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**It is I...**  
**Don't Be**  
**Afraid!**

**(Part 2)**

**# 911-B**

**Series: Living Lessons From Proverbs**



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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO



# It is I...Don't Be Afraid!

## (Part 2)

Our subject is fear. Our objective is to STOP BEING AFRAID. Our title comes from Jesus' words to His disciples in John, chapter 6, verse 20, as they, in the midst of the storm, saw Him approaching, walking on the water. With words that spoke peace to their hearts, He simply said, "It is I; don't be afraid."

This week in my life, and I pray in many of yours as well, as life's storms have caused waves of fear to pound upon the sides of life's ship, God has said to me again and again, "It is I; don't be afraid." When He did, Satan fled, and fear went with him. Our outline for the remainder of our study on fear looks like this:

Don't be afraid (What is fear?)

Don't be afraid of... (What not to fear)

Don't be afraid, because... (WHY not to fear)

Don't be afraid; instead... (How not to fear)

We will cover the first two points in this lesson; then in our next lesson we will study the rest of the outline.

So our word from God is this: DON'T BE AFRAID. I believe there are five key principles or statements necessary for us to build a firm foundation for dispelling fear. Some of them we discussed last week; some we did not. But if fear is a real problem to you (and it is to many of us), you may want to copy down and memorize these five facts about fear.

### DON'T BE AFRAID (WHAT IS FEAR?)

Fact #1: Fear, by definition, is "the absence of confidence in the sovereignty of God." Fear, therefore, is the antithesis of faith. That is why every hero of the faith in Hebrews 11, in order to exercise faith, had to set aside a natural desire to fear. Every time you yield control of your thoughts to a spirit of fear, you are saying, "God is not in control! Therefore I am afraid!"

For example, if you yield to fear of rejection, you are not

trusting the promises of God. If you yield to fear of the unknown, you are not trusting the provisions of God. If you yield to fear of disease or pain, you are not trusting the strength of God (which is made perfect in weakness). If you yield to fear of loneliness, you are not trusting the very Spirit of God whose name by definition is Comforter.

Faith and fear: They are NOT compatible. Faith is confidence in the sovereignty of God (even when there is nothing you can see or feel or touch) that proves that what God is promising will happen.

And without faith it is impossible to please God.

(Hebrews 11:6)

But fear is the absence of confidence in the sovereignty of God that questions His presence in the presence of the unknown. When you question His sovereignty, faith gives way to fear! Faith liberates! Fear brings bondage!

So put that definition to the test of both Scriptural and experimental confirmation in your life this week. Then...if you find it to be true, memorize it! It will give you a foundation stone on which to wage your successful fight against fear.

Fact #2: Fear is a gift from Satan. It is a spiritual gift from the wrong spirit; don't accept it. Ephesians 2:8 tells us even faith is a gift from God.

God has not given us this (counterfeit) spirit of fear.

(II Timothy 1:7)

You see, God imparts faith through focusing on the Word (Romans 10:17), but Satan imparts fear through focusing on the world. Understand that fear is not of God. It is the word of the enemy and the work of the enemy. If you acknowledge that, rejecting fear and resisting Satan become one and the same thing; and at last the issues become clear!

Fact #3: Fear, therefore, is a choice; it is not an emotion. In any given situation, Satan speaks fear, God speaks quiet confidence, and we must choose which spirit we will respond to, the Spirit of faith or the spirit of fear. We are not "overcome" with fear, as Satan would have us believe. We are overtaken with fear when we choose (we make a choice) to listen to the voice of the Stranger. John says this of God's sheep:

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And a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him:  
for they know not the voice of strangers. (John 10:5)

Fact #4: Some fear is the natural by-product of guilt and unconfessed sin. Unconfessed sin leads to the fear of discipline which destroys faith and compounds other fears. False guilt also leads to fears of every kind because if you cannot trust God to forgive you, how can you trust Him to control your life? Thus, fear was first introduced to our human race shortly after our introduction to sin itself, in Genesis 3. For as soon as Eve tasted rebellion and Adam complied without so much as a whimper, man was introduced to fear.

