

Maintaining a Peaceful Mind

Just before his arrest, trial and crucifixion Jesus *“began to be sorrowful and troubled.”* ⁽¹⁾ He knew from Scripture the unpleasantness that awaited him. He told the apostles, *“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.”* ⁽²⁾

He left the apostles and went to another location in the garden of Gethsemane. There *“he fell on his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’”* ⁽³⁾

A second-time Jesus left the apostles and found his own private place of prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. He spoke to his heavenly Father and said, *“My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”* ⁽⁴⁾ Then, he returned to the apostles and found them sleeping, turned around and went a third time to be alone with his heavenly Father. He spoke the same request as he gave himself to heavenly Father’s will.

None of us can imagine the spiritual, mental and emotional battle Jesus fought that night in the garden of Gethsemane. You know why he fought this battle? To maintain a peaceful mind! Let’s follow his example as we face a world of fear, hatred, crime and war.

Resist Fear

Jesus was truly human with a human mother, but a heavenly Father. Like the first man, Adam, Jesus came from a Creator who knew no sin. And, therefore, was completely peaceful. However, Jesus lived in a world which surrounded him with turmoil, anger and violence. During his entire ministry, Jesus faced anger, threats and hostility. Furthermore, Jesus knew the Old Testament prophecies of his life on earth. Scripture predicted his arrest, his trial and his crucifixion. His humanity feared the beating, the spitting, the pulling out of his beard, the wicked laughter, and all the agony of his last 24 hours before his death.

Jesus, like every other human, felt fear. That’s why he prayed so earnestly that heavenly Father would take this time of suffering away. On the other hand, Jesus loved Father supremely and was willing to do whatever Father predicted in Scripture. Consequently, Jesus resisted fear.

It is no sin to feel fear. That’s normal, but we must learn to resist fear when

it tries motivating us to avoid God's will and plan. Consequently, three times Jesus left the apostles by themselves, went to a secluded place in the garden of Gethsemane, admitted his fear and recommitted himself to doing heavenly Father's will. Heavenly Father energized Jesus with the power to become the Savior of the world by enduring the horrible death of crucifixion.

It is no sin to feel fear. However, we must resist it, say "no" to it and reject it when it attempts turning us from carrying out heavenly Father's will.

So, heavenly Father poured energy into Jesus as Jesus refused to yield to the fears he felt. It works the same way with us. It is not sin to feel afraid. We simply say "no" when fear attempts to turn us from doing God's will. Resist fear, yield to heavenly Father and you will win just like Jesus was victorious over fears that attempted to turn him from doing God's will.

Spend Time with the Prince of Peace

The Garden of Gethsemane provided Jesus with a perfect private place to get alone with the Spirit of his Heavenly Father. Jesus did not deny his inner battle with fear. He chose to be alone with the Spirit of his Heavenly Father. Jesus admitted his fear and reluctance to proceed with the arrest, the trial, the persecution and horrible death by crucifixion. But spending time with the Spirit of his Father allowed Heavenly Father to impart to Jesus a superhuman peace that cannot be manufactured by human effort.

One of the greatest mental battles I ever faced occurred in November 1986. Delores and I left a church we had pastored successfully for 15 years and moved to Houston, Texas. We intended to move to Singapore, southeast Asia and work as missionaries.

The Missions Department of our denomination had turned me down as a missionary candidate after I lost my driver's license due to legal blindness in 1974. We accepted their decision and continued working as pastors in Kingsville, Texas. Things went very, very well at the church we pastored. However, in 1984, we received an invitation to minister in Honduras, Central America for a couple of weeks. That experience ignited our desire to be foreign missionaries.

Then, we received an invitation to minister in Singapore, southeast Asia. We accepted the invitation, flew to Singapore and experienced a tremendous couple of weeks of ministry in many, many churches.

We decided to move to Singapore and serve as missionaries even though our missions department had earlier turned us down. About two weeks after leaving our wonderful church in Kingsville, Texas, and moving to Houston, I awoke around 1:00 a.m. absolutely terrified. I got up from bed, went to our small living room, sat down on the couch and tried to get myself together. I had no idea how we would ever get to Singapore without the backing of our national missions office. As I sat on the couch struggling, the Holy Spirit asked me a question: *“Are you going to live by my promises or your explanations?”* Then I realized my battle was between my ears. I looked up at the ceiling of that little apartment and said, *“Lord, I’m going to live by your promises and not my explanations.”* Immediately, total peace flooded my spirit and my mind. I returned to bed and slept the rest of the night.

The next morning I contacted our missions office and they responded that things had changed since 1974. Two missionaries who were totally blind served with our national office; my vision impairment was no problem to being accepted as a missionary!

So, you see, dear friends, God is the Author of Peace. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Spend private time with the Prince of Peace and his peace will fill you with confidence in the Lord and confidence in yourself!

Don’t condemn yourself for battling in your thoughts. Many of God’s children feel completely defeated when battling mental fears. If Jesus had done that we would never have had a Savior. He would have quit following Heavenly Father’s plan, walked away from the Garden of Gethsemane and never become our Savior.

There is no sin in fearing. Fear is a normal part of being human. But allowing fear to become your motivator leads to defeat. So, we follow Jesus’ example of resisting fear by communing with Heavenly Father. Heavenly Father’s Spirit then pours into us courage that destroys fear and enables us to go ahead with carrying out Father’s plan and will.

Why did Jesus withdraw from the apostles three times and spend private time with Heavenly Father? Because he was battling fear. So you see, there’s nothing wrong with you when you fight feelings of fear. Don’t condemn yourself as a loser. You are a winner because you belong to a God who cannot lose! The Prince of Peace lives in you. Yield to peace, not to fear, and God’s superhuman peace will fill you through and through!

Footnotes:

1. Matthew 26:37
2. Matthew 26:38
3. Matthew 26:39
4. Matthew 26:42