

Overcome Fear with Faith¹

Tsitsi Nomsa Ngwenya

As baptized and confirmed Christians that we are, we must not let fear stop us from pursuing what is good and helpful to others. It is true that fear is a bad feeling which sometimes disorients us and cause us to do things we regret later. Fear magnifies problems and situations. It can actually make you see things that are not there. FEAR, has sometimes been seen as an acronym which stands for: *Face Everything and Rise, or Fear Everything and Run*. It is up to the individual how best to behave under threat of fear.

There is a lady I shall call Martha who came to me so that we could pray together about the problems she was facing in her life. Martha is a mother of two boys. She and her husband were going through a divorce. Her husband sold the house they lived in as a family. He abused his wife in front of the children, when the older boy intervened to save his mother he cursed him and moved out of the house to live with a new girlfriend. The younger boy had no school fees for the term. The bigger boy had been accepted at a University outside the country, but had no school fees. He had been home for two years. Martha's company had sent her on forced leave because it could no longer afford to pay salaries like many companies in the country at the time.

Martha could not stop talking when we first met. She would speak for an hour and I would listen without interrupting her. In her talk she would kneel, sit with her legs stretched, sit on a chair, and sit on the floor leaning on the wall. I would observe her body language too as I listened. What I saw in Martha was fear. Martha feared everything she imagined could happen to her and the children, not her present circumstances as such.

¹ The title for this article/chapter is adapted from the *Graduate from the Valley*

We then prayed together. I told her not to be afraid of things that are not there yet and gave her 2 Chronicles 15 verse 15 – 20 and Joshua 1 verse 9 to meditate on. She was called back to work within a week but, still, there was no salary. She did not stop coming to see me so we could pray together. The other thing Martha suffered from was anxiety. She was so anxious, so much so that it was toxic for those around her. Together with the friends we worshipped with, we also prayed against that spirit too.

One day whilst at work, a colleague of hers asked how she was doing, when she told her that she had not been paid for months, the colleague took her to an old lady who helped Martha with school fees for the younger boy, a scholarship for the bigger boy overseas and did not stop there. The woman promised to get her another job. Martha came back to tell me the good news. I persuaded her to do thanksgiving prayers. Before we had hardly finished she interrupted me, ‘Tsitsi I thank God he has sent an angel to pay school fees and the scholarship but how about next term?’

I looked at her and asked when next term was? I reminded her about what God says about worrying. I gave her Mathew 6 verse 25 – 34 and Philippians 4 verse 6 -7 to read and meditate on them. Martha worried too about fuel. She feared the fuel in the tank would run out. The Good Samaritan had given her a food voucher so she could buy groceries she could cook and eat in their house. Even though the house had been sold a month before, the new owner had not occupied it nor given them notice to vacate.

A week later, Martha was called for an interview for a job she had applied some months earlier. Surprisingly too, another interview came before the earlier one had been answered. Congratulations. She was told to come and start work the following Monday. Once again, we thanked God together. On Friday Martha sent me a message asking me to pray that nothing bad happens to her on Monday before she started work. I wondered why she was thinking like that. I ignored her specific

request and instead prayed for her faith to be increased. On Saturday, I sent a message asking how she was doing. She answered that she was fine but once more asked that I should pray that something bad will not happen to her on Monday. I am not a worrier myself. The wilderness experience that I once went through taught me to trust in God. Martha's lack of faith almost discouraged me too. I could avoid her calls, but I failed. Each time she called I assured her that I was going to pray about whatever problems she anticipated. So I asked her why she was so unsure about the job. She said she was sure but only anxious that something might happen before she starts work. Fear. It seemed to me there was nothing which could easily rid of Martha's fear which had made itself comfortable in her system. I encouraged her on and she said she was no longer afraid. On Sunday she sent a message saying she was ready for Monday. I congratulated her and wished God's blessings to accompany her as she started on her new job. Nonetheless, on Monday morning she sent me a message requesting that I should pray that nothing bad happens to her!

You guessed right. Something wrong happened. I do not know what happened on that Monday. Martha could not start work and immediately, she withdrew into her usual feel-sorry-for-me attitude! Fear bound together with self-pity. I did not give up on her. We continued to pray together until the fear was beat out of her system. As soon as she managed to do that, she got a new job and saved money so that when the new owner came to stay, they could comfortably move to a new house. In the end, her older son went to University on full scholarship and she in turn moved on with her life.

