

We all have on our hearts the Fletcher, Wellford, and Orgill families. And we deeply grieve for them and continue to pray for them. Words could never adequately express our horror, sadness, anger, anguish that we feel on their behalf.

But tonight, I'd like to talk about you.

I don't know where each of you is individually. Some of us know Liza well. Some of us have never met Liza. But all of us are traumatized.

What is trauma? Trauma happens when we face something that is beyond our capacity. When we don't have the requisite resources to deal with something.

Certainly, this week we're facing something that we don't have the equipment to handle.

Here are some of the most common challenges I have heard from you and others:

Haunting fear. Nightmarish fear.

Overwhelming, sometimes crippling sadness.

Uncontrollable rage.

Numbness.

Total confusion about God's purposes in these tragic events.

Pervasive stress. Feeling rattled at the core—so much so that our body won't quit trembling, our heart won't stop pounding, and our adrenaline won't stop surging.

Providentially, God has given us a text for tonight that addresses us exactly where we are. He has a tender, personal, authoritative word for you.

Open your Bibles with me to Deuteronomy 3:21.

In these words, 120-year-old Moses is reminding the people of Israel of the nature of their relationship with the LORD God. This people, the people of Israel, are poised to take possession of the Promised Land, Canaan. They are assembled beyond the Jordan River, and Moses is charging them to be strong and courageous—to cross that Jordan River and take possession of that inheritance land that the LORD has promised to their ancestors.

The trouble is that taking possession of this land involves facing enormous obstacles. It means that this rag-tag group of nomads will have to engage in military conflict with people living in fortified cities with armies. It means that this group of wanderers who lack the requisite military resources, experience, or strength must face literal physical

giants, the Anakim. It means that this people of Israel will be putting themselves and their little ones in a physically vulnerable position as they engage the foe.

And they're going to do all this *without* Moses, without the man of God who has led them for forty years through the wilderness.

And Moses has the audacity to say to Joshua and the whole congregation, "Do not fear."

Many of us in this room have experienced in a profound way the reality that, on our own, we do not have the necessary resources to face our enemies, our enemies of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

We've wondered at times if we have what it takes even to face the next hour. Some of us aren't sleeping. We're forgetting to eat. We're terrified when we exercise or when we're outside of the house by ourselves. We're not so easy to get along with and go through our days frazzled and irritated.

We're facing many foes, you and I.

The tangible foes that you and I are facing tonight are different from the tangible foes the Israelites were facing. But the challenge of facing situations beyond our resources is precisely the same.

Here's what Moses says, as he reminds the Israelites of his charge to Joshua.

Read Deut 3:21–22.

Through this passage, your heavenly Father is speaking personally to you a word of encouragement and a word of exhortation. **A word of encouragement in v. 21 and a word of exhortation in v. 22.**

First, the **encouragement** in v. 21. And here it is: **believer, there is no enemy who can prosper against you.**

Look again with me at Deut 3:21. What does Moses say? He says, "Joshua, remember what you've seen. And I'm telling you what you're going to see."

"You've seen God defeat two kings in the wilderness, Sihon and Og. These kings had mighty militaries. They had massive resources and wealth. You were no match for them. And yet you've seen how God utterly routed them. And furthermore, I'm telling you that these kings on the other side of the river are going to fall in the same way."

Well, sisters, did they fall—these Canaanite armies? Moses is no liar. Through Joshua, Israel's Canaanite foes fell. The walls of Jericho came down. The goliaths were brought to their knees. The mighty kingdoms *melted*.

Now, consider where you stand tonight. Consider our position in Christ. We're "beyond the Jordan" too, waiting for that day when we will cross to the other side, to the new heaven and new earth. Well, what victories have our eyes seen beyond the Jordan? We've seen much more than the Israelites ever saw. We've seen the conquering of death itself in the Lord Jesus Christ. And God is saying to us, "you've seen what I've done in the past—well, keep your eyes on what I'm going to do next."

