But before you hasten on, carefully consider this matter. Remember that sin is sin in GOD's sight, whether we humans call our sins little or big. Any sin stands between you and GOD and keeps you from feeling comfortable in His presence.

There can be no fellowship between a perfectly holy GOD and a man with even the smallest sin in his heart.

Take some time to think this over. Has GOD convicted you of any sin in the past that you haven't confessed and forsaken. Is there anything that you are stubbornly holding on to in preference to a close walk with GOD? Dr. Nelson says that it is very easy to rationalize our behavior until we truly believe that what we are doing is all right under the circumstances even though we originally knew that it was sin in GOD's sight.

And GOD says that the heart (and that is the mind, too) is deceitful and desperately wicked. Satan can work through our hearts to make us believe what we really want to think anyway. Something which is seemingly small to you might be at the bottom of all your troubles with fear. It might take some time to recall, but try. Ask GOD to show you if there is anything wrong in your life. He is a faithful, loving heavenly Father who is more anxious to have your life purified than you are, so you can be sure that He will show you if there is anything not pleasing to Him.

When GOD brings no conviction of sin, it is then equally as important for good spiritual and emotional health to trust Him and leave your feelings entirely in His hands. We have so often heard that mental and emotional symptoms are the result of sin in Christians that it is hard to completely get away from the idea. There are many Christians, including myself, who have suffered greatly because we have read books and articles by trusted men of GOD who proposed this theory. Then we have had the added spiritual burden of not being able to fully believe that there is no sin problem between us and the Lord.

A verse that has helped me along this line is: "**Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God**" (1 John 3:21). If GOD brings no conviction of sin, though you have honestly sought it, or if you have confessed any sin that you know of, then rest assured that GOD is holding nothing against you, and accept His Word by faith and enjoy His fellowship.

If you could answer me as you read, you might say that the sin question has been settled in your life but you still have fears and vague feelings of uneasiness. What is the answer for you? Perhaps in spite of much prayer and effort you have been unable to conquer your fears. You may seem to be always confessing to GOD and asking for help. Then you fall right into your fears again.

This may go on until you are desperate from failure, and tempted again to feel that there is spiritual failure in your life when there isn't. This was my experience for years until I found out that these fears were coming from things that happened in my childhood and were below the conscious level, so I couldn't face them because I didn't know what they were. The Bible cannot correct troubles that are beyond our memories or are in the subconscious mind, though it can help us live with our problems and give grace and strength to bear them.

If you find yourself in this classification, it is obvious that you need help from outside yourself. Go to your minister and unburden yourself. Perhaps he can help you if you honestly tell him everything. Many times my husband and I have had members of our church come to us for help. We have done all that we could and at times felt helpless. In a few cases, it was not until much later when some have had to seek psychiatric help that the whole truth came out.

It is impossible to effectively help a person who is too ashamed to reveal all the truth. People seem to be hesitant to tell the minister what is in their hearts. Many of these same people will unburden themselves to a doctor or a psychiatrist.

We also have to face the fact that most ministers are not trained to treat abnormal behavior patterns and difficult emotional problems. They don't know ways of bringing out the problems of the past so the person can have a look at them and then decide what is to be done.

If you have been completely honest with your minister and he cannot help, it may be necessary to go to a psychiatrist. It is far better to have a Christian treat you if possible. But you can have help from an unbeliever insofar as his technical training is adequate. When he gives you an understanding of your problems, then you must face them in the light of GOD's Word and according to GOD's will. If you need spiritual help, go back to your minister with the newfound knowledge given by the mind specialist with GOD there will be found the answer to all your needs.

Maybe you can never have some trained counselor help you, but don't despair! I have in my life that which you may also have and which psychiatry can never give. That Someone is GOD. It is His power, enabling strength, and precious promises that will often hold a Christian through many trials and sufferings when others give way under the strain. The Christian does not always react according to the standard textbook on psychiatry because the power of GOD is not taken into account.

The following suggestions are what have helped me to conquer my fears long before I realized what was causing them. These are still being used in my life.

Surrender your life completely to GOD's will. There can never be true peace and relief from anxieties as long as you are holding out on GOD. When you can truly put yourself into GOD's hands, believing that "**all things work together for good**" (Romans 8:28), and gladly accepting His will as your own, your fears will vanish.

