

**FEAR...WE SEE IT IN MANY WAYS!** Chrysostom was the church leader of Constantinople in the fourth century when Rome was persecuting the Church. The Roman emperor had him arrested and charged with being a Christian. If Chrysostom did not renounce Christ, then the emperor would have this Christian leader banished from the kingdom. *Chrysostom responded to the threat by saying that the emperor could not do so, "because the whole world is my Father's kingdom."* "Then," replied the emperor, "I will take away your life." To which Chrysostom said, *"You cannot, for my life is hid with Christ in God."* Next threatened with the loss of his treasure, this saint replied, *"You cannot, for my treasure is in heaven where my heart is."* The emperor made one last effort: "Then I will drive you away from here and you shall have no friend left." But again, Chrysostom responded, *"You cannot, for I have one Friend from whom you can never separate me. I challenge you for you can do me no harm."*

### **YOU CAN DO ME NO HARM!!**

Jesus said, *"Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore, do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows."*

**DO NOT FEAR!!** Chrysostom lived the life that Jesus expected of him and you can too. **A LIFE WITHOUT FEAR. Remember that...**

### **IT'S AWFUL TO LIVE IN FEAR.**

**Some people live in fear all their lives.**

Stan Mooneyham tells of visiting a primitive tribe in the jungles of Papua New Guinea a few years ago that had never had contact with the outside world until the mid-1970s. Their culture was dysfunctional by any measure. For centuries, they had lived in jungle isolation by the law of payback, under which every slight or every wrong required retribution, usually a killing.

If a man suspected another of stealing from his taro patch, he would hide beside a trail and kill the thief. This in turn required a revenge murder, which prompted further escalation in a never-ending cycle. The tribe had become so fragmented through fear of each other that they were reduced to living in small, isolated family units. **Life was constant terror and hardship.** One day they encountered a Christian from another tribe who told them that there was a new way to live--a way which he called **"BELESI."** We would call it **"peace of mind,"** but the translation from their dialect is *"easy in the belly."* That's an interesting way to put it. **Living with no fear is living "easy in the belly."**

This tribe that had been living by the law of payback asked for a missionary to come and teach them about BELESI, "LVING IN THE BELLY." And when Mooneyham visited their small community on the banks of the April River, gradually, they **STEPPED OUT OF DARKNESS INTO THE LIGHT.** **They learned to live by the law of gentleness and love instead of the law of payback.**

**What a terrible way to live--in constant fear of your own neighbors, never knowing when a minor slight might launch a desire for the severest form of revenge.** *And yet many people in our world live like that—**IN CONSTANT FEAR.***

The bloody "ethnic cleansing" in Sarajevo has left hundreds of children with serious emotional problems. American army nurses serving in Sarajevo reported back in the 1990s that hospitals were often filled with children who needed both physical and emotional care. In one hospital, there was a nightly struggle to get the children to sleep. As soon as the lights went out, the children began to cry. The nurses couldn't seem to find anything to comfort them. Finally, one nurse suggested that the children's fears might relate to a lack of security.

What could they do to make the children feel more secure? They hit upon the idea of giving each child a piece of bread to hold at night. For children who knew the pain of near-starvation, this bread represented security to them.

**That night, all the children fell asleep peacefully, each clutching his or her bread.**

**What a terrible, terrible thing—LIVING IN FEAR, living in insecurity, living with constant anxiety.**

I wonder how many people in our own land live every day in REAL FEAR?

I wonder how many children go to school where they live in fear of cruel bullies. **HOW MANY WIVES TODAY LIVE IN REAL FEAR OF ABUSIVE HUSBANDS?**

Famed divorce lawyer Raoul Felder claims that he has had clients who have killed one another's pets, put snakes in one another's beds. Many clients of both sexes either talk about or attempt suicide in the hopes of hurting their spouse. He knew one man who put leather gloves and a length of rope on the bedside table each night before he went to bed. He wanted his wife to fear that he might strangle her in her sleep.

**What an awful way to live. But there are people who live in constant fear.** I wonder how many people fear getting sick or old because of insufficient resources. I wonder how many people who work in tall office buildings still have reservations about going to their offices each morning after the Terrorists attacks of Sept. 11.

