



An entire class of ships got their names from the lead vessel whose name comes from "Trust in God and Dread Naught"

. . . the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. (Gen 15:1)

In contemporary parlance, fear is considered a great negative; but fear is great positive in preserving our lives from danger and threat. If a child has ever stuck his finger to the surface of a hot stove, he will fear to do so again preventing further, and perhaps greater, injury in future. Our first meaningful thought of God is one of fear, for it is that fear that forces us to look upon our own unworthiness and His utter righteousness. We fear Him and are relieved to know that He loves those who call upon His and that He is forgiving. As the Scripture clearly counsels: *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.* (Psalms 111:10) This is reinforced by Solomon: *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.* (Prov 1:7) That gnawing and dreadful fear turns into a different kind of fear once one is reconciled, by the blood of Christ, to God. It is a fear of disappointing the one who laid down His life willingly in remission of our sins – not a mortal fear of ultimate judgment.

A baby cub bear is a small and fragile little creature. It is fearful of every other thing that moves. It has a great fear of man. But in at least one respect, the cub has less fear than a strong and courageous man. The cub bear is not afraid of Mama Brown Bear, but the strong and courageous man had better fear her – for she will tear him limb from limb if he gets near her baby. The cub, no doubt, has a gentle fear of its mother when he gets into things he shouldn't for she may roughly swat him away from poisoned mushrooms, or dangerous trails. But the intruding man fears not that gentle swat – he fears the mule-strength of the mauling paws of the bear that can take his life in an instant. If we are true Christians, we only fear God's disappointments at our failure to always bear strong testimony of our faith. We fail and falter, but He is ever ready to pick us up from the mire, dust us off, and set our feet once more on firm ground. But to the unrepentant sinner, God is a real terror to be dreaded on the Day of Judgment. Our fear is that of a child who fears disappointing a loving father, or bringing shame upon his family name. Christians should remember that the Name of Christ is called upon us (a greater dignity than we can ever deserve) and we should take care not to besmirch that Name or drag it through the gutters of life.

Except for Leap Year, there are 365 days in the year. Every one of those days should be devoted to God in the service and devotion of a Christian. Do you know how many times God has counseled, in His glorious Word, for us to “**FEAR NOT?**” Why, He has spoken that counsel to us exactly 365 times in the Holy Bible – one for every day of the year! He knows that some are fearful of the times, of the great wickedness at large in the world; yet, He tells us: *Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.* (Isaiah 35:4) In fact, He already has done so on a Hill called Calvary! It is, of course, one thing to KNOW God; and yet another to receive Him as Lord, Sovereign, and Savior. *For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.* (Heb 10:26-27) Even the devils know and tremble, but they are in rebellion against that Lord that has restored, forgiven, and stamped His Seal upon the heart of the true believer.

My father once told an old Cherokee story to me when I was a lad that is based on truth. *When an Indian boy of that tribe reached the age of accountability (about twelve years of age) he underwent an initiation into the tribe as a warrior. There were several tests of strength and endurance that he must pass and demonstrate. The most difficult and dreadful was the last test of being blindfolded and his hands bound behind him on a tree stump in the wilds of the forest overnight. His feet were not bound. He could run away at any time if he lost courage. Once so bound, he was left alone in that forest. He trembled to hear the screech of the panther and the growl of the bear searching for prey. The wolves howled and barked on the surrounding hills. The dews of the early morning wet his head, and drowned his courage. After a long night of fearful dread and intensified heartbeat, suddenly, he could feel the warm light of the rising sun on his brow, and something else – he could feel something tugging at his blindfold. What a relief to open his eyes and find that his father had been sitting there beside him all the night long. He had been as safe as in his father’s hunting tent. Is this not the fears of a Christian – unfounded because even in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, is He not with us? *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.* (Psalms 23:4)*

I lost a loving, kind, and faithful uncle today (I received the news only moments ago while composing this devotion) – Mr. Dennis Ogles, Jr. During World War Two, my father was off fighting for our country in the European Theater. He saw his first enemy action during the Ardennes Forest Campaign (Battle of the Bulge). I was mighty proud of my father, but I was also lonely and fearful without the company of a father-figure. But my uncle, Junior, came often to play with me and strengthen me during that time. Though he was only a teen-age boy himself during the War, his presence always made me feel that I was loved and protected. He has been my hero ever since.

When my uncle stopped by, he would sit me on his knee and tell me the most interesting stories. He reinforced my early faith in Jesus Christ. His character was one of the most stainless and Christian I have ever known. Though he faced the reality of approaching death – he was 86 years of age at his passing – he was neither fearful nor dreading of that Dark Angel of Comfort to God’s people. He has taken his Eternal Rest in Christ just three days before what we ‘Labor Day.’ Uncle Junior’s labors are over. He has finished his race, and has gone to his Father, and to our Father. *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us 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, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* (Heb 12:1-2)

Our Lord and our God always prefaced His personal encounters with men and women with that comforting counsel, "*Fear not! It is I!*" And why should we fear when He is with us in every crisis and every victory of life?

Just as others of the faith have gone from this life fearing not, neither should we. We have the hope of the resurrection, and the promise of God to ward off immoderate fears and dread. So, *Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity.* (1 Cor 16:13-14)