

Fear Not

Has anyone here today ever been scared? Has anyone ever been literally - paralyzed by fear - unable to take another step? For me: walking upon a coyote with her newborn pups while hunting. Rounding up youth to get back to the campfire after playing “*capture the flag*” stepping next to a wild turkey which takes off... my heart rate came back down.

Today we begin a 4-week series called *Fear Not*. Fear is something the bible has a lot to say about. The command “*fear not*” appears in one form or another **365 times from Genesis to Revelation**. This command is given explicitly to dozens of different individuals and groups in a variety of circumstances. It’s clear that God doesn’t want His people to fear in the face of adversity or a decision. **Why do we so often respond in fear?** What can we do about this, and is there a better way? We begin our *Fear Not* sermon series with Paul’s advice to Timothy in his 2nd letter to the young pastor. Paul’s encouragement is this:

2 Timothy 1:7 “...for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”

Some translations say *timidity* in place of *fear*... but the original Greek word can mean either... it can be translated as *cowardice*—**the Greek word used only here in NT**.

If fear doesn’t come from God, then where does it come from? **The beginning of wisdom starts with the fear of the Lord**, so what does that mean? What’s the difference?

One significant difference to recognize is that there is both a healthy and unhealthy fear. Understanding the difference will help you interpret God’s daily reassurance to *Fear Not*. Consider a healthy fear.

Healthy Fear

Healthy fear can save your life. Let’s pretend for a moment that you’re hiking in the woods, and you stumble upon a coyote and her pups. Do you think that the best course of action in this situation is to share a handful of your go-to bible verses with them and keep walking, or should you slowly back away to safety?

Healthy fear can heighten and sharpen your senses, which in many situations, is a great benefit. A person’s internal fight or flight mechanism is simply a natural response to conditions that you’ll find yourself in, like running into a coyote and her pups, getting into an accident, or having an earthquake near your home. Whether you call it fear, or maybe just common sense, there is a healthy fear in life that can be a beneficial thing to recognize again. **As followers of Christ, a healthy fear of the Lord is not only beneficial; it’s biblical!**

- **Proverbs 1:7** says, “*The **fear** of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge...*”

The Hebrew word here also means reverence, which is essential as we consider a healthy posture towards the Lord. It is good and right to hold Him in a place of awe and reverence. As the creator and sustainer of the entire universe, He is the owner of this sacred place.

- **Psalm 5:7** David says, “*...I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you...*”
- **Proverbs 9:10** Solomon states, “*... the **fear** of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*”

David had a healthy fear of the Lord throughout his life, and Solomon knew the fear of the Lord was the beginning of both knowledge and wisdom. This Divine reverence brings understanding. Remember what John said in

- **1 John 4:18** “*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.*”

Now let’s consider an unhealthy fear.

Unhealthy Fear

Unhealthy fear can paralyze and deteriorate you, and this is not God’s heart for you. “*...**God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.***” God wants you to grow in relationship with Him, with the local church, in your relationships with other believers, and ultimately in faith. This journey (being made holy) is often called the process of *sanctification*.

James says, “*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*” (**James 1:2-4**)

God wants us to persevere and finish the race to be mature and complete, not lacking anything. Today, there are many problems and difficulties that inflame fear. Just turn on the TV or the radio, etc.

Remember, the early church faced all kinds of scorn and persecution, even death. I can’t say that we fear death in our society yet, but the potential is to experience ridicule, bullying because of your faith in Christ. Your allegiance to Christ makes you an enemy of the “prince of this world”. There are powers and principalities; spiritual wickedness in high places oppose our faith. In the face of earthly and eternal enemies that the Lord reminds us to *fear not*. Fear can rob us of joy and paralyze us from moving forward into all that God has called us to. Instead of a spirit of fear, we have been given a spirit of power,

love, and self-discipline. **Let's look at these three words and how they help to strengthen our faith...**

Power

2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV) ⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of **POWER** and love and self-control.

That same word we get “dynamite” in English... is the same word that Paul uses to encourage Timothy. It is also the word that Jesus gave the disciples, as Luke records...

- **Acts 1:8** when Jesus said, *“But you will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

This kind of power leaves no room for fear or doubt. When a believer has the Holy Spirit working in them, all can be accomplished while in the will of God. Paul reminds us...

- **Romans 8:11** *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies...”*

Suppose you are experiencing unhealthy fear that is hindering you from experiencing the life in Christ. Remember, you are destined to live; you were given a spirit of power; Miracle working, death-defying, grave robbing power in Christ to do all things by the will of God. The next word...

Love

2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV) ⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and **LOVE** and self-control.

The book of 1 John uses the same word that Paul uses when he tells Timothy that he has a spirit of **love**, **GK:(agape’)** and this could be an entire sermon in and of itself; **1 John 4:18 (ESV)** *“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.”*

As Christ did, unhealthy fear is driven far away from us when we walk in a spirit of love. Jesus walked to the cross in a spirit of love, and we can assume that he walked out of the grave in the same empowered spirit. Don't forget; this is the same spirit alive in you. The next time you're experiencing fear, or any of it's associates like anxiety - worry - or doubt, then check yourself to make sure you're walking in a spirit of love. The final word...

Self-Discipline

2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV) ⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and **SELF-CONTROL.**

How many in the room struggled with self-control? You're in good company, and I have good news to share with you. It takes a lot of discipline to recognize fear and deal with it appropriately. It's simply easier to let it go, shrug it off, and just call it a fact of life. The issue is, it's not a fact of the life God has for you in Christ.

Paul wraps up his encouragement to Timothy by reminding him that he has been given a spirit of self-discipline along with the other two. We need the discipline to take the time to diagnose the fear we're experiencing and how to deal with it.

Isn't it just like God to give us exactly what we need? He knew that all three ingredients would be necessary on this side of heaven. For all of us who struggle with self-discipline, don't forget that; we have been given power through the spirit to experience victory.

Those who exhibit Godly self-discipline ... *You Version Bible App...*

Fear can be destructive in our lives. That is why we need *power, love, and self-control* to overcome it. We desperately need the discipline to check ourselves throughout the day. We need the discipline to form new habits in identifying healthy fear from unhealthy fear, and we need abundant power and love in our responses.

Thankfully, through Christ, we have been given a spirit of *power, love, and self-control*. This week the challenge is: **When you begin to feel fear, take time to identify whether it's a healthy or unhealthy fear you're dealing with.**

When you recognize unhealthy fear, you can pray for the Lord to keep you walking in a spirit of power and love, all while trusting that you can experience a breakthrough in self-control through the Holy Spirit.

Learning to diagnose fear is an essential step in dealing with it. And learning to deal with it will help you keep moving down the path God has for your life. **Let's pray together.**