Breaking Intimidation

Say “No” Without Feeling Guilty. Be Secure Without the Approval of Man.

By John Bevere

However, this scenario describes how many battle with intimidation. They struggle to correct its effects—despair, discouragement, confusion, hopelessness and so on—rather than breaking the power of intimidation!

The message in this book will not teach you to cope. It will share God’s way to freedom from all fear and intimidation. Then you can fulfill the call of God on your life.

“Son, there are many called to my great End-Time army of believers who are bound by intimidation. They have pure hearts toward God and man; however, like Gideon of old, they are held captive by the fear of man (Judg. 6–8). The gifts I placed in them are dormant. I will anoint the message of this book to liberate multitudes of them. They will step out and fearlessly obey Me. They shall be valiant warriors and shall bring forth great victories in the strength of their God. Father, in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ, I ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Your Word to me as I read this book. Please expose and remove any insecurities in my life, so the very root of intimidation will be destroyed. May I draw closer to You and, with boldness, witness of my Lord Jesus Christ.”

Walk in Your God-Given Authority, or Someone Will Take It and Use It Against You

As I serve the Lord, I realize more and more that He uses circumstances and people to prepare us to fulfill His calling for our lives.

If John does not walk in his God-given authority, someone will take it from him and use it against him.

If sin creeps into our lives, the Holy Spirit will convict and instruct us. However, if we do not listen, we will begin to grow cold and dull. This will continue until we are no longer sensitive to Him in our hearts.

Then, in order to reach and protect us or those around us, God will send someone to expose what is wrong. He does not do this for the purpose of embarrassing us but to warn and protect us. If we still refuse to listen, judgment comes. “For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11:31–32).

My God-given authority to serve and protect was being challenged.

I had a choice, although at that time I was not aware of it. I could yield to the intimidation by backing down on what I had said to the ministers of music, thereby forfeiting my position of authority. Or I could stay in my authority, breaking the power of their intimidation by staying strong in what God had said.

On and on these thoughts assaulted my mind. My fears had begun to center on one thought: What is going to happen to me? This is how intimidation will change your focus. The reason: The root of intimidation is fear, and fear causes people to focus on themselves. Perfect love casts out fear because love puts the focus on God and others and denies itself (1 John 4:18).

"John, you are intimidated by those people on the platform behind you. You've been knocked out of your position of authority, and the gift of God in you has been quenched."

While everyone prayed for the next five minutes, the Spirit of God walked me through the Bible, showing me numerous incidents when men and women were intimidated and how this caused the gift of God in them to go dormant. I saw how they yielded their authority and lost their effectiveness in the Spirit. Then He walked me through the past several years and showed me how I'd done the same.

Discovered more unity and strength there than ever before.

It was God purging our church, and it has made us stronger. Our praise and worship have never been so free.

Countless Christians battle intimidation. Often those who are intimidated don't realize what they're fighting. As with most of Satan's devices, intimidation is camouflaged and subtle. We feel its effects—depression, confusion, lack of faith—without knowing its root.

It is my prayer that as you read and walk in these truths, you will be liberated to fulfill your call as a servant of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Satan Seeks to Displace Us in Order to Regain the Authority Jesus Stripped from Him

First, it is important to understand there is a dwelling place or position in the spirit that we hold as believers in Jesus. With this position comes authority. This authority is what the enemy wants. If he can get us to yield our God-given authority, he will take it and use it against us. This not only affects us but also those entrusted to our care.

Believers literally occupy a place in the spirit. It is imperative that you as a believer not only know that place but also function in it. If you do not know your position, you cannot function properly in the body of Christ.

But with the sin of Adam came the demise of everything underneath his authority. By transgression he yielded his place in the spirit to the enemy of God.

A man forfeited his position of authority; therefore, only a man could restore it. Thousands of years later Jesus was born.

The fact that He was human gave Him the legal right to regain what was lost. Because He was the Son of God He was free from the lordship the enemy had acquired over man.

It is clear that Jesus regained what Adam lost and more. Satan and Adam only had dominion over the earth, but Jesus' dominion included not only the earth but also heaven. Jesus had risen above the place of authority Satan had dispossessed. After revealing His position and authority, Jesus told us to "go therefore." Why did Jesus make this connection between His authority and our calling? We find the answer in the writings of the apostle Paul.

A redeemed man hidden in Christ is now given a position in the spirit above the devil. Jesus boldly declared, "Behold, I give you the authority . . . over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19).

Now we understand the command, "Go therefore." Jesus understood the authority He was entrusting to believers. Our rebirth rights have positioned us in those heavenly places far above the enemy's authority and power.

