

# NOTHING TO FEAR



PRINCIPLES & PRAYERS

*to Help You Thrive  
in a Threatening World*

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BARRY C. BLACK

— *Chaplain of the United States Senate* —

As problems confront us, how many times will someone say “that’s life”? From Scripture and a lifetime of experience and wisdom, Chaplain Black has written for us an excellent playbook dealing with life’s challenges.

**John Boozman**

*US Senator (Arkansas)*

I might be considered unique in that I’ve been a member of the United States Senate for twenty-two years and have known Chaplain Barry Black for thirteen of those years. The application for me from this book, and from years of weekly studies with Chaplain Black, is to pursue humility and avoid self-importance—two qualities not typically found in a US senator. And though the ways in which I’ve been blessed by this book may not be meaningful to other people, you will find your own Fearless Principles in here that will give you the comfort and direction to lighten up, develop your God-given talents, and live fearlessly in a broken and dangerous world, placing your focus on Jesus.

**James M. Inhofe**

*US Senator (Oklahoma)*

Chaplain Barry Black has ministered to the military, to the United States Senate, and to believers and seekers everywhere. In *Nothing to Fear*, he speaks to a troubled and anxious time. He offers Fearless Principles designed not to eliminate the presence of fear in our humble lives, but to give us the perspective and strategies necessary to weaken the power that fear can hold over us. One theme running throughout the book—and it’s a challenging one amid the busyness of our days—is the need to simplify our lives. So much fear is created by trying to hold on to and manage what is essentially unimportant and unnecessary. Chaplain Black reminds us of what is truly important—faith and prayer, family, lovingkindness. And he gently chides us—why do we complicate things so much?

**Tim Kaine**

*US Senator (Virginia)*



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*Nothing to Fear: Principles and Prayers to Help You Thrive in a Threatening World*

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

**EARLY IN WORLD WAR II**, in his first speech to the House of Commons after becoming prime minister, Winston Churchill gave members of Parliament and the British people a dose of reality: “I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat.”<sup>1</sup> With similar realism, Jesus sent his disciples into the world with a warning: “I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”<sup>2</sup>

Have you ever felt as if you're living in a very dangerous world—like a sheep among wolves? As you log on or tune in to the seemingly endless news cycles, does it seem as if the world is more threatening today than ever before, particularly for people of faith? When we hear about a racially motivated shooting at a church in South Carolina, the rise of Islamic State across the Middle East, the beheading of Egyptian Christians, the attacks on Christians in New Delhi, the aggressive proselytizing effort of the new atheism, or the drifting of nations from their spiritual moorings, it's easy to feel as if things are spiraling out of control. We also see how distorted theology has been used to justify wars, racial inequality, and premeditated pathology, enslaving people instead of liberating them. People of faith worldwide seem to be experiencing unprecedented levels of discrimination and oppression.

Believers in God shouldn't be surprised by the realities of a sometimes predatory world. After all, didn't Jesus say that "here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows"?<sup>3</sup>

But didn't he also say, "Take heart, because I have overcome the world"?<sup>4</sup> The apostle Paul warned his protégé Timothy that godly living invites persecution.<sup>5</sup> Are you prepared to live fearlessly in a threatening world?

This book is intended to help you stay fearless by following seven principles that Jesus gave his disciples before sending them into a dangerous world:

- Prepare to be sent (Matthew 10:1; Luke 10:1).
- Do a reality check (Matthew 9:37-38; Luke 10:2-3).
- Thrive in a predatory world (Matthew 10:16-20; Luke 10:3).
- Be as wise as a serpent (Matthew 10:16).
- Be as innocent as a dove (Matthew 10:16).
- Concentrate on the task (Matthew 10:5-8).
- Persevere through rejection (Matthew 10:11-14, 21-23; Luke 10:8-12).

These principles are as relevant in today's world as they were when first written nearly two thousand years ago. They have provided generations with the courage needed to walk fearlessly in dangerous surroundings. They have helped many to avoid the common pitfalls of life and become more productive. They have strengthened marriages and friendships, provided wisdom for parents, and supplied the power to break addictions. They have salvaged the lives of people who were living on the edge, providing a lamp to guide their feet and a light to illumine their path.<sup>6</sup>

As you learn and practice these precepts, you will develop the ability to remain fearless amid the storms of life, survive adversity, and even thrive in a threatening world.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Perhaps you're wondering why our Good Shepherd would send his lambs out among wolves? Perhaps it's because our Shepherd knows that hardship builds strength and character: "We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation."<sup>7</sup> Perhaps it's because he knows he will protect his sheep, just as David delivered his flock from a lion and a bear.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps our shepherd puts us in a precarious situation because he is always there with us: "Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me."<sup>9</sup> Or maybe we are placed in a predatory world because the master provides us with the equipment we need to survive, and he wants us to trust him. When Jesus sent out his disciples, he gave them power to heal the sick, cast out demons, and proclaim the Good News to the people they encountered.<sup>10</sup> Though we don't have all the answers, we know that the one who sends us out is too wise to make a mistake. We can, therefore, face our threatening world without fear.



