

# Fear, Faith, and the Tensions of Real Life

Deuteronomy 20:1-20



# Deuteronomy 20:1-4

When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. And when you draw near to the battle, the priest shall come forward and speak to the people and shall say to them, “Hear, O Israel, today you are drawing near for battle against your enemies: let not your heart faint. Do not fear or panic or be in dread of them, for the LORD your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.”

# Deuteronomy 20:5-7

Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying, “Is there any man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. And is there any man who has planted a vineyard and has not enjoyed its fruit? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man enjoy its fruit. And is there any man who has betrothed a wife and has not taken her? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man take her.”

# Deuteronomy 20:8-9

And the officers shall speak further to the people, and say,

“Is there any man who is fearful and fainthearted?

Let him go back to his house,

lest he make the heart of his fellows melt like his own.”

And when the officers have finished speaking to the people,

then commanders shall be appointed

at the head of the people.

# Deuteronomy 20:10-14

When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it. And if it responds to you peaceably and it opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall do forced labor for you and shall serve you. But if it makes no peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it.

And when the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword, but the women and the little ones, the livestock, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as plunder for yourselves.

And you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the LORD your God has given you.

# Deuteronomy 20:15-18

Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here. But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded, that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God.

# Deuteronomy 20:19-20

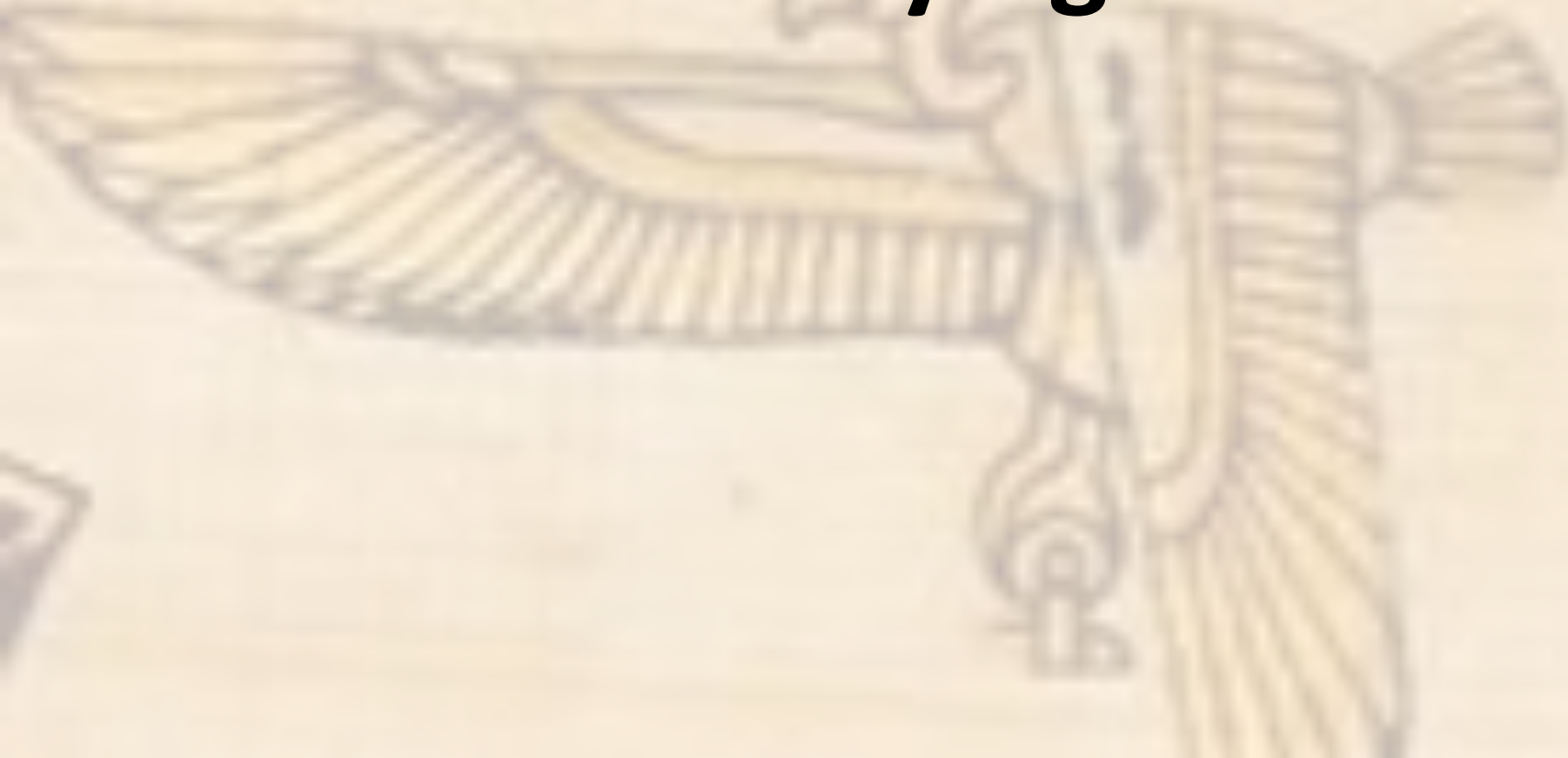
When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. You may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down. Are the trees in the field human, that they should be besieged by you? Only the trees that you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, that you may build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it falls.

