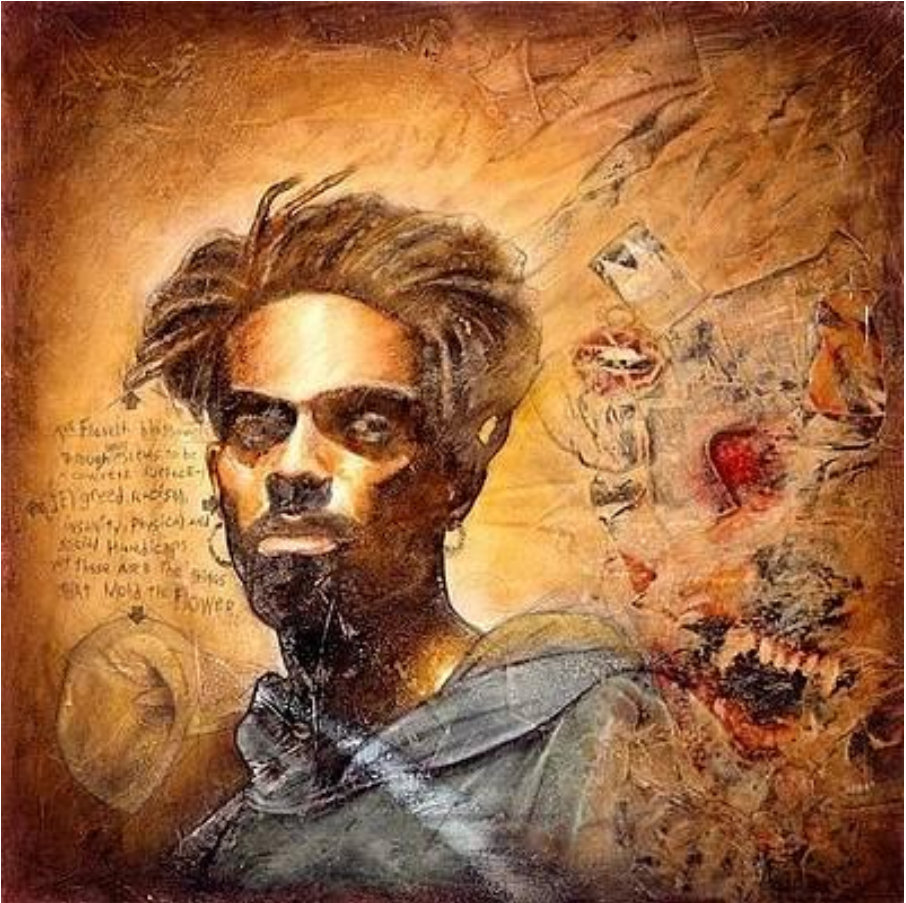


FEAR



Messages by R. E. Bieber

Cover art: Christopher Marion Thomas

I'M SCARED



Don't tell anybody, but deep down, I'm scared about the future.

So many uncertainties.

So many people who cannot be trusted.

Sleazy politicians who could take us all down the tube.

Even my fellow believers seem distant and aloof.

So where do I turn?

Where else, but to God?

Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken. My victory and honor come from God alone. He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me. O my people, trust in him at all times. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge.

Psalms 62:5-8

There is no other rock on which to stand.

There is no other rock on which to build my life.



***Whoever hears these words of mine and keeps them,
is like a wise man who built his house upon a rock.***

Matthew 7:24

Prayer: Dear Lord, we admit we are scared about so many things, our health, the future, the country, our churches, our families. So many uncertainties assault our hearts and minds. Oh Lord, you are the sweet refuge from our fears, from chaos and from our disappointments. Help us to still our hearts before you and pour out the uncertainties and the fears that overwhelm us. Because, Lord, you are our certainty, our hope, our rock, our refuge.... and we trust you with our future, our journey, our destiny. We know that in you, our rock, we will not be shaken and we will find victory. Amen.

Message: 2019

Featured Art: Permission and courtesy of Jedida Sark at jedida-theartofsark

HAVE NO ANXIETY ABOUT ANYTHING



He was not lounging in a recliner sipping tea when Paul wrote those words.

He was in chains in a Roman prison.

Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

From his prison cell Paul tells us to turn our anxieties into prayer.

Is he kidding?

Maybe Paul could do that.

But me? I'm not so sure.

They call our era "The Age of Anxiety".

And who of us isn't affected?

The fear that tomorrow will not be safe.

The awareness that life is unpredictable;
nothing is certain.



Who knows what's going to happen next? How can we not be anxious?