**PREPARE**  
TO BE SENT





## PREPARE FOR SOME PARADOXES

**WHEN JESUS WAS PREPARING** to send his disciples out to practice their ministry, he told them, “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”<sup>1</sup> This seems to present an impossible situation. How can sheep survive among wolves? How can a serpent and a dove symbolize the same character? In short, how can we reconcile the paradoxes we encounter in life?

Perhaps it would be wise to first seek to understand what Jesus meant by “wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” The innocence of the dove refers to gentleness and purity; the wisdom of the serpent has to do with being aware of the presence of evil. A serpent seems to know its enemies and navigates in a way to avoid them. Still, how do we reconcile the differing characteristics of serpents and doves? The Bible teaches us some important principles that can prepare us to live with certain paradoxes and to walk fearlessly in a threatening world.

**FEARLESS PRINCIPLE:**

*Know that God has already given us the gift of salvation*

Knowing that God has intervened in our human predicament by giving us the gift of salvation provides a wonderful context for understanding the challenges of living like snakes and doves in a dangerous world. The apostle Paul describes God's gift in these words: "God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it."<sup>2</sup>

And let us not forget that the gift of salvation was a costly one. In the words of the apostle Peter, "God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God."<sup>3</sup> This gift is so special that nothing can ever surpass it. God has literally given us heaven's best. As Paul says in Romans, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"<sup>4</sup> God is *all in*. "No good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless."<sup>5</sup> That alone should inspire us to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

**FEARLESS PRINCIPLE:**

*Don't let the serpent swallow the dove*

Throughout our lives we will be challenged to reconcile the opposites of good and evil. In business, we must learn to reconcile integrity with intense competition. We are sometimes challenged to reconcile complete honesty with self-interest. Sometimes being completely honest may cost us a sale or advancement. We must reconcile absolute truthfulness with long-term progress. Jesus once said to his disciples, "There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now."<sup>6</sup> In other words, it isn't always the right time for full disclosure.

According to Rushworth Kidder in *How Good People Make Tough Choices*, most ethical dilemmas involve “right versus right” conundrums: truth versus loyalty, justice versus mercy, the individual versus the community, and the long term versus the short term.

Some people are so hampered in their attempts to reconcile gentleness with prudence that they seek to escape their predicament by omitting one factor or the other. Such a person might say, “In my work and secular activities, I’ll be rough and ready. But with my family and at church, I’ll be a person of unassailable integrity.” This may be letting the serpent swallow the dove with a kind of practical agnosticism. If we are to live fearlessly in a threatening world, we must reconcile these opposites and refuse to allow the shrewdness of the serpent to swallow up the gentleness of the dove.

**FEARLESS PRINCIPLE:** *Strive to be unmixed with evil*

We must never neglect wisdom in our character and our actions. Refuse to divorce religion from life. The apostle Paul seems to address people who are having difficulty reconciling opposites when he refers to those who “have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.”<sup>7</sup> We must not sacrifice our integrity but always strive to stay unmixed with evil.

Members of the church in Laodicea had difficulty with this concept. In Revelation 3:15-16, God rebukes them for their failure to stay unmixed with evil: “I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth!” This is an indictment of those who have yet to reconcile the shrewdness of the serpent with the innocence of the dove.

**FEARLESS PRINCIPLE:** *Learn to ward off evil*

Our ability to thrive in a threatening world is directly connected to our willingness to ward off evil. Jesus encourages us to “keep watch

and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation.”<sup>8</sup> That’s a strategy that can enable us to walk with integrity, even in a dangerous world.

The apostle Peter also gives us a firm warning: “Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are.”<sup>9</sup> That is certainly encouragement to learn how to ward off evil.

James gives us a similar challenge and encouragement: “Humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.”<sup>10</sup>

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The God who commands us to flee from evil stands ready to empower us to reconcile the paradox of the serpent and the dove, as we observe the following guidelines:

- Know that God has already given you the gift of salvation.
- Don’t let the serpent swallow the dove.
- Strive to be unmixed with evil.
- Learn to ward off evil.

Once we have reconciled the opposite characteristics of the serpent and the dove, we will be poised to receive and enjoy God’s surprises. “Through his mighty power at work within us,” he desires to “accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.”<sup>11</sup>



PURPOSEFUL PRAYER

*O Lord our God, giver of everlasting life, nothing can separate us from your limitless love. Empower us to reconcile life's opposites, making us wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Help us to remember that nothing is impossible to those who place their trust in you. May our faith create in us both the desire and the power to do your will. We praise your mighty name. Amen.*