

I. Introduction

- A. Do whatever you want.
- B. Today is part four in our series called Freedom. Today, I want to talk about freedom from self-doubt. Freedom from inferiority.
- C. If you are even halfway normal, you will struggle with this. The struggle to feel good enough never goes away. The top three fears are:
 1. Tree: fear of the dark
 2. Two: fear of public speaking
 3. One: fear of heights
 - a) I have phobias one and two. Fear of heights and fear of public speaking.
 - b) I think I told you about going zip lining in Hawaii. My family was there, and we decided to take the kids zip lining... but the place required at least one paying adult, so we flipped a coin, and I lost.
 - c) I don't like heights. I don't like bridges. I don't like skinny little wires strung through trees with me zipping along them.
 - d) God designed me for luxury, and to keep my feet on the ground.
 - e) So we're zip lining back and forth, and I'm handling it. Then we come to this suspension bridge over a mildly deep gorge. A few wires holding up a planks. You hook your harness to a safety wire, and walk across the planks.
 - f) There are a whole lot of problems with this picture. The whole bridge is swaying. The planks are only about a foot wide and ten inches across. We're in a group of maybe fifteen people.
 - g) The first few go across. Then it's my turn.
 - h) My stomach is in knots. My palms are sweaty. My heart is racing. My kids are behind me. Margi is there too. Everybody watching. I tell myself, I can do this.
 - i) I step out onto the first few planks. I'm doing okay. But then the bridge starts to sway, and I freeze. Everybody's waiting. I'm holding up the whole group. So I back out, and tell others to go ahead.
 - j) A little kid goes, no problem.
 - k) A grandma goes, no problem. Her husband follows. Carrying her walker.
 - l) If you googled Loser, my picture would pop up. That's how I'm feeling.
 - m) I try it again, and I freak out again, and I back out again.
 - n) I let everybody go. Now, I'm the last one.
 - o) The rest of the group is on the other side of this crack in the earth, at the far end of the suspension bridge.
 - p) And they're cheering for me, because my awesome children told them my name.
 - q) Bill! Bill! Bill! Bill! You can do it Bill! Yes! Bill! Go Bill Go!!!
 - r) Hey, no pressure.
 - s) I start. I go a few steps. My brain spins in circles. I look down and see a deep rocky gorge with a Hawaiian stream running through the bottom and I know it wants to eat me.
 - t) I hear the people cheering for me.
 - u) My legs are trembling.
 - v) Time is standing still.
 - w) I take another step. And then another. Go Bill Go!
 - x) And then... it's over. I back out. I'm not going. Fear of heights, you win. Sorry everybody.
 - y) I don't even like standing by the edge of this stage. How in the world can I cross a wiry little suspension bridge?
 - (1) The group went on without me, and I walked to the next station without ever crossing that bridge.
 - (2) I felt so embarrassed and so ashamed. I let my kids down. What is wrong with me?
- D. I also have fear number two, which is fear of public speaking.
 1. God must have dedicated a whole day to IRONY when he made me a pastor.
 2. I remember once I was a young pastor. I had launched a new church in Chicago, and we were about four hundred people. Our church participated in a big feed day for homeless people. There were maybe ten churches involved. The leader was a really great guy and a pastor named Jim Queen. We had maybe a thousand people in this giant room, and we were serving food and turkey and all that.
 3. There was a stage and a microphone, and Jim Queen said, Hey Bill, why don't you go preach the gospel? It'll be great! Come on!
 4. Now, I could pull that off today, but not back then.
 5. I don't like speaking in public. I don't like everybody looking at me. I don't want to be the center of attention. Public speaking scares me.
 6. So Jim grabs me and says, hey Bill, go preach the gospel. I freak out. I shake off his arm and say, "Um, no thanks Jim. You do it."
 7. I felt really stupid. By then, I had been preaching for a lot of years. I can preach. BUT... when I preach, I am prepared. In fact, I probably over prepare.
 8. But that preparation is how I help manage my fear of public speaking. I still do it. I bring a ton of notes into the pulpit every time I speak. Even to this day, the hardest walk for me is the walk from backstage to the pulpit. I pray hard, and ask God to help, and then I come out here and let myself go.
