

FOCUS TEXTS

ISAIAH 8:13 (ESV)

¹³ But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honour as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

DELIVERANCE FROM OUR FEAR

(1) The Lord is Ruler, therefore we must have a great fear of Him. (2) The greater fear of the Lord drives away our other, smaller fears!

INTRODUCTION

Some time ago, a global virus suddenly confronted us all with our deepest **fear**: the fear of death.

Many of us were terribly **afraid** of getting sick. We were afraid that something would happen to our children. We don't want them to come in contact with any germs!

With the lockdown regulations, we were **afraid** that we might lose our jobs and some of us did!

Just when the world's fear of germs had somewhat calmed down, the war between Russia and Ukraine broke out. Of course, there were all kinds of reports and videos of this doing the rounds. Among the bitterly tragic and sad videos were fathers saying goodbye to their children and children leaving their fathers behind to fight in the war.

The type of videos and the type of news that we receive from such a distant country awakens all kinds of emotions in us. It makes us **anxious** because the world around us is changing. We become **fearful**, because what if the war doesn't stay far away in Russia, but also reaches us here?

[Application]

We live in **anxious times**. We are, perhaps more than ever, **fearful**.

[Explanation]

We read in Isaiah 7 of a king who **was very afraid also**.

The king of Jerusalem, Ahaz, was very afraid when he heard that the peoples of Aram and Israel had conspired to make war against them. He and his people were terribly fearful - listen to Isaiah 7:2:

“... the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.” (Isaiah 7:2)

The Lord then sends the prophet Isaiah to reassure Jerusalem and the king. They need not be afraid, Isaiah comforts them.

But how should they address this fear they have? **How can they be freed from their fear?**

The Lord gives the answer and his answer is very unexpected. The Lord does not tell them to fear less. **He says they need a greater fear!:**

“But the LORD of hosts, him you shall ... fear, and let him be your dread.”
(Isaiah 8:13b)

[Application]

In times of earthly fears, such as diseases, wars and all our personal anxieties, we must also fear the Lord.

If you are anxious and fearful, you don't need less fear. You need a **greater fear** to be freed from your earthly fears!

1. WE MUST FEAR THE LORD (8:13a)

1.1. What does it mean to fear the Lord, in the Bible?

[Explanation]

To fear the Lord is to be afraid of Him...and more.

Isaiah spells it out like this in our focus verse:

“let him be your dread” (v.13b)

Ahaz and Jerusalem are now afraid of the other nations, but they must have a greater fear of the Lord!

There are several times in the Bible where God appears to people in one way or another and then we see what this fear of the Lord looks like!

In Isaiah 6 Isaiah sees e.g. a vision of God sitting on His throne. Isaiah sees seraphim (=angels) exclaiming:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”
(Isaiah 6:3)

And suddenly Isaiah exclaims in the vision:

“Woe is me! For I am lost” (Isaiah 6:5)

Isaiah was afraid of the Lord! He was **scared and more!** He was also **filled with awe** for the three-times saint in whose presence He stood!

We also read in Mark 4, where Jesus is sailing with his disciples on a boat. A terrible storm broke out and the boat began to fill with water. The disciples were very afraid, but Jesus was sleeping in the back of the boat! They then woke Him up. Jesus then stood up and said to the wind and the sea:

“Peace! Be still!” (Mark 4:39)

And then the disciples were terrified! It says:

“And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”(Mark 4:41)

At first they were afraid that the storm would sink them, but now they have a **greater fear** of the man who was lying asleep in the back of their boat! This Jesus is mightier than the mighty storm!

The disciples were afraid of the Lord Jesus and yet they did not jump out of the boat, but they stayed with Him.

They weren't just scared. They **were afraid of Him and even more...** they were **also filled with deep awe!**

[Illustration]

It reminds me of the time when we walked as a family across the bank of the Gariiep Dam. We stood in the middle of the embankment and looked down over the wall.

When we looked down we could see how some of the locks were open. There were masses of mighty water bursting through the locks!

You realise that you will not stand a chance against that water mass in your life. You are **afraid** of the greatness and the power you see there! And yet you don't necessarily want to leave, because you are filled with **awe!** It is also breathtaking to stand there and experience it all!

[Application]

To fear the Lord is to know you don't stand a chance against Him, the Almighty! You are scared! And yet you don't want to go away from Him. He is breathtaking and you are filled with awe of Him!

To fear the Lord means that we really tremble before Him, but out of awe of Him we worship Him. We realise that He is both deadly and truly life!

If we fear Him, we are afraid of Him and, more than that, we listen to Him and we do what He says!

