



in FOCUS

Equipping God's Workers With God's Word For God's Work



BE STRONG IN THE LORD

We all have fears in life.

Philip Co
(Faculty-on-leave, Dallas
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Fear is a fact of life. We all have phobias, both real and imagined. We may fear dark places, towering heights, lonely nights, public speaking and even crawling creatures, cockroaches, particularly, among men and rats, among women. Even in fairly stable and secure countries, people are afraid. According to a *USA Today* article, "We panic over pesticides and cellular phones, ozone holes and mercury fillings." Fear of failures, unstable economy, difficult circumstances, fatal diseases, natural disasters, and uncertainties grip our hearts. But the fear of all fears is the inescapable appointment with death.

Let's suppose you were brought before Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini at the bequest of President Bush. You were given another opportunity to apologize to the Iranian people for proselytizing the Muslims and be deported back to the States. If not, you would be put to death immediately. How would you respond?

Or put yourself in this situation. You were kidnapped by four persons and kept in an undisclosed safe house for eight days. You know that your family cannot pay the huge ransom being demanded by your abductors. How would you cope with the situation?

We've tried different ways of coping with their fears

How do we cope with fears? Some people deny they are afraid as long as the object of their fear does not creep up. Others face their fears by turning to alcohol, food, or by keeping themselves busy. Conquer your fear of heights through several trips to the roller

coaster or go bungee jumping. Researchers, in fact, have developed a high-tech treatment of this fear using virtual reality. Christopher Klok, a 21-year-old Atlanta college student, used to have a knee-buckling, sweat-producing fear of heights. But after viewing computer-generated scenes in which he rode in glass elevators, walked across bridges, and gazed out from high balconies, his fears have been greatly reduced. But how do you cope with those fears that even the world's most powerful military force can neither prevent nor control? Most people simply have no way out of their fears. But a biblical way to cope with fear may be found in Psalm 125. This Song of Ascent begins with confessions and ends with petitions. It gives us the source of our confidence to face fear and how that confidence can be renewed throughout our lives.

Our confidence comes out of trust in God and His power to protect and to preserve us (vv. 1-3)

As the pilgrims made their way up to Jerusalem for one of three pilgrimages to the annual Jewish feasts, they had to go through the winding paths of Mount Zion as it leads to the city atop a hill. The picture of Mount Zion, breathtaking, immovable and unchangeable, no doubt came to the mind of the psalmist as he declared: "Those who trust in the Lord are as secure as Mount Zion; they will not be defeated but will endure forever." (v. 1, New Living Translation). Just as Mount Zion withstood the strong winds and rain, we who trust in the Lord can withstand the fearful storms in our lives. Notice that he did not say "will be secure" but "are secure." This confidence, however, comes to those who put their trust in

(Continued on page 4)

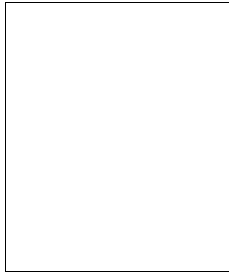
Confidence . . .
simply means
we act in faith,
trusting God
to help us
through each
day's
challenges. . . .
It means
choosing to
live God's
way, not our
own.

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TESTIMONY

Before I became a Christian, I struggled much with finding meaning in this existence. While everybody was busy working, coping with life's pressures, contented in what they have achieved and gained, I was miserable and empty inside. Somehow, I knew the answer lies in the realm of Christianity (maybe because of my Catholic background and my

DAVID UY



studying in a Christian school). I knew that there must be a God who created the heavens and the earth, but to put my trust in Jesus seemed too big a risk. I thought that I could never go wrong by just believing in the Creator who created the heavens and the earth. But I was wrong. One day, I bought a Bible. I spent a few days reading Matthew and Mark and thought they were just a bunch of stories. The two books look the same and did not make much sense. I went "church hopping" for a while and still could not find the answer. One day, I met an old classmate who brought me to his church. There, I came to understand the gospel and know Jesus Christ personally. There I found my home church.

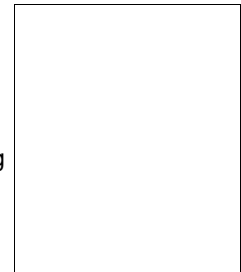
There I searched hard to find meaning in life. I knew that only by finding God's will in my life can I fill the void. I struggled with this issue for a time, not satisfied with the world's idea of fulfillment. I made sure that I prayed really hard and that my human nature will not cheat me in my endeavor. I held on to this as if my life depended on it. The Lord was quiet until a point when I was about to give up. Then in His pleasure and time, He revealed His will to me. Then I knew I was called to be His servant. From that day on, I never looked back. I have been waiting for His right time to enter the seminary. Now I am here.

