



LifeGroups

GROWING TOGETHER IN THE GOSPEL

Growth Sheet

“Fear Not.”

Revelation 1:12-19

Overview of “Encounters with God: Stories of Grace Overcoming Guilt”

Throughout this series, we have studied episodes in the lives of individuals in which God met and spoke with them. Three recurring themes have emerged from our study. When God confronts people he (1) shows himself for who he is, (2) allows people to see themselves for who they are, and (3) extends his grace to them.

Since Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God (John 1:1; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Hebrews 1:1-3), each of these encounters with God points to Jesus Christ and what he has done for us. Only in Christ can we see God for who he is (both holy and loving) and ourselves for who we are (sinful but loved). Only in Christ, moreover, does God extend his grace to us. Therefore, studying these encounters with God serves to humble us, heighten our joy, and fix our affections on Christ.

Who Can Tell You to “Fear Not”?

Fear is one of the most commonly felt human emotions. We fear the loss of respect, acceptance, health, loved ones. We fear the loss of our own lives. The author of the letter to the Hebrews tells us that humans are subject to lifelong slavery through the fear of death (Hebrews 2:15).

When we consider the kinds of things we tend to fear—real, important things—it seems ludicrous to expect that our fears could be dispelled by the command, “don’t be afraid.” Fear, it seems, is something that cannot be bossed around.

Yet this is what Jesus did, as recorded in Revelation 1:17. After receiving a stunning vision of the exalted, resurrected Christ, John “fell at his feet as though dead.” Then Jesus laid his right hand on him and said, “Fear not.” How could Jesus simply tell John to quit being afraid—especially when it was a vision of Jesus himself that had inspired John’s fear?

The answer becomes clear from what Jesus went on to say: “I am the first and the last and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades” (Revelation 1:17-18). The reason Jesus could command John’s fear was that Jesus had conquered every reason John had to be afraid.

Our study of this passage (Revelation 1:12-19) divides into two parts: 1) The vision that inspires fear (1:12-16), 2) The assurance that removes fear (1:17-19).



1. The vision that inspires fear (1:12-16).

Turning to see whose voice was speaking to him, John beholds a vision of the resurrected Christ. The details of this vision highlight Jesus' kingly authority, power, and majesty. Much like Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-6), John fell down in fear.

2. The assurance that removes fear (1:17-19).

Even though he had every reason to be terrified, John is told to "fear not." And the one telling him not to fear is the very one whose vision terrified John! Jesus backs up his words "Fear not," with assurance about who he is. *Jesus alone can tell us to fear not because Jesus alone conquered what is at the root of all our fear: sin and death.*

Discussion and Application

1. Think back to the things that made you afraid when you were a child. In what ways do our fears change as we get older? In what ways do they stay the same?
2. Read Hebrews 2:14-18. The writer to the Hebrews says that people have been subject to lifelong slavery through the fear of death (2:15). What evidence do we see around us that people have this "fear of death"?
3. The things that people tend to fear most are death and public humiliation. How did Jesus experience both of these? How did he overcome them?
4. John's vision of Jesus recorded in Revelation 1:12-16 is much more exalted than the thoughts we typically have about him. Suppose that this week you were to keep a steady hold on this majestic view of Christ in your heart and mind. How would that change your attitude toward others around you? toward the things you tend to be afraid of?
5. As our study of this passage has shown, true courage comes in knowing Christ and what he has done for us. In light of this, suppose you could go back in time to and speak to yourself during a time of great fear. How would you counsel yourself? What lies would you seek to correct? What truths would you give?