# Main Idea

Life in a sin-corrupted world will mean facing terrifying troubles that will require a well-reasoned faith and that will result in tensions among real-life realities.



**Fear, Faith, and Tensions**  
**The reality of war and other**  
**terrifying troubles.**



# **The Reality of War**

War would be a reality for Israel.

## Deuteronomy 20:1

**When you go out to war** against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

This is not given as justification for war but as instruction when war would become a reality.

# The Reality of War

War would be a reality for Israel.

War is a reasonably terrifying reality.

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**When you go out to war** against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

## Deuteronomy 20:1

When you go out to war against your enemies, **and see**  
**horses and chariots and an army**  
**larger than your own**, you  
shall not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God is with you,  
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

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# To the gruesome reality!

## Deuteronomy 20:1

When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

# And when you draw near to the battle...

# The realities of war!

## Deuteronomy 20:5

Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying, “Is there any man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it?

Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it.



# The reality of death!

## Deuteronomy 20:5

Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying, "Is there any man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it?"

Let him go back to his house, **lest he die in the battle**  
and another man dedicate it.

# The Reality of War

War would be a reality for Israel.

War is a reasonably terrifying reality.

War is only one of many  
terrifying troubles.

# There's a long list in a sin-sick world...

Romans 8:35

“Who will separate us from the love of Christ?  
Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine,  
or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”

Courage, drawn from a deep  
faith, is what is called for when  
facing terrifying troubles.

**Deuteronomy 20:1-3**

...you shall not be afraid of them!

...let not your heart faint!