Satan now seeks to displace us in the spirit in order to regain the authority Jesus stripped from him. If Satan can steal or cause individuals to lay down their position of authority, then he once again has authority to operate. Paul says so clearly, "[Do not] give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27, emphasis added). We believers must not forfeit our place in the spirit.

We must realize the kingdom of God is just that—a kingdom. Kingdoms are structured by rank and authority. Heaven's domain is no exception. The higher the rank, the more influence and authority.

When the enemy goes after a church, his primary target is the leadership.
When Satan knocks the keeper of a house out of his position, all those under his care are vulnerable.

We need to take the Bible seriously when it says: "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly" (James 3:1, NIV). The reason leaders (pastors) are judged more strictly is because of the great impact of their disobedience. They hurt not only themselves but also all those placed under their guardianship. God forgives them just as He did David. However, they will still reap what they sow. The enemy is given place!

Satan will blatantly try to steal your authority by bringing sin into your life. If you are determined to serve God with all your heart, he will also try to knock you out of your position in Christ through intimidation.

The First Step to Breaking Intimidation Is to Confront the Matters in Your Own Heart

When the Holy Spirit led me through the scriptures about confronting intimidation, He showed me two extremes that will throw a believer's life out of balance: The first extreme is pursuing power; the second is false humility.

The proper balance is found in the life of Timothy, who cultivated godly character rather than false humility and stirred up his gift rather than pursue power.

What our Father looks for is not power, but character.

We have seen too many ministers fall. But they didn't fall when they committed their first act of immorality. No, they began to fall earlier—the day success in ministry became more important than their intimate relationship with God. We've not only seen this among ministers but also within their congregations.

The goal of the high call of Christianity is not the power of God or ministry; it is to know Me." (See Phil. 3:10–15.)

When we are intimate with God, we will reproduce the way He intends: "The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits" (Dan. 11:32).

The anointing of God is not His approval.

We must have God's heart to be able to obey His will.

To elaborate on what it means not to neglect the gift, let's look at some antonyms. The opposite of neglect is to:

- Accomplish, achieve, act, attend, care for, complete, conclude, consider, consummate. All of these are words of action and authority. Most words have both a verb and a noun form. They are positive and decisive. To further rightly divide the Word of God let's examine what it means to neglect: Breach, disdain, dismiss, disregard, discount, ignore, underestimate, overlook, undervalue, scorn, despise.

These are all negative words signifying a lack of action, decisiveness and authority. It is a serious and weighty thing to neglect what is entrusted to us. We suffer loss when we neglect.

The opposite extreme of simply pursuing the power is living in what I describe as a state of false humility. People living in such a state recognize the importance of pursuing God's character but stop there. They never venture out into God's gifting in their lives because they are afraid. They avoid anything that involves confrontation, perceiving it as a lack of love or Christian character.

I refer to these people as "peacekeepers." At first glance peacekeeping may look appealing, but Jesus never said, "Blessed are the peacekeepers." Rather, He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9). A peacekeeper avoids confrontation at any cost. He will go to any length to preserve a false sense of security for himself, which he mistakes for peace.

A peacemaker, on the other hand, will boldly confront no matter what it may cost him because he does not worry about himself. Instead, he is motivated by his love for God and truth. Only under these conditions can true peace thrive.

There is peace in the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17). However, this peace does not come by the absence of confrontation. As Jesus pointed out, "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matt. 11:12). There is violent opposition to the advancement of God's kingdom.

What we do not confront will not change.

Contend means to fight or wage battle. Christianity is not an easy lifestyle! There is constant opposition and resistance to our pursuit of God in both the natural and the spiritual realms! Paul constantly reminded Timothy to stand in his God-given authority.

Maybe Timothy was like so many others today who love God but avoid confrontation. Fear of confrontation makes you easy prey for intimidation.

God wants you liberated to do and be whatever He asks of you. When you are intimidated, there is no joy. And without joy there is no strength. Where there is fear, there is no peace. But as you break out of what has held you back, you'll find joy and peace in abundance!

If we don't exercise or walk in our God-given authority, someone will take it from us and use it against us! The enemy is after our position in the spirit.

Stewardship of the Gift

The Greek word for gift is charisma. Strong's concordance defines the word as "a spiritual endowment." Another definition, adapted from Vine's dictionary, would be "a gift of grace endowed upon believers by the operation of the Holy Spirit." So the word charisma describes those spiritual abilities with which God equips believers.