1.2. Why should we fear Him?

[Explanation]

Because He is Ruler and holy!

Listen again to Isaiah's words in our verse this morning:

“But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honour as holy.” (Isaiah 8:13)

Jerusalem must not fear the kings of Aram or Israel, because God is the one who rules over the most powerful nations. He is Ruler of all forces!

God is not like men or earthly kings. He is completely exalted, pure, good and no evil can exist with Him. He is holy!

The Ruler of all forces says to his people, they must fear him, because He himself will save His people!

The Lord then also gives a sign to Ahaz, that He will really save them. The sign He gives is a virgin who will conceive.

The virgin will give birth to a son and the Son's name will be Immanuel - it means "God with us".

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)

And

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6)

The hostile nations, Aram and Israel did invade Jerusalem, but they never took over Jerusalem. Just as God promised.

God knew. God arranged it this way, because **God is the Ruler over all forces. He is the saint!**

[Application]

Why should you and I fear the Lord?

Because the sign of a virgin who conceived has happened!

The virgin Mary gave birth to a son. Immanuel - "God is with us"!

The Child in the Crib is the Ruler over all forces. The Son is the saint! The supremacy is on His shoulder!

We fear the Lord, because the Child who was once in a Crib will come back again and next time not as a baby, but as Judge over the living and the dead.

You are going to see the Judge!

You are going to hear the One who stilled the storm!

The three-time holy Almighty is going to pass judgment...on you.

Whether you're dead or whether you're still alive when He comes, it doesn't matter, because He's going to bring everyone before Him and render justice!

Every one of your sins will be revealed.

If you believe that Immanuel came to save you from your sins, the Judge will finally acquit you on that day!

He is both deadly and also truly the Life for each of us who believe in Him!

This is why we fear the Lord - because the holy Ruler will come again, but He will save us who worship Him!

2. WE MUST FEAR THE LORD EXACTLY WHEN WE EXPERIENCE EARTHLY FEAR (8:13b)

[Explanation]

When we experience anxious times, we must counter those fears with a greater fear of the Lord!

Unfortunately, Ahaz and Jerusalem did not.

Look at what Ahaz does and what happens to the people when they become fearful:

(i) Instead of fearing the Lord, the people seek worldly security

In the time of war and fear, Ahaz instead went and sought the help of Assyria. Assyria, the great world power of his time - Ahaz was in awe of them! 'Assyria will be able to save us!' Ahaz thought.

(ii) Instead of fearing the Lord, the people panic about all kinds of conspiracies!

The Lord warns them:

“Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread.” (v.12)

(iii) Instead of fearing the Lord, the people consult their cultural gods

“And when they say to you, “Enquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter”, should not a people enquire of their God? Should they enquire of the dead on behalf of the living? To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.” (v.19,20)

[Application]

Are you anxious about something? Are you fearful about something?
How can you be freed from your fear?

You will find deliverance from your fear, when you have a greater fear of the Lord!

(i) Fear the Lord and do not seek your security from worldly forces.

No matter how powerful Rhamaposa or Putin or any politician of our day is, you should rather fear the Lord.

However important and influential and clever the medics and scientists of our day are, you should not look for your security in everything they dish out for you.

Other people and armies are great and strong, but the Lord is Ruler over all forces! Find your security in Him! You should rather fear Him!

(ii) Fear the Lord and do not panic over all sorts of conspiracy theories!

Don't get swept up in a panic at every scary story people talk about!

'This country conspires with that country and that person plans those things and before long it's done with us!' So the people talk to each other in fear with all kinds of theories.

Christians sometimes get scared yes, but if we fear the Lord we will not fall into total, uncontrolled panic!

In these times in which we now live, it is we, Christians, who must anchor society in truth and calmness and well-thought-out words.

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The world is going completely crazy, because the people do not fear the Lord!

(iii) Fear the Lord and do not seek out the cultural gods

When you get anxious you must consult the living God and not the dead spirits of our people, our country or our culture.

Yes, we South Africans do it too:

Russia is waging war against Ukraine and everyone is consulting the dead Seer of Rensburg for answers.

We have our cultural gods who whisper and mumble.

No, back to the living God, let us consult Him! Let us fear Him!

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”
(Matthew 10:28)

CONCLUSION

We tremble for the Lord and we worship Him.

He is both deadly, but also truly the Giver of Life.

He the Ruler of all forces is with us - Immanuel.

He will come again as Judge of the dead and the living!

We are freed from fear, when we have a greater fear of the Lord.

AMEN!

Ds. GM Boersema
marnix@scriptura.co.za
071 363 5456

Graaff-Reinet