This is not easy at times, and there have been days when I have fought with bitter rebellion to bring myself to a cheerful submission to His will. Don't get the impression that because I am writing the book, the ideas are easy and come naturally. They are just as hard for me as for you. We are still in the flesh and it asserts its power whenever it is given a chance. This is not a book of "the easy way out"; it is rather GOD's way out, and often that way comes only through suffering and tears. But the result is to conform us more to CHRIST's image (Romans 8:29).

You can see that until we can submit completely to GOD's will there is much cause for fear. When we want GOD to work things out our own way, we become fearful because His will might be different. Then we have the added fear because we know we should want GOD's will, when deep in our hearts we still want our own.

Yesterday, I had a complete physical checkup because my family doctor thought I had some symptoms of a serious trouble. The suspected trouble, because of its pain, is one of the two things I most dread. As I have waited for the reports, however, the Lord has brought me to the

place where I can so completely accept His will that I have not even asked that He spare me this added suffering.

I have a right to ask whatsoever I will. Yet, I know that even through some added suffering He will give sufficient grace. It will mature me and teach me to lean harder on Him. It seems that every time I have started writing about suffering or submission to GOD's will, He has seen fit to send some added burdens and trials at the time. It has made me reface and double-check what I am saying to be sure that it is still working for me.

Practice the presence of GOD. That is an expression that has been used by some liberal ministers so long that we hesitate to use it for fear we will be misunderstood. However, it is one of the best ways I know to overcome fear. In this connection spend time digesting Psalm 139.

Where is GOD? I have asked a few people that question. . He is "someplace - far away - in the sky - near at hand - in the church - in the hills from whence cometh our help." These don't help a feeling of fear much because you and I might not happen to be in any of those places.

Many Christians answered the question by saying, "GOD is everywhere." That is very true but still is not very personal or comforting. GOD is right here with me (John 14:23). In me. "**In Him we live, and move, and have our being**" (Acts 17:28). We must keep reminding ourselves of this fact. Unless we believe this not only with our minds but with our hearts, there is little help. When we just believe that GOD is "out there somewhere" there may be serious doubts if He really cares and takes an individual interest in us. There can be doubt that we are getting through to Him when we pray.

Keep impressing this fact on yourself, with Scripture verses and good hymns, that GOD is near and that He does care about everything that concerns you. This takes some real effort at first, but after you have done it for a while it comes so naturally that you will find yourself talking to GOD at every possible moment as though you felt His presence inside or at your side. He will seem so near at hand that He will be a constant Friend and Companion. It should be needless to say that it is hard, if not pretty nearly impossible, to practice the presence of GOD if our time is consumed watching television, reading popular stories and racing from one activity to another. It takes time with the Word of GOD and time in prayer to really feel the presence of GOD.

My little daughter is afraid of storms. If thunder awakens her at night, she cries and calls for me. As long as I stay with her, she is no longer afraid of the storm. The storm is still there, and her natural fear of thunder is there, but the dread is gone because of the one who is going through it with her.

No matter what GOD is calling you to endure, as long as you have His presence close to you, the dread will be taken out of the experience.

Even as spiritual Christians we find many things that make us afraid. It is GOD's plan and purpose that we lean on Him for help. with GOD the fear will be conquered. The circumstances that caused the fear will probably still be there; the natural, human fear of that thing will still be there, but the dread will be gone because of the One who is standing with us through it all. Though fear may lurk around us, we have peace as we let GOD's presence take the dread out of

the fear situation.

A third great lesson GOD has taught me through the years.

As long as we try to meet and conquer fear in our own strength, we are doomed to failure. Fear is a strong emotion that can take over and control us easily. Psychiatrists tell us that fear is one of the most difficult emotions to control. However, CHRIST is the power that helps control fear. The closer we live to Him, the less fear. The more we live in our own resources, the more fear.

Never give in to fear. Don't give in and retreat from the things that cause fear unless you have been advised to do so by your doctor. Once you give in and start running from it, you may be unable to control it at all. You will have given up a lot of pleasures when it wasn't necessary. It will be even harder to return later to the things that have caused fear. Learn to live with your fear in GOD's strength. If you keep retreating from fear, it will only follow you and cause trouble in other ways, until you are almost retired from living.