1. Everyone receives a gift.

2. The gift is not ours; we are merely stewards of it.

Since we do not own it, this gift is not to be neglected or used for personal gain. It is not ours to do with as we please. It is given that we might serve others. We are accountable for our care of it. We will give an account for the gifts entrusted to us, as all stewards give account of their stewardship. Another word for gift is ability, which is defined as "capability, faculty, genius or power." In other words, talent. By using the word woe, Paul indicated the awesome responsibility of faithfulness to God's gift. God's gifts are not for our excess. God will test us with His goodness. We are to use the ability of God in our life to serve those who are weak, young or unable so that the body might be whole.

3. The gift is a portion of God's manifold grace.

Peter divides gifts into two major categories. The first is the oracle or speaking gift; the second, the ministry or serving gift. Paul further divides these two categories. Under the oracle category we find prophecy, teaching, exhortation and leading; under the serving category are ministry (serving), giving and mercy.

You should not be in an oracle, or leader, position until you have proved faithful in serving one who is. There are many who want to lead and preach who have not laid their lives down to serve. No matter how talented they are, it is a disservice to both them and those under their care. If their character is not developed through serving, they will use their leadership position to lord it over people.

People try to move in a gift they want rather than the one they have!

It is the joint operation of these gifts the enemy wants to stop. When successful he can severely hinder our growth! He knows he cannot stop God from giving these gifts, so he is after our freedom to exercise them. Intimidation is the primary way he hinders this.

The Greek word for "stir up" is *anazopureo*, which means "to kindle afresh or keep in full flame" (Vine's dictionary). If Paul had to encourage this young man to stir up or kindle the gift (charisma), then it can become dormant! The gift does not work automatically. Like a fire it must be stirred up and kept going!

So there are two questions we need to answer: What causes the gift to become dormant? How do we stir it up? I will answer the second question in a later chapter, but let's look at the first one now. What causes the gift of God to lie dormant?

The Greek word for fear is *deilia*. The word implies timidity and cowardice, and is never used in a good sense in Scripture (Vine's dictionary). The translators of the NIV believe timidity is the most accurate word for this verse, and so do I. In this light, Paul is telling Timothy, "Your gift of God is dormant because of timidity." Without changing the meaning, I could say:

Timothy, the gift of God in you lies dormant because of intimidation!

Intimidated believers lose their authority in the spirit by default; consequently, their gift—God's ability in them—lies asleep and inactive. Though it is present, it is not in operation.

The life of God appeared to be gone. Confusion set in; I lost my decisiveness; I didn't want to face the people. Why? Because I was intimidated, and therefore I yielded my God-given authority.

Intimidation Defined

Now let's look at the definitions of intimidate and intimidation.

Source	Term	Definition
Oxford English Dictionary	**Intimidate**	1. To render timid 2. To inspire with fear 3. To overawe, cow
Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (10th ed.)	**Intimidate**	To discourage, coerce, or suppress by (or as if by) threatening
Oxford English Dictionary	**Intimidation**	1. The action of intimidating or making afraid 2. The fact or condition of being intimidated 3. The use of threats or violence to force or restrain from some action

The objective of intimidation is to restrain you from action, and coerce or force you into submission. Intimidation wants to overwhelm you with a sense of inferiority and fear. Once you've retreated into submission, either knowingly or unknowingly, you are a servant of the intimidator. You are no longer free to fulfill the will of God but are subject to the desires of your intimidating captor.

Consequently, the gift of God, His spiritual ability in you, is inoperative. Now your authority has been stripped from you in order to be used against both you and those in your sphere of influence.

The origin of intimidation is fear, which has its root in our adversary, the devil. He is the originator of all fear and timidity (Gen. 3:1–10, especially v. 10). He will attack us by way of thoughts, imaginations and visions, or he will use circumstances and those under his influence to intimidate us. Either way, he has one objective: to control and limit us.

The same day he won so great a battle, he ran for his life. He was so intimidated and discouraged by Jezebel that he wanted to die. The purpose of her intimidation was to prevent Elijah from completing God's purpose. She wanted to reverse his influence over the nation. She wanted him destroyed and out of the way. Even though she couldn't kill him, she still accomplished one goal by terrifying him into running away and wishing for death. Unwittingly, he was cooperating with her plan. If he could have seen clearer he would have never run.

Symptoms of Intimidation

An intimidating spirit unleashes confusion, discouragement and frustration. Its goal is to cause you to lose your proper perspective. Everything will seem overwhelming, difficult or even impossible. The stronger the intimidation, the greater the discouragement and hopelessness. If intimidation is not dealt with immediately, it will cause you to do things you never would do if you were not under its influence. This is exactly the goal of intimidation.

