

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Vol. 2 No 21 Oct. 24, 2008



1 John 4: 18 – *But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.*

THE UNKNOWN

What is the unknown? In spiritual terms, the unknown is the place wherein we must step, in faith, in order to have our faith fulfilled, strengthened, and perfected.

It is the place where our faith becomes perfected, where our faith becomes fact. It is the place, spiritually, where we must go if we intend to serve God on His terms.

The unknown is the mysterious place wherein the full truth of the Bible becomes experiential in our lives; and it does so because of the faith step that is made into that same unknown.

The unknown is under the absolute control of almighty God. It is part of His infinitude and, therefore, it is not only unknown, but it also has no boundaries. But the beauty of this huge, inexhaustible spiritual storehouse is that it, as do all things, belongs to God. There is no fear of the unknown, or, at least, there should not be. There is nothing to fear. The unknown is unknown to us but it is known to God. He is immanent in the unknown as He is immanent in all of His creation. He resides within and without the unknown. He

looks down upon it and, at the same time, looks up through it. And when we choose, by faith, to step into the unknown, we are being obedient to God. We are forcing the unseen to be seen. We are converting faith to fact. And we are becoming conformed more and more to the likeness of Jesus.

To have a glimpse into the infinitude of God is to realize that the unknown, wherein our steps of faith must enter, is not only known to God but its depth and its volume is infinite, too. The answers to faith and the promises of the Bible all reside in that mysterious unknown. And it is a place that is bigger than life itself.

WITHOUT FAITH

We are all familiar with the Scripture: “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” Just what is “without faith”? Anything that does not please God is without faith. Sin is obviously without faith. Disobedience, rebellion – they are without faith. How about “little white lies”? Holding grudges? Talking behind someone’s back? Our weak commitment to the

Church? Cheating on our tithes? That casual glance at pornography? Dear friend, the devil lives in that “casual glance.” It will not stay casual very long! All of these things are without faith.

We live our Christian lives as if God was our servant. We maintain control of our lives, the self sitting securely on the throne of our life; and we treat God as if He were there to ensure us that we will be able to continue doing “our own thing” without a lot of interruptions.

“Until we see ourselves as God sees us, we are not likely to be much disturbed over conditions around us as long as they do not get so far out of hand as to threaten our comfortable way of life.” So says A.W. Tozer.

It is faith in the grace of God that granted you salvation. **But salvation was only one step in a process that God has ordained for you to be brought to fruition in Him.** You must serve Jesus as Lord. And as you do, God will begin to conform you to His likeness. Ultimately, you will become part of a brotherhood of which Jesus is the first brother (Rom. 8:29). It is during this process that your faith begins to become strengthened. It

becomes strengthened through obedience and through coming to know God. You come to know God by immersing yourself in His word and by spending quality time with him, in prayer, in listening, in worship, and in meditation.

All of those things that you do in faith please God. We have a responsibility, as Christians, to please God. And part of that responsibility is also to understand fully, that without faith it is impossible to please Him. And we then must know and understand all of those things that comprise “without faith”. And we need to get them cleaned up and thrown out of our lives.

Every area of our life that is without faith, as the Holy Spirit makes us aware of it, grants us an opportunity to exercise faith by yielding that area to God to clean up and to destroy. We step into the unknown, choosing to repent and to change our lives accordingly, so that we will no longer be without faith in that particular area.

Let us be sure that we see both sides of this powerful Scripture: Without faith it is impossible to please God.

THE FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

As stated earlier, the unknown is known to God. And because it is also owned by God and He is immanent

in the unknown, there is nothing about the unknown that should create fear.

Yet, many of us still have a fear of the unknown. There are two very important questions that we need to have answered regarding this fear: From where does it come? And how do we get rid of it?

All fear comes from the devil. The only fear that comes from God is “the fear of the Lord.” But the fear of the Lord is different. It can be said that it is a matter of being in awe of God – and that is correct. It can also be said that it is a matter of understanding, as much as we are able, the immensity of God; and recognizing the overwhelming mightiness of it – and that, too, is correct. It can be said, as well, that the Scriptures are full of examples of mighty men of God trembling in fear at the awesomeness or the experience or the manifestation of God – and that, too, is correct. But there is one thing that is not correct. **We should never be afraid of God. The true fear of the Lord does not include being afraid.**

These great men of God, Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Paul, etc. were overwhelmed by the power and manifestation of God but they were not afraid of Him. I have had more than one occasion when, in prayer, the Lord entered the room in which I was praying. The first time, I was so fearful

that I honestly thought that if I turned my head or looked up, I would die. I was face down on the carpet in prayer when God’s presence filled the room. There was not a doubt in my mind that if I would have turned over and looked up, I would have died. Obviously, there is no way to know whether that is true, and it is very likely that it is not true.

But when it was all over, I realized that I was not afraid of God. I knew He loved me and that He had entered the room because of His love for me. But I was very fearful. The second time it happened, I had the same response, but there was less fear and more awe. That was because of the prior experience. But, again, I was not afraid.

