

What Time I Am Afraid,
I Will Trust in Thee.

The Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana (1863-1952) is famously known for the statement, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

Life is that predictable because the challenges we face are not so different from one generation to the next.

Ecclesiastes 1:9

9 The thing that hath been, it is *that* which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun.



This is one reason Old Testament stories are so helpful even to Christians who have no connection to the Jews.

Romans 15:4

⁴ For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.



This brings us to the story of King Hezekiah who ruled the southern kingdom of Judah during a very turbulent time of her history.



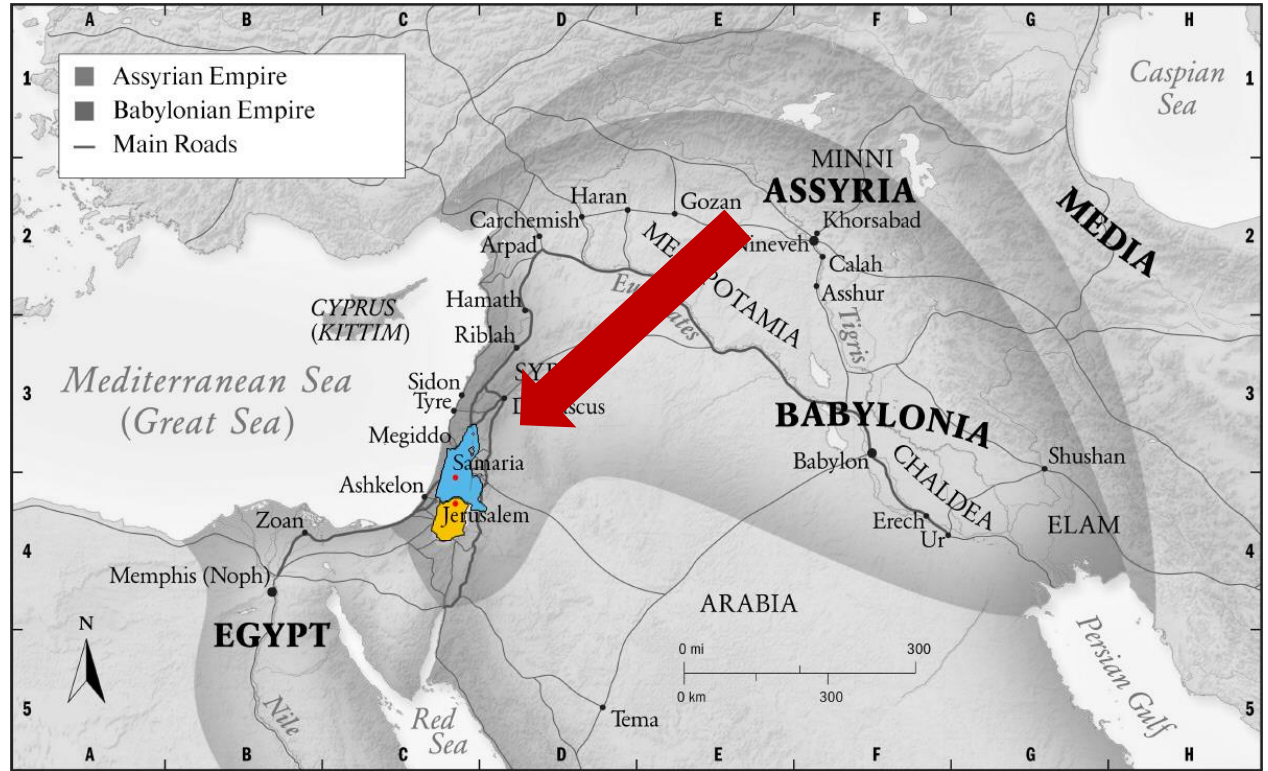
About 200 years before Hezekiah was born,* the kingdom ruled by David and Solomon was divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.**