Still, Paul says,

***Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.
Let all people know your forbearance.
The Lord is at hand.***

In the face of all the pressures, all those storm clouds, we are to rejoice in the Lord?

And let all people know our “generous overlooking of insult and injury (forbearance)”?

We can do it if we remember that the only unchanging reality in our lives is God.

God is not going anywhere.

When God says, “Let there be light” there is light.

When Jesus says, “Lo I am with you always,” it is so.



Maybe it's beyond our power to change our situation.

But it is within our power to focus on God.

To rejoice in his presence.

To show kindness to those around us.

To lay our worries before God as prayer.

***And the peace of God,
which passes all understanding,
will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

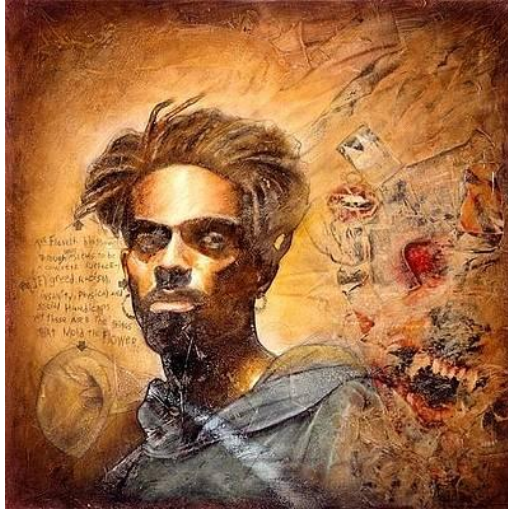
Philippians 4



Prayer- Lord, we bring our anxieties to you. We trust you to lead us through every storm and to keep your promise that you are ever with us and that in you there is no reason to fear. We rejoice in who you are. We rejoice in your presence. We open our hearts to your loving kindness. We open our hearts to your peace. May we live and thrive in the midst of any trial.... as a thanks offering and as a testimony of what you give to those who seek and find you. MM

*Message: REB May 2021
Art: Gwen Meharg*

IT'S BEYOND MY CONTROL, AND IT SCARES ME TO DEATH!



You don't have to be living in a war zone to experience the pounding against your life of powers you can't control.

A decision made by an unknown boss in a distant office that costs you your job.

A truck rear-ends you at a traffic light.

Slander.

Financial ruin.

Sickness.

A sudden blow out of nowhere and we realize that we are not in control. We're at the mercy of forces that we can't even track with our minds.

Where does God figure in all this?

If our Lord Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, where is he when the blow hits?

He's there. If your heart belongs to him, he's there!

"I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you.

And if he's with you, you're safeno matter what.

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

When evildoers assail me, uttering slanders against me, my adversaries and foes, they shall stumble and fall.

Though a host encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.

One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.

For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent, he will set me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies round about me; and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the Lord.

Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me! Thou hast said, "Seek ye my face." My heart says to thee, "Thy face, Lord, do I seek."

....

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; yea, wait for the Lord!

Psalm 27:1-8 &13,14



Prayer: Yes, Lord, help us to wait upon you so we may see your face. Help us to seek your face in the midst of all things ...especially the things that we can't control...the things that strike fear in our heart. We look to you Lord, knowing that you are our stronghold, that you are our light, knowing that when we enfold ourselves in you... there is nothing to fear. May we lift our voices in joy and wonder as we behold your beauty, as we behold your goodness, as we behold your perfection, and as it strikes our hearts that we are yours and we will never be alone or left desolate... because you, the Living God, have promised to come to us. Amen.

Message: REB Unknown date

Art work: Christopher Marion Thomas No contact information available.

IT'S IN GOD'S HANDS



You laid it before God.

That burden, that problem, that fear.

“Lord it’s beyond my power. I put it all in your hands!”

So leave it there.

There’s nothing wrong with laying it before the Lord every day, as long as you keep your hands off it.

There’s nothing wrong with giving God thanks.

Beyond that, you back off and leave it with God.

How the kingdom works.

"The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how.

The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

Mark 4



The farmer does not dig up the seed to see if it's sprouting.

He allows the seed to be hidden in God.

He lets God run the show.

In God's time the farmer has a crop.

Once I put my problem in God's hands, God does things his way.

He does not need my help.

He does not need my advice.

He wants only my faith.

We spare ourselves tons of grief, when we back off and give God room to do things his way.

"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any one."

Mark 11

God will take care of his part.

All you have to do is take care of yours.

Believe

Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.



Look to Christ

Obey

“And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any one.”

