

Becoming Fearless

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This past year, on August 8th, I went to the doctor because I had been passing some blood. Because of the amount, he decided to send me to the hospital immediately, to have a few tests run. They admitted me into the hospital, and inserted a catheter into my bladder. The next day, the surgeon did a procedure, because the CAT scan had shown a possible tumor that was in my bladder. From the procedure, it was determined that I had an enlarged prostate, and that it had caused a few small blood vessels to rupture. They had just seen some small blood clots. The doctor determined that the situation could be treated with medicine, and the next day they would take out the catheter, and I could go home, once I was able to urinate on my own.

The next day, I drank gallons of water, and tried to go to the washroom, but with no success. As a matter of fact, every time I got out of bed I got light-headed, nauseous, had trouble breathing, and had to get back into bed as soon as I could. I also had a bad case of indigestion, throughout the day. By that evening, they had reinserted the catheter, and were so concerned about what was going on, that the doctor had me moved to a cardiac monitoring floor. The following morning, our primary care physician brought in a specialist in pulmonology and cardiology. He ordered x-rays and another CAT scan. It turned out, that during the minor surgical procedure, some blood clots had moved through my heart and into my lungs. I now had a number of pulmonary embolisms in my lungs. They immediately moved me to Intensive Care, and put me on blood thinners. I had a filter installed, into the venacava, to block any other blood clots from moving from the lower extremities into the heart. This venacava filter is about the width of five paper clips. It was installed in the main vein, from the groin area, and is worked up to a location, in that vein, just below the rib cage. It is at this point, that it is opened like an umbrella, and it locks into the vein, and here it prevents the blood clots from moving through. That was on Saturday morning, and that weekend I almost died from pulmonary embolisms. The doctors increased the blood thinners way beyond their normal range, trying to get the situation under control, and I survived.

Through this whole experience, I consistently knew that God was in charge, and no matter what happened, I was really not in the doctor's care, but in God's. He and He alone, is our Healer, and no matter what happened whether I lived or died, it was His will. I asked Him to give my family, and myself peace. I asked him for favor, that I would do nothing, during this whole time, which would bring shame on His name.

The following ten days were spent, mostly, in the Intensive Care Unit. The blood clotting seemed to be under control, but because of the blood thinners, I was bleeding profusely from my bladder. It was a three-way catheter that was installed at that time. They were constantly flushing the bladder with saline solution. They had done a number of x-rays, CAT scans, and ultrasounds. They had finally determined that there were no more blood clots in the leg, and that the pulmonary embolism seemed to be shrinking a bit. The doctors made a decision to take me off the blood thinners, and then to do another surgical procedure to cauterize the bleeding vessels in the bladder, and to shave down the prostate. The procedure lasted about two hours, and was successful.

Again, I called for the elders to anoint me. I knew that God was in charge, and that everything would go exactly according to His plan, and there was no fear. I asked God for healing, and that I would do nothing to bring shame on His glorious name.

The operation was successful, and the bleeding from the bladder stopped. After the surgery, an ultrasound showed that the clots had once again started to form in my legs, and so they put me back on blood thinners. They were not as concerned about the clots this time, because they could not pass through to my heart because of the venacava filter that had been installed. Within about a week, the doctors had determined that my condition was getting much better, and that I could probably go home soon. The catheter was removed, and the embolisms in my lungs were shrinking, and they did not seem to be as much of a problem as they were originally. Although they would form scar tissue, and be there the rest of my life, the doctors determined that the problems that they would cause would be minor.

Then, a couple of days later, when I went to the washroom, the nurses who were monitoring my heart saw my heart rate jump over 200 beats a minute. They immediately got me back in bed, and the cardiologist was called. He decided that an angiogram needed to be done, to determine what was causing the heart rate to rise. Again, God is in charge, He is our Healer. Only He determines life and death, and I knew that it was all in His hands.

When they did the test, it was determined that my veins, arteries and heart were just fine. But the venacava filter, that was supposed to keep me from the danger of blood clots, had moved, along with the clots, into the right ventricle of my heart. Open-heart surgery had to be done immediately.

Again, God is in charge, and He will heal in His own time. I had absolutely no doubt about that.