* circa 741 BC
** circa 931 BC

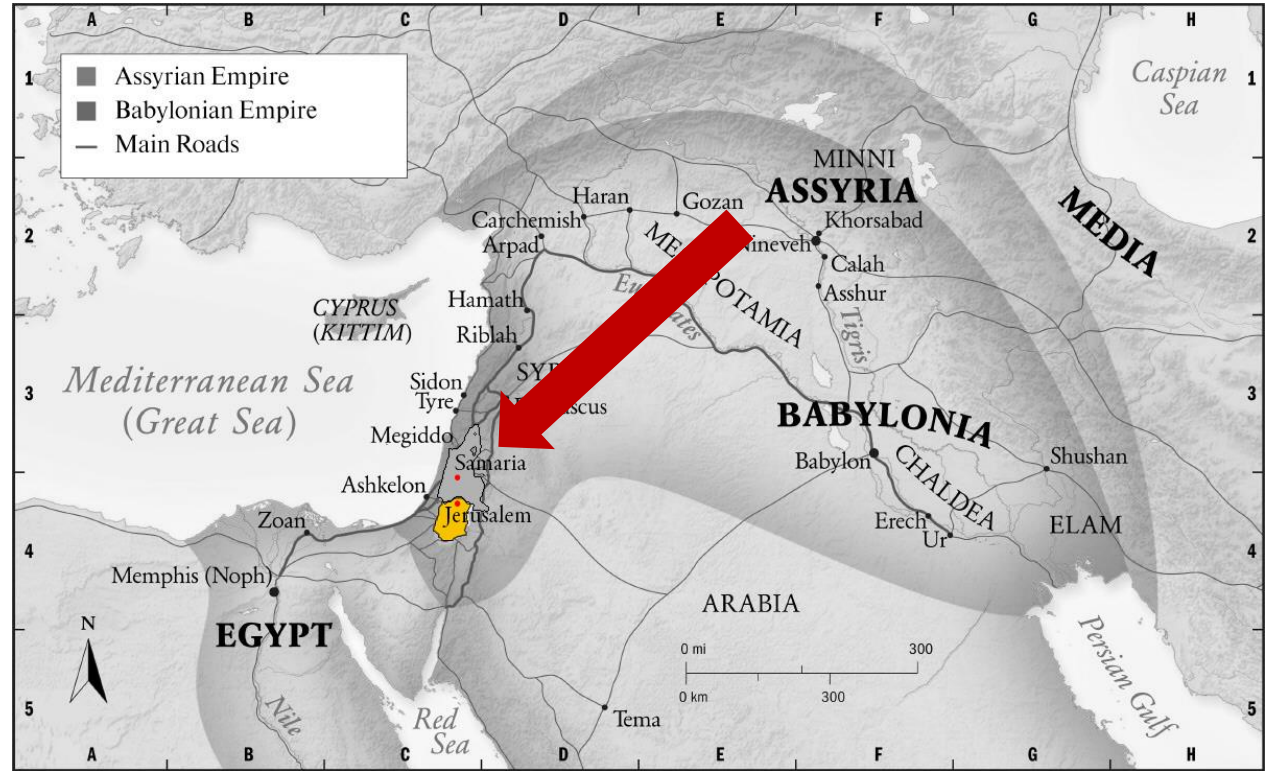


Then, in the sixth year of Hezekiah's reign,* the Assyrian army besieged **Samaria**, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, and carried her people off into captivity.

