

...BUT I CAN TRUST

Fear Not!

ATTENTION:

- There must be a reason why the Bible says so much about fear.
 - The scriptures are replete with these references.
 - Fear not
 - Do not fear
 - Then there are the passages that say things like
 - Cast all your cares on God
 - Don't be anxious
 - Don't worry
 - I guess we humans are somewhat inclined to be “fearful worry warts!”
 - I know that this human standing here talking is...!

ATTUNE:

- What do you do when your fears seem to be winning the day?
 - What if God still hasn't come through in answering your prayers?
 - How do you approach parts of life that are uncertain and precarious?
 - How do you prevent the soil of your heart from being filled with seeds of doubt which grow up into a harvest of frustration and anger?
- It happens!
 - The scriptures give us a glimpse into the lives of some of the best men and women of God as they struggle with their inner doubts.

TRANSITION: God told one such individual...

“Do not be afraid, I am your shield, your very great reward.”

Genesis 15:1

BODY:

- The individual receiving this challenge was non-other than Abraham, the one called a *friend of God* and *the father of the faithful*
 - Abraham's story illustrates man's tendency to fear in times of uncertainty.
 - Even those who are accomplished followers of God!

- Come with me as we briefly enter Abraham's personal story
 - We will go back some forty centuries from today to a place called Ur of the Chaldees, a large city on the banks of the Euphrates River. This same river flows through Iraq and empties into the Persian Gulf not far from Kuwait.
 - As the story begins Abraham (Abram) is about 75 years old
 - He's a prosperous businessman.
 - He and his wife Sarah (Sarai) have no children.
 - Against that backdrop God speaks to Abram for the first time in [Genesis 12:1-3](#)
 - ¹ *The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.*
 - ² *“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*
 - Later God promises to give him descendants/children
 - ¹⁶ *I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted.* Genesis 13:16
 - Ten years quickly pass without any sign of children.
 - Abraham is almost 85 Sarah is past child-bearing age.
 - But, nothing can satisfy Abraham's desire for a son.
 - God wasn't in a hurry to give them a son which added to Abraham's fear.
 - *How much longer would He wait?*
 - *Why had He delayed?*
 - *Has God changed His mind?*
 - *Was there some problem he didn't know about?*
 - *Were they doing something displeasing to God?*
 - *God promised, why is it taking so long?*
 - God knew exactly what His servant was thinking.
 - He saw the doubt.
 - He understood the fear.
 - Now He moves to reassure Abram that all will be well. The time simply has not yet come for the child to be born.

- God responds to Abram...
 - ...the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:
 - “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”
- Genesis 15: 1
- There are reasons Abram doubts God’s promise of a son:
 - He and Sarah were too old to have children.
 - The promise had been made many years ago, etc. etc.
 - The question now, “Will God’s promise be enough for Abraham?”
 - To all our fears God says, *I am your shield*.
 - He protects us in times of doubt.
 - He rescues us in times of danger.
 - LOOK - God does not say, “I will give you a shield,” but **I am your shield**.
 - The God of heaven says He is our shield!
 - We have a shield that is omnipotent, universal, eternal.
 - That shield cannot be defeated.
 - It is as strong as God himself.
 - *We could not be in a better position*.
 - Who can defeat us when God himself is our shield?

The great message is clear = Since God is your shield, fear not!

- Christians aren’t immune to sadness - what happens to others also happens to us.
 - The difference is, “*We know that God protects us from harm so that nothing can touch us that doesn’t first pass through his hands of love.*”
 - That is not to say we don’t weep or suffer. **Far from it!**
 - Our sorrow is different - we hope in God who is our shield!

I read the story of a lady missionary who had nearly been put in jail by a hostile lawyer harassing her and the local Christian hospital. He objected to the fact that the hospital openly did evangelism along with its compassionate medical care. Seeking a reason for legal action, the lawyer accused the hospital of illegally selling intravenous fluid to its patients. It wasn’t true, but that didn’t matter. For nearly ten years the case bumped up and down the court system of that country. At one point it appeared likely that she might either be thrown in jail or forced to leave the country. “*I’m going to shut down this hospital,*” the lawyer laughed, “*You’re going to jail, or I’ll have*

you deported.” To which the missionary replied, **“You can do nothing to me except what my God permits you to do.”**

- That’s a great biblical answer!
 - God is a shield around his people!**
 - Nothing can touch us except that which God permits.
 - That brings us back to our issue - Why did God wait so long to give Abraham a son?
 - Abraham was an old man
 - After all these years God still wasn’t ready to answer Abraham’s prayers and His promises.
 - Abraham was old, but he would be older yet before Isaac was finally born.
 - **Why does God keep us waiting?**
 - There are things that need to happen in our relationship with God that can happen only as the result of us growing to trust God in times of fear.
 - We often short circuit those potentials when we give up
- 1. To develop perseverance in us.**
 - It would be too easy if God answered all our prayers the first time we prayed them.
 - *We would take God for granted*
 - *We would also develop a shallow faith.*
 - 2. To ensure that God alone gets the glory.**
 - When Paul wrote about Abraham’s story, he mentioned this point prominently. **Romans 4:19-21** says,
 - ¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. ²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised***

God acts in order to demonstrate that He alone is responsible, and he alone must get the glory.

3. To deepen our trust in God.

Abraham is the preeminent man of faith in the Bible.
When we read his story, we gain spiritual perspective!

From this story we watch how God uses time to grow a
faith filled Abraham = showing us the way He works
and what He values.

PROJECT: The Answer is a Person

- God's answer to fear is not an argument a formula. It's a Person!
 - That's why he said to Abraham, *Fear not. I am your shield.*
 - God himself is the final answer to fear of the human heart.
- Everything I've been trying to say comes down to a simple question: *Can God be trusted to do what is right?*
 - If the answer is yes, we can face the worst life has to offer.
 - If the answer is no, then we're no better off than the people who have no faith.
- Pioneer missionary to China in the late 1800's and early 1900's, J. Hudson Taylor was a very intense and determined Missionary. He made tremendous sacrifices and recruited hundreds of missionaries to China.
 - During the terrible days of the Boxer Rebellion which was an anti-foreign, anti-colonial and anti-Christian uprising in China (1898-1901), missionaries were being captured and killed,
 - Taylor went through tremendous agony of soul to the point that he could not even pray.
 - Writing in his journal, he summarized his spiritual condition this way: *"I can't read. I can't think. I can't pray. But I can trust."*

ACTIONS:

- Fear not, church.
 - No one knows what a day may bring.
 - Who knows if we will all make it through this week?
 - But our God is faithful to keep every one of his promises.
 - Nothing can happen to us except it first passes through the hands of God.
 - Church, can you trust? No matter what, Can you Trust?
 - God says to each of us, *Fear not, I am your shield*