

## **DELIVERANCE FROM FEAR**

### **#3 Fear of Opposition**

**Read** Luke 1 :67-75

#### **Freedom from fear**

Many of the things we do are motivated by fear. Fear is –

- self-protecting – eg jumping away from a fast-moving truck
- self-preserving – eg defending one’s village or home from attack
- self-promoting – eg promoting one’s own achievements to avoid being ill thought of.
- Jesus came to rescue us from fear!

Zechariah foretold that Jesus would –

- Rescue us from our enemies
- Enable us to live without fear

Our enemies are spiritual (Eph 6:10-17). Our adversary is the devil (1 Peter 5:8)

#### **1. Fear of Following Jesus**

- Many people hold back from following Jesus because they are afraid to do so
- The kingdom of heaven is grasped forcefully (Matthew 11:12). It takes courage.
- Eg Thomas Cranmer who was martyred in 1556, had previously signed a recantation of his faith. When he was burned at the stake he held his right hand in the flames until it was burned to a stump. This kind of thing takes great courage.

#### **2. Fear of Loss**

- Jesus told the rich ruler to give up all he had: this was his greatest challenge (Luke 18:18-27)
- Jesus reminds us that our true treasure is in heaven, not on earth, and that is there we should make deposits (Luke 12:33). We should only value what we can take with us.
- What is really valuable?
- Shop owner to me when fire destroyed my office: ‘It must be terrible to lose everything like that.’ Reply: ‘If we are no richer for what we possess, we are no poorer for what we lose.’

### 3. Fear of Witnessing

- God told Jeremiah not be afraid but to speak everything God told him (Jeremiah 1:7-8)
- See also Joshua 1:7-9
- Every month Wesley International Congregation conducts Urban Reach, an outreach to the inner city and harbour areas. Fear holds people back from participating.
- At Christmas time, the candy cane can be used easily for witness – shaped like a J for Jesus; shaped like a shepherd's crook; red for the blood of Christ; white for being made clean from sin.

### 4. Fear of Persecution

- There is nothing to be afraid of – for nothing can separate us from Christ's love (Romans 8:31-39)
- In Indonesia, a prostitute, whose daughter was also a prostitute, asked three Christian women who were running a children's program to teach her three grand-children so they would not follow the same path. The children enjoyed it so much, they invited their friends. But in October 2005, the three women were imprisoned for three years, even though all the children had parental permission to attend.
- The challenge of Islam is also being felt in Australia.
- While some passages in the Koran appear to express tolerance towards Christianity (eg I:2:8: 'Those who believe, and the Jews, and the Christians... whoever believes in God and the last day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve...') there are others that seem to encourage violence (eg II:2:24: 'And fight in the way of God with those who fight with you, and do not exceed; for God does not love those who exceed (his limits). And kill them whenever you find them and drive them out from whence they drove you out...')
- Extremists may take the latter passages to justify their ends.
- The Bible also has passages that espouse violence, but these are over-ruled by the teaching of Jesus. Compare Psalm 137:8-9 with Matt 26:52
- For most Muslims, the separation of Church and State is a foreign concept. Religion, law and government are all one. Religion without the State seems inadequate.
- People tend to act violently when they are afraid (eg that they will lose power or property or position). But when we love people we cannot fear them (1 John 4:18).
- The best answer to any challenge is to love our enemies (Matthew 5:38-48).
- God can enable us to do this by His Spirit (Romans 5:5).

### 5. Fear of failure

- ‘What if I can’t live up to it?’
- This is a promise that we can! We can live lives that are free from our enemies and free from fear (1:74-75)
- *‘Non posse peccare; or posse non peccare’* (‘Not possible to sin’ or, ‘Possible not to sin’?)
- Read Romans 8:1-4; Galatians 2:20
- With God’s help we can overcome all opposition, including temptation to sin. We live by faith in Jesus who loved us and gave himself up for us.

### Response

What is our response?

- A life dominated by fear or a life dominated by faith?
- Will fear hold us back or will faith lead us on?
- Let’s believe the promise of God and follow Jesus wherever he leads!
- Mark 5:36 – ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe!’

### SOMETHING TO THINK OR TALK ABOUT

**Remember:** You don’t have to answer all the questions. Choose those that seem most relevant to you at this time.

**Read** Luke 1:67-79

### Biblical

1. What was the result of Zechariah being filled with the Holy Spirit? (67) How usual/unusual was this? (See Numbers 11:24-29; 24:2; 1 Samuel 10:5-11; Isaiah 61:1; Joel 2:28; Act 2:1-4, 17; Act 10: 44-48; 19:1-6).
2. What does ‘redeem’ mean? How did God redeem us? (Eph 1:7)
3. A ‘horn’ symbolises strength (Micah 4:13). What is a ‘horn of salvation’? (69-71)
4. Who are our enemies? (71) See Ephesians 6:10-17; Colossians 2:15.
5. What was the covenant God made with Abraham? (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:16-18). How does it affect us today?
6. Why is it now possible to serve the Lord without fear? (74)
7. What is the difference between holiness and righteousness? (75)
8. What was John’s role to be? (76-77)

Freedom from Fear – Fear of Opposition

Personal and practical

9. What would you do if you were not afraid?
10. How does fear lead people to engage in violence, deceit, greed, arguing, substance-addiction and so on?
11. Name some specific ‘enemies’ from whom the Lord has rescued you.
12. What are some fears that have at one time or another held you back from serving the Lord? (74)
13. What have you done (or could you do) to overcome them?
14. What biblical promises can you claim to overcome fear?
15. How does living a holy and upright life help us to live without fear? When you have thought about this you might find passages like 1 John 4:18 and Romans 8:1-4 helpful
16. In what ways can you show love to someone of a different religion?.

Memorise: Luke 1:74b-75

## About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

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