

TEN BASIC HUMAN FEARS

Fears have a direct relationship to specific diseases, especially diseases that affect the brain, the blood, and the heart. Fears increase blood pressure, disrupt hormonal balance, and ultimately cause heart failure as explained in Scripture. "Men's hearts failing them for fear" (Luke 21:26). No wonder we are warned, hundreds of times in Scripture, to fear not neither be afraid. In order to fulfill this command, we must first identify the fears we experience, understand their origin, and follow through on steps to cast them out.

The Destroyers of Relationships

The human drives that are produced by fear are often more powerful than the bonds of human relationships. This is evident when people are confronted by fears and, in response, say or do things that bring great damage to a marriage, family, or other friendship. The behavior of both children and adults can seem totally unreasonable until you discover the fears that are dictating their responses to people and situations.

A wife who fears that her husband will reject or abandon her will be driven by that fear to become financially self-sufficient. Then her lack of needing her husband or dependence on him for support only contributes to the result that she feared. A husband who fears failure will often neglect his wife and children in order to please the people he works for, and in the process he will develop friendships with women that become competing affections with his wife. Children who fear that their parents will divorce and abandon them close off their spirits to one or both parents and look outside the family for their security.

The Characteristics of Fear

- **What we fear, we tend to worship.**

There is a proper fear that we are to have for the Lord. It is a wholesome reverence for His mighty power, His holy character, and His wonderful works. This fear is defined by David; "The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever" (Psalm 19:9). Because we tend to worship what we fear, we are instructed not to fear Satan. Satan and all his demonic hosts were conquered at Calvary. Jesus snatched the list of all our sins from the hand of Satan, nailed it to the cross, and blotted out its writing with His blood. Then He paraded Satan as a conquered foe throughout the heavens.

- **The more we fear God, the less we will fear others.**

The reverse of this is also true. The less we fear God, the more we will fear others, and this will lead us into a fatal trap in decision making, because "the fear of man bringeth a snare" (Proverbs 29:25). To fear man more than God is ridiculous from God's perspective, from which He wants us to see life. Thus, He writes, "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth" (Isaiah 51:12-13).

- **Every human fear is a symptom of imperfect love.**

Scripture categorically states that “there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (I John 4:18). Fear is a by-product of selfish emotions, such as guilt, which produces a fear of impending judgment; greed, which results in a fear of poverty; or loving pleasure, which leads to a fear of death. When we love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength and our neighbor as ourself, we will have no desire of personal gain and no basis for stumbling. Therefore, we will have nothing to fear. He who gives all to God has nothing to lose, and therefore, nothing to fear.

- **Fear is dangerous because it is contagious.**

When the armies of Israel went out to battle, the commanders were instructed by God to make the following announcement to all the soldiers: “What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren’s heart faint as well as his heart” (Deuteronomy 20:8). Because of this characteristic, it is important to surround ourselves with courageous people when we are facing a physical or a spiritual battle.

It is also wise to not listen to the counsel of fearful people. Nehemiah understood this when he was warned to flee into the Temple to save his life. He responded, “Should such a man as I flee? . . . And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin” (Nehemiah 6:11–13).

- **Fear is the bondage of the spirit by a spirit that is not of God.**

Scripture refers to a spirit of fear. This spirit is not of God, but of Satan. “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (II Timothy 1:7). The word *spirit* is translated from the Greek word *pneuma*, which is the same word that is used to describe the Holy Spirit. This same designation is used in Romans 8:15 to describe what we have been saved from, “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

Basic Human Fears

1. Fear of Public Shame

This is a deep and powerful fear that our secret faults and failures will be exposed and ridiculed. This is the first fear that is recorded in the Bible. After Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God, even though they had made fig-leaf aprons to cover their nakedness. When God asked them why they were hiding, Adam answered, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself" (Genesis 3:10).

This fear produces a continual anxiety to make outward appearances acceptable (i.e., fig-leaf coverings). The result is an over-attention to clothes, an extravagance on status symbols, debt, depression, dissatisfaction, surface friendships, and loneliness. This is a basic fear of mankind. It is a fear that every blackmail artist capitalizes upon in order to extort money or other things. This fear keeps a wife or husband from telling a spouse about past failures; it keeps children from telling their parents about wrong things they are doing or have done; it hinders family members from reporting abusive situations.