 9. But back to the story.
 10. So here is a mentor and a highly respected pastor, asking me, another pastor, to do the very reasonable and easy thing of preaching the gospel.
 11. I say no.
 12. Jim gives me this look like there's something wrong with me. "You can do it, Bill. It'll be great."
 13. I'm thinking, I should be able to do this. A normal pastor could do this. It's the gospel. You're such a loser, Bill.
 14. So I tell Jim no. It felt so embarrassed and ashamed.
- E. Have you ever had a time when you didn't feel good enough? Do you ever struggle with self-doubt?

1. Nobody is ever going to date me.
 2. I won't be able to get into a good college.
 3. Or get a good job.
 4. I'm not good enough, smart enough, pretty enough, godly enough. I'm a loser and I can't change it.
- F. The Bible gives us an awesome case study of people who felt exactly that way.
- II. Spying Out the Land
- A. First a little background.
 - B. A bunch of people going home. The whole nation of Israel. They left slavery in Egypt about a year ago. Now, they're on the border of their homeland.
 - C. But there's a problem. While they were gone, other people moved in. So when they get home, they find out their home is occupied.
 - D. To solve the problem, they send in twelve spies. They wait for the report. Forty long days of biting their nails, pacing back and forth, and basically feeling totally inadequate.
 - E. When the spies finally issue their report, it's good news and bad news. The good news is that the place is awesome.
 - F. The bad news is there is no way we can drive these interlopers out. Here's the report.
 1. But the people living there are powerful, and their cities and towns are fortified and very large.... "We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!"

So they spread discouraging reports about the land among the Israelites: *"The land we explored will swallow up any who go to live there. All the people we saw were huge. We even saw giants there...We felt like grasshoppers next to them, and that's what we looked like to them!"* (Numbers 13:28-33, NLT)
 - G. The next verse says the people cried all night.
 1. No needless drama there!
 - H. One of my favorite pastors (Erwin Lutzer, Moody Church, Chicago), calls this the Grasshopper Complex.
 - I. It is the fear of not being good enough. Not smart enough. Not pretty enough. Not popular enough. Not big enough, strong enough, creative enough, you name it.
 1. You filled out a job application but could not attend the interview because you kept hearing a voice in the back of your head, "You will fail". So you quit before you could begin.
 2. Or perhaps you were raised in a home with really demanding parents. Nothing you did was ever right. So now, you feel you cannot do anything right and you are doomed for perpetual failure
 3. This is how the Grasshopper works in instilling fear in the hearts of believers.
 4. The grasshopper complex paralyzes Christians.
 5. It demoralizes you.
 6. The feelings that you are not good enough halt you from moving forward in your faith.
 - J. If that is how you feel, then know that you are not alone. The Grasshopper Complex is the number one affliction of many Christians. It has afflicted some of the most famous of spiritual heroes, like Gideon, Peter, and even Moses and Joshua felt it.
 - K. What does God have to say to a person who struggles with self-doubt, the person who feels that failure lurks around every corner?
- III. Four Encouragements from God
- A. 1. Every every worthwhile destiny has a giant blocking the way.
 1. If you are going to make a difference in the world, if you are going to live for some purpose bigger than yourself, you will have to get around the giants.
 2. Martin Luther King accepted the destiny of fighting racism, and he faced the giants of hatred, and an establishment that didn't want to change, and a church that many times didn't care.
 3. In the 1800s in England, George Mueller pursued the destiny of taking care of orphaned children. Back then, they were abandoned and left on the streets to fend for themselves. Mueller built orphanages, and homes, and housed them by the thousands in the name of Jesus. All without every asking for a penny. Every worthwhile destiny has giant blocking the way.
 4. If your life is always easy, maybe you're avoiding your destiny.
 5. The Grasshopper complex tells you a lie. It says the reason you're having all these problems is because of you. YOU are not enough. You are not worthy. You are not able.