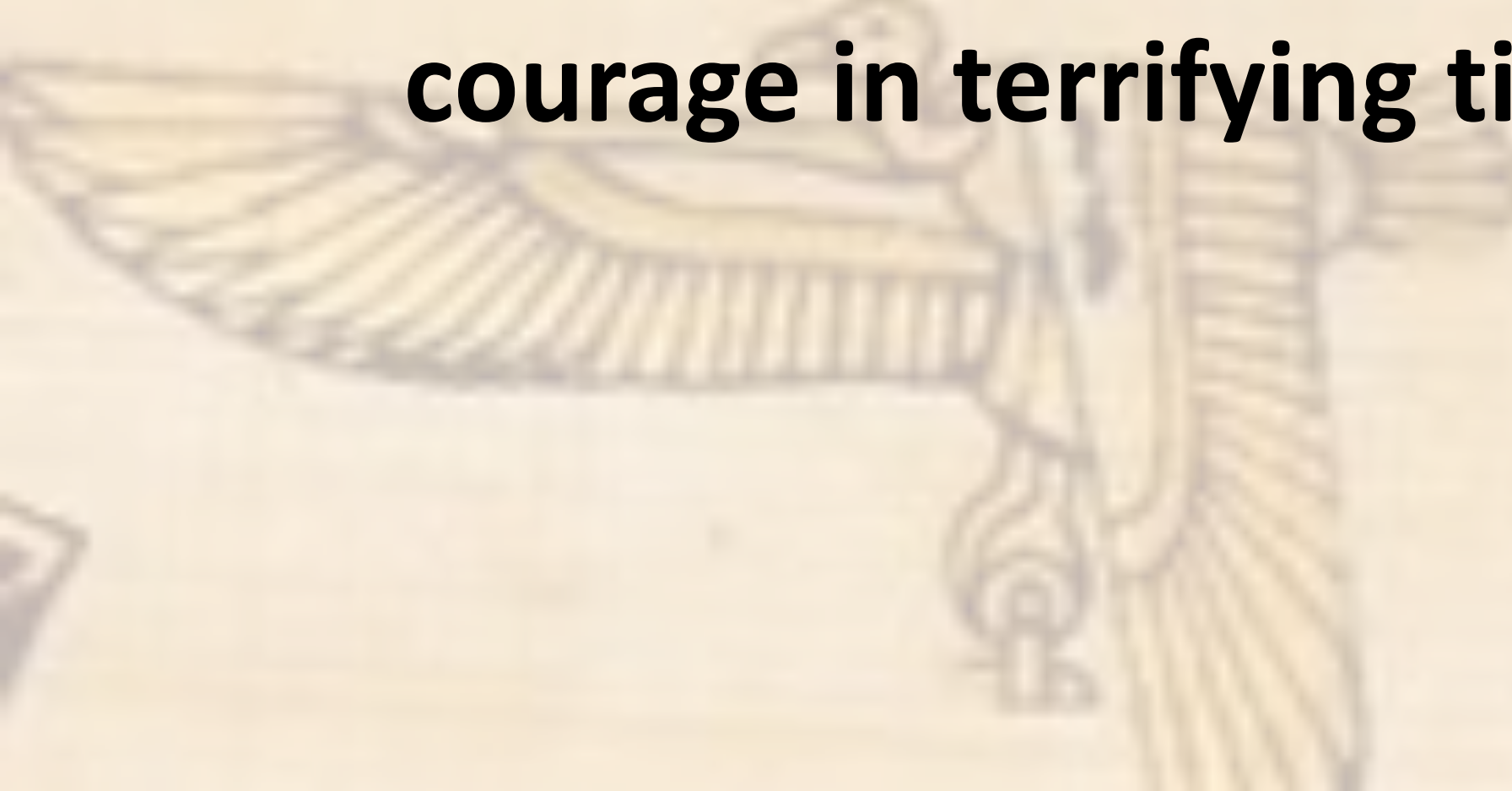
Do not fear or panic or be in dread of them!

**But on what will faith  
and courage be founded?**

# **Fear, Faith, and Tensions**

The reality of war and other terrifying troubles.

**The foundations for faith and  
courage in terrifying times.**



# **Foundations for Faith and Courage**

A reasonable knowledge  
of God's person.

You must have some reasonable knowledge  
of who He is and what He's like.

## Deuteronomy 20:1

**When you go out to war** against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, **you shall not be afraid** of them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

# The reason for given for courage...

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When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you

shall not be afraid of them, **for** the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.



**...is faith based in a reasonable  
knowledge of the One who is with you.**

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# One who has proven Himself!

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When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God is with you,

**who brought you up out of the  
land of Egypt.**

# Foundations for Faith and Courage

A reasonable knowledge of God's person.

A reasonable knowledge  
of God's plans.

You must have some reasonable knowledge  
of what God intends to do.

**Deuteronomy 20:4**

**Do not fear or panic or be in dread** of them,  
for the LORD your God is he who goes with you to fight  
for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.

# The reason for given for courage...

## Deuteronomy 20:4

Do not fear or panic or be in dread of them,

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Do not fear or panic or be in dread of them,

for the LORD your God is **he** who **goes with you** to fight

for you against your enemies, **to give you the victory.**



Faith and courage will come from  
having a reasonable knowledge  
of what God plans to do.

But a reasonable knowledge will  
remind you that God's plan for  
victory is not as **you** plan it!

# Foundations for Faith and Courage

A reasonable knowledge of God's person.

A reasonable knowledge of God's plans.

A reasonable knowledge  
of God's promises.

You must have some reasonable knowledge  
of what God has promised you.

## Deuteronomy 20:1

When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, **you shall not be afraid** of them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

# The reason given for courage...

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When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you

shall not be afraid of them, **for** the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

**...is faith based in a reasonable  
knowledge of God's promises.**

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# The promise of His presence!

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# The promise of His presence!

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Do not fear or panic or be in dread of them,

**for the LORD** your God is he who **goes with you** to fight  
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# What He does NOT promise...

## Deuteronomy 20:5

Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying, “Is there any man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it?

Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it.

# What He does NOT promise...

## Deuteronomy 20:5

Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying, "Is there any man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it?"

Let him go back to his house, **lest he die in the battle**  
and another man dedicate it.