I was moved, by ambulance, to another hospital. The next day, the heart surgeon performed a four-hour operation, to remove the filter. While he was in there, he went into the lungs, and removed most of the embolisms that had been caused by the clotting.

After about another two weeks, I was released from the hospital, and went home on September 10th to spend the next two months recovering.

God even healed me enough, by the fall holy days that we were able to attend the Feast with all of you, and I was able to go back to work, on October 30th.

Suddenly, on October 29th, on Sunday afternoon, when I was at my son's house watching a football game, my right leg started to tingle, as it does when part of the body feels like it seems to be falling asleep. As I stood up to shake it out, the feeling started traveling throughout my whole body. My body was seizing, and out of control. I thought that I was having a heart attack, and that I was going to die. But, even at that moment, I knew that God was in charge, and that all would be according to His plan and purpose. I told my son, "Call 911. I think this is the end."

The next thing I knew, I was in the back of an ambulance, in front of his house, on the way to the emergency room. Again, I knew that God was in charge, and I asked one of my sons to immediately call for an anointed cloth. After a number of tests, it was determined that I have a brain tumor. It is a meningioma, right at the top of my head, pressing up against the main vein. It is about an inch and a half to two inches in size, and it is probably non-malignant, but it is causing swelling on the left side

of the brain that controls the motor skills on the right side. They are usually very slow growing, but once they start to affect things, as this one is doing, they need to be removed. Removal can be complicated, as it could be soft, or it could be hard. It may be easy to suck out, or it may be in need of being chipped and picked away, a little at a time. It could take only a couple of hours, or up to nine hours, to remove it. There could be temporary paralysis, or it could be permanent. The surgeon could damage the main vein, that it is up against, and cause major bleeding, stroke, or even death.

As I said, most likely it is not cancerous, but there is still the possibility that when they do the biopsy, it could come back showing cancer. To complicate matters, my blood is clotting more quickly than others, and for now, I am on blood thinners. They cannot operate while I am on thinners, because the surgery, of course, would cause extensive bleeding in the brain. Again, what happens if it starts to clot after the surgery? If they put another venacava filter in, and it breaks through again, like the last one did, there is a good possibility that it could go into my heart. With the trauma, my heart would not be able to take it.

They have not scheduled the operation yet, because of the question of clotting. The hematologist wants to put the operation off, as long as possible. The neurosurgeon wants to get done as soon as possible, because the longer he waits, the more chance there is of greater difficulty and permanent damage.

This whole brain tumor issue has been a very interesting thing. When I was in the hospital, for thirty-four days, going through the first round of all these health problems, I had absolutely no doubt that God was in charge, and that things would be according to His plan and purpose. I did spend quite a bit of time thinking about what was going on, and why God might be allowing it to happen. But, the complications came along fast and furious, and required immediate action, and I did not really have that much time to mull them over. I was fearless. Now God has given me a different situation, where I have plenty of time to think about the complications that could come, and I became fearful of the results.

Revelation 21:7-8 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

God ranks being fearful right up there with the abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers and idolaters. Fearfulness will put us into the lake of fire, from which there is no return.

The word "*fearful*" in Revelation 21 is Strong's number 1169, *dilos*, and it means dread or timid. By implication, it means faithless. To be timid, according to Webster's, means to be fearful, and not bold. To dread, means great fear or apprehension of danger or evil. If we say that we believe God's word, and His promises to us, how can we go through our lives, even in times of great trial, fearful and timid in the way that we approach them, dreading the outcome? We must put our money where our mouths are, and live our lives boldly, with great courage, in spite of what we see before us. This does not mean that we foolishly look in the face of danger and laugh. But, it does mean, that through our trials, we stand fast, and we faithfully learn the lesson that everything that God does, and allows to happen in our lives, is because of His love for us. As we grow through these trials, we learn that it is because of God's compassion and tender mercy towards us, leading us towards perfection.

In the beginning of the book of Job, we saw Satan bring great calamity on Job and his family, even causing his family to be destroyed. Miserable things would fall to those who were in Job's tender care.

Job 2:3-6 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause." So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. "But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life."