Prayer- Lord we admit that the burdens, problems and fears that trouble us are beyond our control. We can't solve them, we can't see beyond them. Lord we give them to you, we place them in your capable and loving hands, Lord help us to leave them to you, to keep from interfering, from advising you and from manipulating situations to our will. We trust you. We trust your sovereign will. We trust your love. And as we lift our hearts to you seeking relief from our distress may your tender mercy strike us to the heart... to extend the same tender mercy and forgiveness to all in our circle. MM

REB: July 2021

Featured Art: Rebecca Brogan at [John the Baptist Arts](http://JohntheBaptistArts.com)

HELP FROM ABOVE



Psalms 121

From Where Does My Help Come?

***I lift up my eyes to the hills.
From where does my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.***

We have run out of options.

There's nowhere else to turn.

It's our last resort.

In desperation we cry out,

"Lord Jesus, help me!"



All our masks have fallen off.

Our swagger is gone.

Heaven sees our desperation, and things begin to happen.

***He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, he who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.***

God's help is always a mystery, hard to pin down.

Only one thing is certain:

we are no longer dangling in the wind.

We are in the hands of the living God.

***The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade on your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.***



In the face of danger, seen and unseen, we are protected.

While chaos increases on all sides, a wall of fire surrounds us.

***The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.***

Whether we die tonight or live to see another day, we are safe.

We remain secure...

as long as we choose to live under God's protection ...
and walk in the footsteps of his Son.

***The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and forevermore.***

Psalm 121

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we cry to you for help. We place our troubles in your hands. You are our keeper. We are not alone in anything we face. We lift our eyes out of our anguish, to you our Living God, and know you hear us, you love us, you walk with us, you keep us safe. Break through our barriers so that we can sense your holy protection and feel your loving embrace. Amen.

REB 2019

ANXIETY



"Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Acts 1:6

What's next?

Will we survive?

And when I die, what then?

---Questions generated by anxiety.

Once we place our lives into the hands of the Master, trusting him to guide and provide, we can be sure of this:

Jesus is Lord of the future---our future.

We will know what we need to know when the time comes.

Meanwhile, we keep walking by faith, wrapped in his peace.

"It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:7-8)

That's all we need to know.

Walk in the light of the Spirit, and doors will open.

Everything we need, including knowledge, will be provided.

"I am the light of the world, he who follows me will not walk

DON'T PANIC



"I have yet many things to say to you; but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

John 16:12-15

His Promise

If there's any promise Jesus made which is indisputably in-tended for all his followers, it's the promise of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will come to you and you will know he has come. You won't be standing around wringing your hands wondering, "Did he or didn't he?" The Holy Spirit will accomplish definite things in our lives.

Jesus did not promise.... warm feelings or cold chills when the Spirit comes even though such things may happen (then again they may not.)

Jesus did promise....

That the Spirit would guide us, speak to us, teach us, remind us, fill us with the life of God so we can get the job done.

Jesus did promise....

That any time we feel inadequate for the needs that come pressing in all we have to do is lift up our hearts to the Father and ask and he will pour out his Spirit upon us.

And when the Holy Spirit is resting upon us we will have more than enough of God's life to give to those who come to us.

"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Luke 11:13

Jesus did promise

That he would go right on talking to us from the Father's throne and that the Holy Spirit would make us know clearly what the Lord has to say.

"He will take what is mine (my word) and declare it to you."

To be so led by the Spirit is the normal condition of every child of God.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Romans 8:14

And when we are so led by the Spirit we work in harmony and unspeakable joy in the midst of our trials.

Our Experience

But while all this was promised to us can we honestly say that this is what we're experiencing?

Many of us are inclined to sigh and shake our heads, "There was a time when I really expected that life to become mine. In fact, I tasted it. But I learned the hard way that it just isn't that simple."

Somewhere along the line our hopes were dashed.

The pattern for some of us was like this: One day our eyes open to the amazing discovery that the Spirit of God has come –is guiding us. We're thrilled to learn that the apostles weren't exaggerating! They weren't some special breed! This thing is still going on and we're part of it!

We're cruising along in this new Spirit--directed life, enjoying a new attitude, a fresh vision of Jesus, until one day a particularly strong challenge comes our way. We cry out for guidance but nothing seems to happen. We wait and wait for an answer. Nothing. There's a knock on the door, a man hands us a book and says, "Read this," and disappears. We sit down and read. "Why, this speaks exactly to my need! This must be the answer to my prayer!" In the book we are told to get up and do something daring for a change. "Look at Hudson Taylor! C.T. Studd! Corrie Ten Boom! Elizabeth Elliot!" And now some act of daring comes into mind. But even as we consider it the light seems to dim. "Never mind," says a voice, "This is the path, take it!" So we do. Before long we're sitting on the floor of an abandoned quarry, surrounded by snakes, howling wolves, confusion, and despair.

