

How To Overcome Fear Acts

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 May 1985

Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] Okay. But I don't know about you, but fear is kind of a daily thing in my life, especially when I work with high school kids. But I have little fears and I have big fears. Some of my little fears will include whether or not Reagan is going to invade Nicaragua. You probably have those fears too.

Will some terrorists get a hold of a bomb and drop it on? I have little fears like, will I stand up here and will Dr. Tatcher, my professor, noted theologian, great scholar, and author of Knowing God be sitting in the front pew.

And I think that that fear has not materialized tonight, so we can be paying a great fee. No offense, Kate, I'm glad you're back. But I have little fears like, will my prince ever come? How will I make it to the end of the month on \$3.20? And things like that.

So moms, today we celebrate a chance for them to kind of relax and be grateful for the gift of motherhood, be grateful for the gift maybe that they've been given in children.

Tomorrow, the fears come back. The fears of what will my kids inherit? Will they inherit anything? Will they be alive? I can't do anything. Fears like, will my marriage last? Fears like, what will happen when my kids are grown up and have left the home? What will I do?

[1 : 32] Maybe for career moms that work outside the home, there are fears like, do I spend enough time with my kids? Or maybe the fear is, maybe I spend too much time with my kids and not enough time on my job.

And the job assessment. For the single mom, she probably has the fear of just financially making it. Or does she have enough within her to make up for the missing parents, the other missing parents? Or maybe she fears marriage. Will I ever get married? Will a second marriage work? High school, the time when parents fear the greatest, I think.

They fear as they watch us grow up and we experiment with unique and various forms of hairstyles and clothing that are outside of any parent's imagination.

And I think maybe some of you can talk to that. Some of you actually look like it. But that's a great time of fear. And I think for high school kids, it's a very great time of fear as well.

[2 : 37] There are big fears like, will there be any job for me when I get through all this education? Will I be able to be employed? Will I even be alive when I get out of high school?

Will the bomb finally drop? The question of little fears like, do I look funny? You know, standard fear that you have when you look in the mirror when you go to high school.

I must look funny. Will I have any friends when I go to high school? Will my 501s ever be size 28 again? Little fears like that. Well, tonight, the passage in Acts, there are three characters that I want to look at.

Because I think there are some fears that they have that maybe might help us as we try to work through what it means to these people that have God and are related to him.

I want to start three verses earlier with Lydia because I think Lydia is someone that we can really identify with. So I'm just going to read these three verses and then I'll go on from there.

[3 : 43] Starting with verse 13. We remained in this city some days. Now they're in Philippi. And on the Sabbath day, we went outside the gate to the riverside where we supposed there was a place of prayer.

And we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods who was a worshiper of God. And when she was baptized with her household, she besought us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.

And she prevailed upon us. Well, Lydia could be a woman right out of 1985 as far as I'm concerned. She is a successful businesswoman. She'd be the kind of woman who the province would light up.

Have you seen those commercials? I mean, I could just see it on the Philippian PKVU, you know, with her face and reading the province and the light coming up. And the caption would be Lydia, seller of a fine guy, international rep for Sazzards or for L's or something.

[4 : 54] And I mean, she is one very successful woman. But she's also probably, well, maybe we can identify with her some more. She probably shops in the finest boutiques along the ground.

She probably only holidays on the warmest beaches. And maybe some of us can identify with that. Maybe we can't. But she also is afraid. And there's been an article here maybe three or four months ago in the Sun, I believe it was, on a successful woman.

And that often a successful woman has a deep hidden fear that really people knew her. They think that she's really together. And has everything worked out.

But if people really knew her, they would know that she's really quite afraid. And I wonder if maybe Lydia wasn't a little bit like her. She certainly had every reason to be. Because here she is a woman, a businesswoman, and definitely a man's world.

And it looks like she was alone. She traveled alone. She's either a widow or she has never been married. Because she's the head of a household. And so she's probably experienced a bit of loneliness.

[6 : 05] A bit of fear of traveling internationally. And also a bit of fear of the fact that she maybe is not actually convinced that she is as great as everybody thinks she is.

But she's found a group of women that she can talk with. That she meets with outside of town. Now apparently that's fairly common. That the Jews would meet down by the riverside to pray.

And they would meet during the week or on Sunday or their Sabbath. And try to talk with God. And I would imagine for Lydia, who probably was a fairly sharp woman, that was a bit frustrating.

Because there was no way she could tell if God really heard her. There was no way she really knew what God was like. There was no one to teach them.

There was nothing actually in her background that would allow her to even understand them. She was not a Jew. But it looked like she may have come to become one of the followers of Judaism.

[7 : 03] Simply because she wanted to know about God. So one day along come Paul and Silas. And they walk into this group of women who are trying to pray and trying to talk to God.