Before I understood how intimidation worked, I would sit in my hotel room fighting discouragement and hopelessness. I would wonder, What good is all this doing? Who do you think you are? I would sometimes even have these thoughts in the morning after a great service.

I couldn't shake the heaviness. I would pray, and it seemed God was nowhere. Just as with Elijah, my focus had shifted to me, me, me. I felt ineffective; I considered my ministry to be worthless. That is why Elijah said, "It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!" (1 Kings 19:4).

I finally recognized that my behavior was exactly what this intimidating, discouraging spirit wanted. It wanted me to back off from what God sent me to do.

I boldly broke free and felt released from confusion and frustration.

God knew Elijah was determined to run. When a man has it in his heart to do something, God will often let him do it even if it is not His perfect will. When a man sets his heart to do something, God will not stop him, even if it is not God's perfect will.

The work God had begun through Elijah could not be completed until Jezebel was confronted. She was at the very root of Israel's problem. The Bible says, "But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up" (1 Kings 21:25). The Lord would have been with Elijah had he not fled, just as He had been with him on Mount Carmel. But he was intimidated by Jezebel and was knocked out of his authority. The gift to finish the task was dormant.

If the wrong influence of a leader is not confronted and put to a stop, then it is only a matter of time before the wickedness filters down to those under their charge.

You say, "But Ahab was the leader, and Elijah was not afraid of him." Yes and no. Ahab bore the title of leader, but he had yielded his authority to his wife. Therefore, in the realm of the spirit she was the "strong man" over the idolatry in Israel. She was the instigator of the Baal worship. It was her influence that caused the entire nation of Israel, with the exception of the seven thousand faithful to God, to depart from the worship of the one true God. Since she was not directly confronted, her influence remained.

They run the show behind the scenes by controlling the person with the title of leader.

When God told Elijah to anoint Elisha "prophet in your place," it was because Elijah had surrendered his place of authority because of intimidation.

When we are intimidated, we give up our position of authority. Consequently, the gift of God to serve and protect lies dormant. We end up unintentionally furthering the cause of the one intimidating us.

An Intimidated Person Honors What He Fears More Than God

Intimidation paralyzes us in the realm of the spirit. It causes us to compromise what we know to be right. It causes us to allow or tolerate what we, under other circumstances, wouldn't stand for.

To honor means "to regard, esteem or respect."

An intimidated person honors what he fears more than he honors God. With or without realizing it, he submits to what intimidates him.

When leaders relinquish their authority, all those under their care suffer.

I warned this pastor, "You are allowing sin to spread unchecked throughout your church. God will hold you accountable for the effect on the other sheep!" I went on, "A shepherd not only feeds the sheep but protects them as well. You like feeding them, but you are afraid of protecting them because you don't like confrontation. But both are important! You need to confront this man in a firm and loving way, and if he does not repent immediately, remove him from the church." If we don't feed sheep they will starve, but if we don't protect them they will be devoured.

It is convenient love, not true love, if you do not protect those people.

I explained, “You’re intimidated by your own board. You need to step back into your God given-authority and tell them you are the pastor—not them.”

Repenting of the weakness he had tolerated in his life and ministry

By His grace I am now free.

Spiritual Resistance Requires Spiritual Assistance

First, fear, or timidity, is a spirit, and second, it is not from God.

The Greek word for spirit in this passage is pneuma, which is the same word used for the Holy Spirit or the spirit of man or a demon, according to Strong’s concordance. Intimidation is not an attitude or a disposition. It is a spirit.

Since intimidation is a spirit it cannot be fought on the level of our intellect or will. Having a positive mental attitude will not overcome intimidation. Spiritual resistance requires spiritual assistance. It must be addressed in the realm of the spirit.

Why would people who are intelligent and physically strong struggle with intimidation—often from someone or something weaker in body or mind? Perhaps everything is fine, but they live in constant dread that their circumstances might change for the worse. They spend all their time and energy worrying and trying to safeguard themselves against what may never happen. It is impossible for them to enjoy the present because they are so afraid of their future. It doesn’t make sense, yet no matter how you reason with them, their fear persists. They have a spirit of timidity, or fear. They are not fighting natural weakness but spiritual weakness.
Next, consider men and women who always seem to get their way. Their stature or education doesn’t matter. They may not hold any position of authority, yet those around them back down and yield to them. Why? It’s simple. They control others by a spirit of intimidation. They have learned how to use intimidation to their advantage.

However, he allowed one woman to intimidate him into running away and wanting to die! It doesn’t make sense.