"God knows I wanted to be led by the Spirit. God knows I was sincere. Then how did I end up in a place like this? Is this what happens to people who desire to be led by the Spirit?"

Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide me into all truth, truth that would set me free. Yet here I sit paralyzed by confusion – undone!"

But did God let me down?

Does the fact that I'm sitting at the bottom of this quarry, mired in error, mean that the Spirit failed to guide me? Not at all. The erroneous paths we take, the false ex-periences we have, these excursions into the weird, occur not because we're overly zealous for God, as we suppose, but because we doubt God and start jumping at straws.

**If Jesus says the Spirit will guide us,
then we can be sure that the Spirit will guide us.**



But when the guidance doesn't come as soon as we think it should, or in the way we think it should, when the light isn't as bright as we think it should be, or the interval of silence seems unbearable.....

we panic – we doubt.

We take our eyes off Jesus and open ourselves to whatever lying spirit happens to be drifting through town. So when there's a knock on the door and this stranger gives us a book and commands us to read it we think it's an angel. We're in such a hurry for guidance *we fail to perceive where it's coming from.*

Experience the Promise

If you ask your Father for bread he won't give you a stone. And if you ask him for fish he won't give you a scorpion.

But if you turn your heart to the side in unbelief...

... if you get tired of giving God thanks for his goodness to you,

...then when someone comes to the door with a stone and calls it bread you may be foolish enough to bite into it.

"When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

That's a promise to each of us even as he gave it to the eleven in the upper room.

Just as surely as Jesus feeds us with the body and blood....

He gives us the Spirit of Truth to guide us into all truth, to lead us into the very heart of God.

The Holy Spirit comes to us today to do in our lives all the things Jesus promised he would do....

...if we will trust him,
...if we will let not our hearts be troubled nor let them be afraid.

**Believe that the Holy Spirit will guide you.
Don't panic and try to force the situation.**

If there's a time of silence, let there be silence. Don't corrupt God's silence with your own talk and speculation.

If it thunders let it thunder. Don't immediately try to decode it into a divine message.

If someone knocks on your door and breathlessly urges you to hurry into the desert for a rendezvous with the Lord, ***don't go!***

When the Spirit is ready to move you one step beyond the place where you now are you'll know.

Meanwhile, live in God's mercy right where you are with your heart fixed on the Lord.

**The Spirit will guide us without any help from us.
All we have to do is trust.**

Don't panic.

Don't try to force the situation.

Don't sink into a depression.



Trust. Believe.

And this promise will be fulfilled day after day in your life.

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth

Prayer- Lord Jesus, help us not to panic. Help us not to doubt. Help us not to despair. Help us not to look for other paths that lead us from your gentle call. Help us not to force the situations we face. Instead, Lord, help us to fix our hearts on you. Everyday we live, may we know your Spirit of Truth is with us, continually declaring you to us, continuing to glorify you, continuing to lead us even when we hear silence, even when nothing seems to be happening. We trust you. We believe in your promise, so lead us Lord, lead us and we know you will bring us into unspeakable joy.

Original: found in the booklet "Guidance". Date unknown.

All art: Ramone Romero ramone-romero.blogspot.com/

FOR SO HE GIVES HIS BELOVED SLEEP



It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he gives his beloved sleep.

Psalm 127:2

The storm is raging, waves are crashing over the boat, yet he sleeps, without a care in the world!

He knows how to stay awake all night and pray.

He knows how to focus and concentrate.

But when it's time to sleep, he just abandons himself to the Father's care and sleeps.

“Lord, wake up! We’re going to perish!”

“Where is your faith?”

We get drowsy when we should focus and stare at the ceiling when we should be sleeping.

What's wrong with us?

***It is vain for you to rise up early,
to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows...***

Distractions.

We're distracted and drowsy when we should concentrate.

We're distracted and anxious when we should be sleeping.

So Jesus teaches us to focus on one thing.

Our Father, who art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

If we turn our minds away from the rat race and center them on his kingdom, God helps us to focus during the day and to sleep during the night.

When we're focused on his kingdom we can take care of the work God gives us to do each day, and abandon ourselves to him in sleep each night.



For so he gives his beloved sleep.

Prayer- Beloved Lord, help us to stop choosing to eat the bread of sorrows. Help us to let go of our weariness and our distractions so we can abandon ourselves to you and find your sweet rest. Help us to concentrate on your kingdom, to center our cares on you, knowing you care for us, your beloved sheep.