**How many of us still have misgivings about getting on a plane? YES, IT IS AWFUL TO LIVE IN FEAR!**

**YET, SOME OF OUR FEARS ARE OF OUR OWN CREATION.**

Of course, some of our fears are our own creation. There are some very real fears in this world. Terrorism is a good example. **However, there are many fears that exist only in our minds.**

**There's a book written by Drs. Burka and Yuen on the subject of PROCRASTINATION.** In their studies of confirmed procrastinators, **they saw this consistent fact: *Procrastination is Purposeful.***

**Here is what they discovered...**"While people may not realize it or want to admit it, when they slow down or avoid doing even the most necessary things--*like taking their high-blood-pressure medicine or depositing their paychecks so checks don't bounce—THERE IS A "PURPOSEFUL REASON" FOR NOT DOING THOSE THINGS.* Where does that decision to "not" step forward come from? It grows out of one of four types of **FEAR... *fear of failure, fear of success, fear of being controlled, or fear of intimacy.***"

**Do you see anything interesting about these four so-called fears?** They are not VISIBLE, SOLID, TOUCHABLE and some would say REAL at all. Nobody's going to kill you if you fail--or if you succeed, or if you give in to the need all of us have for intimacy, YES, THEY ARE SELF MADE FEARS—NO ONE ELSE CAUSES THEM!!

**Some of the fears that haunt us are totally irrational.**

**Today the #1 fear that people list in surveys is the fear of speaking in front of an audience. It even beats out death in most surveys.** THAT IS CRAZY!! I've spoken in front of a group a few times myself and, as you will testify, I have not always been at my best, but so far nobody's crucified me--not with nails anyhow. **There are people who would rather walk on fire than give a speech. Why is that?** Well, some people fear looking stupid. Big deal! Nobody ever died from looking stupid. If they did, our streets would be lined with corpses. In the absence of real fear, we create fears in our own minds.

**And that's sad. Fear can be a real paralyzer. Fear can keep us from being all that God created us to be.**

There was a Navy man who dreamed of writing stories for the movies. He wrote a screenplay about the naval hero John Paul Jones. He sent the screenplay to Julia West, who was then the story editor of Paramount Pictures. She rejected it. Later, this writer told Julia West how disappointed he felt from the rejection. He came to see, though, that fear could be a paralyzer. He also learned that the best way to overcome the fear of failure is to go on

with the determination to succeed. In March 1933, this writer spoke to our nation. **He was newly-elected President Franklin Roosevelt** who said: *"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself--nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."*

**Fear can paralyze--whether that fear is based in reality or whether it exists only in our own mind.**

### **THE IDEAL ANTIDOTE FOR 'FEAR' IS 'FAITH' IN GOD.**

Jesus says that the ideal antidote for fear is faith in God. *"Are not two sparrows sold for a cent?"* Jesus says to us. *"And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore, do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows."*

**Many of our fears would disappear if we knew that we were loved, accepted, secure.** Why do we fear failure? Or rejection? Or intimacy? Is it not because there is a great insecurity within our souls? How much could you accomplish if you could be FREED of all your fears and anxieties? If you truly believed that God was with you? If you knew that what you do really matters and that you would be accepted regardless of the outcome?

According to Pastor Bruce Wilkinson in his best-selling book Secrets of the Vine, ***there are four areas of life in which we all need some "pruning" from God.*** These four areas are the ones which most of us struggle to control. We don't want to trust God with them. They are the last areas of our life that we are likely to turn over to God's control.

**The first area is the people that we love the most.** It's very hard to admit that our loved ones belong to God, and that we must surrender them to Him. **The second area we struggle with is the right to know why God does what He does.** God is a sovereign God. His ways are higher than our ways. His will is perfect. We want an explanation for our suffering, an answer for our doubts. But God is not obligated to us. He expects us to trust Him even when we don't understand His ways. **The third area we struggle with is our love for money and possessions.** Things enslave us. True freedom is found in contentment, in not wanting more. And **the fourth area we struggle with is the source of our significance.** Many times, we find our worth in our appearance, our status, our job performance, our athletic ability, our money and possessions. *But our true worth comes from being a unique creation of God. This worth cannot be diminished in any way.*

**This is what Jesus is saying to us:** *Do not be afraid. Since God cares for the smallest sparrow falling from the sky. Surely, God cares for you!*

A few years ago, motivational speaker Patrick O'Dooley gave a seminar for a group of business people in Galveston, Texas. Galveston is a small island just off the coast of Texas. O'Dooley noticed that some of the seminar attendees had the letters "BOI" on their name tags. He learned that those letters stood for "Born on Island." Evidently, it is a mark of prestige to have been born in Galveston. Those people with "BOI" on their name tags hadn't done anything to deserve their special status. They weren't necessarily harder workers, or more dedicated, or smarter than anyone else. But they automatically received more respect simply because they had been born on the island.

Maybe you and I should have name tags that say on them **BTC.** *"Belongs to Christ."* We would wear these not for others, but as a reminder to ourselves who we are. We belong to Christ. **Nothing can separate us from God's LOVE-a LOVE that can "STOP US FROM BEING AFRAID!!!"**

It's awful to live in constant FEAR. **But the solution to FEAR is found in GOD'S LOVE.** **Ground your life in His LOVE and allow yourself to do the Amazing Things He Has Called You to Do!! Amen.**