 6. But the truth is usually something else.
 7. The reason you're having all these problems is because you are discovering your destiny, and you cannot do that without conquering difficulty.
 8. Sometimes, the struggles tell you you are on the right path.
 - a) *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (Romans 8:37)*
 9. So don't give up. Don't quit. Don't follow the example of Israel and cry all night.
 10. Set a timer. Give yourself five or ten minutes. Cry. Whine. Feel sorry for yourself for ten minutes. Then turn it off, and go slay some giants.
 11. If you weren't pursuing something wonderful, the devil wouldn't care, and he wouldn't be pushing all these obstacles in your path.
 12. Every worthwhile destiny has a giant blocking the way.
 - B. 2. God is on your side and he's bigger than any stupid giant.
 1. *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31)*
 2. The answer is "nobody." Nobody can be against you, and make it stick.
 - a) When you are at school, God is on your side.
 - b) When you are alone, God is on your side.
 - c) When you are afraid, God is on your side.

- d) When you are preaching the gospel to a crowd or walking across a ridiculous suspension bridge, God is on your side.
3. Your biggest struggle is not the bridge or the crowd or the fear or the aloneness.
4. Your biggest problem is unbelief.
5. When the people saw the giants, this is what God told them:
 - a) *But Caleb tried to encourage the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!" (Numbers 13:30, NLT)*
6. There were twelve spies who brought back a report of the promised land.
7. Ten spies looked at the giants and concluded it was impossible.
8. Two spies looked at God and concluded, no problem.
9. The difference between unbelief and world-changing faith is as simple as where your focus is.
10. If you keep your eyes on God, you may get knocked down, but you'll always get back up.
 - a) *Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior... (Isaiah 43:1-3)*
11. A few years after I wimped out from preaching the gospel, I had another chance.
12. I was sitting at home, a little before seven at night, relaxing with nothing I had to do. My phone rang.
 - a) "Is this Bill?"
 - b) "Yes, who's calling?"
 - c) "Bill, this is John at Pacific Garden Mission. We have you scheduled to preach the gospel tonight. How soon will you be here?"
13. Pacific Garden Mission is a giant place in Chicago. It's much like our Good News Rescue Mission in Redding, only several times larger. Every night, they gathered their guests and preached the gospel. I had done this a few times, and was always really prepared.
14. And now, it was my turn again. But guess which flaky pastor forgot to put it on his calendar?
15. So I was getting this phone call from John, who just asked me, "How soon will you be here?"
16. I said, "How long till the sermon starts?"
17. He said, "You have 33 minutes."
18. I said, "I'll be there."
19. I raced to change my clothes — the Mission required a shirt and a tie. I grabbed my Bible. Grabbed some clothes. Threw a tie over my shoulder, raced to my car. In zero traffic, this would be a 25 minute drive. Plus finding a place to park on South State Street, that great street.
20. I'm racing through the city streets. I'm putting on a tie with one hand while I'm driving with the other. I'm honking at slow people. Laws may have been broken.
21. My heart is pounding, and I'm thinking... I have to preach the gospel, and I have no clue what to say.
22. All my inferiority rises to the top. I'm stupid. How could I forget this date? This is going to be a disaster. I don't know what to say.
23. But then I remembered something. I remembered that God would be with me. And as I raced down the streets, I suddenly began to feel peace. And all these verses flooded my mind:
 - a) *God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in time of trouble. (Psalms 46:1)*
 - b) *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? (Psalms 27:1)*
 - c) *So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11)*
24. I get to the location. I park in a \$30 parking lot. I sprint through skid row to mission. They have a guy there to meet me.
25. "Are you Bill?"
26. [Heavy breathing...] I nod my head.
27. "Let's go!"
28. He leads me through this maze of hallways that smelled like urine, and we get into this big auditorium. There are hundreds of people filling every seat, and they finish singing a song, and the guy gives me a shove and says... your turn.
29. May I remind you that the second most common fear in America is the fear of public speaking.
30. All I remember of that sermon is that I preach from Ephesians 2:8,9, I had no preparation, and people got saved.
 - a) Every worthwhile destiny has a giant blocking the way.