A reasonable knowledge will remind  
you that God has not promised to  
keep you from suffering and hardship  
but to be with you through it!

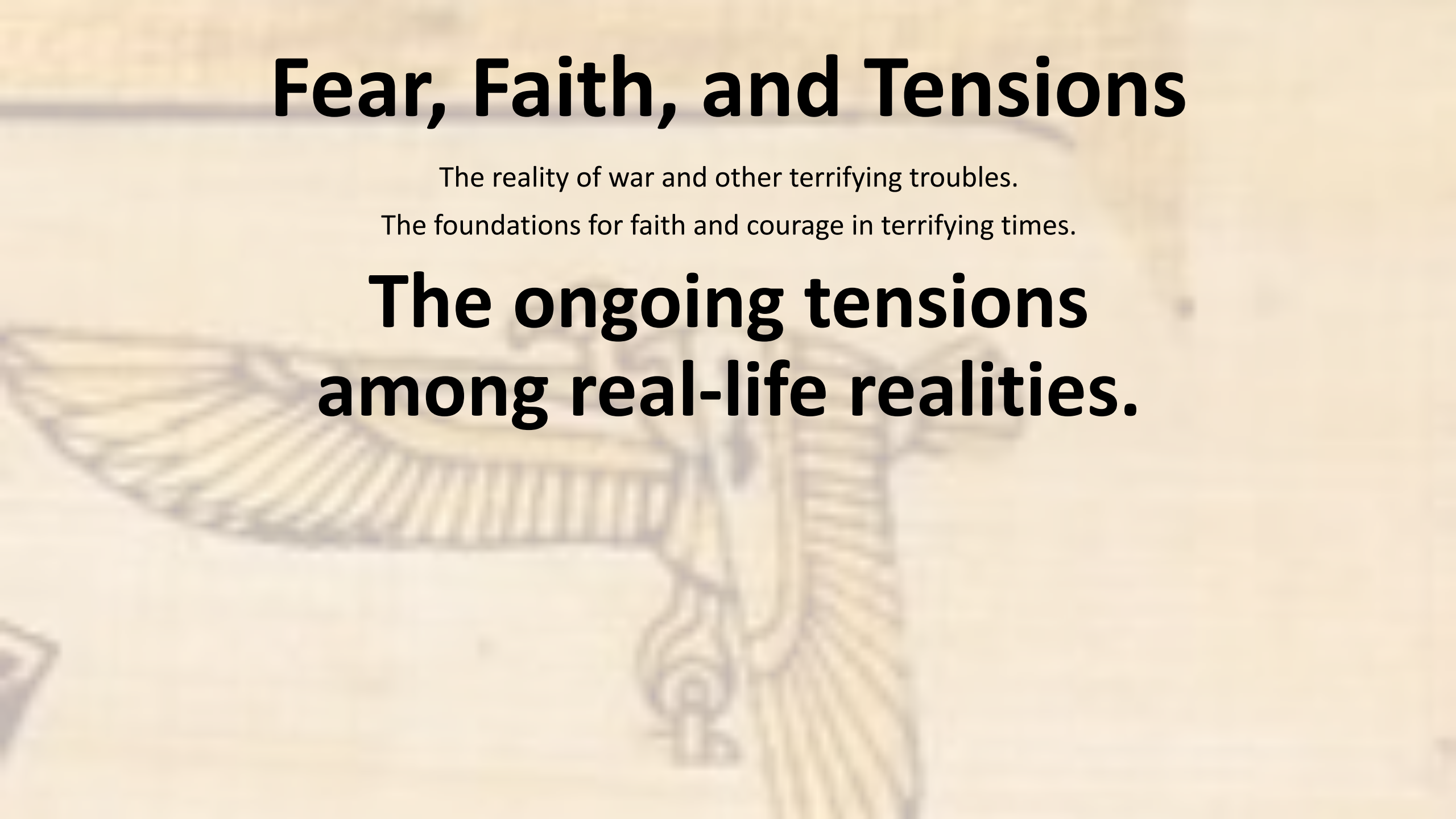
Remember, Christ's promise  
of His eternal presence!

# **Fear, Faith, and Tensions**

The reality of war and other terrifying troubles.

The foundations for faith and courage in terrifying times.

**The ongoing tensions  
among real-life realities.**



# Ongoing Tensions

The tensions of life, duty, and love.