Instead of giving in to fear, commit to the Lord the things that make you afraid. There are so many verses that give wonderful promises to those who commit their lives to the Lord. "**Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass**" (Psalm 37:5). "**Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator**" (I Peter 4:19).

Committing is a turning over of everything that bothers us to the Lord for His care. When this is done with absolute trust there is nothing left to fear.

If your special need is to master fear, this is your promise:

"**I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me**" (Philippians 4:13). You will notice that what you do is not in your strength but through CHRIST. He is the One who gives the power to overcome.

I have also learned that apart from trust and faith in God, there is little victory over fear. We are told in Ephesians 6 to take the whole armor of GOD that we may be able to withstand the fiery darts of Satan. "**Above all, taking the shield of faith**" (verse 16).

This is not our faith for salvation or CHRIST's faith in us. Rather it is our faith in GOD and in the fact that He is able to keep His promises. Now we are right back to our original definition of peace. Faith and trust are the basis for victory over any sin or dread in our lives, and are also the answer to our understanding GOD's peace.

GOD has not left us in doubt as to the true meaning of faith. We are told in Hebrews 11:1: "**Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**"

Substance gives reality and assurance to our hope. It produces an unshakable confidence in One who has promised. Evidence is the conviction of the certainty of things that are not seen. Faith is the outcome of knowledge. We have to know something before we can believe it. We can't have faith in what God promises until we find out just what He promised. Scripture is a progressive

revelation of GOD's power. As we know more of GOD's Word, we should have more faith, when we completely take GOD at His Word (Romans 10:17). In other words, faith serves in place of sight. For the child of GOD, when GOD says that something is true, it ought to be just as true as though we had seen it with our own eyes.

Linda, a five-year-old daughter of two of our church members, was rushed to the hospital for an emergency appendectomy. As she was being wheeled down the corridor on a stretcher, she kept saying: "**I will trust and not be afraid.**" Linda had learned a lesson in her tender years that many of us have yet to learn. Trust is the cure for fear. Anxious dread and trusting don't go together. When we fear, we are not trusting; vice versa, when we are trusting, we are not fearing.

I have found it very helpful to saturate myself with Bible verses that promise deliverance from fear, and related experiences. There is not enough room in this chapter to list those that have been beneficial, but you can find them by using a concordance. As I find verses, I mark them in my Bible so they are easy to find again. Those that seem to be a special help I type on cards to carry with me. When I am waiting in the doctor's office, traveling, or cooking a meal, I take these and meditate on them.

This is more than memorizing them. This is a definite effort to make them a real part of a heart knowledge as well as a head knowledge. I try to assimilate them into my being as food is assimilated into my blood stream. In this way, they are so much a part of me that they come to mind on a moment's notice.

GOD has been very faithful in showing me special verses to help through hard situations. Some years ago, we were vacationing in New England. I have always had a fear of water. The family wanted to take an all-day boat trip from Boston to Cape Cod. It would spoil the day for them if I did not go. I asked GOD for a verse to help me through the experience. He was faithful. It was from Psalm 107:28, 29.

**"Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still."** And we did have a storm on the return trip. I am now planning a plane trip with my husband. I am always uneasy in planes, though I never hesitate to go. The Lord gave me a verse of comfort to take with me. **"If I take the wings of the morning... even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me"** (Psalm 139:9, 10). These illustrations are not given to suggest that the same verses might help you. They are only to show that GOD will give you a precious promise to meet your needs if you will ask Him.

GOD has not promised that Christians will have an uneventful, easy type of life. To the contrary there is every reason from Scripture to believe just the opposite. These verses did not promise me safety. I have not been promised that we will not have rough weather while we are flying, nor engine trouble, nor even that my life will be spared on the trip. But GOD has promised that He will be with me and that He will hold me in His hand. That is all I need to know to have a happy vacation. GOD's promises are all you need to know to have a happy journey through life. Pray to be made more trusting and then go out and live as though that prayer had already been answered.

By now you have guessed that I am the Janet Speers written about in the first chapter. You can

tell from that description and from the foreword to the book that I have been a constant companion of fear most of my life. That gives me a real understanding of some of the things you and others may be suffering.

Whether your fears are the normal, everyday garden variety or phobias caused by some hidden reason, Bible verses and GOD's promises will give you the strength to go victoriously through them. I have had both types and this is my testimony.