 - b) God is on your side, and he's bigger than any stupid giant.
- C. 3. The biggest giants are the lies inside you.
 1. Lies about yourself.
 2. Lies about your world.
 3. Lies about your God.
 - a) *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8)*
 4. Listen, the world is a pain machine and a lot of bad stuff happens from the outside. There are a lot of evil giants out there, no doubt.
 5. But still, there's a lot of bad stuff happening on the inside because we have swallowed the devil's lies.
 6. One of the amazing benefits Jesus won for us when he died on the cross was to break the spell of the devil's lies.
 7. The shed blood of Christ proves that the devil is a liar.
 - a) You are not ugly, you are beautiful.
 - b) You are not unwanted, you are cherished.
 - c) You are not a failure, you are a masterpiece in progress.
 - d) You are not stuck, you are free.

- e) You are not doomed, not defeated, not destroyed. You are knocked down, but never knocked out.
 - (1) The biggest giants you will ever face are the lies you believe.
- f) God isn't mean.
- g) God isn't absent.
- h) God isn't a bully, or a tyrant.
- i) God isn't in your life to take from you, he's in your life to give and give more than you can ask or think.
- j) This world isn't as glamorous and good as you think it is, it is dangerous and has a dark side,.
- k) The culture of the world is not a friend of God, it is seeking to erase him.
- 8. The biggest giants you will ever face are the lies you believe... about yourself, your God, and your world.
 - a) When God's people said they were grasshoppers, they were believing a lie, and their commitment to that lie doomed them to forty years of wandering in the wilderness.
 - b) But that is not God's plan for you.
 - c) And that, I believe, is not your destiny.
- 9. And God has given you his most powerful weapon to defeat those lies, and to rehab your whole way of thinking. He has given you the mighty sword of the Spirit, the word of God, the Bible.
- 10. One of the best things that ever happened to me was growing up memorizing the Bible. I can quote verses from all over the place. And the ones I can't quote, I can usually find.
- 11. That's my prayer for you.
- 12. When a person gets saved, that's awesome. But it's just the beginning,.
- 13. The next thing is slaying the gigantic lies of the devil.
 - a) *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5, NKJV).*
- 14. Chronic self-doubt is a sign you are believing some lies. Hurting yourself. Giving up. Apathy. Self-damage. Addiction... all of these are traceable to lies.
- 15. And the weapon of God's Word can slice them into oblivion.
 - a) One last lesson in breaking free from self-doubt and inferiority.
- D. 4. You + Christ = A Giant of Grace with a destiny the world's evil simply can't withstand.
 - 1. I don't care how insecure you feel today. I don't care how weird or different or confused you feel.
 - 2. Christ lives in you. This is the mystical core of our Christian life. He is making you into YOU, the real you. He's not making you weird or hyper-spiritual. He's making you, YOU. He's unburying you from the lies. He's making you into your truly awesome self, with all the potentials activated.
 - 3. The person you can become is truly awesome.
 - a) Your past can't destroy you.
 - b) Your failures can't hold you down.
 - c) Your weaknesses don't own you.
 - d) Your disabilities don't define you.
 - (1) You are spiritual royalty, destined to make your mark upon the world.
 - 4. Nobody can fill your shoes. You are unique. One of a kind.
 - 5. I preach with a lot of notes. Other pastors preach off the cuff. Great. They can do it their way, and I will do it mine.
 - 6. You may feel weak today. You may feel that you don't matter.
 - 7. Don't believe the devil's lies.
 - 8. You have Jesus. You have the gospel. And you, armed with God's Word, can change the world.
 - a) *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (Romans 8:37)*
 - 9. This isn't a pep talk, it's the Bible truth.
 - 10. If God says you're more than a conqueror, you're more than a conqueror.
 - 11. Just keep going.
 - 12. Pretty soon, the grasshopper complex will fade away, and the giants on the horizon will tremble in their boots when they see you coming.
 - 13. One of these days, I'm going back to Hawaii, and I'm going to try that suspension bridge again.
 - 14. Will I make it across?
 - 15. I'll let you know.