YOU WON'T SINK



When they threw Jonah overboard, he sank!

When Noah's Flood swallowed wedding feasts and family reunions,
they sank!

But when Jesus came walking on the water said to Peter, **"Come"**,
Peter did just fine...

.... until he panicked.

The world we inhabit is unstable as water.

It's a boiling sea.

Nothing is certain or safe.

Except the One who walks on water.

When he says, **"Come,"** we can step out of our "boat" and
walk toward him.

We can follow him through the turmoil, and never sink.

He empowers us to accomplish whatever he commands.

***"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves;
so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.***

Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils, and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles.

When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Brother will deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes."

Matthew 10:16-23

If we follow the Master we can "walk on water".



No need to panic.

Keep focused and keep going.



If we falter, he'll lift us up.

If we're following in his steps, we will never sink.

Prayer: Lord Jesus as you call us to come, may we keep our eyes on you, so that as we step out of the boat, into the rolling waters you call us into...we see you and don't sink. When we panic, when we falter, lift us up. Help us to step out filled with your Spirit, knowing we won't sink, knowing you will give us all we need to keep going, to keep enduring, to keep faithful, to keep proclaiming your Kingdom as we walk to you above the waters. Amen.

Message written July 2020 REB

Art: Walking on Water Melani Pyke melpyke.com and Walk on Water (close up) Ain Vares ainvaresart.com/

FREE FROM THE FEAR OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH



One brisk morning you walk out the door and are met at the sidewalk by four well-dressed men who take you by the arm, open the door of their sleek Mercedes and firmly deposit you in the back seat. The car speeds through the town and out onto the open road. After what seems like several hours, the driver turns up a wooded lane and stops in front of a magnificent stone building. You are ushered into a room and given a seat at the end of a long table as the four guards seat themselves on either side.

"He's coming now," whispers one of the guards.

"Who?"

"Why the Accuser, of course."

A man dressed in judges robes enters and settles himself at the head of the table. A book is brought in and opened and all the major sins of your life are read aloud in the presence of these four men.

Secret sins.

Sins no one ever knew.

Sin after sin is carefully described.

Your life, which up to then, seemed more decent than most, suddenly looks hideous, as your past is spread out before you, crowded with all the misdeeds you had long forgotten.

It looks more like the past of a murderer.

How is it possible?

The Accuser looks up from the book and fixes his eyes on you. They are not kind eyes, they are not holy. The Accuser's eyes are hard, cruel and evil.

"You know the penalty", he says.

"I sentence you to death.

You will be returned to your home. When you arrive you will find that the clock hasn't moved one second from the moment you met these guards. You will pick up precisely where you left off.

Only remember this: my Executioner has been ordered to take your life at the appointed time."

"When will that be?", you cry in despair. "How much time do I have?" "Ah" answers the Accuser.

"That is not for you to know.

It could be today.

It may be next week.

Perhaps not for 50 years.

You will not see the Executioner, but he will follow you at all times. You will never be out of his sight.

He will stand in the shadows and await the appointed moment. Then he will strike."

Soon you find yourself standing alone on the sidewalk in front of your door. The time is exactly what it was when you met the strange guards. A friend comes down the street and bids you good morning. You smile and return the greeting but you are in a daze.

Was it a dream?

Was it a hallucination?

Or did it really happen?

Everything is the same as ever except that now you have the unshakable feeling that you are being followed by someone.

In a few weeks you become accustomed to this presence lurking behind you. You no longer turn around and try to see him. You're no longer afraid to open doors or go into dark rooms or walk down deserted streets.

You begin to laugh again and enjoy life almost as you did before, except that deep within is the knowledge that you are living under the sentence of death.

You know that some day, somewhere, the Executioner will step out of the shadows and strike.

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.

Hebrews 2:14-15



When Adam and Eve lived in the Garden, they ate of the Tree of Life. They were alive in a way that humans today cannot experience.

There was no shadow hanging over them.

In the evening when the sun went down, they could sleep in perfect peace because tomorrow would be another glorious day. They had nothing to look forward to but new joy, new glory, in the garden of their heavenly Father.

But the day they ate of that forbidden tree everything changed.

Suddenly they saw that they were naked and covered themselves.

They were guilty and had to run and hide.

Soon they were cut off from God outside the Garden among the rocks and thorns of this insecure world that we know so well.



Worst of all, they were living under the sentence of death.

"In the day that you eat the fruit thereof, you shall surely die."

The Serpent who had been the Tempter was now the Accuser.