Steps of action:

1. **Realize that God sees every sin**—What we think we do in secret is actually done in the open presence of God. Therefore, David wrote, "The darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee" (Psalm 139:12). The energy that we expend to think or do evil is indestructible. It travels into space like the light that emanates from the stars. Since God inhabits space, He continually looks at our sins. This is why David stated, "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance" (Psalm 90:8).
2. **Realize that public shame will come**—This fear is an ominous premonition of what God has promised to do with all of our words, thoughts, and actions—He will expose them before all. Jesus promised that the secrets of men's hearts will be made known and every deed will be openly judged. (See II Corinthians 5:10.) "Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops" (Luke 12:3).
3. **Ask God to blot out every sin**—There is only one way to rid the universe of our sins: it is to have them blotted out by the blood of Christ. This is the prayer of David, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions" (Psalm 51:1). It is the blood that Jesus Christ shed on the cross that we must claim as the full payment of our sin. As we repent of our sin and claim the blood of Christ as our full payment, He will blot them out and remove them from His sight. "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:11-12).

2. Fear of Rejection

The fear of rejection is one of the most powerful and destructive emotions we can experience. In a marriage, it is more painful than the death of a partner. Death brings closure to a relationship and allows for the enjoyment of pleasant memories, but rejection creates an open wound that never heals.

Children who are rejected by their parents or older siblings experience a damage to their self-worth that is never fully healed. They will search for acceptance from others and will often look for it in the wrong places. A classic example of rejection is Jephthah, who was thrown out of his family because he was born of a harlot. He found acceptance with "vain men" (Judges 11:1-3) and later made a foolish vow motivated by his desperation for acceptance.

Being rejected is having those you love and trust close off their spirits to you and cut off further fellowship. When Cain sinned against his brother, he experienced God's rejection and said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth" (Genesis 4:13).

Steps of action:

1. **Establish your acceptance with God**—If we fulfill the commands to love God with all of our hearts and our neighbor as ourselves, we need not fear rejection. As David stated, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. . . . He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor" (Psalm 112:7-9). As long as we are in fellowship with the Lord, it does not really matter who rejects us. Paul emphasized this when he wrote, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).
2. **Confess your faults to one another**—Often people reject us because we have personal faults or idiosyncrasies that cause them to react to us. The fear and conflicts that come from these faults contribute to sickness. Thus, Scripture states that if we are sick we are to call for the elders of the church and to "confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James 5:16). We should also ask people to point out blind spots in us that need to be corrected. We should do this with close friends, because as "iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17).
3. **Be committed to making disciples rather than friends**—We are commanded to make disciples who will be true to the Lord, rather than trying to make friends who will be true to us. David experienced the rejection of his closest friends, and Solomon warns that just a little whispering can separate chief friends. (See Psalm 41:9 and Proverbs 16:28.) Even in making disciples, we must anticipate that they will leave us if they choose to reject the commandments of Christ. Many of Christ's disciples became offended at His teaching and "walked no more with him" (John 6:66). All those in Asia forsook Paul, but those who remained true became his joy and crown. (See II Timothy 1:15 and Philippians 4:1.)

3. Fear of Death

This fear has two aspects: fear of physical death and fear of spiritual death. It is a by-product of the perpetual war that is going on between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Satan's objective is "to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." God's objectives are that we "might have life, and that [we] might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Jesus died to deliver us from the bondage of fear: "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Satan hates our bodies because of four factors: one, our body was created by God in His image and Satan hates God; two, we become a member of Christ's body when we are born again and Satan hates the Lord Jesus Christ; three, a believer's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and Satan hates the Holy Spirit; and four, our members become weapons of righteousness when they are yielded to the Lord, and Satan knows that they can do damage to his kingdom.

The fear of death is founded on the reality that every person is in the process of physically dying because of the sin that Adam passed down to all of his descendants. Spiritual death is also being experienced by all those who are trusting in their own efforts for salvation.

Steps of action:

1. **Receive the gift of eternal life**—"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Salvation must be received as a gift, not a reward for our good works. (See Ephesians 2:8-9.) The repentant publican received eternal life by crying out, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). John explains that "as many as received him [Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). Thus, we can add to our cry, "I now receive your Son as my Lord and His death on the cross as the full payment for my sins."
2. **Dedicate your body to God**—As believers, we are to dedicate our bodies to God as a living sacrifice, so that He can carry out His good works in and through us. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). At the same time we should yield the members of our bodies to the Lord so that He can carry out His mighty works in and through us.
3. **Choose to lay down your life, serving God**—As believers we conquer through our death, not through our life. This is the message of the life and death of Christ. Paul wrote that the more we experience of dying to self, the more we can share true life with others. (See II Corinthians 4:11-12.) It is when we purpose to die for the Lord that we conquer Satan, as explained in Revelation 12:11: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

4. Fear of Impending Judgment

This fear has deep roots in the Word of God and in the laws of nature: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Therefore, Scripture warns, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:7-8).