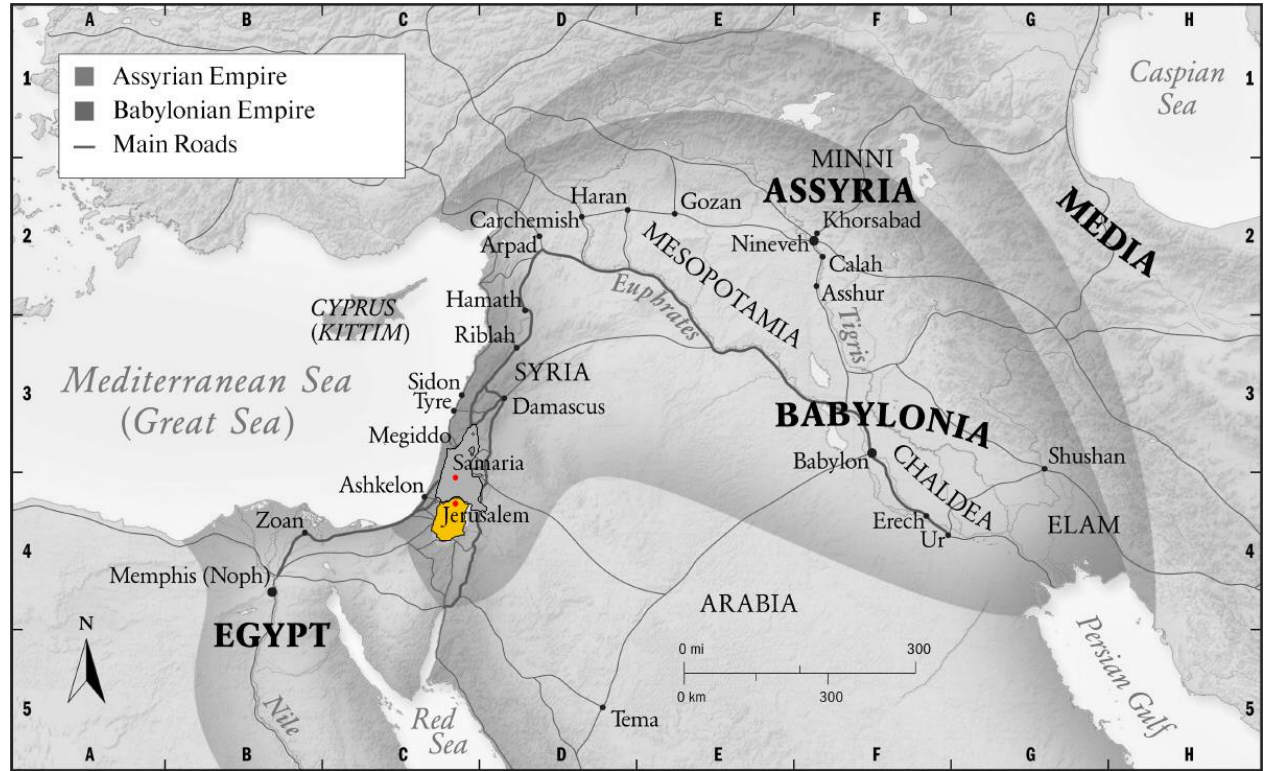
* 721 BC



The people of the northern kingdom were so assimilated into Assyrian culture that soon they were no longer considered Jews. They were called *Samaritans*.



The Assyrians then turned their sights on the land of Judah. Eight years later, “in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah’s reign did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them” (2 Kgs 18:13).



Hezekiah had worked to cleanse Judah of the corruption caused by his father, Asah, and restore holiness to the temple in Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 29:3-5, 20-21

- ³ He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them.
- ⁴ And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street,
- ⁵ And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy *place*.
- ²⁰ And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the LORD his God.
- ²¹ And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.

But when the king of Assyria invaded his land, Hezekiah followed the example of those who had ruled before him. He tried to appease the Assyrian emperor with a tribute payment, sabotaging the very restorations he had commissioned.

2 Kings 18:15-16

- ¹⁵ And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house.
- ¹⁶ At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.



Hezekiah soon realized that the Assyrians would not be satisfied with just a token of Jerusalem's treasure. The king of Judah commanded his soldiers to make ready for war. Barricades were fortified and waterways rerouted. Finally, the king addressed his people with words of courage and faith.

2 Chronicles 32:6-8

⁶ And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying,

⁷ Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him:

⁸ With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles.

And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

The king of Assyria learned of Hezekiah's preparations, and sent his own messenger to Jerusalem with words intended to weaken the resolve of the people.

