

Christiana's Progress - Part 2 of the book "Pilgrim's Progress"

December 3rd, 2017 - Christiana's Progress
Stage 6 - Part 1 - (pages 56-61)

The thread of the message in the script today is dealing with fear, or the spirit of fear that immobilizes so many Christians. Other words that describes fear are anxiety, worry, afraid, fret, terror, dread, horror, fright, panic, alarm, trepidation, apprehension and phobia to name a few. It's a common yet paralyzing tactic of the devil that he uses on all. Depending on which translation you read, the King James Version has over 500 references to the word fear.

Picking up from the end of last week's message, Christiana enquires if Mr. Great-Heart had **fear** when he battled the giant called Maul. It says; "*CHRISTIANA. "But were you not afraid, good sir, when you saw him come with his club?"*

MR. GREAT-HEART. "It is my duty to mistrust my own ability that I may rely on Him who is stronger than all."

CHRISTIANA. "But what did you think when he fetched you down to the ground at the first blow?"

MR. GREAT-HEART. "Why, I thought that so my Master himself was served, and yet he it was that conquered at last."

Who is his Master? It's Jesus. He was acknowledging that his victory didn't come by his strength or ability, but through Jesus Christ. We always need to keep that in perspective in our spiritual battles that we face, just as the angels acknowledge the power of Jesus in their battles as they battle for us as Christians.

On their journey, they meet up with Mr. Honest who references Christiana's husband Christian; "*MR. HONEST. "I have heard much of your husband, and of his travels and wars he experienced in his days. Be it spoken to your comfort, the name of your husband rings out all over these parts of the world:, has made his name famous."*

The Apostle Paul talks about being cast down but unconquered in **2 Corinthians 4:7-15**; "*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God."*

Christian left behind a famous great name, well spoken of for his faith, his courage, his endurance and his sincerity. The apostle Paul left behind a famous great name for his faith, his courage, his endurance, and his sincerity as a preacher of the Gospel. Will you be remembered as a Christian full of faith, courage, endurance and sincerity?

The script continues; "*Now, as they walked along together, the guide asked the old gentleman if he knew one Mr. Fearing, who came on pilgrimage from his parts.*

MR. HONEST. "Yes, very well. He was a man that had the root of the matter in him; but he was one of the most troublesome pilgrims that I ever met with in all my days."

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MR. HONEST. "He was a very zealous man, as one can see by the tale you have given of him. Difficulties, lions, or Vanity Fair, he had no fear about at all; it was only sin, death, and hell, that were to him a terror, because he had some doubts about his interest in that Celestial country."

Do you have doubts about heaven? Are your fears about sin, death and the judgement of hell? Does fear riddled you with condemnation and unworthiness? Remember in last week's sermon how in **Numbers 13:27-33** The spies that brought back a report about the land flowing with milk and honey, They said "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Mr. Fearing's perception of life was the same as these spies that were sent out. But his fear was more of the judgement and condemnation of sin. This fear paralyzed Israel so strongly that they refused to enter into the promised land. They cried, wept, complained, questioned God, wanted to die and looked back to the past instead of looking ahead to the promised future! Fear will do that.

It says in **Numbers 14 :1-10**; "So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt." Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' [Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them." And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel."

Mr. Fearing was so preoccupied with these 3 fears; 1) of **sin**, 2) of **death** and 3) the **judgement** of hell; that he failed to enter into God's blessings for him in Christian fellowship as part of the Church Body. Wherever he went, he was oppressed, he fought depression, he couldn't enter the Interpreters house because of condemnation of sin. It would be like if you saw someone standing outside a church building and while everyone went in, and they stood there, afraid to enter because they don't feel worthy and are condemned their sins, scared that they'll be judged to hell when they die. He didn't have a sound mind because of fear.

As a result of the negative report that we just read about in the book of Numbers, the Israelites did not enter into the promised land right away. Because of fear, they ended up wandering in the desert for another 40 years until that generation past away.

That's why often you here those "could have, would have, should have" statements - that come out of Christians mouths about the past. "If I would have obeyed God back then, and not walked in fear, I know I could have done what He asked me to do...and now look at where I am". Sound familiar?

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"MR. GREAT-HEART. "You say right; those were the things that troubled him; and they, as you have well observed, arose from the weakness of his mind, not from weakness of spirit as to the practical part of a pilgrim's life. I dare say that, as the proverb goes, he could have been a bit a firebrand had it stood in his way; but the things with which he was oppressed, no one could ever make him shake off easily."