Noah was motivated by a fear of impending judgment to build an ark so that he could save himself and his family. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (Hebrews 11:7).

The fear of judgment is defined in the laws of the harvest. We reap what we sow, we reap where we sow, we reap more than we sow, and we reap in a different season than we sow. The sins that we sow in youth will produce sickness and disease later in life, as Scripture affirms, "His bones are full of the sin of his youth" (Job 20:11). Therefore, we are warned, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13).

Steps of action:

1. **Confess and forsake all sins of the flesh**—Because the wages of sin is death, we are to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). Sins that we refuse to surrender are competing lusts that violate our covenant with God and bring about sickness and death. Fleshly lusts are especially damaging. Therefore, Peter writes, "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).
2. **Experience the freeing power of fasting**—Some sins are so deep and pervasive that they need a special work of God that comes through fasting. Jesus explained this to His disciples when they could not cast out an unclean spirit, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21). Jesus promised that if we fast secretly, He would reward us openly. Isaiah explains some of these rewards, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? . . . Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily" (Isaiah 58:7-9).
3. **Cry out for God's deliverance**—Ultimately it is only the power of God that can deliver us from the impending judgment, and He invites us to cry out for this deliverance. "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Isaiah 50:15).
4. **Renew your mind in God's truth**—Sins are like darkness; the way to drive it out is to let the light in. This will happen in our lives as we memorize and meditate on Scripture as David testifies: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11).

5. Fear of Evil

This fear is so important that Jesus included it in the prayer He taught to His disciples: “. . . Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil . . .” (Matthew 6:13). In this verse, the Greek word for *evil* is *poneros*. It is evil in a moral and spiritual sense. It is from the noun *ponos*, which means “great trouble, intense desire, and pain.” *Poneros* is Satan, the first author of all evil in the world.

This fear is also included in the Shepherd’s Psalm, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me” (Psalm 23:4). When Abraham went down to Egypt, he feared evil and death. Therefore, he said to his wife, “I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake” (Genesis 12:11–13). This deception became an iniquity that was passed on to his descendants.

Paul grappled with evil in search of a victorious walk with God. He testified: “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do . . . O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:19, 24).

Steps of action:

1. **Abhor evil in all its forms**—There are many commands that warn us to turn the fear of evil into a motivation to flee from it. “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good” (Romans 12:9). “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (I Thessalonians 5:22). “We should not lust after evil things” (I Corinthians 10:6). “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (I Corinthians 15:33).
2. **Lay up good treasure in your heart**—Evil springs from the heart; therefore, Jesus taught, “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things” (Matthew 12:35).
3. **Overcome evil with good**—We are not to fear evil, but rather to overcome it. We do this by carrying out good works that are motivated by love. Notice how these will overcome evil. “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21). “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (I Peter 2:12). Because of the importance of good works, we are to be zealous in doing them and we are to provoke one another unto love and good works.
4. **Cry out for protection**—The Lord does not keep us from troubles, but rather delivers us in times of trouble. He wants us to have a daily walk with Him in intimate fellowship. This means that when we sense evil, we cry out to Him for deliverance. “The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil” (II Thessalonians 3:3).

6. Fear of Insufficiency

This fear is the root of desiring to be rich and heaping up things for the future. Much sorrow, pain, and sickness is caused by this fear. Because "the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Timothy 6:10).

God gave Abraham and his descendants the land of Canaan, but when a famine came, he went down to Egypt and sowed seeds of future judgment. (See Genesis 12.) Abraham's fear of insufficiency was decreased later when he gave tithes of his victory to Melchisidec and refused to take any of the spoils that belonged to the king of Sodom. It was then that God said, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Genesis 15:1-3).

Jesus addressed this fear when He reasoned with His disciples not to worry about having enough food or clothing. He pointed to God's care of the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" (Matthew 6:25-26).

Sleep is vital for health; however, the sleep of a rich man is interrupted by worries over his possessions. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? . . . The abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep" (Ecclesiastes 5:10-12).

Steps of action:

1. **Learn to be content with basics**—"Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (I Timothy 6:6-8).
2. **Develop the quality of generosity**—The way to have sufficient provisions is to be generous. This is a principle of life: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).
3. **Seek first the kingdom of God**—Most people spend their lives building up their personal security, then give the leftovers to God. However, their trust is not in the Lord, but in their financial assets. God's ways are just the opposite; we are to seek His kingdom first and then everything else will be added to us. (See Matthew 6:33-34.)
4. **Understand how God gives**—When believers ask their heavenly Father for things that will meet basic needs, He gives them. Then they must search out and find what He has given. One of the largest "rooms" in heaven will be filled with things that God gave to people, but they never searched for or claimed. (See Matthew 7:7.)