2 Chronicles 32:13-15

- ¹³ Know ye not what I and my fathers have done unto all the people of *other* lands? were the gods of the nations of those lands any ways able to deliver their lands out of mine hand?
- ¹⁴ Who *was there* among all the gods of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people out of mine hand, that your God should be able to deliver you out of mine hand?
- ¹⁵ Now therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you on this manner, neither yet believe him: for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of mine hand, and out of the hand of my fathers: how much less shall your God deliver you out of mine hand?

He not only slandered the king of Judah, he slandered his God.

2 Chronicles 32:17-18

- ¹⁷ He wrote also letters to rail on the LORD God of Israel, and to speak against him, saying,
As the gods of the nations of other lands have not delivered their people out of mine hand,
so shall not the God of Hezekiah deliver his people out of mine hand.
- ¹⁸ Then they cried with a loud voice in the Jews' speech unto the people of Jerusalem that were on the wall, to affright them, and to trouble them; that they might take the city.
- ¹⁹ And they spake against the God of Jerusalem, as against the gods of the people of the earth, *which were the work of the hands of man.*



Sennacherib knew that the most powerful weapon in his arsenal was fear. Fear could win a bloodless war. He wanted to frighten the Jews into surrender.

All the “facts” were on his side. Just as he said, the gods of the other lands had not been able to deliver their people out of his hand. Why should the God of the Jews be any different?



The story of Sennacherib's threat toward the land of Judah is recorded 3 times in the Scriptures, in **2 Kings 18-19**, **2 Chronicles 32**, and **Isaiah 36-37**. The importance this triple witness cannot be overstated. God does not want his people to miss the valuable lesson contained in these testimonies.

Before we hear the conclusion to this story, let us consider:

The phrase “fear not” appears 63 times in the KJV Bible.

“fear ye not” 8 times

“fear thou not” 4 times

“fear him not” 2 times

“fear them not” 4 times

“Be not afraid” 26 times

With this in mind, let us examine:

THE TWO KINDS
OF FEAR

THE POWER
OF FEAR

THE CURE
FOR FEAR

The Two Kinds of Fear

In both the Old and New Testament, **the fear of God** is shown to be fundamental to holy living.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

- ¹² And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,
- ¹³ To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?



The Two Kinds of Fear

We should strive to serve God acceptably in **godly fear**.

Hebrews 12:28

²⁸ Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:



The Two Kinds of Fear

Walking in the fear of the Lord
enhances every aspect of our life.

Proverbs 14:26-27

- ²⁶ In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.
- ²⁷ The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.





Another kind of **good fear** is our “flight or fight” response to danger, whether that danger is real or imagined. Facing a thief at the train station, or waiting offstage to address a crowd can trigger this reaction. The heart rate accelerates. The body sweats. Alertness and strength intensify.



On the opposite side of the spectrum is *ungodly* fear. This kind of fear pushes you to panic, to react in fear rather than in faith. This is the kind of fear that Sennacherib used to unnerve the Judeans, hoping to frighten them into surrender.



This kind of fear has no relationship to God.

2 Timothy 1:7

⁷ For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.



Ungodly fear is the most formidable enemy you will ever face.

The devil himself cannot prevent you from reaching out to God, but ungodly fear can tie you up in knots.

If you want to live a full life, you must know the nature and the cure for this debilitating kind of fear.

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The Power of Fear

Fear is the polar opposite of trust. If trust is “up,” then fear is “down.” Even so, fear and trust are much more similar than they are different.

They both reside in the heart.

Psalm 27:3

³ Though an host should encamp against me, **my heart** shall not fear.

Proverbs 3:5

⁵ Trust in the LORD **with all thine heart**, and lean not unto thine own understanding.”





Fear and trust are like two children vying for the last seat in a game of musical chairs. At any given moment, only one can occupy your heart.

Proverbs 29:25

²⁵ The fear of man bringeth a snare:
but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD
shall be safe.

Psalms 56:4

⁴ In God I will praise his word,
in God I have put my trust;
I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

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Fear tells you that defeat is inevitable.
Trust tells you that things will work out for good.

