

Introduction: Fear and faith are connected and often misunderstood, even by committed Christians. There are two sides to each word, leading to four possible combinations of the two. People can either be afraid of other people ‘fear of man’ which leads to being trapped in despair (Proverbs 29:25), or have a reverential ‘fear of the Lord’ which results in life, plenty of good food, and wisdom to know how to live rightly before God (Deuteronomy 6:1-2; 8:6-10; Proverbs 9:10-11). Faith can be either faith that God will give me what I want, which is a false trust that leads to rejection by God (Jeremiah 2:23-37), or faith IN God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ (Proverbs 3:5-6; Ephesians 3:11-12; 2 Timothy 3:14-17). The four possibilities are: fear of man and faith for what I want; fear of God and faith for what I want; fear of man and faith IN God; and, fear of God and faith IN God. *** Perhaps these four fear-faith possibilities are represented by the ‘four soils’ in Jesus’ parable of the Sower (God) and the seed (the Gospel – Matthew 13:1-9; 18:23). Fear of man and faith in my desires would be the hard heart (soil); reverential fear of God and faith for what I want would be the shallow heart (soil); fear of man and faith IN God would be the heart weighed down with worldly cares (soil with choking weeds); and reverential fear of God and faith IN God would be the heart in which God produces much fruit (good and fruitful soil). Those in the first category are clearly still lost. Those in the fourth category are clearly children of God in the Kingdom of God IN Jesus. Those in the second category would be like plants that die without ever flowering; and, the third category would be like a fig tree with no figs (Matthew 21:19-20), with the hope that if a faithful gardener fertilizes it, it may become fruitful (Luke 13:6-9). *** Fear and faith may also be thought of as wings on a bird. If both are wrong, the bird never gets off the ground. If both are right the bird will soar and glide (Isaiah 40:31). If either are damaged, the bird will only get so high and then tumble to the ground. *** The desire of the one who reverentially fears God in gratitude for His gift of redemption IN Jesus, and has unwavering faith IN God no matter what happens is to always pray as Jesus did in Gethsemane: May Thy will be done; and, he or she will accept with joy and peace whatever God’s will is – even to death (Matthew 26:36-46). *** In today’s story from Samuel, Saul goes from the first ‘soil’ to the second and back to the first. David, who was the fourth ‘soil’ (after God’s heart when he was anointed king – 1 Samuel 13:14; 16:1-13; Acts 13:22) goes to the third ‘soil’ when confronted by a king of the Philistines. *** Let’s now look at the details of both the story of David and Saul and a teaching psalm from Asaph.

I. When put in difficult positions by the Philistines, David and Saul respond differently. (1 Samuel 28:1-7)

- A. Achish demands that David fight his fellow Israelites and he answers ambiguously; Samuel dies and is mourned, then Saul gives a righteous decree. (*Verses 1-3*)
 1. In those days the Philistines gathered their camped hosts to war against Israel; Achish said to David: You must know with certainty that you are to go out with me in the encampment: you and your men. (*Verse 1*)
David’s dilemma: In his fear of Saul, David had wrongly sought help from this pagan king. Now David learns that he must join in warfare against people God anointed him as king to protect them.
 2. David said to Achish: Thus will you know what your servant will do; Achish (responded): Thus I will make you the ‘keeper of my head’ for life. (*Verse 2*)
David’s reply: What will Achish know? David’s loyalty to him, or David’s loyalty to his God and his people? Achish trusts David enough to entrust his life to David for as long as he lives.
 3. Samuel had died and all Israel mourned for him and buried him in his city: Ramah; Saul put out from the land mediums and knowers-of-dead-spirits. (*Verse 3*)
Samuel and Saul: After Samuel died, and was mourned and buried, Saul took his last good action.
- B. From mountain foothills, Saul fears the Philistine army amassed across the valley from him, fear leads to his final desperate rebellion against Yahweh. (*Verses 4-7*)
 1. The Philistines gathered and came and camped at Shunem; and, Saul gathered all Israel and camped at Gilboa. (*Verse 4*)
Battle lines drawn: It is amazing the Philistines went fifty miles north to the northern side of Jezreel valley, ten miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee. Saul was forty miles north of his tribe of Benjamin on the south side of the valley, five miles from Achish.
 2. When Saul saw the host of Philistines, he was afraid of them (men) and his heart greatly trembled; when Saul inquired of Yahweh, Yahweh did not answer him: even in dreams, also in Urim (sacred lots), and even in prophecy. (*Verses 5-6*)
Great fear: Saul was greatly afraid of the human army ready to conquer him. Yahweh did not answer him with dreams (as with Joseph Genesis 37:5-11; 40:1-15; 41:9-44), or Urim (Numbers 27:18-21), or with His Covenant enforcement officers, the prophets (2 Samuel 12:1-23).
 3. Then Saul said to his servants: Seek out for me a woman who is a medium that I may go to her and inquire of her; and they said to him: Behold! Woman medium of dead spirits (is) at Endor. (*Verse 7*)
Desperate sin: In his desperation, Saul does what he knows is wrong, contradicting his previous righteous decree. Endor is a short distance from Gilboa.