No, this was a spiritual conflict of such magnitude that the nation, the king and the false prophets paled in comparison. Elijah faced in Jezebel a strong, controlling spirit of intimidation that the king and the false prophets did not have.

Do not stumble over the word witchcraft. Don’t make the mistake of thinking of a woman with a wart on her nose flying around on a broom, casting spells and using potions. A person exercises witchcraft when he or she seeks to control. Yes, there is a form of witchcraft or control that conjures up demonic spirits. However, witchcraft is not limited to this. Paul rebuked the Galatian church, “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth” (Gal. 3:1). This bewitching was not from potions or spells. Paul was referring to teachers who had persuaded them to disobey what God had clearly revealed to them. These teachers were not masters of the occult, but they did have a controlling spirit. And it had affected the entire church.

When you let fear enter your heart, here are some of the things you stand to lose:

- Peace
- Confidence
- Courage
- Endurance
- Heroism
- Resolution
- Security

I have watched as people tried to rid themselves of fear's torment through positive thinking. They do not escape, for they are dealing with fear's effects, not its origin.
So to break the power of intimidation, you must go after the spiritual force behind it.

Control and Intimidating Spirits in the Church

In our churches are those whose hearts are not right before God. They intimidate leadership to get what they want. They act submissive until things don't go their way. When the leadership is weak, they are the ones who run the church.

Intimidation is a spirit that gains expression through any person who will yield to it, even through a believer! The Bible admonishes believers not to give place to the devil (Eph. 4:27).

What we do not confront will not change. If evil is ignored it becomes stronger!

Believers need to learn to live in the spirit. The Spirit of God will reveal what you are up against. Without discernment we will focus our attention on the side effects.

My focus would be on me, not on what God had for those people.

"When I put you into a position of leadership over a service [or anything else], you are responsible to maintain order and authority over that service. I will not do it, because I have entrusted it to you. When I put Adam in the garden, I told him to guard it. When the devil came to destroy, though I knew the severe consequence not only for Adam but also for the entire human race, I did not come down and knock the fruit out of his hand! I do not take back what I have given, and I had given him that responsibility. The man and woman I told you to confront had a rebellious spirit. When you did not confront them, that spirit was allowed to preside over the service. When this happened, My Spirit lifted because you gave your authority away. As the shepherd of these people, you are called not only to feed them but also to protect them. Protection will mean confrontation."

Intimidation is a spirit and must be dealt with accordingly. If we try to fight spiritual battles with fleshly weapons, we will at best be frustrated, and at worst, wounded and defeated.

The goal of intimidation is to make us give up our authority, thereby rendering our gifts inoperative.

So, if intimidation lulls the gift asleep, what wakes it up? The answer: boldness. Intimidation causes a person to draw back, while boldness lunges forward even in the face of opposition.

True boldness comes from God and is fueled by godly virtue. Boldness that is fueled by God's character awakens the gifts in our lives.

David said, "The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1). David declared the Lord his source of strength and power. Knowing there is none greater than God, he could fearlessly declare, "I fear no one!"

Eliab was now bold—bold with anger. He attacked David's character, not the problem facing Israel. When a person is intimidated, he looks for an escape, a release of pressure. If he is weak, he will make excuses. If he is strong, he will often attack those who have confronted him by putting some form of blame back on them.

People who have strong personalities will use intimidation to make a lie look like the truth. You must stay in the spirit to overcome the strength of such attacks.

Usually intimidation will accuse you of the very weakness it seeks to hide. Those who act pure outwardly but have an impure heart will always attack the pure in heart. Remember that pure-hearted Timothy was intimidated.

David was so confident in God's power that he was able to put his life on the line. This boldness woke up the gift of God in him, and he defeated the giant who intimidated and oppressed the entire army forty days!

Could it be clearer? He has given his people power over all the enemy possesses. Intimidation is an enemy. It lies to you and says, I have more authority or power than you. You had better back off and do what I say! If you don't, you'll pay the consequences.

If we listen to these intimidating lies, the gift of God will go dormant, and we will live in an oppressed state. But when we know the One who has promised to be faithful, we can rest in the power that is above all other powers and, with David, face our giant of intimidation with great boldness.

Ask yourself and answer honestly: Does your confidence rest in what God has said or in what you see and experience? If you measure everything by what has happened in your past, you will never grow beyond it.

Do you base your belief on what you see happen to others? Is your level of trust gauged by the faithfulness of others?

Jesus wasn't wishy-washy like so many leaders are today! He made it clear to them that the gift of God would remain dormant in them if they could not believe. He wanted it known that He was grieved with them.