"You've done it!

Now you're in my power, and you're going to die!

Soon you're going to die."

They could till the soil, and herd their flocks, and raise their children, and build shelters to protect them from the cold winds. There were pleasures in eating, and drinking, and loving, and overcoming obstacles.

But death reigned over them.

They could no longer eat from the Tree of Life. The bright hope of another glorious tomorrow was marred by the ugly knowledge that tomorrow might never arrive.

When you and I were born into this world, we were born children of Adam. Before we know what it is to speak a word or make a decision, we already know what it is to be afraid.

What are we afraid of?

Why is a child frightened by a loud noise? Or a sudden unfamiliar jar?

Why does a child panic when it comes into the house and calls for its mother and there is no answer?

The fear behind all fears is the fear of that moment when the Executioner will materialize before us and strike the blow.

The fear of death.

The aged woman who cries from her sickbed, "O why doesn't God let me die?" may think she wants to die. But her whole being, tired and worn and sick as it is, is struggling for life.

Still running from the Executioner.

The young man who, in a fit of despair, puts a gun to his head and blows out his brains is not running away from life. He's beside himself like a man marooned on a single rock in the middle of an endless ocean. Death has surrounded him. The unseen Executioner has deprived him of all hope. And so, he gives himself up to the Executioner.

People don't realize what a grip their approaching death has on them. How the body, mind, and spirit shudder every time they are reminded that it's coming.

Death is not an event, something that happens when your heart stops and the fires of this body turn cold.

Death is a region that you enter when your body falls away and you step forth into a world with shadow but no substance.

A world where music is often replaced by the sound of weeping.

Where time can be filled with endless waiting.

Where the memory plays and re-plays and replays your past.

When the rich man in our Lord's parable entered the region of the dead, he was not unconscious.

He was very much awake.

He could see.

He could feel.

He could think.

He could speak.

"I beseech thee father Abraham, send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue for I am tormented in this flame!"

Many years ago I was in a group of seven men on a weekend retreat. It was Saturday night. We had just got up from our knees after being drenched in an outpouring of the Holy Spirit with a force that none of us had ever known before. We were sitting in front of the fire in silence when finally one man got up, walked over and stood by the fireplace and said, "The biggest thing for me is that I know now – I know that I'm never going to die".

What a strange thing for him to say!

But I noticed that from that day that man, in his own quiet way, had power he didn't have before.

He was like a rock. He was filled with the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. So he knew he was never going to die. He would go on for a few more years. One day they would have a funeral for him and lay his body in the ground.

But this man will live forever, and so will you, and so will I, if the Spirit that lives in this man rules our lives.

***My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me.
And I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish.
Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.***

John 10



It is true that Jesus came to preach good news to the poor, and heal the broken hearted, and bring release to the captives, and open the eyes of the blind.

But the chief reason for his coming, the chief reason for Jesus' presence with us as we read these words, is to raise us from the dead.

***“The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear
the voice of the Son of God.
And they that hear shall live.”***

John 5:25



We don't have to live under the curse of the Accuser.

We don't have to live in dread of the Executioner.

We can have life that no man and no devil can take from us.

And when we have this life, we are free from the shadow of death and alive to God as never before.

Because we are sustained by the Tree of Life.

We are eating its fruit.

Where is that Tree of Life?

It's up there on Calvary.



Its fruit is the broken body and the shed blood of the Son of God.

If anyone eats of this bread, they live forever.

"At the Cross, at the Cross, where I first saw the light, And the burden of my heart rolled away."

The burden of our hearts is up there on the Cross!

He is dying our death.

He is destroying our Accuser.

That through death, He might destroy him that has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

When Satan tells you, "You are going to die!" don't argue with him. Just point him to the Cross and he will shrivel up and disappear.

Of course we have to keep learning how to live all over again.

To live like free men, free women.

And the way we learn to live is by keeping Jesus' words.

If a person keeps my saying, they will never see death.

John 8:51

The power of the Holy Spirit operates in our lives day by day, hour by hour, not through some glorious experience we once had, but through *simple obedience to the words of Jesus right where we are.*

"The words that I have spoken to you, they are Spirit and they are life."

John 6:63

When Jesus says, "Love your enemies", and we obey out of love for him, his power surges through us and blesses our enemy as well as us.

When Jesus says, "Proclaim the gospel", and even though we're afraid, timid, self-conscious and tongue-tied, we do it out of love for him, the gospel rolls out of our mouths, a stream of living water.

Today, when we finish reading these words, we will go forth, either as victims of the unseen Executioner living in the shadow of death...

