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SUDDEN FEAR

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We all experience two types of fear. One is healthy, helpful, and protective, and the other is deadly, debilitating, and paralyzing. One is rational and produces a plan of action. The other is irrational and produces panic and reaction. It is this second category that very often occurs as sudden fear. It is the kind that catches you completely off guard and unprepared. Proverbs 3:25a and 26a tells us, *“Be not afraid of sudden fear... For the Lord shall be thy confidence....”* There is a type of “fear”, or caution, that comes from God that is designed to provide protection for our life. It heightens our senses and causes us to respond in an appropriate manner to deal with danger. But, there is also a type that comes from satan and is designed to destroy us. The fear that is provided for my protection and well being never brings into question the goodness and provision of God, but the “sudden fear” brought on by the devil questions everything about God - His character, His goodness, His love, His ability, everything. It is designed to create a wrong response that results in sin. Sudden fear engineered by the devil always comes with the accusation that God cannot be trusted. Some say, “Well, fear is just natural.” Yes, and that is the problem – it is *natural*.

The word *sudden* in Proverbs 3:25 means instant, unexpected, or startled and the word *fear* means alarm, terror, and panic. Sound familiar? It is the same word that was used in 2 Chronicles 20:3 to describe the initial reaction of Jehoshaphat when he received the news that there were three armies coming to kill him and his people, and they were right at his door. Of course he was startled and alarmed and surely felt a sense of panic, but it did not last long. The Bible says that, “Jehoshaphat feared”, but then it continues with, “and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.” There was the initial reaction of alarm, but it was quickly followed by the action of seeking God. How was it that he was able to make that transition so quickly, to rebound from fear to faith? It is because he was in the habit of seeking God. Trusting God was his practice, his lifestyle, and he had seen God work on his behalf before (2 Chron.



Please pray for our upcoming campaign to Kenya August 16 - 29.

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18:31). Sudden fear is often produced by the normal unpredictable circumstances of life, but it is also brought on by the lies, threats, and accusations of the devil. No matter the source, sudden fear can and should be dealt with by instantly turning to God in faith. Regardless of where the fear originates, satan will always use it as an opportunity to entrap us in discouragement and despair. Our sure defense is deliberate pro-active faith in God.

Over and over again we hear Jesus say to His disciples, "Fear not", "Be not afraid", "Why are ye so fearful?" In Matthew 8:23 we find them in a similar situation as Jehoshaphat, not threatened by armies, but by huge waves sweeping over the ship they were in. The bottom line was the same - if something didn't happen, and soon, they were going to die. The Bible tells us, "...*there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves...*" Have you ever felt "covered" by circumstances? This was not a situation in which they had the opportunity to do a lot of planning. This storm came without warning, just like the storms of our life sometimes. They were caught off guard and they panicked. In that state of panic they woke Jesus up and proclaimed - we perish! Then Jesus did what only He can do - He calmed the storm. The "great tempest" was all of a sudden turned into a "great calm". It is important to note that the word Jesus used in rebuking the disciples was *oligopistos*, little faith, not NO faith. The word means small or limited. Their faith may have been small, and yours may be also, but if it is enough to at least get you to turn to Jesus, then it is enough. If your storm is great, take heart, for when you turn to Him in faith, your calm will be great also. The circumstances turned to calm when they turned to Jesus. But, THAT was the key. And it is in our experience as well. The reason Jesus rebuked the disciples is that they turned to Him in timidity, rather than in all out faith. The important thing, however, is that they turned. Are you in the habit of quickly turning to God when sudden fear comes? If not, just keep practicing and you will soon develop that habit.

Romans 8:15 assures us, "*For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*" Then in 2 Timothy 1:7 we read, "*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*" Fear that is not from God brings bondage, confusion, alarm and panic. The way out is to turn to Jesus - quickly and completely. He said in John 14:27, "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth [based on circumstances], give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" Dear Christian, are you fearful? Are you alarmed by a sudden fear? Then quickly - turn your eyes upon Jesus and receive His calm, His peace, His confidence. It is yours for the asking.

When sudden fear comes, you may not be able to help responding initially with panic. That initial response is not sin. But, you CAN help continuing in it. To continue in fear rather than turning to Jesus in faith IS sin because it is disobedience. Your present situation may look hopeless. The circumstances and "professional" opinions may tell you to give in and give up. But, don't! Rather, turn to Jesus. Cast yourself upon Him and give Him a chance to turn your great tempest into an equally great calm.

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31)

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