You can be outgoing, strong, bold—even anointed—and still fight intimidation. When the pressure becomes strong enough, what you're made of is exposed. Possessing a spirit of timidity has nothing to do with a deficiency in personality, physical strength or anointing. So, what does render people vulnerable to intimidation?

The word Gethsemane literally means an "oil press." An oil press extracts oil from the olive. The olive does not freely yield oil. Only when great pressure is applied will the oil from within come out. Gethsemane is the place of such pressure—not on olives, but on hearts. Under intense pressure what is inside us will come out, often to our own surprise. In other words, the motives of your heart are tried and exposed when trials (pressures) come.

Jesus loved His Father more than His own life, so He could lay His life down.

Boldness is not how loudly or how much we talk. It is also found in silence—silence while false accusations are thrown in your face. Jesus stayed in His authority by not reacting. He knew they had no power over Him. To react would indicate they did. They attempted to control Jesus with their accusations, threats and powerful positions. To answer them would be folly, for they had no concern for the truth. Jesus knew they couldn't take His life because He had already given it to the Father!

The root of fear and intimidation is the love of self. Perfect love casts out fear and gives us boldness. Boldness born of love breaks the grip of intimidation. Imperfect love, or self-love opens the door to intimidation.

> Love has been perfected among us in this: That we may have boldness in the day of judgment. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. — 1 JOHN 4:17–18

Fear and intimidation are magnified as we focus on ourselves.

Fear should no longer torment us because a dead person can't be tormented. You can point a gun at a man in a casket and threaten him, but he won't even blink.

All Boldness Is Not Motivated by Love

I believe his boldness was drawn from the approval of others. He thrived on impressing others. The fear normally hidden by his outgoing personality was exposed.

How do we develop roots that will hold us firm? What are we to be rooted in? Ephesians 3:17 says that we are to be rooted and grounded in our love for Christ. True love does not seek its own.

The boldness it takes to break the power of intimidation must be fueled by our love for God.

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear [intimidation], but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). Power is a part of breaking intimidation, but it is not enough by itself.

The Only Way to Conquer Intimidation Is to Lose Your Life

I believe Jesus was telling Peter, “You failed before in the strength of affectionate love, but there is coming a day when you will face your greatest fear and be victorious in the strength of perfected love.”

He will strengthen us when we are intimidated. He will allow us to face repeatedly what we fear until we are victorious. When we come to the end of our strength, we will cry out for His. In this strength we cannot fail because love never fails (1 Cor. 13:8). God does not want us running from our areas of weakness. He wants us to face them fearlessly.

The Lord was essentially saying, “Paul, don’t ask Me to remove these things, but rather ask that My grace and strength will raise you above what you cannot handle. Paul, where there are no obstacles, there is no need for power. A victory can occur only where there is a battle. The greater the battle, the greater the victory. A true soldier does not run from conflict but runs to it.”

Paul loved Jesus more than his own life. He was prepared to die—and was most willing to live—for Him.

Our attitude should be, Lord, however You will be glorified, have Your way, but the devil will not have his!

The key to Paul’s boldness is that he did not consider his life dear. He also understood that God’s plan for his life included facing trials and persecutions. His love for Jesus was greater than his love for life itself. Paul’s life points to the secret of finishing the race. Lay down your life and take up Christ’s. Often this will mean we lay down what is comfortable and pick up the uncomfortable— the cross.

We are matured in the midst of suffering.

We will never win the battle over intimidation unless we refuse to love our lives even to the death.

The only way to conquer intimidation is to lose your life.

Don’t compare yourself with others. Just follow Me!” So many people measure their lives and ministries by what others do and say. You don’t want to measure yourself by the wrong standard.

Self-esteem and a good self-image are not in the Bible. Feeling good about yourself is not a requirement for loving and following Jesus.

Isaiah prophesied concerning Jesus, “His delight is in the fear of the Lord” (Isa. 11:3). His delight should be ours!

The only way to walk totally free from intimidation is to walk in the fear of the Lord.

Strong confidence produces the boldness we need to go God’s way rather than man’s way.

First, what is the fear of God? It includes, but is more than, respecting Him. Fearing Him means to give Him the place of glory, honor, reverence, thanksgiving, praise and preeminence He deserves. (Notice it is what He deserves, not what we think He deserves). He holds this position in our lives when we esteem Him and His desires over and above our own. We will hate what He hates and love what He loves, trembling in His presence and at His Word.

Second, let's examine the fear of man. To fear man is to stand in alarm, anxiety, awe, dread and suspicion, cowering before mortal men. When entrapped by this fear we will live on the run, hiding from harm or reproach, and constantly avoiding rejection and confrontation. We become so busy safeguarding ourselves and serving men we are ineffective in our service for God. Afraid of what man can do to us, we will not give God what He deserves.