**or we will go as sons and daughters of God,
filled with the power of an endless life.**

The door to Everlasting Life is open and we may enter afresh even now. The door is none other than the outstretched arms of this man who raises the dead by dying for them, purges them with his own blood, and quickens them with his living word:



Jesus.

Whoever has the Son has life, and whoever does not have the Son does not have life.

John 5:12

Do we have this Son?

Are we walking with him?

It's time to cast out the Executioner who has followed us down the empty years filling our lives with dread, and draw near as never before to the risen Lord Jesus,

**who to know is life eternal,
who to serve is unspeakable joy.**



Prayer- Father, free us from the fear of this shadow that hangs over us. Free us from the accusations, the dread of the executioner. Deliver us from the fear of death, the bondage that keeps us from experiencing life and joy. Teach us to live in the freedom you call us to. Lord may we hear the voice of Jesus so we can be raised from the dead. Lead us to the tree of life, so we may freely eat its fruit. May we walk this life in simple obedience to your son, hearing believing and living his words, living these lives as the sons and daughters you meant us to be... filled with life and joy. Marantha Mirror

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Featured Art: By Chris Powers from the Full of eyes ministry fullofeyes.com

OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF DEATH... ...THOSE WHO HEAR SHALL LIVE



Jesus came into this world to set us free from fear and bring us life, now....

For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. (Hebrews 2:14b-15)

In other words, Jesus was born into the human race in order to set us free from the fear of death. He experienced death, rose from it, and now gives us a life that death cannot destroy.

**So that we don't have to be afraid to die.
So that we have eternal life burning inside us right now.**

And yet - for most of us that's not our experience. Most of us are scared to death even to think about our own death.

You're on a flight at 39,000 feet and look out and see the left engine on fire. What's your first thought? *"I'm going to die!"*

Isn't it ironic that at one time hundreds of young men scattered

around the globe were just waiting for the signal to strap on the explosives and go blow themselves up in a crowded subway or a government building, or willing to kill thousands by vaporizing an entire city with a nuclear device. Or today, the Christians who are willing to attack and kill in an apocalyptic fervor in order to rescue their country from their ideological enemies. These guys aren't afraid to die. They see themselves as soldiers in a holy war.

They're angry. "What else do I have to live for anyway", they say. "If I die and take as many of the enemy with me as possible, it will hasten the day that goodness will reign. Besides, I have been taught and led by people who tell me that violence and insurrection is the righteous, godly thing to do if it destroys the sinful.

The problem with that kind of dying is that it increases misery and suffering for everybody.

And the war goes on until everybody's so exhausted and demoralized they can't keep it up any more or until the whole world becomes a police state.

I'm saying all this because the day when most people die of old age seems to be disappearing. Death by violence, mass shootings, famine, plague is on the rise worldwide; and we now know we're not immune in North America or any civilized country.



We're back in the days of Herod, the king. When Herod realized that the wise men had tricked him and refused to guide him to this new baby king in Bethlehem. He solved the problem the way more and more problems are solved...with violence... "Kill all the male babies two years old and under within a three mile radius of

Bethlehem!” he ordered.

Yet, this baby who escaped the massacre, was born to die, to make it possible for us to live in such a world as this and not be afraid.

He came to break the curse of death which is tearing the world apart before our eyes.

He came to deliver us, so that we can walk through the smoke and fire and not be afraid.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.”

John 10: 27-28

He’s **not** telling you to strap on your suicide bomb and go blow up New York. He’s **not** telling you to storm government offices and take down your perceived enemies.

He’s saying,

“Walk with me, and no matter what happens, you’re safe.

Whatever fire you have to go through, I’ll go through with you.

I’ll give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.

I’ll never leave you or forsake you.

I’m your life - your eternal life, as long as you walk with me.”



Ah, but how do we get hold of that confidence? How do we get the absolute certainty that the Lord Jesus is with me right now and nothing in this world - not even death can separate me from him?

**So that I'm invulnerable until my work is done.
So that I'm free from the fear of death.**

That's where we should be - all of us, all the time.

**Joyfully confident that Christ the Lord will never leave me -
That I'm His forever.**

That's where he wants us to be. But how do we get there? How do we overcome the fear of death?

By taking two simple steps.

1. Finding Life in the Cross

Step one in overcoming the fear of death is to come to the cross and find life. Follow the baby from the cradle to the cross but don't stay in Bethlehem. Deliverance from the fear of death comes to us not at Bethlehem but at Calvary. Bethlehem was a bloody place when Herod slaughtered the infants. Israel is still the scene of violence.