So let us understand that the fear of the Lord is a very real experience that each of us should have but it does not include being afraid. So what happens when we experience the fear of the unknown?

That fear, unlike the fear of the Lord, comes from the devil. **If there is one place he does not want us stepping into, it is the unknown where our faith will become fact.** There is fear in most of us that has lain dormant (and in some cases, not dormant at all) since childhood. We had dreams of being suffocated by balloons (my childhood terror), or “boogie” men hiding under our beds or in our closets, or coming down

from the third floor in the middle of the night. We read stories, or had them read to us, that filled our minds with “being afraid”. I can remember as an eight or nine-year old, in boy scouts, hearing scary stories at night while we camped out. That was supposed to help us become men. What it did for me was add to that dormant stockpile of fear that the devil was building up in my psyche.

So when we become Christians and we, suddenly (oh, doesn't God love to work suddenly?) find ourselves standing in front of a mountain, knowing that the Lord wants us to step out in faith and leap over that mountain, how easily the devil reaches down into that cache of paralyzed, horrified spookiness, bringing undue alarm and terror to our spirit. And we freeze up! And the mountain just looms ahead, bigger and scarier than ever.

Oh, the deviousness of the father of lies. He can't keep you from salvation because you already have it. He can't keep you from radical discipleship because you are already walking in it. Do not allow him to keep you from the great unknown wherein lies the power and experience of almighty God.

Refuse to accept his pseudo-fear. He has no right to put that on you.

Let us understand that this fear is a lie of the devil.

All of those scary things in that little supply house in the deep recesses of our minds are lies, too. The first step in eliminating this fear is to recognize what it is and from where it comes. Now, having done that, how do we eliminate it?

1 John 4:18-*There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.*

This is an unbelievably powerful Scripture. Let us understand everything that God is saying to us. First, fear has to do with punishment. **God does not punish us. He forgives us. He cleanses us. He redeems us.** If we are being punished, just who do you think is doing that? In many cases, we punish ourselves. We think of ourselves as being so inferior and unworthy that we do not consider the Scriptural fact that God sees us as holy and blameless and has done so since the creation of the world (Eph. 1:4). And, of course, the devil, if we let him, and many of us do, will punish us because he hates us.

So, fear has to do with punishment. This is just another confirmation from the Lord that fear comes from the devil. It does not come from God.

Secondly, there is no fear in love. The two are incongruent. They cannot reside together. **If God says there is**

no fear in love, then there is no fear in love. You cannot be living in the love of God and still have fear. It is impossible – or else the Scripture is incorrect.

“Well, then,” you say, “what am I experiencing?”

Oh, you are experiencing fear, all right, but you are experiencing a lie. In reality, there is no fear, but the devil is the father of lies. He can make pseudo-fear act as real as any fear that has ever been experienced. And if you believe him, you will think, without question, that you are full of real fear; and you will pine away in that pseudo-fear. Ultimately, it can destroy you.

Remember, God has said that fear has to do with punishment. God is not punishing you and the devil has no right to punish you. You, therefore, are experiencing a lie. You must get hold of the understanding of how the devil operates. He has no authority over you at all. He can only lie to you, and he will if you allow him to.

God says that there is no fear in love. Are you a child of God? Then the Father and the Son, Jesus, both live within you. And if they do, then there is no fear in that love. You are living in the love of God the Father and you are living in the love of Jesus the Son. That love has no fear in it. Therefore, the fear that you think you are experiencing is a pseudo-fear

that comes from the lie of the father of lies himself, the devil.

Thirdly, perfect love drives out fear, and that includes pseudo-fear. God is perfect love. **And the God who lives within you will drive out that pseudo-fear that is strangling you if you will allow Him to.** How does it happen?

You must take that step into the unknown, that same step that you have been afraid to take because of the pseudo-fear about which the devil has lied to you. **You must know that on the other side of that step is the perfect love of God and that, by His grace and in His power, the moment you take that step, that pseudo-fear will dissipate, dissolve, and leave. It has to. Perfect love casts out fear.** That is the word of God and the word of God must do what it says it will do. And the word of God always responds perfectly to faith.

Dear friend, the battle is a spiritual battle. The devil wants you to believe a lie and Jesus is telling you plainly that there is no fear. Simply take that step into the unknown and watch that mountain crumble into dust.

Faith is being certain and being sure of that which you cannot yet see with your eyes. But you can see it with your heart because the word of God has to be true.

Take that step of faith into the vast unknown of all that God is. He is waiting for you.

Faith is always a step into the unknown. And it can, it should, and by the grace of God, it will be taken without fear.

Stepping into the unknown opens the door to the divine order. God wants us to transpose from the natural order of things to the divine order. It cannot be done without faith. And faith cannot be operated in pseudo-fear. Just remember, it is pseudo. Send it where it belongs, friend.

Only believe!

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