As the curtain goes up on Act II of the Drama of Life, we find God walking through the Garden, looking for His two disciples who had suddenly become scarce and aware that their wardrobe lacked modesty.

“Adam? Adam? Where are you, Adam?” God called. God always calls to us when we are separated by sin. He knows where we are; that is not why He calls us. He wants us to know where He is, that He is still there! “Adam? Adam?” He called. Adam looked up at God (the way we do when we realize He is still there in spite of our disobedience) and said, “I heard You, Lord, back in the garden. But I hid. I was afraid. Lord, I was embarrassed about my wardrobe and Sears wasn't open yet. I was afraid.”

Afraid of what? Afraid of being in the presence of God with unconfessed sin. And these fears often lead to more sin, too. Remember Sarah in Genesis 18? She lied to the angel of the Lord about laughing at his promise, and she used as her excuse that she was afraid. Unconfessed sin and unresolved guilt: they will lock your heart in a vault of fear, and those fears will remain until the heart is cleansed. A Christian out of the will of God is as jumpy as a soldier on the battlefield with no weapons, for that is precisely what he is!

Fact #5: We covered this in our last lesson: The fear of the Lord, that awesome confidence in the sovereignty and authority of God that makes God pre-eminent and preempts all other fears. Therefore, the ultimate enemy of all unhealthy fears is the all-consuming fear of the Lord, which sets the Christian free. So here is a summary of five facts to memorize.

1- Fear is the absence of confidence in the sovereignty of God. Therefore, fear and faith are incompatible.

2- Fear does not come from God. It is a spiritual gift from the wrong spirit.

3- Fear is not an emotion. Fear is a choice. You listen to the voice of the Savior, and the result is faith. Listen to the voice of the stranger, and the result is fear. Fear is a choice.

4- Unconfessed sin and unresolved guilt open our spirits to the spirit of fear, and we have no weapon with which to combat fear until the heart is cleansed.

5- God's ultimate weapon to eliminate and eradicate the very temptation to fear is the gradual, continual transformation of the life into that exciting joy-filled, Christ-controlled life which is known as the fear of the Lord.

So that is what fear is, what it isn't, where it comes from, and what our responsibility is where choices are concerned. Fear is not a mystery. Fear is a fact, and the fact is that it need not crush the Christian. So, the Bible says, Don't be afraid, and as always, the Bible is specific. It says, don't be afraid of this, of this, or this, or even this. So Part 2 of this lesson is just a topical journey through the Scriptures to see in detail in which areas Satan loves to attack us with fear, and how God feels about it!

### DON'T BE AFRAID OF...

God says, "Don't be afraid!" You say, "Afraid of what?" Well, first of all, don't be afraid of man, or anything man can do. Remember, anything man can do:

- is temporary - has no eternal consequences
- is limited - only the permissive will of a sovereign God allows it
- will be transformed into spiritual blessings by a God Who makes all things work together for good, if we but acknowledge His sovereignty.

So don't fear Breznev or Arafat or Khomenei or your boss or your enemy or your mate or anyone else. God knows well who would harm you. He may alert you to prayer and arouse you to faith, but He has not alarmed you to fear. Fear is Satan's lie; don't listen. Listen instead to what God says, and take up the Word and slay the enemy of fear when it attacks.

Is the fear of man a threat to you? Then memorize Psalm 27:1-3.

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The 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?

When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came  
upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall  
not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be  
confident. (Psalm 27:1-3)

The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do  
unto me? (Psalm 118:6)

Only rebel ye not against the Lord, neither fear ye the  
people of the land; for they are bread for us: (God will make  
a sandwich out of them--loose translation!)... their defense  
is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them  
not. (Numbers 14:9)

Hebrews 13:5,6 sums it up:

...He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So  
that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not  
fear what man shall do unto me.”

