

How to Get Through a Pandemic

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One-day John Wesley was walking with a troubled man who expressed his doubt as to the goodness of God. He said, “I do not know what I shall do with all this worry and trouble.” At the same moment Wesley saw a cow looking over a stone wall. “Do you know,” asked Wesley, “why that cow is looking over the wall?” “No,” said the man who was worried. Wesley said, “The cow is looking over the wall because she cannot see through it. That is what you must do with your wall of trouble—look over it and avoid it.”

Here is the point. Faith enables us to look past our circumstances and focus on God and His sufficiency. As we pass through this pandemic, we must come face to face with God’s truth and God Himself to grant us relief from overwhelming fears along with dismay (mental and spiritual discouragement or depression) which can be created by these types of trials. Our devotion to God’s Word and relationship with God will enable us to pass through this pandemic victoriously so that we might remain unscathed from a spiritual perspective. Even if we become infected with this virus, the virus does not have to infect and disturb our spiritual lives. Our physical life may not always be virus proof, but our spiritual life should always be virus proof!

Isaiah 41:10 gives this promise: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.”

A pandemic does not mean that Christians should panic. I’ve been saying that we should be concerned but not consumed or overcome with fear during these next several weeks.

How do we get through a pandemic?

There are two ways to get through a pandemic.

I. Obey God’s Command

“Fear thou not” and “be not dismayed.”

When we don’t know how to get through a tough time, like this virus outbreak, the best thing to do is to simply obey God and what He tells us to do. The command that God gives to His children is very clear: “Fear thou not.” We are talking about overcoming and debilitating fear that can strangle our spiritual and Christian life. The other part of this command is similar: “be not dismayed” which means to experience bewilderment, confusion, to become disoriented in life, or to be utterly baffled by the situation at hand. Dismay normally evolves into discouragement and depression. Life can sometimes cause us to be overcome with dismay, so much so, it can defeat our spiritual and emotional outlook on life.

God tells His children they should not be overcome with fear and dismay. This is because fear and dismay can debilitate our spiritual lives and keep us from trusting in God. In obedience to God’s command, we can by His grace, overcome the fear and dismay that stems from difficult times, such as we are passing through right now in our country and personal lives.

Jesus said in John 14:1: “Let not your heart be troubled (agitated): ye believe in God, believe also in Me.”

Fear, along with mental and spiritual confusion (a depressed state), can overtake our lives and bring us into spiritual defeat and cause us to miss God's peace and calmness during the storms that we face in life. God reminds His people some 365 times in the Bible that they should not fear. This should mean something to us today!

God wants to deliver us from fear, anxiety, and a state of mental and spiritual defeat which can so easily overcome our hearts during a pandemic or virus outbreak such as this. This is why He commands us to "Fear thou not" and "be not dismayed" (don't become confused and discouraged and lose your way in life). The Bible gives us the answer on how to be rescued from debilitating fear and mental confusion which can haunt our lives and bring us to a place of defeat and despair. We must obey God's command. We must come to the place where we place all of our confidence and trust in God and determine by His grace to obey His Word and not be overcome with life-debilitating fear and frustration. Again, a pandemic does not mean we should panic as a Christian but find our rest and peace in God.

A father said that his little girl, who was much afraid of the dark, slept at night in a crib beside his bed. Often he had been wakened during the night by a little voice saying, "Papa, it's dark! It's dark, papa! Take Nellie's hand." And when he had taken hold of the lifted hand, she sank quietly to sleep, all her fears being taken away. The remembrance of the pleading voice of the little girl had often helped the Father to remember that in the midst of troubles and distress, he, too, had a Father to whom he could lift his hand and say, "Father, it is dark! Take my hand."

When we obey God's command by His grace and do not allow fear and dismay to overwhelm and depress us, we will pass victoriously through the difficult times of life, such as this pandemic, and find God's peace and tranquility.

So how do we get through a pandemic? We obey God's command. But the command is followed by the cure.

II. Follow God's Cure

What is the treatment for overcoming fear and dismay? After giving the command to "Fear thou not" and "be not dismayed" Isaiah proceeds to give the antidote or cure for plaguing fears and mental defeat. We are reminded once again "God's commands are God's enablements." What God tells us to do something or obey Him, He gives us the guidance and Divine help on how to accomplish it. How do we overcome the fear that is associated with a pandemic? This verse gives us a very clear answer.

There is a five-fold treatment to cure fear.

1. Experience God's Presence ("I am with thee")

"Fear thou not; be not dismayed" ... "for I am with thee."

God's presence is the antidote for fear and dismay. We don't have to fear and be overwhelmed with dismay since we have God's abiding presence to provide us with comfort, peace, and spiritual stability in the changing times of our lives. God's presence will help us to overcome the fears, foes, failures, and future that we face in life. We don't have to be afraid since God is with us. "I am with thee." This is a tremendous promise!

In Matthew 14:27 Jesus said something similar to His disciples when their boat was on the Sea being tossed about by the raging storm. "But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer;

it is I; be not afraid.” Jesus always comes to us in the storms of life. During those raging storms of life Jesus whispers in our ear, “Be of good cheer; it is I.”