II. Saul’s turning from following God to his own desires is typical of Israel’s history. (1 Samuel 28:8-12; Psalm 78:29-37)

- A. Saul deceives a medium twice, then she cries out when Samuel appears before her. (1 Samuel 28:8-12)
 1. Then Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he, himself, went and two men with him; and they came to the woman at night; then he said: You must divine for me, please, a dead spirit, and bring up for me whomever I name to you. (*Verse 8*)
Deceit and request: Saul took off his royal robes. Was this a ‘confession’ to Yahweh that he is not His king? Then, under the cover of darkness, he deceives the medium, demanding she violate his order.
 2. The woman said to him: Behold! you know what Saul has done; that he cut off mediums and knowers-of-dead-spirits from the land; why then are you laying a snare for my life to cause me to die? (*Verse 9*)

Medium's suspicion: She may not know who is making this request of her, but she is all too well aware of Saul's command and fears her death (Leviticus 20:27).

3. Then Saul, himself, swore to her by Yahweh: As Yahweh lives, no punishment will happen to you for this thing. (*Verse 10*)
False oath: Saul speaks a lie, violating Yahweh's Word through Moses; so, he took Yahweh's Name in vain.

Why should the medium take his word? Saul deceives from his fear of the Philistine army, and his God-forsakenness.

Those who forsake God will deceive others out of fear

4. Then the woman said: Whom will I bring up for you? He said: Samuel, you must bring up for me. (*Verse 11*)

Question and answer: The medium ensnared herself by asking whom she should bring up for this 'stranger'. Saul asks for Samuel, knowing Samuel told him Yahweh had irrevocably taken the kingdom from him (1 Samuel 15:22-26).

5. When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out in a loud voice: Why have you deceived me? You (are) Saul. (*Verse 12*)
Woman screams: She is shocked to see the real spirit of Samuel, and realizes the 'stranger' is Saul who has deceived her! This may be her first contact with a true man of God. When he comes to her from the 'other side' she screams at Saul's deception due to his fear.

Those who forsake God will deceive others out of fear

Application: We must realize the biggest danger to the Church is NOT obvious evil, but the subtle sin to believe we can manipulate God by the faith that thinks God will give us what we want, rather than the faith IN God who is perfect and has a good plan for our lives, even if we do not fully understand God and His ways, and are overwhelmed with troubles, pain, and confusion.

- B. Saul's unfaithfulness to God is typical of Israel's five hundred year history with Him after being delivered from Egypt. (*Psalm 78:29-37*)

Poetry: The poetry of psalms is aimed at the heart. It is not linear or literal. Poetry uses metaphors and word pictures to bypass the mind and stir emotions so God can do heart surgery on souls.

1. They ate and were filled exceedingly / and what they desired, He made to come to them. (*Verse 29*)

God gives success: God fulfilled His Word to Moses about His people Israel (Deuteronomy 6:1-4). He warned them to not let His blessing make them forsake Him, by proudly thinking they did it themselves (Deuteronomy 31:19-21).

2. They were not sated in their lustful desires / their food still in their mouths // and the anger of God rose up against them / and He slew the strongest of them / and made the young men of Israel to lay down. (*Verses 30-31*)

Not satisfied: No matter what God gave them, it was never enough for them.

God's anger to death: Their selfish, prideful desires made God angry enough to strike them down (Exodus 32; Judges 2).

3. In all this, they still sinned / they did not believe in His wonders (awesome miracles). (*Verse 32*)

Lack of true faith: The wilderness generation witnessed a dozen of God's miracles: ten plagues on the Egyptians, and not them; two at the Red Sea – dividing the waters for them to escape, and bringing them back to drown the Egyptians. After God led them to conquer the land under Joshua with casualties only due to Achan's sin, they repeatedly rebelled for some three hundred years under the judges.

Application: In light of Israel's continued failures, we must realize pride is a great danger to true faith, and ask God to open our eyes so we are not blind to the everyday miracles God gives us.

4. Then He consumed their days in vanity / and their years in trouble. (*Verse 33*)

Rejection again: God rejected His people for sins and lack of faith. He brought their days (of life) to an end in vanity and troubled them for years at a time.

5. When He slew them, they sought Him / they returned and sought God early and earnestly // Then they remembered that God (is) their Rock / and God Most High (is) redeeming them. (*Verses 34-35*)

Repentance: When they turned to God in repentance, seeking Him for who He IS and all He does for them, remembering His past acts of grace, He paid the price of redemption for them. Now we can be redeemed through His faithful Son: Jesus!

6. They deceived Him with their mouths / and with their tongues they lied to Him // Their hearts were not established toward him / and they were not true to His Covenant. (*Verses 36-37*)

Deceit: God's people, Israel, did not have an established faith IN Him. They thought they could deceive Him and lie to Him. They did not reverently fear Him; but, forsook Him and only feared not getting what they wanted.

Those who forsake God will deceive others out of fear

Pride: The opposite of faith IN God is pride in oneself.

Bottom Line: Success, God's gracious gift, can lead to the false notion we caused our success, not God! Rather than trying to deceive God, we must genuinely repent before Him. Pride was deadly for Adam and Eve in the Garden, Israel in the wilderness, Israel under the judges and Saul!

Success can lead to pride, deceit and rejection by God

Application: We must be people 'after God's heart', constantly praying to be filled with His gift of humble child-like obedient faith SO we are continuously thankful people of love demonstrated by receiving with joy all of God's good gifts so we will do the work God gave us to do by the faith of Jesus' finished work!

Conclusion: When Achish commands David to fight against his fellow Israelites, he responds ambiguously. After Israel mourns Samuel's death, Saul issues a righteous decree; but soon fears the Philistine army gathered on the other side of a valley in northern Israel. He responds in desperation with his final rebellion against Yahweh: turning from the God who would not answer him. Then Saul twice deceives a woman medium who cries out when Samuel appears to her.

Saul's unfaithfulness to God is typical of Israel's history with Yahweh after He delivered them from slavery in Egypt.

Those who forsake God will deceive others out of fear