And begin to tell them that God has come to her. That he has come to talk to them. And to teach them about himself through his son, Jesus Christ.

And I can imagine for Lydia, that must have sounded like great words. Finally, she knew about God in a way that she'd probably been hungering about for quite some time.

She finally understood that God loved her. That God accepted her totally. That it didn't make any difference whether she was successful or not successful. That he accepted her in her fears and in her concerns about doing well or about not doing well.

He took away her loneliness and replaced it with himself. And I think for Lydia to respond in the way she did immediately. And then immediately to open her house to Paul and to Silas to stay.

[8 : 07] There's something very significant that took place in their lives. A second person that I want us to look at starts with verse 16. And that's the young slave girl. Now the young slave girl is probably a teenager.

So maybe some of you can identify with that. She is probably a very gifted ventriloquist. Because she seems to be able to throw her voice and is being used in this way.

Some of you may know somebody like this in your high school. Somebody that's a little different. That maybe somebody that wears spiced red hair and chains around their arms.

And kind of looks different. Zippers on all manner of outworking for their pants. Or maybe it's somebody that has a polo shirt on.

501. Top sided. Depending on what school you go to. But this girl is a bit alone. And she senses that her only usefulness is with these two men that have taken her aside.

[9 : 12] And are using her basically to disrupt meetings. And she seems to be quite successful. Because she has followed Paul and Silas around for a couple of days.

And I don't know if you've ever been in a situation where you're trying to talk seriously to a group of people about maybe God. Or something equally serious.

And you have someone that's bugging you. And I don't think anyone bugs more successfully than the one who's trying to be super religious. And I like the way she kept yelling at them.

These men are the servants of the Most High God who proclaim to you the way of salvation. I have had an interesting experience at one of my high schools in Burnaby.

Where I have about 80 kids coming to a club to talk about rock music. Now none of these kids want anything to do with God. And certainly not with Jesus Christ. But they are brought in because we're talking about rock music.

[10:10] Well a couple of them have decided that they really would like to disrupt the meeting. And the best way to disrupt the meeting is to act religious. So they're in the back yelling how they have been saved.

And there are a few other interesting comments that they make. So they totally disrupt the meeting. And I mean I really can identify with Paul. I wish I had enough courage to just yell out what he did. But I don't think that would probably be the right thing at that point. But you can imagine maybe if you're walking down the halls at McGee or at Point Grey or at PW or at Hamburg.

And you're having this conversation with some people. And there's somebody bugging you behind you. Imagine if you were the person that was bugging them. And all of a sudden they stop and turn around and yell out what Paul yells out.

I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. Now that would set a few people in the hallway on their ear, right? I mean I can imagine what would happen at Burnaby North.

[11:10] Actually I don't think I want to imagine. But something does happen with her. Immediately something happens with her. And I don't know that I can explain it. She couldn't explain it.

But she changed immediately. She was probably from the bottom of the social ladder. She probably was fairly, just very lonely.

Because it doesn't sound like she had any parents. And all of a sudden, even though Paul was annoyed, there was power in the name of Jesus Christ. But something happened to her.

She was made whole. It seems that whatever was causing her to disrupt things came out of her. She was changed.

She sensed that she was not alone anymore. She sensed that she was a completed person, a whole person. And I would imagine that Paul and Silas chatted with her and introduced her to the family that she had now come into.

[12:10] Maybe some of us are at that place where we need a family. And we need to be a part of God's family. And I think in a way, this young, lazy girl gives us a little help and hopes that we can be a part of God's family and be made whole.

Well, you can imagine at that point, that was great for her. But that clearly disrupted these two men's view of what they were going to do with her. Because this was their livelihood.

She was drawing people away and for a small fee, she could tell them their future and was making a good income for these two guys. Well, obviously, they were a bit upset.

And they managed to get all the crowds that were around Paul and Silas on their side. And they started attacking them and basically beat them up and put them in prison.

And that's where we meet our third man, the third interesting fellow that has to deal with fear. And that's the prison guard.

[13:10] And the prison guard, Lydia was from the top of the social ladder. And the slave girl is probably from the bottom. Well, the prison guard is one of the sturdy middle class. And he's reliable.

He's conscientious. He's dependable. You know, he's always on time. But he also knows both the upper crust, the people that are really in with the government, the guards and the other Roman officials.

But he also is exposed to a lot of the people that are really out with the government. Obviously, the ones that he's putting in prison. He reminds me a bit of what high school principals may feel like today.

Because they're trapped between having to teach teachers and students in school trying to learn. At the same time, they're trying to make cutbacks and be obedient to the government that's in power.