The fear of man: It is the absence of confidence in the  
sovereignty of God. God says, Fear them not! Don't be  
afraid!

The second thing we must not fear is Satan. In II Kings 17 we  
read these words:

...Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them,  
nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them:

But the Lord, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt  
with great power and a stretched out arm, him shall ye fear,  
and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice.

....ye shall not fear other gods.

But the Lord your God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver  
you out of the hand of all your enemies.

(II Kings 17:35-37,39)

The message is: You cannot fear God and Satan at the same  
time. If your frame of reference leads you to an unholy awe of  
Satan, a preoccupation with HIS power, HIS tactics, or HIS  
objectives, you are guilty of overkill. You are like the few spies  
who came back overwhelmed at the size of the giants in the land.  
You have been focusing so long on how big the enemy is that you  
are no longer seeing him as he looks...standing next to God!

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There are some things we are to do where Satan is concerned.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.  
(I Peter 5:8)

We are to be AWARE...of his tactics. We are to be ALERT...for his attacks. We are to be ANGRY...over his devastation. Be aware, alert, angry...but not afraid. I John 4 tells us why (verse 4):

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them [these Satanic spirits that oppose Him]: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. (I John 4:4)

Should the stronger fear the weaker? No! We must have a healthy respect for his tactics and a sensible eye for his attacks. But we must not live in a corner cowering in fear over one we have been assured to defeat. Sure, Satan has gone wild in these latter days; the Bible said he would. He is fighting like crazy because he knows he is about to go down for the count of ten. He is not coming in for the kill; that's a lie. He is panicking; he is done for and he knows it. And the greater his onslaught, the greater God's grace. So, be sober, be vigilant, but don't be afraid!

The third thing we are not to fear is tribulation. Oh, what a number Satan does on us here, particularly as these last days of history see an acceleration of those satanic activities which precede the great time of tribulation. Some Christians are seen hovering under a hymnbook or perched precariously under a pew for fear some shrapnel or pieces of falling society will hit them on the head. Read and memorize Revelation 2, beginning with verse 8.

And unto the angel of the church of Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive;

I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) [you just think it's poverty, but you're still rich] and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews [mine], and are not, but are [really of] the synagogue of Satan.

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: Behold the devil will cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

(Revelation 2:8-10)



Jesus said:

In this world ye shall have tribulation, (John 16:33a)

That is a promise. But He added,

Be of good cheer [in other words, don't be afraid]; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33b)

That is a promise too. So do not fear tribulation. It is God's stepping stone to greatness and His entry way into the fountain of His grace.

The fourth thing the Bible tells us not to fear is what it costs to be a disciple. So often we hear people say, "I want God's best for me, but not if it costs me what it cost her." Or "I want the mind of Christ, but not if it means I have to go through that." "Lord, give me a ministry, but please not there." And we look into the eyes of the One Who so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son for us, the One Who while we were yet sinners died for us, and say, "Lord, whatever You want, but...", as though a God whose heart beats with love would ever do or allow anything that was not best for us. How many times I have started to pray, "Lord, whatever it takes...", and then stopped short because like a high speed motion picture, visual images raced through my mind of what "whatever it takes" might be. There is nothing wrong with praying "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." What IS wrong is stopping short of praying, "Nevertheless, Thy will be done."

In Luke Jesus, speaking to the disciples, urges them to replant their priorities in spiritual soil. Then He gets painfully personal.

If then God so clothes the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? (Luke 12:28)

(You think God's warehouse of clothing will run out of inventory?)

And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. (Luke 12:29)

(God's grocery store is in good shape, too!)

For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. (Luke 12:30)

(God has got a list of your needs at His fingertips.)

But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things [food and clothing] shall be added unto you.