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Having a fear of cancer cannot cause a person to develop cancer. If that were the case, there would be no such thing as “hypochondria.” A person can make himself sick with worry, but it is his anxiety rather than the imagined disease that affects him.

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Irrational fears are called phobias. “Claustrophobia” is the fear of confined spaces. This anxiety disorder can make a person feel like the walls are closing in on him. Of course, this fear cannot actually cause those walls to move.

The Power of Fear

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1 Chronicles 28:20a

²⁰ And David said to Solomon his son,
Be strong and of good courage, and do it:
fear not, nor be dismayed...

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The Cure for Fear

Fear thrives in the darkness of ignorance.

Hosea 4:16 says,
“My people are destroyed for lack
of knowledge.”

Isaiah 5:13 says,
“My people are gone into captivity,
because they have no knowledge.”



The Cure for Fear

If ignorance is the *cause* of fear,
then knowledge is the *cure*!

The light of knowledge dispels darkness.
Where there is light, there is no fear.

Psalm 27:1

- ¹ The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
the LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?



In 1944, the National Forest Service adopted “Smokey Bear” as its mascot. Americans of all ages know that “Only you can prevent forest fires!”

Learning the rules of forest fire prevention is part of every schoolchild’s education. As Christians, we must know and practice the rules of “fire prevention.”



The Cure for Fear

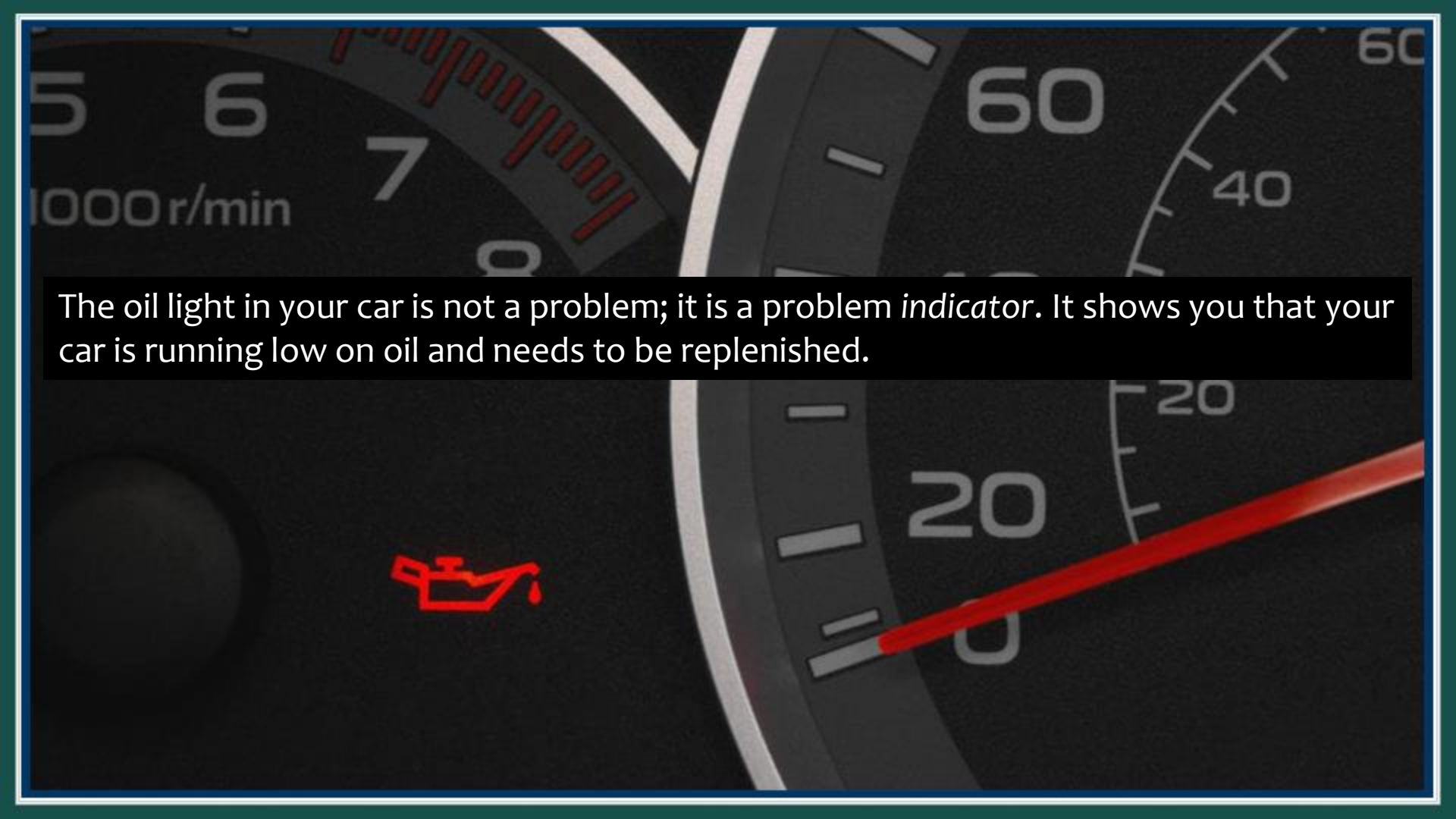
The way to “keep” or protect your heart is bury the word of God in your heart.