What is that, that future victory of ours? One day every believer in this room will cross that Jordan River. We'll get to the other side. We'll reach the promised land of the new heavens and new earth.

And who will lead us? It's not going to be your pastor, it's not going to be law enforcement, it's not going to be a politician, it's not going to be your therapist—Jesus *himself* is going to get you home and lead you across that river.

The new and greater Joshua—*Jeshua*, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. A day is coming soon when we shall see our Captain with our own eyes, and he will pacify every one of his and our foes. He will rule and reign over the kingdoms of this earth.

What else? What else will we see on that day? We'll see Liza. We will. We'll see her with our own eyes. She'll be robed in sparkling raiment. She's alive and well now, but she's not yet clothed in her resurrection flesh. But on that day, she will receive her imperishable inheritance in full, and she'll look a lot like Jesus Christ. And on that day, we're going to keep looking around. And we're going to see that the rest of us believers, *we too* look a lot like Jesus.

That's your sure and certain fullness of victory if you listen to God's voice and choose life in his Son.

Believer, there is no enemy who can prosper against you. That's Moses's strong encouragement to Joshua.

Transition: And it's the basis on which in v. 22, Moses then **exhorts** Joshua, and all of us.

What is that exhortation? It's a simple one: **Trust him**. Trust him.

Moses puts it negatively: Do not fear. "Do not fear" is most frequent command in the Bible.

Moses is not saying "don't experience fear." He's saying don't give into it. Don't indulge it. Don't let it dictate your decision making. Don't allow fear to so grip you that it dominates your perspective and conduct.

And what truth does Moses highlight as he issues this command?

God's personal presence as our Captain to fight on our behalf. Not merely to fight ahead of you and prepare the way. Not merely to fight alongside you and be present with you. Not merely to fight behind you and hem you in. To fight **FOR** you.

In your experience of traumatic grief, you will be tempted to respond to the fear you experience in unhealthy ways. We will face specific foes, specific temptations, in the coming days as we experience the phenomenon of fear. Here are a few:

- **Isolate** in our experience of fear
 - We've got to do this together. God has given us one another.
 - Don't sneak off in a corner. And don't let one another sneak off in a corner.
 - The main temptation that will come to you and me is not to isolate from one another, but *to isolate from our Captain himself*. We are a traumatized people caring for traumatized people. If there's ever a time to recognize our need for our Captain's inimitable care and strength, it's now. Don't wander off. Don't go it alone. Cling to him. He is near. Cling to him.
- **Deny** our fears
 - Try to stick our head in the sand. Busy ourselves—not in a helpful way, but in a way that avoids the pain we are feeling. Some of us will be tempted to do this with a few extra glasses of wine, a few more sleeping pills, distracting ourselves by obsessively tracking the upcoming trial details and discoveries ...
 - None of that will help you. All of that will merely compound your fear. It will control you. It will lead you astray.
 - With your knees knocking and your heart pounding, look to your Captain. Tell him how you feel. Articulate your fears to him. Tell him everything. And then consider what your eyes have seen and what you know you *will* see.
- **Compare** our fears
 - We can do so by either imagining that our pain is greater than someone else's and even putting ourselves in the center of the narrative. That is, we can make it all about ourselves and our pain. Or we can do this by indulging in false guilt and shame for the pain we feel because so-and-so's pain is much worse.
 - Don't compare. Trust the Lord and bring your fears to him—regardless of your neighbor's fears and experiences. Don't imagine that downplaying or minimizing your plight is holy. No, God invites you—calls you—to cast your anxieties and burdens on him because he cares for you. He *cares* for you. He cares *for you*. Don't compare.

Believer, there is no enemy who can prosper against you—you have seen his victory in the past, and you will see his victory in the future—so trust the Lord.

I'd like you all to have the opportunity to share with one another at your Tables. I'd like you to check in. To help structure your time, here are two questions you may use if you'd like.

1. What is one specific way you have seen God provide this past week as you have experienced fear?
2. What is one specific way you are trusting God to provide in the coming days as you experience fear?