

HOW TO BE VICTORIOUS OVER FEAR

(Psalm 23:4)

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You *are* with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me (Psalm 23:4).

In his 2013 book *What Are You Afraid Of?*, pastor and author David Jeremiah told us about some of the fears that famous people face. He said:

Cher, Jennifer Aniston, and Whoopi Goldberg are all aviophobes. They are afraid of flying. Barbra Streisand is xenophobic—she is uncomfortable around strangers. Michael Jackson was haunted by the fear of contamination, infections, and diseases. He was mysophobic. But the celebrity with the most phobias is Woody Allen. He's afraid of insects, sunshine, dogs, deer, bright colors, children, heights, small rooms, crowds, and cancer.

Then he went on to say:

Famous people of the past were no different. George Washington was scared to death of being buried alive. Richard Nixon was terrified of hospitals, and Napoleon Bonaparte, the military and political genius, feared cats.

Fear is not a problem that only famous people deal with, it is a spiritual malady that followers of God battle with as well. The uncertainty of what will happen due to the spread of the coronavirus has struck fear in the hearts of so many around the world.

This morning, I would like you to see how the man after God's own heart—King David—found victory over fear during the most difficult days of his life.

Title: How to Be Victorious Over Fear

(Prayer)

What did David mean when he wrote of walking through the shadow of the valley of death?

Yea, though I walk through **the valley of the shadow of death**...

The Hebrew word for “shadow of death” means “deep darkness” or “deathly darkness.”

Theologian Annang Asumang wrote: “The imagery of the valley in the Old Testament represents a place of **gloom ... danger ... and decision-making.**”

Commentator Allen Ross called these valleys a picture of: “...life-threatening experiences, or difficult places...”

1. The reality of fearful circumstances

On the night before Jesus was crucified, he told His closest friends, “In this world **you will have trouble**; but take heart, because I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Like Jesus, David knew that he could not avoid the dark valleys of life--- they are **a given**. He didn’t say, “**if**” I walk through the valley...he said “**though**.”

This past week I received an email from functional medicine expert Dr. Mark Hyman who called the coronavirus a “once in 100-year pandemic.” So, whether we are Christians or non-Christians, we are all currently living—right now—in the midst of a life-threatening reality.

Even 3000 years ago, David the King of Israel understood that these life-threatening valleys happen—that they are a part of life. And since he knew this, **he decided in advance** that when these difficult times came upon him, his response would be one of **faith in God** and **not fear**:

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil (or, catastrophe); For You *are* with me...

2. The response to fearful circumstances

David said, “**I will fear no evil...**” *I am **not** going to be afraid of them!*

A lady once approached D. L. Moody and told him she had found an awesome promise in Scripture that helped her overcome fear. Her verse was Psalm 56:3: “**When I am afraid, I will trust in You.**” Moody replied, “[Ah yes, a great promise!] But there is an even [greater] promise than that!” And he quoted Isaiah 12:2: “**Behold, God is my [deliverer]; I will trust, and not be afraid.**”

In Scripture, the commands: “Do not fear” and “Do not be afraid” are used 113X!!!! The most repeated commands in the Bible!

The great pastor and author Warren Wiersbe said:

The secret of victory over fear is faith in God. There is no problem too great for God to solve, no burden too heavy for God to carry, no battle too overwhelming for God to fight and win. God is big enough to conquer the enemies that rob us of our peace and leave paralyzing fears behind...Faith is not simply medicine to kill the disease; faith is spiritual power to keep us from being infected in the first place...On the road of life there are level places that delight us, and there are difficult places that challenge us... there are rocks and bumps even on the paths of God’s choosing, and we have to learn to accept them and benefit from them... It is much easier to kick the rock and turn around and go back. The secret to climbing higher is to look away from yourself and your difficulties, and look

by faith to Jesus Christ. He knows where you are, how you feel, and what you can do. Turn it all over to Him and start walking by faith.¹

The reality of...the response to...and finally...

3. The promise in fearful circumstances

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; **For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.** (Psalm 23:4).

We have seen that going through the valley of deep darkness—through life-threatening difficulty—is a part of life—we can't avoid it. It is a reality.

But we have also seen that David decided **in advance** that he would not allow these bad times to strike fear in his heart, but would trust that God knows what He is doing.

How could David not be afraid? How could he go through the darkest days of his life and not be overwhelmed by fear?

He could do this because of the promises of God. David said, "I will fear no evil; **For You are with Me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.**"

When David started this Psalm, he began by talking **about** the Lord:

v. 2: **He makes** me lie down...

He leads me...

v. 3: **He** restores my soul...

He leads me...

David begins by talking **about** the Lord, but now (in v. 4) he is talking **to** the Lord:

v. 4: **You are** with me...

Your rod and staff comfort me...

v. 5: **You** prepare a table before me...

You anoint my head with oil...

And when David says "You are with me," he is not trying to point out that God is **everywhere** (though He is!), he is saying:

"Lord, I know that in this life, I must walk through the darkest valleys...they are part of life and I can't avoid them...but when I do walk through those valleys, I will not be afraid because You are with me—You are my

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bumps Are What You Climb On: Encouragement for Difficult Days* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 97.

provider and protector—and You will be there to encourage me just when I need it most!

Illus: story of pastor on cross-country flight---“fasten seat belts...**turbulence!!!!**” Everyone gripped with fear....everyone, except a little girl. Calm. Reading a book like all is fine. The pastor asked her after the plane landed how she could be so calm. And she said, “My daddy is the pilot, and he promised me that he was going to get me home safely.”

None of us know what the future holds for our lives. We don't know if we will die tomorrow or next week or if God will let us live to the ripe old age of 100. But we do know this, when God asks us to endure the deep dark valleys of life-threatening circumstances, He has promised to be there with us! And if, in His infinite wisdom, He decides that our work on earth is finished, we can rest in His promise that He will bring us home **safely** to be with Him.

During the Depression in the 1930's, Taylor Gardner was young and just getting started as a preacher and was preaching to a black congregation in Louisiana. Electricity was just coming into existence in that part of the country, and **the church had just one light bulb hanging down** from the ceiling to light up the whole sanctuary. Gardener was preaching away, and in the middle of his sermon, all of a sudden, **the electricity went out.** The building went pitch black, and being new at all of this, Taylor Gardner didn't know what to do. He stumbled around wondering what he should say until one of the elderly deacons sitting in the back of the church said, "**Preach on, preacher! We can still see Jesus in the dark!**"

And my friends, if you can see Jesus in the dark—if you can trust Him even when life becomes more fearful than it has ever been for you—then you will be able to say, **“I will fear no evil, for You are with me!”**

(Invitation/Prayer)

Believers: **Don't worry, but pray**---let your requests be made known unto God!
(Pray especially for those on the front line!)

Non-believers: **Believe in Christ for eternal life!** (He will be with you forever!)