I always feel that fear is the opposite of love. Fear is triggered by pain, insecurity and being at the risk of danger, those who oppress others use force, which in turn then induces fear. Husbands who beat and suppress their wives are actually afraid of them. They are afraid of how powerful they may become in their relationship if they let them be and work and earn their own money making them financially independent. If they gave them freedom of association they would

meet clever people who would spur them on to achievement by advising them that they can do better than at present. They are afraid of how beautiful they will look if they let them wear certain types of clothes. Part of their fear is that their own inadequacies as providers would then become exposed and also that other men might snatch them away. As a consequence, they beat and abuse their wives so they can stay to the line.

Women too, who fear that they could be divorced resort to all kinds of unacceptable means of matrimonial oppression. In African culture, it is said that they use *umuthi* or *muti*, to soften, blind and control their husbands. In Europe and other parts of the world, they have their own kinds of unsavoury means like casting spells. An American woman I met at a conference I attended in South Africa confessed to me that she had once cast a spell on her boyfriend so he could not stop thinking about her. She told me that the spell worked in seven days. She told me there are stores in her hometown where such spells were sold openly. Some of those men who have their partners using *umuthi* on them become so afraid of their partners to the extent of not progressing in life. Even some men too use charms and spells on their girlfriends or wives. There is what is known as *runyoka*, a witchcraft charm whereby husbands use it supposedly to lock their wives so that if they indulge in intercourse with other men the consequences are fatal. This sex-locking charm is said to continue working that way even after the husband is deceased. People who do such things do not realize that their problems would never end but multiply. I once attended a funeral of a husband and wife in Eastern Zimbabwe where a husband had made a witchcraft pact that his wife should also die the same day he dies. Even though the community did not condone it, there was nothing they could have done to a man who openly boasted about his evil powers. The deceased people were neighbours to my cousin who I had visited. It was said that the husband had been taken ill on a Friday night and admitted in hospital whereupon he died during early hours of the morning. As he was dying in hospital, his wife also fell

mysteriously ill the same time and she subsequently died too. When the sad news about the passing on of the man reached the family at home, tragically the wife was already dead. They had four young children who were still at primary and pre-school and in addition, they were still building their house which was then at window level at the time of the deaths.

In many instances if someone criticizes you for no apparent reason the reason could be that they are afraid of you. Some men want to be feared as fathers and husbands and not respected instead. I know a woman I shall call Loice whose husband never allowed her to wear jeans, short trousers or miniskirts. He never allowed her to have her hair done or even for her to wear makeup. Loice thought her husband loved her so much, she concluded that his controlling habits were a sign of love. He did not allow her to seek employment despite the fact that she was a professional woman. Loice deteriorated mentally and socially as she stayed at home, cooking and washing clothes for him. He did not allow her to learn to drive a car. He drove her to her relative's funerals and other events. The husband did grocery shopping and all other shopping for her. Loice saw very little of what was happening outside her four walled yard. The only road she knew was the one to church with him on Sundays. But she did not know what her husband did during his free times such as Saturday afternoons. After having had four children she appeared aged. Later on Loice's husband married another woman. Loice was surprised that the new wife was her husband's secretary who wore nice fitting clothes and makeup. The new wife talked about world affairs she read about in newspapers and discussed with others during lunch and any other free time at work. The new wife did not stop being who she had been. She just changed a job and did not allow the husband to make her live in the same house with Loice. He rented a much bigger and better house for her. Loice allowed her husband to instill fear on her until she could no longer think her own thoughts. For Loice it was my husband up, my husband down my husband this and that. There was absolutely

nothing she owned. Loice had allowed her husband to manipulate her to a point where she could no longer imagine living her own life.

If you are afraid you have no freedom, your confidence is crushed, and you do not see anything else other than the problem which induces fear in your being. Jesus saw that his disciples were afraid after his resurrection, thus He visited them often. He appeared to them in John 20 verse 19, 'In the evening of that same day, the first day of week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them,

Peace be with you...verse 21 and he said unto them again, peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.

Jesus came to His disciples when he saw that they were afraid and hiding. His assuring presence dispelled their fear and instead gave them reserves of peace. He came to give them hope, strength and confidence in God's protective and abiding love. In those days being a disciple was a dangerous thing to be because some people did not only hate Jesus, but they were totally against his teaching. The Jewish authorities themselves were not only afraid of Him but they preferred him dead. It is equally true with our lives to this very day. We sometimes want to crush people who threaten us. We do not want people who are clever than us - it has to be us.