Fearing man steals your God-given authority. His gift then lies dormant in you. You feel powerless to do what is right because the empowering of God is inactive.

When we please men to escape reproach, we forget the Lord.

You will serve and obey whom you fear! If you fear man, you will serve him. If you fear God, you will serve Him. You cannot fear God if you fear man because you cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24)! On the other hand, you will not be afraid of man if you fear God!

When you truly love God and fear Him alone, you will live a life of consecration, not worldliness.

Notice that the fear of God gives you power over sin. Proverbs 16:6 says, "By the fear of the Lord one departs from evil."

The fear of God draws you toward God's presence, not away from it. However, the fear of man causes you to withdraw from God and His glory.

If we do not grow in the fear of the Lord, we risk the danger of becoming familiar with God and treating as common the things He considers holy.

His goodness draws us to His heart, and His severity keeps us from pride and all manner of sin.

A person is seduced into sin when he counts as common or familiar what God esteems as holy. Too often we take lightly the things God takes seriously, and we treat seriously the things God treats lightly. We are very serious about appearing respectable to other people, but that's not as important to God as the motives of our hearts.

God is looking for those who will also reverence and fear Him when they do not perceive His presence or power, like children who obey even when their father is not watching.

He feared man more than God so he was easily intimidated by the people. There was no boldness in him, the gift of God was dormant. This made him a weak leader. When confronted by Moses, he blamed the people who had intimidated him.

Aaron did not take responsibility for what he had done. Yes, his assessment of the people was correct. It was their idea, not Aaron's. But because he feared them he was not strong enough to break the intimidation of the crowd and lead them correctly. He was entrapped by the fear of man.

The man who fears God is only concerned with what God says about him. The man who fears men is more concerned with what men think about him than God. He offends God in order not to offend man.

The kingdom of God is not a democracy. It is a kingdom. Popularity is not important.

Notice He said, "I am giving . . . " He did not say, "Spy out the land and see if they can take it." In this verse we find the root of man's fear: Would it not be better for us? These people were intimidated because they thought only of themselves. They did not say, "What God says is best." Instead they asked, "What is best for us?"

The root of the fear of man is the love of self. When you love your life, you seek to save it. You will be intimidated by anything that threatens it.

We can only follow Him in these circumstances when we have settled in our hearts that God is good. There is only good in Him. He would never do anything to us for only His benefit at our eternal expense or harm!

It is a sobering thought to know that many will be rejected by God because they feared rejection by man.

The Fear of the Lord Produces Confidence and Boldness

The fear of man causes us to avoid rejection, harm and reproach from man without considering God's rejection. A person who fears man will offend the One he cannot see in order not to offend the one he can.

If you fear the Lord, you can walk through any difficulty in a manner that honors God. You recognize that He alone can keep you, and you will trust that He knows what is best in the eternal scheme of things.

It is crucial that we do not react under pressure. We must act according to the word of the Lord.

Because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.

David was careful not to do anything without hearing the word of God on the matter.

Even under tremendous pressure, David would not move until he first received the counsel of the Lord. He strengthened himself by turning to the Lord. He reminded himself of God's faithfulness and covenant.

David acted, while Saul reacted. David could act and not react because he knew what God was saying. When we have the mind of Christ, we are equipped with the courage to act and not react.

In an earlier chapter we discovered that it takes boldness to break intimidation—not natural boldness, but boldness fueled by the godly virtues of power, love and a sound mind. This was our key verse:

"Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

Let's look at how these three things produced the boldness in David that it took to withstand any intimidation he faced:

1. Power: He knew God, and he knew that God was greater and more powerful than anything David would face.

2. Love: He loved God more than himself.

3. A sound mind: He would not be moved until he had the word or mind of the Lord, no matter how great the pressure.

The spirit of a sound mind is not born of natural wisdom or special training in Scripture.

Jesus declared, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Notice He did not say "proceeded." That would be past tense.

The Scriptures alone are what proceeded out of the mouth of God. He said "proceeds," which is present tense. We must know the Lord of the Scriptures to know what is proceeding out of His mouth today.

The reason some do not speak, teach or preach with authority is because they study out a message from the Bible, then relate their mental understanding of these scriptures. They speak of what God said and did instead of what He is saying and doing! Only when we speak by the Spirit of God will we speak with authority.

We are admonished to walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6). Jesus only did what He saw the Holy Spirit do. If we do that, we will have soundness of mind and possess the boldness we need to overcome intimidation and control.