While suggestions that have helped me may be used to assist you in your conquest of fear, there is something even surer. Love is the answer to all fears. GOD's Word tells us so.

Perhaps the most quoted verse in the books that I have read on the subject is I John 4:18: "**There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.**" In every case, the author has not explained the verse but merely left the impression that "**perfect love**" (whatever that is) will cast out all kinds of everyday fears. That only leaves the reader a little more desperate, feeling a spiritual lack in his life is responsible for his little fears and phobias.

Miss Eugenia Price believes that the perfect love that casts out fear is CHRIST. She suggests that we make CHRIST the center of our lives and He will cast out the fear. Since GOD is love, and CHRIST and GOD are one, CHRIST is "**perfect Love.**" Love is not just a "spiritual phenomenon but a Person."

While her statement is true and very comforting, yet in the full light of GOD's Word I believe there is a great deal more to this verse than that.

For years this has been a question in my mind, so I have asked ministers what this verse means. Most of them have told me that they weren't sure and a few gave me answers that as I thought them over never satisfied. Since then I have learned that the only way to truly understand a verse is never to consider it alone. It is a part of the verses surrounding it. Taking a verse out of its context often leads to misunderstanding and a false impression of GOD's true meaning.

The meaning of this verse has been carefully checked with two seminary professors. One is my husband, who is head of the Bible department of Dallas Theological Seminary; the other, Dr. Charles C. Ryrie, president of Philadelphia College of Bible. Independently of each other, they both gave me the same ideas.

This verse is not a blanket promise that "**perfect love**" will cast out the normal, or abnormal, everyday kind of fear we suffer. Because we live in a corruptible body that is subject to stress and pressure, we are a target of fear. This is the natural result of just being alive. Nowhere else in the Word are we promised that we can ever attain the place where we will never know fear again.

Then what kind of fear does this "**perfect love**" cast out? The only way to be sure we have a proper interpretation is to see what is meant by studying it in the context of the surrounding verses. The verse says:

**"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that GOD hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (I John 4:15-18).**

First of all, this promise is only for Christians, those who have by a definite act of faith let CHRIST's death take the place of their own. This is the only way that GOD can dwell in a person and that one can dwell in GOD. The first verse above makes that very evident.

Secondly, as we grow, believing and experiencing GOD's love in us, and letting it flow through us, our love is perfected or matured. "**Perfect love**" then is a matured love of the Christian that comes as he dwells in GOD's love and it is allowed to be perfected and matured in him.

Verse 17 starts with "**Herein,**" thus referring us to the verse immediately preceding and showing that this is the way to attain the "**perfect love**" that casteth out fear. Now that the matter of the meaning of "**perfect love**" is settled we still have to determine what kind of fear it casts out. One phrase gives us the answer: "**That we may have boldness in the day of judgment.**" Now the day of judgment is future, so this promise can't refer to our every day problems with fears. This is a promise that Christians who have grown to maturity enough to believe and accept what GOD has done for them will have no fear of GOD in the day that we appear before Him in person after the rapture. There will be no fear or alarm between us and GOD.

All fear that we might not make it to Heaven, that our works might not be enough, or that GOD might bring up our sins again for judgment, is gone once for all and need never return. The mature Christian always has peace that he has nothing to fear in the day that he stands before GOD's presence.

These verses also give us the assurance that we need have no fear of judgment of GOD either now or in the future.

**"Because as he is, so are we in this world."** The "**He**" refers to CHRIST. When we are in CHRIST JESUS, there will never be any judgment or punishment for us. CHRIST took all our punishment on the Cross.

- He paid the price for sin that GOD demanded and thus GOD will never be able to demand another payment.
- We have perfect assurance that we will never have to face our sins when we stand in person before GOD.
- We know that we will stand before GOD in CHRIST's righteousness and GOD can no more deny us access to Heaven than He could deny it to His Son.
- We are His and a part of His Body and a member of His true Church and His Bride.

GOD can never refuse us; We are as safe for all eternity as CHRIST is.

Sin always causes fear between an individual and GOD. Until the sin question is settled either in

the life of the believer or the unbeliever, there will never be real peace or complete freedom from fear.

We have a holy GOD who cannot tolerate sin, and we know that we haven't a chance if we try to stand before Him in our own sins. Sin is usually at the bottom of fears of GOD's judgment, for those who are mentally well balanced. However, a lack of knowledge of what GOD's Word teaches on this subject might also be the basis of fear of His judgment.