I believe our life is worth living only when we are able to fulfill God's purpose in our life and when we are able to glorify His name every step of the way. May we have the pleasure of saying as Paul said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

TESTIMONY

Did GOD really call you to go fulltime? How do you know? Did GOD speak to you? These are some of the questions fulltimers often ponder.

ALLAN RILLERA



I did not know how to answer those questions because I never heard GOD's voice calling me "Allan, Allan." But I can say that the LORD has been working in my life in many different

ways.

Many people experience pain in life and I'm one of them. But GOD used them to draw near to me. I came to know Christ when I went to Baguio for my college education. There God molded me and gave me the opportunity to serve Him until I became a Sunday School teacher in my home church in Dagupan City. I love telling others about Jesus. He also led me to become involved with the youth.

Going fulltime was not on my mind. One time, I attended a youth summer camp. As I was listening to the message of the pastor, I felt like it was GOD speaking to me. He said, "the harvest is plenty but the workers are few." At that time I began having a passion for people. And then He said "whom shall I send?" I asked the LORD to send me to His people, people who are spiritually lost, and who do not know the LORD.

Is that how simple it is? Well, not at all. I still experience a lot of obstacles in my journey: pains, emptiness, rebellion, brokenness, ups and down. Sometimes I'm ready to give up. But GOD is so gracious. HE keeps preserving my soul because HE loves me. Now I have decided to obey the LORD in this fulltime journey.



TESTIMONY

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:11, 13)

JEAN TING



I am thankful that I was born into a Christian family, the seventh of nine siblings. My dad was a pastor, a man who loved God more than his life. Yet I find it difficult to reminisce about my dad because he went to be with the Lord when I was just four years old. God's grace was with my mom as she raised nine children until they were all grown-up and working.

I am grateful that in spite of pressures and difficulties as a pastor's kid, growing up without dad's love in my early age, I still had the Perfect Father who loved me unconditionally. I know that He sent His beloved Son to sacrifice His life for me because of my sins. Now my life has meaning and purpose.

Life seems to be okay for me as I recall being a Christian. All I know is that I belong to Christ because I accepted

Him as my personal Lord and Savior. "Therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17) So I try my best to live a Christ-like life yet I know my testimony at home is not above reproach because of my stubbornness. I thank God for giving me a patient mom who always loves and cares for me just like our Lord taking care of me in spite of my shortcomings.

God called me to serve Him at all cost on August 18, 2002. During my devotion He assured me that He would be there for me as long as I was willing to obey Him. Indeed God's will is "good, pleasing and perfect." (Romans 12:2)

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

FACULTY ON THE MOVE

☞ From September 1 to 6, 2003, Dr. Shao taught “Old Testament Theology” at the Reformed Theological Seminary in Bandung, Indonesia. Dr. Shao and his wife, Prof. Rosa Shao, were invited by the Dr. Stephen Tong Evangelistic Association. Dr. Shao also preached at the Indonesian Evangelical Church (Hok Im Tong) on September 7, 2003.

☞ Rev. Wilson Go Kiao went to the United Evangelical Church of Olongapo on October 12, 2003 as guest speaker during their 27th Anniversary.

SPECIAL LECTURES

⇒ Rev. David Linden of the Action International of Canada was the guest lecturer in the Chinese Track Module, “Book Study on Isaiah.” His stay was from September 15-20, 2003.

⇒ Dr. Samuel Ling lectured on “Biblical Counseling” last October 9 and 11, 2003.

**A lecture on
Christianity's Encounter
with
World Religions**

**with Dr. Ajith Fernando from November 17-20,
2003 at BSOP.**

Dr. Fernando is the author of many books on a wide range of topics. His latest book is *Jesus-Driven Ministry* (Crossway, 2002).

BSOP SUNDAYS

Grace Gospel Church (July 27)
Christ Universal Mission
(August 3)
Quezon City Evangelical
Church (August 17)
United Evangelical Church of
the Philippines (August 4,
September 21)
Glory Evangelical Church
(September 21)
St. Stephen's Parish
(September 28)
Grace Christian Church
(October 4, 5)
Dumaguete Christian Church
(October 12)
Bacolod Trinity Christian
Church (October 19)
United Evangelical Church of
Zamboanga (October 26)
Gerizim Evangelical Church
(November 30).

Q2 Theological Education by Extension (TEE)

Gerizim Evangelical Church	<i>Books of Ruth and Esther</i>	Prof. Wilson Go Kiao
	<i>Theology: Know What You Believe</i>	Prof. Dennis Yam
	<i>I Peter (II)</i>	Dr. Tan Chiu Eng
Quezon City Evangelical Church	<i>Theology of Prayer (II)</i>	Prof. Dennis Yam

God. It simply means we act in faith, trusting God to help us through each day's challenges. It means doing what we know is right, even though we may act alone. It means choosing to live God's way, not our own.