7. Fear of Abandonment

The ultimate experience of abandonment took place on the cross when Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). Since He was tested in all points as we are, He is very aware of the potential damage that the fear of abandonment can have. Therefore, to those He sent out, He gave assurance of His faithfulness.

He sent Joshua with the promise, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Joshua 1:5). He assured the disciples, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). In Hebrews 13, we read, "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

Hagar experienced the pain of abandonment when Abraham sent her away with only bread and a bottle of water. In her anguish, she cried out, "Let me not see the death of the child. And she . . . wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is" (Genesis 21:16-17).

David wrote about his experiences with abandonment when he said, "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off. . . . Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation" (Psalm 38:11, 21-22). Elijah expressed his pain of abandonment when he felt that he was the only faithful prophet left. He exclaimed, "I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (I Kings 19:10).

Children are especially sensitive to the fear of abandonment, because they depend upon their parents to meet most of their needs.

Steps of action:

1. **Transfer security to your heavenly Father**—By the age of twelve, Jesus was more related to His heavenly Father than He was to His earthly father. He had no fear of abandonment, because he was busy about His heavenly Father's business. (See Luke 2:49.) Throughout His life, He was very conscious of the fact that His heavenly Father had sent Him into the world to carry out a mission, and that in order to do it He must maintain an intimate fellowship with Him. He said to His disciples, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).
2. **Claim God's promises to those who are abandoned**—God gives special reassurances of His presence and protection to those who are abandoned by their husband or parents. He identifies Himself as a Father to the fatherless and a protector of the widow. (See Psalm 68:5.) David testified, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up" (Psalm 27:10). James gives a challenge to all believers when he says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (James 1:27).
3. **Thank God for His purposes in allowing it to happen**—When God allows a child to be abandoned, it means that God has an extra special purpose for his life. Moses, Daniel, Joseph, Esther, and Samuel are powerful examples of this truth. In order to experience God's purposes, however, there must be a spirit of thankfulness; otherwise, bitterness will occur and destroy that potential.

8. Fear of the Unknown

Most people become comfortable and secure in their little world of activity. They carry out the same routine every day, see the same people, and can fairly well predict what will take place. When they are called upon to leave their security and surroundings and go to an unfamiliar destination, they develop a strong fear. Those who rate the emotional trauma produced through different events in life put the trauma of moving high on the list because of the emotional turmoil involved and the need for readjustment.

Abraham is known in Scripture as the Father of Faith. That faith was tested when God said to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee" (Genesis 12:1).

The fear of the unknown forces us to stop depending on our own scope of information, our own resources, and our own circle of friends. We are forced to become vulnerable and to learn how to depend upon the Lord, Who knows the beginning from the end. He is therefore the God of the Unknown. His wisdom is infinite and His foreknowledge is complete.

Every disciple that Jesus called had to deal with this fear because He called them to leave their professions, their families, and their surroundings, and follow Him in a ministry that had never before been carried out.

Steps of action:

1. **Develop the mind-set of a stranger and pilgrim**—God wants us to focus on heaven as our real home, rather than this earth. Based on this Peter wrote, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims" (1 Peter 2:11). A stranger is a foreigner from another country, and a pilgrim is one who is traveling to a holy destination. The more we focus on our eternal home, the less we will be bothered with the fear of the unknown. The fear of the unknown is usually based on temporal comforts and conveniences and concern about suffering. Thus, Paul wrote, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). A pilgrim expects to suffer in order to reach his destination.
2. **Concentrate on the goal of making disciples**—If your goal in life is to enjoy comfortable surroundings, you will have a fear of the unknown. But if your goal is to fulfill the final command of Christ and to make disciples, you will anticipate the unknown because it will force you meet new people who need the Lord and who are candidates to become disciples for the Lord. When we get to heaven it is not going to be important how comfortable or how secure our surroundings were, but it will be vitally important to be able to tell the Lord how many disciples we have made for Him. Paul was just as able to make disciples in the prisons he occupied as in the synagogues he visited.
3. **Concentrate on God's nature and purpose for your life**—God has an infinite understanding of all that will happen in His universe, and He has pre-ordained that we are to carry out a series of good works under the direction of His Holy Spirit. As we follow Him, He will lead us to new places and experiences, as he led Philip, for the purpose of carrying out these good works.

9. Fear of Enemies

This fear has a powerful effect upon our emotions and our physical health. David pled with God to “preserve my life from fear of the enemy” (Psalm 64:1). “For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead” (Psalm 143:3).

