

“MY LOVE IS ALWAYS WITH YOU”

“When darkness shrouds your vision, obstacles obscure your path, and confusion clouds your judgment, I need you to trust Me. *“Even there My hand shall lead you, and My right hand shall hold you”* (Psalm 139:10). You may feel like your future is bleak, like armies are against you, and your only option is to hide, saying, *“Surely the darkness shall cover me”* (Psalm 139:11). But I assure you that I am by your side. I have not left you, and never will I forsake you. I am *always* with you... even when you fail. *“Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand”* (Isaiah 41:10).

As the disciples fled for their safety, the reality of their inability to fulfill their promises to never forsake Jesus came to fruition. *“You will all be made to stumble because of Me”* (Mark 14:27). Their Companion in the custody of the enemy, they were scattered and alone, unsure where to go and how to proceed. As their minds entertained their fears, doubts began to take hold.

What causes you to feel afraid? How do you combat these feelings? _____

Fear

Fatigue and heightened emotions collided as their fellow disciple appeared on the scene. Accompanied by Roman soldiers and temple guards armed with torches and weapons, Judas Iscariot stepped forth to identify the One he called “friend” with a kiss.

Read Matthew 26:47-56, Luke 22:47-53, and John 18:1-11.

Summarize Judas’ actions in one word: _____

Why is this the most painful type of treachery? _____

How did Peter seek to defend Jesus? What emotions provoked him to react with violence? _____

Per the account in John 18, how had Christ demonstrated His power in the presence of the soldiers *before* Peter took up His sword (v.6)? How should this have assured Peter, James, and John? What then was Peter trying to prove? _____

“Put your sword in its place” (Matthew 26:52). Figuratively, have you taken up a sword against someone or something? What feelings have convinced you that this is necessary? In what ways does Christ’s rebuke speak to your situation? (vv.52-53) _____

How did Christ redeem the situation? (Luke 22:51) _____

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How did Christ protect His disciples (John 18:4-9)? _____

Per Mark 14:51-52, who else was present? _____

How might the disciples have felt after they fled (Matthew 26:56)? _____

Earlier that night, all of the disciples strongly declared that they would not abandon Jesus, but when the trial was upon them, not one stood by Him. “*All the disciples **forsook Him and fled***” (Matthew 26:56, emphasis mine). The Greek word for *forsook*, *aphentes*, means “to quit, forsake or abandon.”¹ Afraid of what might transpire, the disciples deserted, left, abandoned, gave up on, and turned their backs on Jesus. Some would even deny and disown Him.

Define fear. _____

Fear is caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or is a threat to our well-being. It is the apprehension of experiencing something negative or unpleasant.

What action do most individuals take in an effort to prevent something unpleasant from transpiring?

What were the disciples afraid of? (Consider John 20:19.) What had they forgotten? See John 14:27-28. _____

Is fear a reflection of trust? Why or why not? _____

Turn now to Joshua 1 and read verses 1-9.

How could fear have thwarted God’s plan for Joshua’s life? _____

Had Joshua allowed it to grip his heart and mind, fear could have prevented him from moving ahead with God’s plan for his life. As with Joshua and the disciples, the enemy instills fear to prevent you from going forward or progressing with God. If you allow it, fear can stop you from doing what you have been led or called to do. It can also cause you to question your identity in Christ.

How has the enemy used fear in an attempt to distract you from God and His will for your life? _____

How can succumbing to fear consequently affect those around you? _____

¹ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

Psalm 31:22a says, *"In my alarm I said, I am cut off from your sight!"* (NIV). The longer fear resides, what occurs? _____

How could fear have immobilized the disciples? _____

Instead of letting fear control him, what was Joshua to do? _____

What did the Lord promise him in verses 5 and 9 of Joshua 1? _____

After Christ was taken into custody, the disciples *"scattered, each to his own"* (John 16:32), leaving them isolated and alone. What is God's solution to fear in the following passages:

Deuteronomy 31:6 _____

Psalm 23:4, 46:1-3 _____

Isaiah 41:10, 13, 43:1-2 _____

Lamentations 3:57 _____

What does the phrase, "Do it afraid", mean to you? _____

Record Psalm 16:8. _____

Compromise

Before they arrived in the garden, the disciples had also claimed that they were willing to risk and lose their own lives for Christ's sake. Not only did they scatter in an effort to preserve their lives, one of their own would compromise his faith to protect himself.

Continue reading in Mark 14:53-72 and John 18:12-27.

Peter fought against Christ's predictions of betrayal, suffering and death, and Christ's claim that he would deny Him (Matthew 16:21-23, Luke 22:33-24). His rash defense of Christ in the garden indicated that he still questioned Christ's words, thinking himself capable of standing strong when others failed.

Why do we often fight against God's revelation of the state of our heart, refusing to see ourselves as we are? _____

After his display of courage, Peter fled the scene with James and John. Soon after, he and John mustered up enough nerve to turn back and follow Christ into the courtyard. Per Mark 14:54, in what manner did Peter follow the Lord? Is this an indication of the true state of his confidence? Why or why not? _____

Peter warmed himself at the fire of Christ's captors; the same individuals present in verse 65. Who interrogated Peter? (Mark 14:66-72) _____

Why might Peter have felt that his actions were necessary? Of what was he afraid? Were his thoughts true? Explain. _____

What happened to John? _____

What did Peter need to learn according to the following verses?

Deuteronomy 3:22 _____

Psalms 27:1-5, 56:3-4, 118:6 _____

Luke 12:4-7 _____

Hebrews 13:5b-6 _____

What do these verses reveal about self-protection and preservation? (Also consider Romans 12:19-21.) _____

Return to Mark 14. Caught in the depth of his sin, Peter was overcome with remorse. How does he respond? (v.72) _____

Further, Luke 22:61-62 reveals, *"And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' So Peter went out and wept bitterly."*

Was Christ ever absent? _____

Turn now to Psalm 51 and read verses 1-17. Relate David's remorse to what Peter must have felt.

The one who challenged Christ's claims, stood in his own strength, thought himself capable of fighting off an army *and* incapable of failing his Lord; the one who neglected to pray for God's help and strength was confronted with the truth of his pride and weakness.

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In the coming days, it appeared that Peter distanced himself from his companions as he grappled with the reality of his sin. What does Psalm 139:7-12 reveal about God's presence during our darkest days? _____

Compare verse 13 of Psalm 51 to Luke 22:32. Would Peter return? What was he to do upon acceptance of his transgression? _____

Per his words in Acts 3:19, what would Peter find in the presence of the Lord? _____

*“Lo, **I am with you always**, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20, emphasis mine).*

In closing, read 2 Timothy 4:17-18.