We are often storm-tossed, perplexed, and in despair. When the night seems darkest, the Lord is near at hand to help, save, and comfort us. Let us not push the panic button and forget about Him during the storm but then we hear His comforting voice “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.” Don’t be afraid! Don’t be discouraged and overcome with mental confusion and misery.

“How can I fear?
Jesus is near.
He ever watches over me.
Worries all ease;
He gives me peace.
How can I fear with Jesus?”

God said to Moses in Exodus 33:14: “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”

God’s presence is recognized during the trials or difficult times of life.

Isaiah 43:2-5: “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour ... Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west.”

Water and fire are the traditional symbols for testing (Ps. 32:6; 42:7; 66:12; James 1:2). We all pass through the deep waters of trial and the fire of testing and hardship. None of us who are exempt from trial. But the trials we pass through should change us and make us more like Jesus Christ in our faith, virtues, and overall character.

1 Peter 1:7: “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

We must allow this pandemic (fiery trial) be a tool that God will use to bring about spiritual growth in our life. Allowing God to work through our life, building faith and Christian virtues in our lives will enable us to pass through the pandemic victoriously.

The left-winged and liberal politicians tell us: “Never allow a crisis to go to waste.” Well, as liberal-minded this might be for political gain, this statement is true from a spiritual perspective. We should allow this pandemic to change us and mold us into the likeness of Jesus!

2. Embrace God’s Person (“I am thy God”)

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God”

Folks, He is our God! He will get us through this! God is enough! This is the second part of the treatment that will cure fear and dismay. The text of Isaiah 41:10 goes on to say that “I am thy God.” This is a key part of the cure for all anxiety and fear. This is why we need not fear. God is God, and we can embrace Him as the only solution to our fears. God is on our side! It’s as if God is saying, “Remember who I am. I am thy God!” This means we will reflect upon His greatness, His power, who He is, what He has done, and what He can do for our lives today. God is saying, “Don’t forget who I am. I am the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, immutable, and eternal God who

can do anything, and everything.” I can meet your need! Don’t be afraid! Don’t be dismayed with life!

“For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

Once again, Jesus said in John 14:1: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me.”

When we believe in God and remember who He is, it’s then that our fears and confusion can be dispelled. We must remember His presence and power that can deliver us and free us from our fears. Reflecting upon God can calm the fears which have been running our lives. “I am God” (Isa. 41:10).

Now that settles everything! What more do you need? “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10). Just reflect upon God and remember who He is, and you will find deliverance from all your fears and anxieties. Will you just for a moment reflect upon God and what He means to you?

“He lights the way when the road is long,
And keeps you company. With His love to guide
you, He walks beside you, Just like He walks with me.
When I am weary, filled with despair,
Who gives me courage to go on from there,
And who gives me faith that will never die,
Somebody bigger than you and I.”

We need to encounter God! We need to see the King as Isaiah did! Isaiah’s encounter with God reminds us who God is and what He can do in and through our lives during a pandemic. When we understand who God is and reflect upon His greatness and power, we will remember that there is nothing He cannot do. Surely the great and mighty God can take away our fears and dismay.

3. Expect God’s Power (“I will strengthen thee”)

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee...”

Someone said: “Don’t tell God what you can’t do; just find out what He can do!”

This is the third part of the treatment that will cure fear. The text of Isaiah 41:10 goes on to say that God will strengthen us in the time of trouble and calamity. God’s Divine strength will enable us to pass through the fiery trials and deep waters without fear overcoming our hearts and lives. Dear friend, unlimited strength is at our disposal. The believer can serve valiantly, endure patiently, suffer triumphantly, and, if need be, die gloriously. How can this be? It’s because God has promised to “strengthen” us in every trial that we face. There is no limit to God’s power.

The songwriter wrote:

“Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed;
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid;
I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by My gracious, omnipotent hand.”

Psalm 46:1-2: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”

There you have it! If you want to be delivered from fear, from a state of dismay and bewilderment, then experience God’s shelter and strength in your life. This Psalm (Psalm 46) is for the “all shook up.”

Psalm 27:1 goes on to say: “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?”

Alexander Maclaren said: “Only he who can say, ‘The Lord is the strength of my life,’ can say, ‘Of whom shall I be afraid?’”

God’s strength can dispel the fears and dismay that we face. As we avail ourselves to His power and strength, we can be released from our financial, emotional, and physical fears. We can be released from the type of dismay or bewilderment which leads to discouragement and depression.

We need to learn the secret of tapping into God’s ever-present resource and power which is available to us. When we forget God’s promise we become afraid and troubled in life. We become discouraged, dismayed, and deprived of our riches in Christ.

Here are some New Testament promises:

2 Corinthians 9:8 says: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”

Ephesians 3:16: “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.”

Someone said: Where our strength runs out, God’s strength begins!”

4. Embrace God’s Promise (“I will help thee”)

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee...”