The chief weapons of our enemies are bitter words; they “whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words” (Psalm 64:3). David stated, “Mine enemies would daily swallow me up Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil” (Psalm 56:2, 5).

There are two types of enemies: those against God, and those we have made. Both types are represented in Esau. He was a profane and immoral man whom God hated, but Jacob made Esau his enemy by stealing Esau’s blessing. Therefore, Jacob fled from Esau’s hatred and feared for his life for the next twenty years. (See Romans 9:3 and Genesis 27:36.)

If we have failed to love God with all of our hearts or others as ourselves, we must realize that God will stir up our enemies—even as He did with the nation of Israel. The Book of Judges is a continual sequence of God raising up enemies when His people strayed from Him and then raising up deliverers when the people repented and returned to Him. When Solomon forsook the Lord, Scripture states, “The LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon And God stirred him up another adversary” (I Kings 11:14, 23).

If we are dealing with God’s enemies, then we must also realize that they are being energized by Satan, who is opposed to all that God wants to accomplish through His people in the world. It is in reference to this point that Paul states, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).

Steps of action:

1. **Realize that all enemies are under God’s control**—Since it is God Who stirs up enemies and it is God Who conquers them or brings them to peace, we must not focus our attention on people but on the purposes of God in allowing the enemies to be there. (See Deuteronomy 28:7, 25.)
2. **Flee to the Lord for protection**—This was David’s first response when facing his enemies: “Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me” (Psalm 143:9). Under the protection of God, David was able to reassure himself with this truth: “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? . . . Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear” (Psalm 27:1–3).
3. **Examine your heart and life**—If you have failed to love God with all your heart and to love others as yourself—confess it, turn from all competing affections, and plead for mercy. This was David’s response when he said, “O LORD,

rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed." "The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins. Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred" (Psalm 6:1-3, 25:17-19).

4. **Bless your enemies and do good to them**—When we give a verbal blessing to one who has cursed us, we neutralize the venom of his curse and become emotionally free from the damage the curses could do to our emotions and physical health. Thus, Jesus commands, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). Our tendency is to want to do to them what they do to us, but Paul reaffirms the command of Jesus when he states, "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not . . . Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12: 14, 19).

5. **Cry out to God for deliverance**—This is the most powerful way to deal with enemies, as David testified, "When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me. In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me" (Psalm 56:9-11). God promises that if we call upon Him in our day of trouble, He will deliver us and we will glorify Him. (See Psalm 50:15.)

David further affirms the power of crying out, when he writes, "I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies . . . The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him" (Psalm 18:3, 5-6).

6. **Wait patiently upon the Lord**—God may not remove our enemies quickly. He allowed David to run from Saul's wrath for several years. During that time, God deepened the walk that David had with Him and enlarged his message through the Psalms, as he testified, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD" (Psalm 27:13-14).

10. Fear of Failure

This is a deeply ingrained fear because God made each person to carry out specific purposes for His glory. It is only as we carry them out that we will find our identity and our fulfillment in life. If we fail to complete God's purposes, we will have a deep sense of failure, frustration, and depression.

Our greatest asset is the blessing of the Lord. Scripture states, "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it" (Proverbs 10:22). When the time came for Jacob to deal with his enemies, he got alone to seek the Lord's favor. The angel of the Lord met him and they wrestled through the night. Jacob said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Genesis 32:26). God blessed him, and thereafter Jacob's name became Israel, so that when Jabez cried out for a blessing, he called upon the God of Israel. (See I Chronicles 4:10.)

Joshua had good reason to fear failure. He was given a task far beyond his capability. Therefore, God said to him, "Be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:7).

Steps of action:

1. **Know the will of God**—God's will is not a job or a vocation, but a series of good works that He predestined us to accomplish. (See Ephesians 2:10, 5:18.) In order to do them we must be wholly dedicated to Him (see I Peter 2:21), morally pure (see I Thessalonians 4:3), and thankful in all things (see I Thessalonians 5:18).
2. **Meditate in God's Law day and night**—In order to have the wisdom and success that God desires for us, we must memorize and meditate on the Law, especially on the commands of Christ. God said to Joshua, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8-9).

David confirmed this when he wrote of the one whose delight is in the Law of God: "In his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:2-3). Jesus said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

3. **Be zealous unto good works**—Our success is in the good works that God carries out through us to glorify Him and to benefit others. He redeemed us for this purpose. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). If we keep ourselves cleansed from the contaminations of evil, we will be a vessel unto honor, "prepared unto every good work" (II Timothy 2:21). Our good works are vital but they must be motivated by love. (See Hebrews 10:24.)