

Things you can afford to loose – Fear Unbelief and Bad Conversation

Last week we ended our mini-series on *Things You Can't Afford to Loose*, where we examined three God-given virtues – **confidence, joy and peace**. We noted how all these qualities *strengthened* and equipped us to face the storms and trials of life. However, as with most things, there is a flip-side – a negative approach that incapacitates our strength and makes life more difficult. These are things we can afford to loose! And as before, we will be examining three – **fear unbelief and bad conversation**.

(1) **Fear**: Is it really possible for you to live without fear or anxiety? Well, according to God's word – It is! You can get rid of fear and anxiety in your life! **"There is no fear in love"** (1 John 4:18). But remember, the world system is bent on telling you that you can't! Wherever you turn, you will probably find good reason to become stressed and anxious, and today especially, fear is common place in most people's psyche.

There are countless recognised phobias. A *phobia* is an intense and persistent fear of a specific thing, object, situation, or activity. And because of this intense and persistent fear, the victim's anxiety is typically out of proportion to the real situation. Psychiatrists recognise three major types of phobias. The first, *simple phobias* are fears of particular things, objects or situations such as animals, closed spaces and heights. The second type, *agoraphobia*, is fear of open, public places and situations (such as public vehicles and crowded shopping centres) from which escape is difficult. *Social phobias*, the third type, are fears of appearing foolish, stupid or shameful in social situations. Taken together, these phobias are believed to afflict five to ten people in every hundred (and it's on the increase).

Philippians 4:5-7 says, **"...The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."** This passage serves to enlarge our understanding of both worship and intercession. However, Paul's sound advise also accentuates an aspect of prayer we should all rightly consider, he urges his readers to break an established pattern in their lives – **anxiety!**

Anxiety is an emotional state in which people feel uneasy, apprehensive or fearful. Most sufferers experience anxiety about events they cannot control or predict, or about situations that seem threatening or dangerous. Many often use the words *fear* and *anxiety* to describe the same thing. Likewise, fear describes *a negative reaction to immediate or perceived danger characterised by a strong desire to escape the situation*. And fear is the opposite of faith - it's believing that something bad is about to happen!

Yet God has not given you spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1:7). Fear is a curse! In fact, because of fear, more people experience anxiety disorders than any other type of mental illness. Fear is something we can all definitely afford to loose – get rid of!

A survey of people aged 15 to 54 in the US found that 17 percent of this population suffers from an anxiety disorder during any given year. I don't know about you, but I am not planning to be a constituent of this group – and especially not as a Christian. How many times (in the Gospels) do we hear Jesus Himself say, "Fear not." Why is this; because before anything miraculous can take place, fear and unbelief must be removed? The Greek word for anxiety has negative connotations, namely, a fearful harassing care which brings about unreasonable (out of proportion) pressure. However, it may also be used to describe someone who is attempting to carry the burden of the future (the unknown) all alone, or someone who has unreasonable concern, especially about things over which no-one has any control. Paul is presumably speaking of

imaginary troubles or phantom anxieties. Therefore, he tells his readers to stop worrying, and not to be overtly anxious, stressed or fearful over anything. Leaving them no exceptions! Note, the language is as comprehensive as it can be, “**not... about anything, but in everything**” No anxiety, real or potential, is excluded! From personal experience Paul had learned that “*the way to be anxious about nothing was to be prayerful about everything.*” As we draw near to God (in prayer), He draws near to us! And where God is, there you will find true rest and contentment - the Peace of God.

Appropriating Paul’s advice means recognising the presence of anxiety in your life, however unreasonable or embarrassing it may appear to be, for nothing can be gained by ignoring it or trying to suppress it. Notice, Paul does not exhort you to get rid of anxiety before you pray. *Prayer* itself is the therapy! Neither does Paul ask you to make light of your troubles, because he knows that God is greater than all your troubles.

Therefore, always let God know what is troubling you. It is through prayer that God has provided us with a channel for expressing our anxiety, or any uneasiness or concerns.

Prayer is – *conversation with; a plea directed to; a request made of; or information given to*, the Supreme Person of the universe. The One God (and Father of all) who does hear, know, understand, care about and respond to the concerns that otherwise would sink us into despair. Prayer is both an act and an atmosphere! Every believer needs to live in an *atmosphere* of prayer. The mood, tone and temper of your life should be a prayerful one – nothing else. This removes the harmful approach to prayer that implies; if you are not isolated, segregated and on your knees, you are not praying.

Also, please understand, Paul wasn’t suggesting that *the Lord is near you, therefore there is no need to be anxious!* But rather, *the Lord is near, therefore offer your anxiety to Him!* Hence, his advice is disobeyed, not by being afflicted with worry but by simply refusing to present your burden to the Lord. Being anxious and stressed-out means that you suffer alone – you yourself groan; you yourself seek to see ahead and predict the future; and, you yourself have chosen to keep hold of the problem. This is such a heavy burden in itself. So why would anyone in his right mind want to inflict such pain and suffering on himself?

(2) **Unbelief**: The second thing you can definitely afford to loose is unbelief. As mentioned earlier, fear and unbelief will incapacitate and sap any strength you have. But they will also prevent miracles (God’s supernatural power) from manifesting in your situation. So, if you are genuine expecting God’s awesome power to accompany your Christian walk, then you must get rid of all fear and unbelief.