Satan knew human nature. "*Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life*". According to Satan, a human being, faced with the cold hard facts of the destruction of his own life, or even the possibility of having difficult pain and sorrow, will turn on God's truth. But, we have two options here. We can both give into it, and become exceedingly fearful of what men can do. Or, the second option is what God expects of us: to stand in fear and awe of Him, trusting in Him, and His promises, to keep us protected. You know the end results of God's purpose for Job.

James 5:11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

James talked about what God had accomplished with Job, and what we should see that He is accomplishing with us.

The word '*end*,' in that verse, means the '*end of a purpose*.' God was showing Job, and us, through the trial that he went through, that no matter what God allows in our lives, it is perfecting us. It is bringing us closer to knowing His perfect love. His love is absolute compassion and tender mercy to those whom He holds in His hands.

It is interesting that James speaks about '*compassion and tender mercy*' as the absolute attribute of God. Then he immediately goes into using those two same characteristics, and how we should treat one another.

James 5:12-16 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes," be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment. Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Our word to one another must be as sure as God's word is to us. In our joy and sorrow, we share a bond with one another and God, which will never be broken. The unceasing, fervent prayer, in compassion and tender mercy, makes us whole. Brethren, in the joy and in the sorrow in the trials, there is much more going on here than meets the eye. God is binding us together, with Him, and with each other. If we are fearful—without faith that God is doing exactly what He needs to do with each

of us, individually and as a group, then we will fail and end up in the Lake of Fire. But, if we move forward, with great courage, we will be glorified, following the footsteps of our Elder Brother, as the spiritual children of the Father.

To be fearful will keep us out of the Kingdom of God, and could actually play a part in bringing down those around us.

Deuteronomy 20:1-5 "When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. " So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. "And he shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; 'for the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.' The officers shall speak further to the people, and say, 'What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart.'

God is telling us, right here, that even though the odds seem stacked against us, we must never be terrified at the possible outcome, because God will save us. As James said, about our relationship with each other: just as we lift one another up with our prayers of faith in God and His promises, and stir each other up continually by our personal courage, if we are fearful and fainthearted, we will cause our brothers to stumble as well.

Our fearlessness is not only necessary for us to succeed, but it also shows our great love in encouraging each other. It is a circle, and the more that we go before our Father's throne, in fervent prayer, on one another's behalf, the more our brethren can be bold in the face of their trials. The more that we meet those trials, and trust God; the more we lift up our family. We show absolute devotion to God, His purpose, and each other by doing this.

II Timothy 1:6-10 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

Just as Paul told Timothy, we are being told the same thing. We have been set apart by God to live a life with tremendous courage, because God has given us that gift to fulfill His purpose. We are to live with a courageous spirit of love, walking through the door that was opened by our elder brother Jesus Christ. So, in our trials, we should know God well enough, through His Word, that we can walk boldly in power, love, and of a sound mind. Do we believe this? Do we understand how special we are to God, and that He will see us through these trials? He has every hair on our head counted. We have a great High Priest, who is now working to make sure that we are perfected, by the scary trials that may beset us. He has already blazed the trail before us.

Hebrews 4:14-16 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 5:7-9 who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, Our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, was perfected by the things which He suffered. He did it so that we can come boldly before His Father's throne, and obtain mercy and grace, in our time of need. We must believe this, and we must live by this.

I am currently reading a book, titled "Undaunted Courage," by the historian Stephen Ambrose. This book is about the courage of Lewis and Clark, as they went into uncharted territory, and opened up the larger part of the United States that lay still unexplored, for those to follow behind them and build. Those that came after them faced tremendous hardships and danger, but they pushed on, fearlessly, because they had a better idea where they were going, because of those who had gone before them.

We are quickly coming up on the Passover; it is slightly more than eight weeks away. We will be spending more time thinking about the painful trials that Jesus Christ went through on our behalf. As we come to this time, let us reflect on His undaunted courage, as He did what He did on our behalf, and make sure that we remember that we have a job—to walk as He walked.

We know that Christ was exceedingly sad, in facing the great trials that lay before Him, in His torture and His execution. Of any man who ever lived, He knew better than anyone else what was going to happen to Him at the end of His life. He knew exactly what the scriptures said He would have to go through, and He would not back down. He lived fearlessly.