Perhaps it is not a person or group that resists you, but you wrestle with your own mind as it is bombarded with thoughts.

What man considers insignificant, God uses to perform the impossible. Then He gets all the glory!

"The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right of memorial in Jerusalem" (Neh. 2:20).

Anger is another weapon of intimidation. It will be wielded against you in order to stop or deter you. From this anger can come blatant—or subtle—threats. This distraction is a very effective tool of intimidation. I have watched many times as people backed away from what they knew was right or what they should do, in order to avoid the wrath of others. They made special concessions in order to keep a false peace.

Often when God commissions us, we face resistance and opposition from without and within.

So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?"

Nehemiah stayed strong, focusing on what God had commanded him to do. He would not be deterred from his commission. The enemy wants to sidetrack us to make us ineffective in our labor. Satan will not try this only once. He is persistent. We must be stronger in our resolve than he is in his. That is why the Bible says we are to "resist him, steadfast in the faith" (1 Pet. 5:9).

The word steadfast means "strong, firm and immovable." Too many people give up after a few hits from the enemy rather than remaining immovable until the victory is complete.

Nehemiah still would not stop. He was too focused to be sidetracked by slander. Too often we are drawn off course by trying to smooth things over with an enemy who is trying to intimidate us.

I have had to look at people and say, "Why are you allowing the lies of this person to affect what God has called you to do? Just because he accuses you doesn't mean he is right or he wants the truth! You need to know what God says about you and His plan for you. Why try to reason with foolishness?" The Bible says, "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him" (Prov. 26:4).

The last person who attempted to stop Nehemiah was a man who came and prophesied that he should seek refuge in the temple, because the enemy was coming to kill him (Neh. 6:10). But if Nehemiah left the work site, it would weaken the men and keep the work from completion.

Nehemiah responded, "Should such a man as I flee? And who is there such as I who would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!" (Neh. 6:11). Nehemiah then perceived that God had not sent this man at all: he pronounced this prophecy against Nehemiah because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Now look at what Nehemiah said after this:

> He had been hired to intimidate me so that I would commit a sin by doing this, and then they would give me a bad name to discredit me. — NEHEMIAH 6:13, NIV

The enemy can give you a bad name by intimidating you into protecting yourself at all costs. Nehemiah had the mind of the Lord; therefore, he was able to discern the pure and true from the evil and deceptive.

For they all were trying to make us afraid, saying, "Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done." Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.

Again we see the purpose of intimidation: to weaken us so we cannot accomplish the will of God and will no longer resist the intimidator. If we do not stand against this steadfastly, we will succumb.

When you decide to live in the high call, you will face opposition and resistance. “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Again we are told, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

We trust our plans and programs more than we trust God.

Few Christians possess the persistently determined character necessary to obtain the high calling of God. When met with opposition, they turn aside to the path of least resistance. At first this escape route appears to be a good choice, with its promise of ease. But this road is paved with the characteristics of lukewarmness: compromise, apathy and self-preservation.

Remember how Elijah was overwhelmed with discouragement because of Jezebel’s intimidation? He withdrew and ran. He was so disheartened that he was knocked out of his authority. We need to treat discouragement as an enemy. We underestimate its power to prevent us from obtaining the high calling of God. If God tells Joshua seven times to be strong and courageous, then we must take heed also. Discouragement is a killer! If not confronted, it will cause us to draw back.

It is important to realize that God takes no pleasure in cowards. We are told, “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev. 21:7–8, emphasis added).

The word coward means “one who shows ignoble fear in the face of pain or danger.” Isn’t it sobering that God groups cowards with murderers and the sexually immoral? Yet we excuse ourselves, claiming that cowardly behavior is a weakness.

No, cowardice comes from unbelief. And unbelief cost the children of Israel their lives. They never entered their promised land. “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb. 3:19).

It is no different today. A coward does not conquer. He will not receive that which is promised.

The Lord strongly exhorted us through the apostle Paul:

> Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast . . . and not in any way terrified by your adversaries. — PHILIPPIANS 1:27–28

Stand fast and don’t allow your adversaries to terrify you. Be brave, strong and courageous, ready to face and deal with any opposition rather than withdrawing from it!

Christians who are not armed to suffer are easily captured and held imprisoned by the fear of man—intimidation.

Guard the purity of your heart and stay in your position of authority as God's child and servant. Then you can boldly declare:

The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

Never to allow any previous failures to hold you back. Don't judge your future by where you've been! If you do, you'll never go beyond your past! No matter how often you have fallen, there is unfailing hope—God specializes in turning cowards into champions! His power is perfected in weakness.