Mr. Fearing could have been much more than he was, but was so full of fear, depression, oppression that he had lost a sound mind. If fear rules your life, you don't have a sound mind. You open yourself up to mental illness when you walk in fear. **2 Timothy 1:7** says; "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*" It comes down to personal decision making in your life as to whether you choose to let fear rule you or not. It's not that Mr. Fearing first had a weak mind which gave way to fear, BUT, fear gave way to not having a sound mind, which gave way to depression, which gave way to oppression, which kept him out of the fellowship with the body of Christ! As a Christian, you do have power, you do have love and you do have a sound mind.

Mr. Fearing did not have a sound mind. He could of, and should of and would of had a sound mind had he resisted that spirit of fear. If he really knew the word of God he would have risen up and quoted it over his life, resisting the lies of the devil. The spirit of fear will keep you out of experiencing a sound faith and hope in eternal life and have you wasting a lot of your Christian life bound up in fear, doubt, unbelief, with a lot of could of, would of, and should of's.

Are you experiencing the fear of sin, death and judgement as a Christian? If so you might want to examine your life and see where you've allowed the spirit of fear to come into your Christian walk and twist your perception on sin, death and judgement. Here in **John 5:24** it shows the assurance of your salvation; "*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.*"

Romans 8:1-11 shows exactly what's going on with Mr. Fearing. It says; "*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*"

If you're walking in fear, you're walking in the flesh. You can choose to walk in the flesh if you want to like Mr. Fearing did. It says his soul was fine, he walked through other trials battles with no problem at all, but he walked in fear about personal sin, death and judgement and was really robbed of many blessings from God because of that personal decision he made. This wasn't the reverential fear of God, no, it was paralyzing fear from the devil.

As a Christian, if you're walking in condemnation about sin, death and judgement to come, then you're walking in the flesh and not according to the spirit. If you've repented of sins you've committed, then condemnation has no place in you...unless...if you get back into your carnal fleshly mindset and allow the lies of the devil in which

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say that God really hasn't forgiven you and that you're still guilty take hold. Lies, lies, lies. Bind them and resist them in Jesus' name.

Mr. Fearing was walking according to the flesh and as a result was walking in condemnation about sin, death and judgement to come. If this is you, feeling unworthy that you can't even get to church and be in fellowship with other Christians etc., then you're walking in the flesh.

Romans 8:5-6 says; *"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."*

If you want to live a life of peace you must be spiritually minded, living according to the spirit resisting the spirit of fear at all times in every situation. It's not to say that fear won't try to attack you, because it will. You can walk in the flesh or in the spirit as a Christian, but if you want life and peace, you need to walk in the spirit. If you're afraid of death and dying, you don't need to be because Jesus removed the sting of death by conquering it and taking that eternal separation from God away. You now have hope!

Romans 8:12-17 talks about sonship through the Spirit of God! It says; *"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."*

Being in the flesh and fear brings bondage. There need be no fear of judgement for sin if you've been forgiven of it! There need be no fear in death because death has been conquered through Jesus at the cross and it has no sting! If you're in the flesh, it becomes the proverbial me, myself and I syndrome, it's introverted, oppressive and depressive, pointing and looking only to oneself. If it's not of faith...it's of fear. More than likely, if you're a Christian walking in fear, condemnation, unworthiness and all we've talked about, it will be very difficult for you also to have sound Christian fellowship and even go to church. If you do make it into church, like Mr. Fearing eventually did by going into the Interpreters House, it will be shallow and short lived...unless...you get out of your flesh and start walking as Jesus called you walk...as a son or daughter of his!

Just like the children of Israel could have entered into the promised land right away and not wandered 40 more years in the wilderness, you too can enter into peace and joy and your promised land in Christ and in fellowship with other Christians right now, if you get out of the flesh and into the spirit. Don't wander around in the desert of fear any longer...that's not God's will for you.

1 John 4:17-19; *"Love has been perfected among us in this: 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 casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us."*

This culminates in the love walk. In fear, the love that God has for you is stymied. Fear breeds torment, condemnation, judgement, unworthiness etc...not love. Choose, love, joy and peace! It's a spiritual battle, it's a demon of fear to make it very clear. But in Jesus' name bind it and cast it from your life and you can be set free! If you're walking in unrepented sin, you're still in the flesh, so repent of it and be set free!

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So as a Christian, are you going to walk in the flesh, which will result in fear of condemnation of sin, death and judgement to come, or are you going to walk in the spirit and experience a life of peace free of condemnation? Mr. Fearing made it into heaven, but he had innumerable trials that could have been avoided as a result of fear of the future. Don't follow his example.