Proverbs 4:23

²³ Keep thy heart with all diligence;
for out of it are the issues of life.

Psalm 119:11



A close-up photograph of a car's instrument cluster. The background is dark with several gauges. On the left, a tachometer shows numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8, with the text '1000 r/min' below it. On the right, a speedometer shows numbers 20, 40, and 60. A prominent red needle is shown pointing towards the 20 mark on the speedometer. In the lower-left area, there is a red icon of an oil can with a drop, representing the oil pressure warning light.

The oil light in your car is not a problem; it is a problem *indicator*. It shows you that your car is running low on oil and needs to be replenished.

Just the same, when I am afraid, my fear indicates to me that my heart is running low on trust. I must hide the Word in my heart until my trust in God returns to the level that it belongs.

Psalm 18:2-3

- ² The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.
- ³ I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.



We have not yet finished the story of Sennacherib and Hezekiah.

You will remember that Sennacherib had stolen away the Jews' courage.

Thankfully, Hezekiah and Isaiah knew what to do when they were afraid.

2 Chronicles 32:20

²⁰ And for this cause
Hezekiah the king,
and the prophet Isaiah the son
of Amoz,
prayed and cried to heaven.



Here is the great lesson of this story,
and the reason I believe it is told three
times in the Bible.

It is silly to think that we can eliminate
fear from our lives, or that “spiritual”
people are never afraid.

It is what we DO when we are afraid
that shows our spirituality.

Psalm 56:3

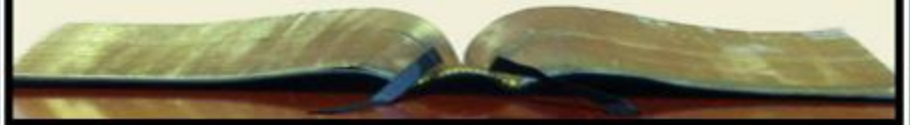
³ What time I am afraid,
I will trust in thee.



Never be ashamed to confess your fear to your heavenly Father. Go to him to have your trust restored.

Psalm 62:8

⁸ Trust in him at all times;
ye people,
pour out your heart before him:
God *is* a refuge for us.



Hold fast to your faith in him, and let the words of this psalm be your own testimony:

Psalm 34:4

4 I sought the LORD,
and he heard me,
and delivered me from all my
fears.



Truly the Lord delivered his people that day.

2 Chronicles 32:21-22

- ²¹ And the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword.
- ²² Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side.

And truly this same God will deliver everyone who puts their trust in him.

Psalm 37:40

⁴⁰ And the LORD shall help them and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.





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