This is the fourth part of the treatment that will cure fear and frustration which comes directly from the text of Isaiah 41:10. What a promise this is to claim! The text goes on to say that God will help us in those times of distress and turmoil. He will help us through this pandemic. God is never going to abandon us. Instead, He is going to help and assist our lives. God will help us pass through the valleys and climb the insurmountable mountains that are before us. God assists us by providing us with the peace, joy, strength, and patience that we need. He truly is our help. His help keeps us from being overcome with fear and overwhelmed with our circumstances which in the end produces spiritual dismay and confusion.

God repeats this promise in Isaiah 41:13: “For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.”

Yes, God is with us to help us in life and cure us of our fear, anxiety, and a state of bewilderment and unrest. The promise is given again in Isaiah 41:14: “Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”

We don’t have to fear knowing that God will help sustain our lives during our trials. God has promised to never abandon His saints. God will help us through life’s journey so that fear does not haunt our lives and dismay and distraught do not overtake our lives. God will be by our side when we pass through the storms of life. He will also keep us safe till the storm passes by.

“A shade by day, defense by night,
A shelter in the time of storm;
No fears alarm, no foes affright,
A shelter in the time of storm.”

The Lord will keep us safe till the storm passes by!

Psalm 121:1-2: “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.”

Have we really been trusting God? Dear friend, once we have learned to put our trust in God, we will no longer be overcome and defeated with fear and dismay when trials come against us. God is greater than this pandemic, this virus, and greater than any problem that we might face. Therefore, we can walk by faith instead of fear. We can put our faith in His provision for our lives instead of being overtaken by fear and perplexity. It takes faith in God’s promise who said, “I will help thee,” to overcome fear and perplexity.

The beloved verse of Psalm 56:3 says: “What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.”

There is a simplicity to living the Christian life. We must remain *simple* in our faith and *singular* in our focus –focusing on God and His provision. Fear cannot exist where there is faith.

Someone remarked: “Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered. No one was there.”

“I trust in God, wherever I may be,
Upon the land or on the rolling sea.
For come what may, from day to day,
My Heavenly Father watches over me.
I trust in God, I know He cares for me,
On mountain bleak or on the stormy sea.
Tho billows roll, He keeps my soul.
My Heavenly Father watches over me.”

5. Enjoy God’s Perseverance (“I will uphold thee”)

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.”

This is the fifth and final part of the treatment that will cure fear. The text of Isaiah 41:10 finally states that God “will uphold thee” with what He calls the “right hand of My righteousness.” In other words, Christ always does what is right. Whatever He does is in accordance with His righteous standard, and it’s this same God (our righteous God) that perseveres in our hearts and lives to keep us spiritually sane! (“I will uphold thee”).

The great blessing is this. Each one of us as His children can enjoy God’s persevering hand operating within our daily lives. Let’s not miss this beloved truth. God perseveres through us (“I will uphold thee”) which means God will support us, hold us up, and keep us from spiritual defeat. In other words, God will keep us from falling. He will sustain us.

Psalm 55:22: “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.”

The only way we can stay spiritually healthy during such a time as this is to allow God to uphold us and keep our lives from being overcome with fear and mental confusion and shock. We can’t experience freedom from fear or bewilderment without God persevering in and through our lives (“I will uphold thee”).

God knows how to hold up His children!

Deuteronomy 33:27 says: “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms ...”

“I feel the touch of hands so kind and gentle, They’re leading me in paths that I must trod;
I have no fear when Jesus walks beside me, For I’m sheltered in the arms of God. So let the
storms rage high, the dark clouds rise, They won’t worry me for I’m sheltered safe within
the arms of God; He walks with me And naught of earth can harm me, Sheltered safe
within the arms of God.”

It’s God who holds on to us and keeps us spiritually healthy and stable in life. His personal presence and power will drive away our fears, sustain us, enable us to live on a higher plane, give us something worth living for, and make our life count for God.

Someone wrote: “Security is our nearness to God, not our distance from danger.”

There will always be dangers but our security comes from God’s promise which says, “I will uphold thee.”

The treatment and cure for fear and dismay is not complicated. How to get through tough times, a pandemic, is explained in this text.

Isaiah 41:10:

“Fear thou not (*don’t be overcome with fear*); **for I am with thee** (experience God’s presence); **be not dismayed** (*don’t be overcome with mental confusion and breakdown*); **for I am thy God** (embrace God’s person); **I will strengthen thee** (expect God’s power); **yea, I will help thee** (embrace God’s promise); **yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness**” (enjoy God’s perseverance in your life).

So, dearly beloved, we need not fear and become totally frustrated, discouraged, and defeated during this virus epidemic. Instead of experiencing fear and dismay we can experience God’s presence and peace. The songwriter said:

“There’s within my heart a melody
Jesus whispers sweet and low,
Fear not, I am with thee, peace, be still,
In all of life’s ebb and flow.”

May God grant each one of us His peace in our hearts as we continue to pass through this difficult time. We don’t know how long this will take to get on the other side of the curve of this pandemic. But God will be with us and keep us from being overcome with financial, physical, spiritual, and emotional fears and dismay which can rob us of our peace and joy.

May God be with you all in a special way until we meet again. We sometimes sing:

“Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship our spirit finds
Is like to that above.
When we asunder part,
It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be joined in heart,
And hope to meet again.”