

Bible Studies for Life: December 13

Shaking Off Fear • Psalm 91:1-6, 9-16

By Bobby McKay



McKay

Talk about all the things a person could be afraid of, my biggest fear should belong to someone else! There is literally an unlimited number of recognized fears and phobias that are documented. Spiders, snakes, heights, and even tight spaces do not bother me. I read recently read about a fear called phobophobia – the fear of having a phobia!

I would never belittle anyone's fear, but some seem fears stranger than others. My fear is that of water. Of all things, I am a Baptist minister afraid of water. Being afraid of water is almost as bad as being afraid of fried chicken (pardon the stereotype). I do not know how to swim, nor do I wish to learn.

The baptismal waters are my limit for how much I can be submerged without a real sense of panic coming over me. For many of you, swimming, water skiing, etc,. are means of recreation and relaxation. For me, relaxation is being a passenger in an airplane over 30,000 feet above the ground.

Regardless of what causes you fear, we all have one thing in common: the incredible ability expressed by our Heavenly

Father to both defend and protect us from any external or internal threat. Oftentimes, what we perceive as fear is unwarranted. Sometimes, fears are imagined and yes, sometimes the fears come to fruition.

If left undealt with, fears can hinder our effectiveness for God and even cripple us from moving forward in obedience to Him. As we continue to look at our emotions, be honest with yourself and seek to be made whole.

I know this is obvious, but some fears are healthy ones. Taking precautionary measures with an impending tornado or installing a smoke detector in your home indicates wisdom and precaution.

I hope you have your copy of the Scriptures open. If not, go ahead and do that and while you are at it, grab a highlighter or good pen. Now, underline each time God is named or described in Psalm 91:1-6. According to your translation, the number may vary, but there are at least 14 references to His name, attributes, or actions on behalf of His people.

When it comes to fear, we tend to forget God has our enemies outnumbered. We mistakenly believe the lies of the enemy (or our own finite logic) and conclude we are helpless and inept. I can make you one guarantee. When you or I choose to fight our battles alone, we are setting ourselves up for failure and disappointment.

Take an inward inventory and think about the last time you succumbed to fear. Who or what had the greatest frequency in your thought processes? Were you more focused on yourself and a fantasized outcome or did God and His power, faithfulness, and refuge dominate your thoughts? Psalm 91:1-6 bids us to remember who God is. Because of who He is, I can have confidence in the most fearful of times.

I have always loved the Batman character. There is nothing visibly different about Bruce Wayne. Sure, he's a billionaire

and lives in a mansion, but physically he is nothing extraordinary. However, when he dons the cape and mask, it's about to get serious. Bruce Wayne transforms into a fearless hero. We as believers should allow the power of God to transform us into confident and fearless people.

It is not only who God is that matters, but also important to remember what He does. Psalm 91:9-13 is not a guarantee that troubles will not come our way. However, it is the assurance God will protect us from scores of dangers in our lives and will guard our path. Many times, the protection and guarding He provides goes unseen by our physical eyes, but they are there just the same.

Some interpret Psalm 91:11 as each person has a personal "guardian angel." That is a theological stretch and not sound doctrinally or biblically. You and I have something even greater than a guardian angel – we have Christ within us and the Holy Spirit to guide us.

In the final section of our lesson, Psalm 91:14-16 conveys where He is during our times of fear. The psalmist asserts that the Lord is only a call away. The closer I walk with God daily, the more I will see my fears in relation to the Father's love for me. I will see a pattern forming in my life of trust and dependence. I will experience and encounter the power and faithfulness of the Lord in my life, no matter my circumstance or situation.

Too many good Baptists have "shepherd phobia." Do not fear the Good Shepherd, but turn to Him today!

McKay is pastor of Pleasant Grove Church, Brookhaven.