Doubt and unbelief are the devil’s tools and they will make you totally unstable. And an unstable vessel cannot navigate the storms of life! James 1:6-8 tells us, “***But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.***”

There are a few things we should take note of here. Firstly, as fear is the opposite of faith, doubt is the opposite of belief (“*he must believe and not doubt*”). Believing is very powerful. In Luke 8:50 Jesus says, “Do not be afraid; **only believe**, and she will be made well.” In Matthew 21:21,22 Jesus boldly declares, “I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. **If you believe**, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.” And one of the most power statements Jesus ever made can be found in Mark 9:23, “***Everything is possible for him who believes.***”

The opposite of this spiritual principle is, "Nothing is possible to him who doubts." Why? Because he is unhinged, unstable and unreliable. James talks of a person being drawn in two directions (tossed to and fro). His alliance is divided, and because of his lack of character, he vacillates between belief and doubt - sometimes thinking that God will help him and other times giving up all hope. Does this sound familiar? If it does then you can rectify it right now. Only believe!

Throw away your doubt and unbelief, and release the measure of faith that God has provided for you. Simple childlike faith (as small as a mustard seed). Yes, you do have enough faith in you to remove all fear and doubt. You were created with this in mind - to live by faith and nothing else. And this is pleasing to God. Hebrews 10:38, "Now the **just shall live by faith**; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."

(3) **Bad Conversation.** Someone once said, "*You cook in the frying pan of your own words.*" Your life is served up and seasoned in your own words. Almost every time you prepare to converse with someone, there is an open door for you to have meaningful dialogue or bad conversation. You can decide to frame your conversation with encouragement, and bring *life*, or allow the wickedness that's contained in the tongue to run riot and speak *death*. The choice is entirely yours! Your choices may be good or bad, but these two requirements must be present for anything to be established.

First, *you must believe with your heart*, and second, *you must confess with your mouth*. This process is a foundational spiritual law, and it will work either way - manifesting *good or evil*. **Proverbs 25:11** says, "**A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.**" Like a master craftsman, you have the ability to place your words in the most beautiful setting – using precious materials (positive, encouraging words).

In **Deuteronomy 30:14** it states, "**The word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, so you can do it.**" Notice, your obedience and *love* for God must be evident in both places, in your heart and in your conversation. Only then can His covenant promises manifest in your life. This is both practical and realistic! The trouble with many believers is that they appear to have the Word in their hearts, yet they never speak out anything in line with the God's Word. His Word is "**alive and active and sharper than any two edged sword**", however, its *life* and *power* is only released through the tongue. **2 Corinthians 4:13** "**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.**" Implying that confession is a product of belief – our faith.

Throughout the Bible you will find a great emphasis placed on *speech*. That is, what comes out of your mouth, or is on your lips. I am convinced that the *sin of disobedience* is manifest more intensely (and is more evident) in people's conversation than in any other area of their lives.

Many people might appear moral to society because their countenance reflects a form of Godliness. Yet their conversation is seasoned with all kinds of evil and corruption, and they *deny* God's power in their lives through improper speech. Remember, "**...the Word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it (in order that you may obey it).**" The big question today is this – "*What word is very near you?*" The word of *life* or a word of *death*? Because, whether you like it or not your words are deciding your future – either good or bad.

Jesus said that we would have to give an account of every careless word we have spoken, and that by our words we will be acquitted or condemned. **Matthew 12:36, 37** "**But I tell you, on the day of Judgement all**

men will have to give an account for every idle word they have spoken. For by your words you will be justified and acquitted and by your words you will be condemned and sentenced” [Amplified]. Note the Greek word translated “*idle*” literally means *negative*! According to Jesus, negative or worthless speech is an expression of a person’s true character.

Have you ever wondered how you sound like to others? Are you a clanging empty can or a symphony of praises to God? Are you a slave to the evil of the human tongue, or are you ***“filled with the Holy Spirit, singing - making melody in our heart to the Lord?”*** Proverbs 18:21 says, ***“The tongue has the power of life and of death and those who 'love' it will eat its fruit.”*** The Amplified puts it a little different, ***Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they who 'indulge' shall themselves eat the fruit of it [for death or for life].”***

Remember, the fruit you are producing you’ll be made to eat (and so become)! You are what you eat! You feed your character primarily with the fruit of your lips. It’s incredible and frightening how much power the tongue has. It can destroy three people all at once. The one slandering, the one whom is being slandered, and the one listening. If left unchecked, it can become the greatest pollutant in your life. But the *power* is with you – It’s in your mouth!

We can cloth each other with words of life or garments of death. But one thing's for sure – *whatever our lips produce we ourselves will be made to partake*. So why not do what the Lord God has instructed... ***“Choose life that you may live.”*** And always remind yourself, your words truly matter because they are a creative force. So use it wisely.

There isn’t a Christian on the planet who cannot afford to loose a bad confession. It is something we should get rid of the moment we notice it. And you can easily do this by retracting it and replacing it with a positive confession. One that is in line with God’s word. That’s all it takes!