During my times of distress I did not pray to God to only help me clear my problems away, but also to use my situation to transform me to become a better person as well as to use my situation as an example to encourage others. And He certainly did. We become true Christians after baptism and following which we should be bold enough to preach the Word of God without fear. Jesus fulfilled His mission here on earth hence He has sent me and you to continue doing His work. He did not just return to heaven to His Father before giving us the assurance and hope of his presence in our very midst by the power of the Holy Spirit – also often aptly referred to as the Comforter. He appeared to his disciples to give them hope. Let us turn to Jesus every time we are afraid because He gives hope and peace. Jesus and God are the

embodiment of peace, love, hope and patience. They are the mother of all virtues – they are all in all. True love of God removes fear and bestows freedom to a true worshipper.

When I shut down my business in 2012 I did not exactly know what I would do. However, I knew fully well that God would never take me to places where His grace would not protect me. The devil visited me often to instil and to toss me around with fear. He visited me time and again to ask me how I was going to pay outstanding debts through his countless willing instruments who wait upon the devil to do his bidding – those so unfortunate people who allow themselves to be used by him. The more I answered them and thought about the pile of those debts outstanding, the more I was tormented by them. The more I thought about them the more the people owed phoned or physically came to my office and even at home to threaten me with all manner of suffering and pain. It did not matter that we were all there helplessly watching everybody's money burning in the banks. Employees went to court for unpaid salaries yet they were there when the economy was sliding and burning. I got to a point where I would ignore the callers and only focus on praying and writing. I was quiet angry then. Sometimes during those painful periods, someone would phone me to talk about books and writing. That would change my mood significantly. I soon realized that writing was truly a precious gift from God. It had some evident therapeutic effect on me considering the mortal emotional wounds suffered by the vast majority of employers at the time. I had started writing two years before when I was still running the business. I wrote my first stories and poetry from my office just as a way of whiling up time since there was not much to do in terms of the primary purpose for which the office had been secured. I was praying alone in my office and the little but gentle voice said to me:

Tsitsi listen to me now, get your pen and papers and visit your writer friend at the University of Zimbabwe, go now. Take all your poems and short stories with you. I want to change your purpose and direction in life. I no longer want you in business because it

makes you vulnerable to the evil people of this world. Take your notebook and pen and go now. The rest you will find there.

It was in September 2010. I took the two manuscripts I had written with me, a poetry anthology, *Silent Drumbeat from eMatojeni* and an unpublished novella entitled, *To Depths Unknown*.

As fear tried to close in its grip on me, I fiercely fought it back with my writing till it disappeared. I quickly made a lot of intellectual friends during the first months of writing. I would write and read to them and their feedback and critique my work taught me all the more about creative writing. I read, read and wrote and wrote. In two years, I had worked and produced a total of six manuscripts. Fear had completely disappeared. In between writing and reading literature, I avidly read the Bible, prayed and meditated.

Fear which paralyses children of God and blocks their good ways disappeared away from me and I found out that I communicated more freely with those I owed money from the inflation induced defunct company. I however did some consultancy work in between out of which I, earned some money and, paid off those whom I owed money. There is nothing God cannot do. He had removed all fear from me. I replaced fear with hope, faith and heartfelt joy.

In the Gospel according to Mark 5 verse 36, **But Jesus overheard what they said and he said to the president of the synagogue, do not be afraid; only have faith.**

The true and voluntary love of God removes fear.

In Paul's second letter to Timothy chapter 1 verse 7, **God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but the spirit of power, love and self - control.**

We are not supposed to fear but to trust in God.

We should know that our Father in heaven has all the power to protect us from all evil. He protected me so He can protect you too. If we put all our trust in God, then, all the fear will disappear. It is not easy

sometimes but we just have to trust God. Worry simply says we do not trust God enough. We must remember that the devil loves those who worry. They are his. It is true that the devil always works with what we fear the most. Those who are afraid that they will fail exams in most cases a very high probability of failing - turning their fear into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Those who are insecure in their jobs sometimes get fired. In his letter to the Romans Apostle Paul encouraged us in Chapter 8 verse 1 -2;

If you belong to Christ Jesus, you will not be punished. The Holy Spirit will give your life that comes from Christ Jesus and will set you free from sin and death.

We must not be ruled by fear, otherwise we will live miserably unfulfilled lives. Let us try by all means that whenever we feel afraid, we put our trust in God the author and finisher of all our lives.