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:31,32)

I believe that what the Master is saying is this: God is sovereign. He knows our needs and plans to meet them. OUR responsibility is to set aside what this world calls important and rest the entire weight of our lives on what God calls important. It's scary; it's costly; it's incredibly final. But Jesus says, "Little flock, DON'T BE AFRAID. God wants to give you His kingdom. So if you are seeking His kingdom, what have you to fear?"

In Deuteronomy 1:21 Moses encouraged the children of Israel to take their eyes off the enemy and the cost of taking the land, and to focus instead on the Father's power and the Father's promise.

Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.

(Deuteronomy 1:21)

Possessing the land of abundant life costs something. No, wait! Possessing the land of abundant life costs everything!

If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. (Luke 9:23)

But it is nothing to fear! Total surrender to the will of God! That is all God asked of Eve, but Satan said, "Eve, you will miss too much. Make yourself God; you set the terms." So Eve went for Plan B, and the entire human race went with her.

Don't be afraid of what it costs to be a Christian. Measured against the backdrop of Calvary, whatever it costs is nothing. It is immeasurable. You cannot lose, so don't be afraid.

Fifth, the Scripture says not to be afraid of the unknown.

Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.

For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken. (Proverbs 3:25,26)

God's strength lies in what WE DO NOT KNOW. For what is unknown to us is known to Him. Thus we are called upon to

place our confidence in things not seen. That's faith. Do not fear the unknown. Clutch it to your heart as a letter of love from God to be opened at just the right time.

Sixth, the Scriptures tells us not to be afraid of the authority God places over you.

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. (Romans 13:3,4)

It says this: God placed that authority there, so just obey it. There is no basis for fear. If you are going thirty miles per hour, you don't even need a rear view mirror to watch for flashing lights. (Loose translation!) But if you disobey, you had better fear. That authority is God's paddle to spank you into obedience.

The seventh warning: Don't fear death!

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil [nothing]: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)

We covered this last lesson. Why fear passing from death to life? Why fear going from good to great, or from imperfect to perfect fellowship? Why fear never feeling pain again? Why fear never tasting sin again? Why fear never experiencing grief again? Satan has sold us a lie. Don't fear death. If you are a Christian, anticipate it.

Finally, eighth, do not fear the higher ways of God. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so God's ways are higher than ours. We, as Christians, become fearful of certain spiritual experiences and encounters because they do not fit into our preconceived plans. We are fearful of new assignments. I'll give you an example. When God changes our ministry, or changes the thrust of our ministry, or sends us to people or places we did not choose, we fear those new assignments. The Scripture is full of "fear nots" where new assignments are concerned.

One example is Genesis 46 where Israel (Jacob) had just learned that his son Joseph was still alive. Yet to make the trip to see him at his age and under those circumstances was difficult,

if not impossible. So at Beersheba, God spoke to Jacob in a dream and said,

...Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I.

And He said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:

I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes. (Genesis 46:2b-4)

A most unusual promise: "Go to Egypt...I will there make of thee a great nation." It was most unusual timing, too. But then, Jacob had a most unusual God.

Abraham received a number of such unusual assignments. His most unusual, perhaps, was in Genesis 22, where God told him to take his miracle son to the top of a mountain and slay him. But Abe wasn't afraid. Once again he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief. He believed his God. He had confidence in His sovereignty. So God intervenes and says,

...Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. (Genesis 22:12)

God said, "You were not afraid, Abe. You were so filled with the fear of the Lord it never entered your mind to fear to obey." So don't be afraid of strange assignments. If God says "go", go. If God says "stay", stay. Remember, the more unknown the terrain, the more you need the Master's presence to lead you.

Don't be afraid of God's miracles either: not of the miracles of His presence, not of the miracles of His provision, not of the miracles of His power.