But Calvary - the cross where Jesus died - that's where the power of life still flows. And you don't have to go to the Holy Land to find the cross - it's as near as your breath.

You want to experience the power of Christ? Hang around the cross until the Spirit of God reveals to you what it means.



Until its redeeming life-giving power begins to flow into your heart.

Take Paul...

And, when I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.
(1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

And the power of God flowing into you from the cross drives the fear of death right out of you and fills you with eternal life.

So do what Paul did. Hang around the cross until it brings you to Paradise, not after you die, but right now.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
(1 Corinthians 1:18)

2. Learning to commune with Jesus.

The second step of overcoming the fear of death is to talk to him and let him talk to you.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.” (John 5:25)

In this case, he's not talking about bodies in their graves hearing his voice, he's talking about the walking dead. Men and women who are physically alive, but spiritually dead, brought from darkness suddenly to light and from the power of Satan to God by hearing his voice.

You come to life when you hear his voice.

You stay alive by communing with him.

And this life is yours forever if you keep communing.



When Jesus says...

“Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”,

...How else can you come to him but by communing with him?
Taking his word as a personal word to you. Answering him. Talking to him, who is not only your Lord, but the best friend you ever had.

***I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.***

Psalm 32:8

You don't have to be some super-saint to talk to the Living Christ.
All you have to do is what any child knows how to do. Draw near and talk.

Talk!

Commune with him!

Tell him what's on your heart!

There's not a trouble we experience that he doesn't understand from inside.

He's here to deliver us from all fear.



He died and rose again to deliver us from the fear of death.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.

Eternal life is not something you get after you die, if you're lucky. It's a relationship with Jesus which begins on this side of the grave and keeps right on going.

Once you have it, the life of Christ in you is so powerful that your physical death becomes a mere blip on the journey. It's nothing. When it comes, it comes... like crossing the bridge, like going through a doorway.

Of course, until we get to that doorway, our job is to spread life everywhere God sends us.

Our job is to do for others what's been done for us.

To open their eyes.

**To bring them from darkness into light
and from the power of Satan to God.**

That they, too, may receive the forgiveness of sins, and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ ---

--- freedom from the fear of death.



Prayer: Lord, may we look at your cross, your loving death, and see life. May we look until your life giving power drives out the fear of death in us. Dear Lord, may we hear you speaking to us now so that we may live, truly live now. May we continue communing with you at all times...may we continuously expose our hearts to you, coming to you with every need, every concern, every thought...knowing you listen, you care. Thank you that you will be with us through every fire, that you will never abandon us, that we will never be alone. Thank you that you are our eternal life now. Thank you that in a mystery your death and resurrection can deliver us from the fear of death, even untimely death or a violent death. We trust that no matter what you will tenderly carry us and be with us in it. Thank you for caring this much for us. And Lord, give us the voice, the joy in this life that we can open the hearts of many to your loving presence, your tender touch...delivering them from the darkness, from futility and from the fear of death. So that they can hear you and live now too. Amen.

Message: 2001 originally titled "Those Who Hear Shall Live"

Featured Art: Courtesy of Sinead Kell.

HE CAN HANDLE IT



Why are you trying to take over God's department?

Don't you think he can handle it?

Are you afraid he'll make a mistake?

Does it upset you, not to be in control?

God's department is to provide,

if you will concentrate on your department:

To seek his kingdom above everything else.



If you must worry, worry about something worthwhile.

Worry about your pursuit of God's kingdom.

Stir it up.

Strengthen it.

Clear away the clutter so you can see the real picture.



And then get on with the life you were born to live:

The life of answering God's call.

"Here I am, Lord. Show me the next step."

Fear not, you will be provided for.

Better still, you will be guided.

You will end up where you're supposed to be.

"But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"

For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."

Matthew 6:30-33



Prayer: Lord, here we are. Show us what to do. We need your help as we face our troubles, fears, disappointments, and all the unknowns that we have no control over. Help us to let go of these and entrust them to you. Yes, yes you can handle them. In your hands our troubles become a song of your goodness. Help us to see this, to trust you, and to dearly love you amidst them. Strengthen us, revive us. Give us the resolution, the faith, the confidence to rise up even as our troubles, fears, and the unknown swirl around us.... and to live the wonderful lives you have for us.... lives of hearing and answering your call... as your capable hands guide us to wherever we are supposed to be. Amen.

Message: Richard E. Bieber 2014

Featured Artist: Courtesy of Colleen Briggs at colleenbriggs.com

[Maranatha Mirror Messages](http://mmirror.net)

mmirror.net

maranathamirror18@gmail.com



THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN