

Title: Four Facts About THE Father and What Follows

Date: June 19, 2022

Subject: We gain happiness when we

Scripture:

It's Father's Day and the word father begins with the letter F. Therefore, I was looking for a way to have an intro that was filled with lots of Fs. I scoured the Internet to see if anyone had something like that. It wasn't exactly a feeding frenzy, but failed in a fruitless search. I finally figured rather than force the issue, I'd forget about it and focus on four foundational facts from God's Word.

These apply to fathers, men, women and children as we face increasing challenges to our faith in Christ and families.

I. Your Heavenly Father loves you. Therefore, don't faint.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1.

God's mercy is at the forefront. Paul was constantly in awe of God's mercy extended toward him. He said he had a ministry because God in his mercy allowed him to become one of his followers. The apostle had been a persecutor of anybody and everybody who placed their trust in Jesus. He was a violent man who hunted down men, women and children to have them imprisoned, beaten or killed. As a result of these actions and the weight of his sin, considering himself to be the worst of sinners (1 Timothy 1:16), he felt he did didn't deserve to be brought into God's family.

God's mercy is at the heart of what allows a person to become a Christian and everything that flows from the relationship that's been established with God. It's the bedrock upon which the relationship is built. If it weren't for God's love, mercy, grace...there would be nothing. But because God is loving, merciful, and gracious, we can be born again into a new life.

God's love continues to be with us. Let's move down a little bit later in 2 Corinthians 4. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7 - 9.

Followers of Christ are compared to ordinary, unattractive clay jars that have little value or beauty in and of themselves. But they can hide valuable contents. This is the case with people who know Jesus Christ as Savior. On the outside, we may not be anything special to look at, but on the inside is Jesus. He's promised to live inside of us, renew us, make us clean, transform us into something unrecognizable to our previous condition. Paul phrases it as God's treasure.

The Christian life isn't without difficulty. Verses 8 and 9 describe the pain that can come from life and people who don't know Jesus as Savior. In spite of what is faced, God's mercy shines through. He doesn't allow us to be run over or...

Go back to v. 1. "Therefore we do not lose heart." Move ahead to v. 16. read 2 Corinthians 4:16 - 18.

We hear again the call to not lose heart. We don't move towards cashing in our chips and getting out of the game. We don't faint as mentioned by our main point.

Francis Schaeffer was one of the premier Christian thinkers of the 20th century. He authored phenomenal books which communicating the content of the Christian faith and defending it - *How Should We Then Live*, *A Christian Manifesto*, *He Is There And He Is Not Silent*.

He battled cancer and during an interview he said, “The only way to be foolishly happy in this world is to be young enough, well enough, and have money enough - and not give a care about other people. But as soon as you don't have any of the first three, or if you have compassion for the weeping world around you, then it is impossible to have the foolish kind of happiness that I believe some Christians present as Christianity.”

If our greatest need had been to be happy as the world thinks, God could have made all of us circus clowns and everybody would enjoy clowns and not be afraid of them. Sometimes we feel happiness will come through a change in circumstances. A change in those things might increase our temporary happiness but our greatest need in life is not to be happy in the way the world thinks. What is needed is a changed life that will make us better as we become more like Jesus Christ.

God's mercy is woven through the chapter. We see some of the evidence of God's love in vv. 16 through 18. In spite of the things that are taking place - difficulties, struggles, trials, hardships, persecution - there can be a daily inward renewal provided by God. There's also the comparison of what's taking place in our lives with the eternal glory which far outweighs all troubles. This leads to the motivation of focusing on the eternal even though it's not seen. This is because of the promises God has given to us of how he will act out of his love.

If God can do all that he does for the long term, if that's the end goal, if that's the promise of God if his love is active to that end, then we also can depend on the fact his love is active in the here and now. Don't faint because he loves you.

II. Your Heavenly Father holds you. Therefore, don't fret.

Read John 14:1.

This is one of the times Jesus told his disciples on the night before he was crucified that they shouldn't let their hearts be troubled. It seems like that would have been the natural reaction. After all, He'd given the disciples disturbing news: he was leaving because he was going to die and return to heaven, he would be betrayed, and Peter would deny him. This likely would cause the rest of them to question what they'd do.

One source imagines the reaction of disciples. “Is it possible to exaggerate the consternation and distraction, the shrieks of fear, the bitter sobs of reckless grief that convulsed the upper chamber? In the agony of despair” (Pulpit Commentary on John 14:1).

Jesus told them: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; Trust also in me.” That's a double call for trust. He went on to speak about the many rooms in his Father's house that he would prepare so they could be with him and that he is the way, the truth and the life.

Jesus later told them, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27). Then towards the end of their time Jesus told them they’d have trouble, but they were to take heart because he has overcome the world and they could have peace in and through him (John 16:33).

One African language translated “don’t let your hearts be troubled” as “don’t get your livers in a quiver.” Don't be disturbed, stirred up, irritated, or agitated.

Instead, Christ followers are to place their trust in him. We trust him because he holds us.

The story is told of an expedition of botanists who were in search of a rare flower in the Alps. They enlisted the services of a boy who was familiar with the mountains. The scientists searched high and low and finally spotted one of the flowers down a steep side of a mountain. They asked the boy if he’d go down and get it. The scientists held up a thick rope they’d tie around the boy so he’d be secure. They’d hold onto it and he’d be perfectly safe. The boy declined. The scientists did what any red-blooded American would do. They offered him more money. The boy still declined. The scientists were at their wit's end. They begged and begged and begged. The boy continued to refuse. Finally, the boy ran off. However, he was only gone for a few minutes. He came back with an unknown man. The boy announced to the botanist he’d go down to get the flower if this man would be allowed to hold the rope. The scientists were a little bewildered and asked what was so special about this man. The boy said, “He's my father.”

The boy had complete trust in his dad that he wouldn't let anything bad happen to him. We're to have similar trust in God - God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They won't allow anything to destroy us. We understand bad things happen, but even through those things, God still holds us. Although we want to know why certain things happen, the truth is... we don't need to know. What we need to know is we put our trust in God and he holds us.

In turn for trusting, the promise is God provides peace. Peace was often used as a greeting and as a goodbye. Here it's more than a simple “hello” or “later gator.”

"The peace Christ leaves is power to hold the wildest fear in pause, to still a clamor or hush a cry - it is the coming of mercy to a sense of sin, of life to the fear of death...the ordinary salutation may become invested with immense significance. There are moments when into one human word may be condensed the love of a lifetime. Christ does but pour through these common words the fire of his eternal and infinite love” (Pulpit Commentary, John 14:27).

Because the Father loves us, don't fret. A synonym for fret is worry. Fret means to eat away, to wear away, to blaze up which connects it to anger. A person may think that fretting starts eating away at the problem but it's eating away at the person who possesses the worry.

Most of the things people worry about are something in the past they can't change or things beyond their control or things in the future that never happen or things that are so small they're not really worth worrying about. There are probably those who say it pays to worry because if they worry about things then they

won't happen. An older gentleman was asked what had robbed him of his joy. He responded “things that never happened.” There isn't a cause and effect and it's not worth the energy and effort.

Psalm 37 has been called an answer to worry. Three times it instructs us to not fret - do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong, do not fret when men succeed in their ways when they carry out their evil schemes, refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret - it leads only to evil” (Psalm 37:1, 7, 8).

The problem in the passage is people who are evil. They seem to be getting everything the righteous should be getting or the evil aren't getting what they should be getting which is punishment. They seem to be living good lives free from problems. What God writes through David applies to all causes of fretting: trust in the Lord, delight in the Lord, commit your way to the Lord, be still before the Lord, wait for the Lord (Psalm 37:3, 4, 5, 7, 34).

Your Heavenly Father keeps you. Therefore, don't fear.

Jesus taught about his and the Father's ability to keep and protect. READ John 10:28 – 30.

At the end of this upper room discourse is the high priestly prayer. Jesus prays for a number of things for his followers. One of the things that jumps out is he prays for the protection of his followers (John 17:11, 15). Jesus said he had protected them and kept them safe (John 17:12) and was entrusting all those who would become his followers into the Father's hands to keep them.

The Lord often called upon his people to not fear, to not be afraid. When the Lord was establishing his covenant with Abraham: “Do not be afraid, Abraham. I am your shield” (Genesis 15:1); when Joshua was taking over for Moses as leader of the people of Israel, the Lord repeatedly called upon him to “be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; Do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9; 10:8); and the great apostle Paul whom we think was full of courage and fearless: “do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you” (Acts 18:9).

Worry and fear are closely related. They trigger some of the same reactions.

Lisa Schmidt wrote on a web page for the Association of certified biblical counselors: “Fear and worry can arise suddenly and linger long. They can sap our energy, cause a lack of sleep, drain our joy, ruin relationships, and even aggravate body aches and pains. They reveal a potential ignorance of or lack of faith in the sovereignty of God (Romans 8:28-29). Most importantly, fear and worry do not glorify the Lord... Worry is sinful when: Our thoughts are unproductive and are consumed with things; It controls us and causes us to neglect relationships and responsibilities; It harms our bodies (possibly with upset stomachs, ulcers, migraine headaches, etc.); It causes us to lose hope instead of finding biblical answers; We stop functioning. Worry is typically motivated by fear. Fear is a feeling of anxiety caused by either a real or perceived presence of danger, evil, pain, or consequences. The significance in overcoming fear is first in properly differentiating between prudence, godly fear, and sinful fear... Sinful fear is fear that motivates us away from biblical thinking, speaking, and behaving” (Lisa Schmidt. 9/16/14. biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/articles/fear-and-worry).

King David, the sweet singer of Israel, wrote many Psalms encouraging himself and others to not give into fear. Two of the best known include: “The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1); “When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?” (Psalm 56:3, 4). The first may have come when his son Absalom claimed the throne and David was on the run. The second occurred when the Philistines had captured him (1 Samuel 30:1 - 6).

Another time David's life was in danger from his own men after he had scored a major victory over his enemies. His army returned home to discover another enemy had captured their wives, children and possessions. They wanted to stone him. As we can imagine, David was greatly distressed because of this talk. Wouldn't you be? We find this little nugget in the midst of the threat on his life: “David found strength in the Lord his God” (1 Samuel 30:6). David found strength in God as he realized God was keeping him.

Another key Scripture: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).

Someone has noted the verse contains five pillars of fearlessness: “God is with me; God is my God; God will strengthen me; God will help me; and God will uphold me” (John Piper. Sermon - June 20, 1993. Fear Not, I Am with You, I Am Your God. desiringgod.org/messages/fear-not-i-am-with-you-i-am-your-god. Accessed 6/16/22).

Don't fear because the heavenly Father keeps us.
Your heavenly Father knows you. Therefore, be faithful.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.

God is faithful. He knows everything there is to know about us. He knows our situation. He knows our temperament. He knows our personality. He knows our areas of temptation. He knows our failings. He remains faithful to us.

This verse is an encouragement following warnings not to be like the Israelites from the Old Testament. They often turned away from God. Some of the ways included setting their hearts on evil things, worshipped false gods, committed sexual immorality, grumbled.

The Lord was with them in their journey and provided ways of escape and the ability to endure what they were facing. They chose to take their own path. They tested God.

We are called upon to not test Christ. Our response is to be faithful in return to him. We can choose which way to go as we follow Jesus Christ. God will be with us to provide ways of escape, not just during temptation, so we can endure. We don't need to throw our hands up in the air in despair and hopelessness.

Listen to these reassuring words from the Psalms: “As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; For he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust” (Psalm 103:13, 14). The great God is fully aware of the who, what, where, when, why and how of our lives and he exercises compassion toward us.