Psalm 22:1-13 But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people. All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, "He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!" But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts. I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb You have been My God. Be not far from Me, For trouble is near; For there is none to help. Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. They gape at Me with their mouths, Like a raging and roaring lion.

Who better than Christ knew the demons' pleasure at watching Him being crucified?

Psalm 22:16-20 I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots. But You, O LORD, do not

be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me! Deliver Me from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth And from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me.

He had a lifetime to consider the brutal beating that He would take at the end of His life, and the physical and mental problems that He would go through. Yet, He went through them, all of His life, with undaunted courage.

Psalm 22:22-31 I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You. You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel! For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from Him; But when He cried to Him, He heard. My praise shall be of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him. The poor shall eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the LORD. Let your heart live forever! All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the LORD'S, And He rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth Shall eat and worship; All those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep himself alive. A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the LORD to the next generation, They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, That He has done this

Here, we can see just why He could have this boldness, and what it accomplished.

Jesus Christ said, in John 12:27-29, *"Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 'Father, glorify Your name.'" Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."*

Brethren, for this cause have we come to the hour of our trials and troubles for the Father, to glorify His name.

There is one more key element that we need to look at in becoming fearless. It is the reason that Jesus Christ could do what He did, with undaunted courage.

Mark 4:2 Then He taught them many things by parables, . . .

We see here, that Christ had been teaching the great multitudes many things, through parables.

Mark 4:33-34 And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.

He told them what all of these things meant. The apostles, who had been called for a specific job, were not left hanging, but were given, clear instruction about God's plan and purpose, directly from Jesus Christ.

Mark 4:35-41 On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side." Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm

arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

The word '*fearful*,' in verse 40, is the same word used in Revelation 21. They became terrorized, in a time that Christ had expected them to have faith, and they did not. He expected them to understand what was going on here, that His Father was in charge of all that was going on, and all the work would be done. He expected them to know Him, His purpose, and their part in it, even at this point in their lives. But they did not, because they did not know God, and even vaguely understand His purpose. That lack of understanding actually made them terrified of Him, as they were in the storm. Verse 41, '*And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"*'

God has given us a gift, both in the life and death of Jesus Christ, in His blazing the trail before us. He has given the few of us, among many, the extraordinary privilege of coming directly before the throne of the Father, and to understand what He is doing. But, it is not a privilege without responsibility on our part. We must know Him, and His purpose, through every opportunity that God gives us to learn His ways. That includes, and maybe it is more importantly, through our trials.

There is another interesting clue, in Christ's final hours of His life.

Matthew 26:31-41 Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.'" Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble." Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples. Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Christ asked them to watch and pray with Him, so that they, together, could be strengthened and encouraged, and face the terrorizing road ahead. The apostles failed to carry out their responsibility. They did not work as hard as they should, just as we do not, to understand the Father's plan and purpose. Even at the end, they did not seek the Father, as Christ did.

Matthew 26:51 And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

A lot of commentaries have said, that they think that this was Peter, himself.

Matthew 26:52-54 But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?"

Christ shows us the difference in our actions, if we really know God, or if we do not. It makes a big difference in how we act. John Ritenbaugh, in a sermon on the sovereignty of God, quoted Daniel 11:32, *'but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits'*. "Know" indicates a close, warm and passionate intimacy, combined with head knowledge that produces the edge in a person's life. This enables us to trust God, and at the same time, to perceive what He is doing. It is the factor that makes God's Word authoritative to us.

The trial that Nancy and I are going through is small compared to what many of you have gone through, are going through, or will go through. But, we are all in this together, with our Father and Jesus Christ. We cannot become fearful, but must have absolute faith that our Father knows exactly what He is doing, in perfect compassion and tender mercy, and He has given us the marvelous opportunity to glorify His holy and righteous name together.

I am ending with the same scripture that John Reid did, in his preceding sermon. Always remember, what we are told in Hebrews 13:5-6, and be content with the things that you have. *"For He Himself has said, "I will never, never, never leave you nor forsake you." ' So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear."*

Stay strong, with undaunted courage.