But what is the basis for our trust? Every night a boy had to walk past what he believed was a haunted house. A friend gave him a good-luck charm to give him courage. An adult said, "It's sinful to be afraid. Trust God! Be Brave!" But he was still afraid. Then someone said with compassion, "I know what it is to be afraid. I will walk with you past the house." That's all the boy needed to quell his fears.

It's not enough to pump ourselves up with positive thoughts by saying to ourselves, "Trust God! Be brave!" as if God were some good-luck charm. The psalmist continued to say in verse two, "Just as the mountains surround and protect Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds and protects His people, both now and forever" (v. 2). Jerusalem is surrounded by the Mount of Olives on the east, the Hill of Evil Counsel on the south, the ridge beyond the valley of Jehoshaphat on the west, and the high ground about Scopas on the north (H.D.M. Spencer and Joseph S. Exell, editors, *The Pulpit Commentary*, 3:211). These mountains are regarded as her natural defenses or walls of protection. The idea of this imagery is this: our confidence must rest upon God's presence and power to protect us from harm. This is the true basis of our trust.

Verse 3 gives us the concrete assurance for our present afflictions. Though we are surrounded by wickedness, violence, sinfulness, and the apparent prosperity of the wicked, the psalmist was able to have a proper view of God and His ways in life. He declared, "The wicked will into rule the godly, for then the godly might be forced to do wrong." In the New American Standard version it reads, "For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the righteous." The scepter which is a symbol for the rule of wickedness shall not rest or permanently be upon the land of the

righteous. God will not allow evil to triumph in the end. He is the Lord Almighty who reigns forevermore.

"For" in the middle of the verse gives us the reason for the protection provided by God. He protects us in order to preserve us from being forced to sin by the wicked. The Scripture is replete with exhortations for God's people not to be afraid on the basis of who God is and what He can and will do for His people (Gen. 15:1; 21:17; 26:24; 46:3; Ex. 14:13; Num. 21:34; Josh. 10:8; II Kings 6:16; I Chr. 28:20; II Chr. 20:15, 17; 32:7; Ps. 23:4; 27:1; 46:102; 118:6; Isa. 41:10; Jer. 46:27-28; Ez. 3:8-9; Dan. 10:19; Joel 2:21; Mt. 10:29-30; Lk. 12:6-7; 1:12; 1:30; 5:10; 8:50; Eph. 6:10; II Thess. 3:3).

Our confidence is renewed as we talk to God about His power to do good, to act justly, and to bless His people (vv. 4-5)

As we live the Christian life, no doubt we still face fearful circumstances even when we have put our trust in God. However, our confidence need not be shattered for we can constantly renew it as we talk to God about His power to do good, to act justly, and to bless His people.

The psalmist now turned to petition God concerning His goodness. He cried out, "O Lord, do good to those who are good, whose hearts are in tune with you" (v.4). We can be confident when we are in tune with God and can "come boldly to the throne of grace in order to receive mercy and find grace to help us when we need it" (Heb 4:16). Whenever we cannot see how all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose, we can cry out to God knowing that He is good and will surely do good.

Not only is the Lord good but He is also just. This is why the psalmist could make the appeal to God to "banish those who turn to crooked ways. . . and take them away with those who do evil" (v. 5a). Take note that the Lord is the One who is capable to act justly more than anyone else could. Many times we lose our confidence simply because we think God is not acting justly and we better do

something by our own strength to eradicate evil. However, strong is the person who rests under the everlasting arms of the Lord of justice.

The psalmist finally talked to God about His power to bless His people by praying, "And let Israel have quietness and peace" (v. 5b). I believe this is more than just a benediction but a desire on the part of the psalmist as he prayed to God. He knew that real peace comes from God and not through protests and reforms that we worked for. As we face a morally degenerated and evil society, we can trust God to bring about righteousness and peace and overcome our fears as we present our situations to Him through prayer. Faith in God is indeed the antidote to our fears in life.

Conclusion

Going back to the situations presented at the beginning, how will you cope with the fear of impending death and all other fears? I am fascinated by the conviction of Shadraach, Meshach, and Abednego in their reply to King Nebuchadnezzar as recorded in Daniel 3:16-18: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, Your Majesty can be sure that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

Geraldine, a sister in the Lord, said of her ordeal: "I wasn't scared. I just prayed." She later told her abductors about Noah's ark, Sodom and Gomorrah – just like what she does in Sunday School. She even asked for a Bible and narrated to them the Parable of the Prodigal Son. She told them that they would be welcomed by the Lord in spite of what they had done just as the prodigal son was welcomed by his father. She was rescued eight days later when police arrested two of the gang's leaders during the payoff.

No matter what fears you face in life, your knowledge of and your trust in God will keep you strong.