And I think probably our jailer felt a bit like high school principals do today. Caught in the middle. Trying to please both and do his job. Well, he takes Paul and Silas to prison.

[14:14] And it says that he had received a charge that he had to keep them safe. And so he took them to the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stock.

Well, it may be that he not only fastened their feet, but he also fastened possibly their heads as well to make sure that they were secure. Because he knows his life depends on us.

Because if any Roman prisoner escapes, the person who is in charge of guarding the prisoner is put to death. So this jailer really wants to make sure that they're securely tied in there.

So he takes them in and puts them in the stock and makes sure they're secure. Now, Paul and Silas have been quite beaten up. But for some reason, they start singing.

Well, apparently, this puts the jailer to sleep. Now, I'm not sure what that says about their singing. But he falls asleep. Now, in Philippi, apparently, earthquakes are not uncommon.

[15:18] And so in the middle of the night, with the guard asleep, an earthquake happens and shakes the foundations of the prison. And the doors open, which isn't too hard to imagine because the doors apparently were just shut with a wooden bar.

And probably the stocks were similarly fastened. So it really doesn't seem too improbable that all of a sudden they were free.

Now, I've been talking a bit about fear. There's fear and there's terror. And I think probably when the jailer woke up, what he experienced was terror.

Because he woke up, he'd fallen asleep, one, which right away, he knew he was in trouble. Two, he looks up and the cell doors are open and he immediately assumes that the prisoners have escaped. So he knows that his life is over. And so he's about to kill himself when he hears someone inside the prison telling him not to harm himself.

[16:19] So he rushes to gather some light so that he can see if it is really true. And he goes in. And what he finds are Paul and Silas sitting there.

Not only are they sitting there, they're totally free. They could have left. But they probably also look happy. And there's probably rubble all around. And I'm sure he's totally confused.

And in the midst of his terror and probably the release of the terror of the moment, he asks of Paul what he has to do to be safe. What does he have to do to experience what he sees is fearlessness? Because these two guys should be scared to death. I mean, they've just been through an earthquake. They've been beaten up. And now they're sitting there like they have joy. And there's something very powerful in whatever it is they have.

And so he asks them, what do I have to do to experience this fearlessness or to be saved or whatever you want to call it that you have? Well, Paul's answer is interesting.

[17:22] Because Paul answers the same way that he answers Lydia's problem. The same way he answers the slave girl. And the same way he answers us when we ask what we have to do to experience salvation or to experience what it means to be outside of fear or to understand fearlessness.

And Paul says, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. You and your household.

Well, Christ comes in to make a radical difference in our lives.

I'm not here to tell you that if you make a decision to follow Jesus Christ with your life, that you will never experience fear again. Because the day may come when Tamma will ask you to speak.

Or the day may come when J.I. is sitting in the front pew when you're asked to speak. Jesus doesn't come to take fear out of your life. What he does come to do is to live with you in that fear and to give you power to overcome that fear.

A verse in John 16 verse 33 says, you will have trouble in the world, but take heart. I have overcome the world. You know, Jesus gives us the power, because we're related to him, to overcome the world.

[18:38] To live fearless lives. To sense his presence. To be powerful and victorious because he lives with us. I have some verses out of a psalm that are on the wall of my office.

And actually it came to mean a lot to me when I lived in Colorado. Because for a time, I lived by myself. And I don't know if any of you know much about Boulder, Colorado. But it was really trying to be the Berkeley of the Midwest in the 70s.

And was succeeding quite well. And for a time, I was young. And I had just started out being involved with high school kids and ministry. And was definitely naive.

And I put my name in the phone book. My full name. Which was not smart. I wouldn't recommend you doing that. And I started to get very interesting phone calls in the middle of the night. And I was quite frightened.

And for a time, I lived by myself. And someone gave me these verses out of Psalm 46 that I have kept with me. And I think that I'll share them with you as a closing.

[19 : 47] Let me just read them for you. God is our refuge and strength. A test of help in time of trouble. We need not fear. Even if the world blows up and the mountains crumble into the sea.

Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble. He has come to rescue us. Well, I need a rescuer. In a lot of situations in my life.

Daily, I need a rescuer. And Jesus Christ is the only one that's powerful enough to rescue us. I would invite you to look at him if you've never looked at him.

If you know him, trust him. He has the power to live with you in your fears and to help you overcome them. Let's pray for a second. Father, we rejoice that you are our refuge.

That you are powerful and big enough to be our refuge. Father, that when we seek you out in our fears, you meet us there. You comfort us.

[20 : 54] You give us strength. And you give us courage. Father, thank you that you love us. That you're concerned with our big fears and our little fears. Father, we thank you for your love.

In Christ's name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. All right. Thank you.

Thank you.

[22 : 36] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[25 : 06] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[28 : 46] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.