

“Fear Knots or ‘Fear Nots!’?”

One of the most crippling emotions which we face so many times in our lives is fear. We can experience fear when we go through various changes in life. Fear becomes evident when we have to face unknown tasks such as learning a new job, taking a new position or moving to a different location. Of course, one usually never forgets the first time he experienced “stage fright” when he was called on to do something before a group of people.

In fact, fear is such a strong overpowering emotion that it has caused some people to never experience things they’ve always wanted to do. I remember one elderly gentleman telling me that he felt bad while on a vacation for driving past the town in which his son lived because he was afraid to drive in the city. Fear interfered in his relationship with his son.

Along with our fears come those strange physical feelings we get in our stomachs which many call “knots.” A “fear knot” is that tight feeling we get in our stomachs that makes us feel tense all over at the thought of doing something or something happening to us. These “knots” produce those undesirable symptoms like sweating in the palms of our hands, stuttering while we “try” to “speak English,” uncontrollable shaking and knocking knees. Maybe you can remember the old cartoons

which exaggerated these symptoms of fear by showing water flowing off their bodies and their knees literally knocking profusely.

Even the LORD recognized these physical symptoms of fear in His promise to His people in Isaiah 35:3-4 → *Strengthen the weak hands, make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come . . . He will come and save you.”* Face it, as common as these “fear knots” are, we would all like to avoid these feelings and symptoms.

Yet, according to the meaning of the 1st Commandment we are told to “**fear**, love and trust in God above all things.” (Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation, © 2017 Concordia Publishing House.) Does God expect us to go through all these “fear knot” feelings at the thought of Him? The fear spoken about in the explanation of the 1st Commandment is a different type of fear than the fear which a person has when he experiences a “fear knot” in his stomach.

The fear that God asks for is a respect for Him as
our all-powerful Creator . . .

. . . A “fear knot” is experienced because we forget
that God is all-powerful.

The fear of God is displayed
when we focus on His power at work in our lives . . .

. . . A “fear knot” is completely focused
on our own inabilities.

One who fears God strives to please Him
in what he does . . .

. . . “Fear knots” are the result of worrying about
what looks good in our own eyes
or the eyes of those watching us.

It is the constant occurrences of these “fear knots” that prompted God to use the phrase “Fear not!” so many times in the Scriptures. In fact, this expression (or some phrase similar to it) is used some 90+ times in the Scriptures. Maybe the reason it needed to be repeated so often is because those “fear knots” are so tight and it is so difficult to let go of our fears when we experience that tightness. After all, when’s the last time you were told “Don’t be afraid!” and you immediately were no longer afraid? It was probably easier said than done.

Let’s consider some “Fear nots!” from God to help us the next time we are experiencing those “fear knots” in our life.

Exodus 14:13 → Moses said to the Egyptians stuck between the Red Sea and Pharaoh’s pursuing army: *Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will work for you today.* Then He parted the Red Sea for the Israelites to walk over on dry ground.

Deuteronomy 31:6 → Moses said to the people before they entered the Promised Land: *Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD*

*your God Who **goes with you**. He will not leave you or forsake you.*

Joshua 1:9 → The LORD reassured Joshua as he was making preparations to lead God's people into the Promised Land: *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God **is with you wherever you go**.*

Isaiah 41:10 → Yahweh says: *Fear not, for **I am with you**; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*

Matthew 14:27 → Jesus said to His disciples when He came to them walking on the water: *Take heart; **it is I**. Do not be afraid.*

Matthew 10:28 → Jesus says to us who fear other people: *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.*

Hebrews 13:6 → *So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"*

God's "Fear nots!" are backed up by His powerful ability to control all

things as well as His promises to be present and help you through all you encounter in life. This includes your frail efforts to serve Him in your struggle with the presence of your sinful nature, the devil and the world's sinful influence. Maybe the problem is not so much the "fear knots" you experience at the moment but that you do not remember God's "Fear not!" which He speaks to you so many times in the Bible.

At such times you need to hear again and again God's ultimate "Fear not!" spoken to us sinners in the Person & Work of Jesus Christ! He has accomplished all that is necessary for you to be completely forgiven of your lack of faith in the midst of your "fear knots!" Through faith in Him alone you are forgiven and renewed by the Holy Spirit to go forward with confidence that He is at work in and through you!

Fearing God—that is, trusting in Him in the midst of all things in your life—may not totally remove those "fear knots" in your service for Him. However, when God's "Fear not!" are before your eyes, you can gain the courage to face whatever comes your way as you strive to share the love of Christ with others. 2 Timothy 1:7 says that *God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control*. In the words of Jesus: *Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* (cf. Luke 12:32) Amen.

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