Aren't most of us like those folks in Acts 12 who are on our knees praying for things we could not handle even if God gave them to us? You remember Rhoda and her friends. They were praying for Peter to get out of prison. I can just hear us there, can't you? "Lord, Thou art able to do all things. Deliver Peter from prison. Amen." About then the doorbell rings. Rhoda answers; Peter's there. God answered her prayer (and messed up her prayer meeting). She slams the door in his face, runs inside, and says that Peter is at the door, "Sure he is," moaned the spiritual giants. "You're seeing things, Rhoda. It's an angel!

Now back to our prayer meeting. Where were we? Oh, yes...we were praying for Peter. 'Dear Lord...'"

But [poor old] Peter stood outside and continued knocking. (It is difficult for answered prayer to get into some prayer meetings and some lives.)

And when they [finally] opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. (Acts 12:16)

So Pete says, "Settle down, gang. God miraculously released me from prison." (Isn't that what they were praying for?)

Zacharias was in shock, too, in Luke 1. An angel appeared to him (verse 11) and was standing by the altar.

And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard. [Or, for God has simply heard your prayer.] (Luke 1:12,13)

The angel had similar words spoken for Joseph (Matthew 1:20) and Mary (Luke 1:30) and for the shepherds about Jesus' birth:

Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. (Luke 2:10)

Fear not; your prayers are answered. Fear not; I bring you good news. Why do we pray for things we cannot handle? Then instead of faith, we are filled with fear when God gives us the very things for which we asked.

What about you? Are you afraid of the presence of God? Do you fear long hours alone with Him, afraid He will call you to a level of commitment or to a relationship with the Father to which you are not ready to agree? Are you afraid of the promises of God? Do you stop short in your prayer life for fear He might answer? Are you afraid of the power of God? Do you steer clear of allowing Him to perform miracles in your life, lest He upset your spiritual status quo? Oh, is not this the cardinal sin of fear, and yet does not fear in the Bible surface more times over fearing the presence, power and promises of God even than fearing the enemy himself?

Do not fear the wonderful ways of God. He knows best; He does best. He IS best.

In the next lesson, we will look at WHY we must not fear, and at how to conquer the fears that press upon us day by day. In the meantime, remember, fear is the absence of confidence in God. It is a spiritual gift from Satan; it does not come from God. It is not an emotion; fear is a choice. Either we listen to the Savior or we listen to the Stranger. Fear is often the result of unconfessed sin. But the fear of the Lord conquers all other fears.

If we are honest, I suppose we can divide our fears into three categories: fear of what man can do, fear of what Satan can do, and fear of what God may do. Doesn't that last fear seem out of place with the other two? But wasn't that the disciples' problem in the storm? And aren't we as afraid of letting God be God as we are of anything else in our lives? Isn't it about time we stopped being afraid of the high cost of discipleship? Isn't it about time we stopped fearing the strange assignments of God, the miracles of God, and the presence of God? Isn't it about time we just let go and let God be God?

The problem with Christianity is Christians. This Christian life as God wants it lived is revolutionary. We are literally afraid of it! So we water down our expectations, our anticipations, and our explanations until life reaches a level of acceptability compatible with our faith rather than s-t-r-e-t-c-h-i-n-g our faith to a level of accountability that is acceptable to God!

Sometimes even as churches or groups we are literally afraid of what might happen if God continues to bless. We want to be comfortably settled in our success, but not overwhelmed with such spiritual victory that we cannot handle it. So we unconsciously pray for limited miracles, just enough transformation to raise our hopes, but not enough to rock the boat.

God does not want us to be afraid. He does not want us to fear what man can do. He does not want us to fear what Satan can do. But above all I believe He is saying that He does not want us to fear what HE can do, if we will but let Him. And somehow, I believe the underlying truth God wants to release out of this lesson into our lives is this:

He wants to be Lord,

He wants to answer prayer,

He wants to still reveal Himself as a God of miracles,

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He wants to re-release first-century power into twentieth-century Christianity.

And He will do it, if we will just stop being...afraid.

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