If you are unsaved, it is natural that you should fear GOD and His judgment. The answer to your fears is to let CHRIST take your place by receiving Him as your Saviour. If you are a Christian and still have a fear of GOD's judgment, in spite of being shown GOD's Word in this matter; check to see if there is any sin standing between you and GOD right now. If so, the answer to your fears is confession. Tell GOD what you have done wrong, as He has promised to forgive.

When that is done there will be a miraculous release of your fears of GOD. David was living in fear, tremblings and actual physical illness as long as he kept his sin locked up in his heart, but the moment he confessed it he found a powerful release. **"I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin"** (Psalm 32:5).

While all Scripture has a primary meaning as shown from the context, it can also have one or more applications to our everyday problems. This is true of these verses in First John. While this perfected love refers specifically to **"the day of judgment,"** we can also use it to help overcome every day fears. The more we love GOD, the more we trust Him. The more we trust, the more fear will be cast out.

**"God is love"** (verse 16). There is nothing sensational in this statement. We have heard it over and over again. We simply do not accept the truth of it. If it were to become real to us and an actual part of our consciousness, then we would see miracle upon miracle in our lives. But it has been repeated so often that it is almost automatic. Of the people whom I asked to define GOD, nearly all of them included, **"God is love."**

But the sad fact remains that we don't really understand, believe or feel it. We think of GOD as Someone far off Who is more of a judge and a demanding Person than a Father of love. We fall so far short of what we know GOD wants of each of us that it seems hard to believe that He could love us in spite of our failures. Even the Apostle Paul said, **"The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do"** (Romans 7:19).

Unless we can accept the love of GOD embracing us now with all our faults and shortcomings, we will not have the help we need in conquering our fears.

**"God is love."** This is one of His attributes that cannot be changed. GOD's love for us never changes. It is always the same "yesterday, today, and forever." But it is possible for us to change from day to day in our response to His love. We are bidden to abide, continue, or stay put in His love. This is our part in receiving that joy and peace that will replace much of our fears. **"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love"** (John 15:9).

We are loved by CHRIST with the same quality and quantity of love with which the Father loves the Son. It is possible for us to live in a real sense of that love that will help in the battle against fears. It is also possible for us to live so far from the Lord that we don't feel the presence and power of that love operating in us. It is not possible for GOD to remove His love from us but it is possible for us to ignore it.

Recognize GOD's love in every detail of your life. Remember that "**all things work together for good**" (Romans 8:28). GOD is sending even the hardest circumstances because He loves you. The dread can be largely taken out of fearful experiences when we completely accept the fact that this is GOD's love for us in action.

Then respond to GOD's love with a heart full of acceptance. The more you respond, the more you will become conscious of the ways in which GOD shows you His love. Live every minute as though you believe that His love is being manifested to you now. By faith take the power of His love in your life to help in your conquest of fear. "**And we have known [experienced] and believed [really trusted] the love that GOD hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him**" (I John 4:16).

Fear is not harmful nor sinful in itself. It is a necessary part of life to keep us from destroying ourselves or others. It can only hurt us as we let it control our lives. There are some kinds of normal fears that are a necessary part of living. There are abnormal fears which come without any apparent cause of danger. Many of these can be relieved or forgotten by understanding the causes through reading books that help, Christian friends, a pastor, or someone who has had similar experiences. If they are too deep-seated, it might be necessary to have a trained counselor in order to find the source of trouble.

Any type of fear that you may have can be helped by the power of GOD. As we learn more of Him through the Scripture, we learn to trust His love more. As we let Him live out His life in us our love is perfected and matured. A mature love casts out all fear of the judgment of GOD both in the present life and in the future. Living in the constant sense of GOD's love will greatly help to relieve the common everyday fears which come to all of us at one time or another. It will also help, though it may not cure, our phobias.

**"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"** (Romans 8:38, 39).

"A traveler crossed a frozen stream  
In trembling fear one day  
Later a teamster drove across  
And whistled all the way;  
Great faith and little faith alike  
Were granted safe convoy,  
But one has pangs of needless fear  
The other all the joy."

- *Faith* by Mary V. Littell  
~ end of chapter 7 ~