### **Deuteronomy 20:5-7**

Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying, “Is there any man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. And is there any man who has planted a vineyard and has not enjoyed its fruit? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man enjoy its fruit. And is there any man who has betrothed a wife and has not taken her? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man take her.”

# The tensions of real life...

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# These are in tension with duty...

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# Somebody would need to risk death!

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# Duty is held in tension with love...

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# The tensions of love...

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# Ongoing Tensions

The tensions of life, duty, and love.

The tensions of mercy and judgment.

More later...

# Ongoing Tensions

The tensions of life, duty, and love.

The tensions of mercy and judgment.

The tensions of weakness  
and responsibility.

# Weakness

Deuteronomy 20:8

And the officers shall speak further to the people, and say,

**“Is there any man who is fearful and fainthearted?**

Let him go back to his house, lest he make the heart  
of his fellows melt like his own.”

In the real world, weakness will  
make fear a real thing!

**Fear is held in tension with responsibility.**

...you shall not be afraid of them!

Do not fear or panic or be in dread of them!

**Note that these are commands!**

Contrary to what the world believes  
and teaches, **you** are responsible  
for your emotions...

Your emotions are  
***commandable!***

# Commanding emotions...

...you shall not be afraid! (Deut. 20:1)

Do not fear or panic or be in dread! (Deut. 20:3)

Moses said to the people, “Do not fear” (Exod. 14:13)

Take courage, fear not! (Isaiah 35:4)

“Do not fear those who kill the body!” (Matthew 10:28)

“Do not fear their intimidation and do not be troubled!”

(1 Peter 3:14)



# Commanding emotions...

Put on sackcloth, Lament and wail. (Jeremiah 4:8)

...you shall not mourn and you shall not weep,  
and your tears shall not come. (Ezekiel 24:16)

This day is holy to the LORD your God;  
do not mourn or weep. (Nehemiah 8:9)

Rejoice with those who rejoice,  
and weep with those who weep. (Romans 12:15)

# Where do emotions come from?

**1 Samuel 1:8**

“Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat  
and **why is your heart sad?**”

**Proverbs 15:13**

“**A joyful heart** makes a cheerful face,  
But when **the heart is sad**,  
the spirit is broken.

**Isaiah 35:4**

“Say to those with **anxious heart**,  
“Take courage, fear not.”

# Where do emotions come from?

Matthew 15:19

For **out of the heart** come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

# The Lord commands your heart!

**Proverbs 3:1**

My son, do not forget my teaching,  
But **let your heart** keep my commandments.

**Proverbs 23:17**

**Do not let your heart** envy sinners...

**Proverbs 24:17**

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls,  
And **do not let your heart** be glad when he stumbles.

**John 14:1**

**Do not let your heart** be troubled;  
believe in God, believe also in Me.

# What drives your emotions?

1 Samuel 1:8

Then Elkanah her husband said to her,  
“Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat  
and **why is your heart sad?**

**Am I not better to you than ten sons?”**

Elkanah connected Hannah's emotion of sadness to what she treasured, what she believed would satisfy her most.

“Am I not **better to you** than ten sons?”

Your emotional responses are tied to your treasures and the degree of value you place on them.

## **Matthew 6:21**

**“...for where your treasure is,  
there your heart will be also.”**



# Another case study...

Luke 18:22-23

When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

# He had an emotional response!

## Luke 18:22-23

When Jesus heard this, He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

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# Why?

## **Luke 18:22-23**

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# Because of his treasures!

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Matthew 6:21

“...for **where your treasure is,**  
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“...for where your treasure is,

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Your emotions are telling you  
what you treasure and how much.

This is good news because you  
can learn to order the treasures  
of your heart according to the  
Lord's proper order.

# Ordering your emotions...

Psalm 16:8-9

I have set the LORD always before me;  
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

**Therefore my heart is glad,  
and my whole being rejoices...**



# Remember the ongoing reality?

Deuteronomy 20:8

And the officers shall speak further to the people, and say,

**“Is there any man who is fearful and fainthearted?**

Let him go back to his house, lest he make the heart of his fellows melt like his own.”

Compassion is required, but let's not use compassion as an excuse to give in.

# Conclusions:

There **will be** terrifying troubles!

Are you reasonably growing in a knowledge of and faith in your Lord?

Are you willing to accept that your emotions are yours and do the work of ordering them in righteousness?

Do you see that your greatest treasure is Christ?

