

“Combating the Spirit of Fear”

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Back in the middle of March 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic was first officially recognized and many were gripped with fear, anxiety and even panic—I gave a special message I entitled “*Fear Not for I Am with You.*”

I took that title from one of my favorite verses in the Bible—

Isaiah 41:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Fear not, for I *am* with you; Be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

That was 19 months ago and this morning I’d like to revisit that topic with a message I’ve entitled, “*Combating the Spirit of Fear.*”

I don’t think most of us would argue that a spirit of fear has fallen upon our nation. We see it every day in the number of people who wear multiple face masks along with face shields—often while they are by themselves walking outside or while driving a car.

There are many people who are so scared at the prospect of getting COVID that they have barely left their houses during the last year and a half.

Many young couples refuse to take their children to see their grandparents who haven’t been vaccinated (often older people have medical complications that would make taking the vaccine dangerous for them) and so because of the fear of young parents that their children will get COVID and die— families have been divided. In places like New York City, you can’t go into a store or restaurant or other places of business without showing a vaccine passport—and some are even advocating that people not be allowed into a hospital for medical care without being vaccinated!

➤ **Why?**—Because of fear (and control!).

Because of all of this fear, alcohol and drug abuse are way up in our country—not to mention anxiety, depression and suicide. Now on top of all of that—the government (the largest employer in the country) and many employers have mandated that their employees get vaccinated or lose their jobs.

Which has caused fear to be driven even higher among those who can’t get the vaccine for medical reasons or who simply don’t want to get vaccinated for fear of the complications they might be left to deal with from the vaccine—or because they’ve already had COVID and now have natural antibodies and immunities.

So now they are left with the fear of losing their job and not being able to pay the bills and provide for their families. This spirit of fear isn’t limited to the world—it has also fallen upon many Christians and churches as well.

Which is very sad because we know God's Word clearly tells us—

2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)

⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Fear is from the devil who uses it to control us, separate us from one another and steal our joy and our victory which is in Jesus Christ—remember, a divided church is a defeated church!

Yet many Christians have been taken captive by this spirit of fear and refuse to come back to church, refuse to gather with other Christians for fellowship—or even to enjoy a simple Bar-B-Q in the backyard with family and friends for fear of getting COVID-19 and dying.

Even though the CDC says, *“Individuals are more likely to survive the coronavirus after contracting it.”* The health agency says *“If you have the virus between the ages of 0 to 70, you have a 99% survival rate. And if you’re over 70, the survival rate is nearly 95%.”*

Gov. Ron DeSantis also tweeted about the CDC update, saying people in the age groups of 0 to 19 have a 99.997% chance of survival if they contract COVID-19, the age group of 20 to 49 a 99.98% chance, 50 to 69 years old 99.5% and 70 years old and above a 94.6% chance.

One reporter said, *“[These statistics] will make people not so fearful—Get over the fear!”*

As I said in the message I gave a year and a half ago, I would never want to minimize the severity of this pandemic—but I know the Lord doesn’t want us to live in fear either!

News headline—**“The CDC’s weekly U.S. mortality dashboard reports that deaths are at the lowest weekly point since March 2020.”**

One reporter has said—

“You didn’t know that did you? With the “Delta variant” raging and all that. You probably thought that mortality was through the roof. It’s not.

*Pediatric mortality from Covid in Florida is below **flu** levels. For all of 2020, there were 22 pediatric deaths from influenza in Florida. 70 children died from drowning. 83 died from strangulation—but for all of 2020 and 2021 combined, there have only been 15 pediatric deaths from Covid-19.”*

Those other risks like drowning and suffocation are *much* more significant for kids than Covid-19—in fact, Covid-19 has been the *least likely cause of death for kids in the United States*:

Ages 1 to 4:

- Drowning kills 2.8 children per 100,000
- Vehicle accidents kills 2.3
- Homicide kills 2.2
- Cancer kills 2.0
- Cardiovascular disease kills 1.0
- Flu/pneumonia kills 0.8 children per 100,000
- Suffocation kills 0.7
- **COVID kills 0.2**

Ages 5 to 14:

- Cancer kills 2.1 children per 100,000
- Vehicle accidents kills 1.9
- Suicide kills 1.5
- Homicide kills 0.7
- Cardiovascular disease kills 0.6
- Drowning kills 0.5 children per 100,000
- Flu/pneumonia kills 0.8
- Suffocation kills 0.2
- **COVID kills 0.2**

Now please, I'm NOT trying to minimize or downplay the number of children (or adults for that matter) that have died from COVID—any death of a child, young person or adult is a tragedy. But the news media, many in the medical community, and the federal government (for some strange unknown reason) have all been 'up-playing' this pandemic making it seem much worse than it is.

I have heard and read multiple stories by whistleblowers in hospitals, both doctors and nurses that have said the numbers of COVID deaths are purposely being inflated. Again, any deaths from COVID-19 are too many—especially if it's someone you love that has died!

I'm just saying that a demonic spirit of fear has taken captive a large segment of our so-called 'experts' in the news media, the medical community and government agencies that are promoting and disseminating misinformation to control the rest of us with fear—and they have been quite successful in doing so!

One Christian writer said—

"There is a demonic spirit of fear suffocating the Earth. You know I'm right.

The Spirit of Fear is destroying relationships and tearing the Church apart. Unvaccinated grandparents are being told by their children that they can't see their grand kids and not to come around. Bizarrely, vaccinated members of your church are fearful and distrusting of their unvaccinated brothers and sisters. But Christians, in particular, are not supposed to fear...

This Spirit of Fear has caused a tsunami of worldwide terror and destruction."

Fear is a tool of the devil—again, *"God has not given us a spirit of fear."* Fear is a very powerful weapon the enemy tries to use against the people of God.

Someone has said, *"Fear is the most crippling human emotion. It paralyzes soldiers in the mist of battle and keeps Christians from sharing the lifesaving message of the gospel with those who are lost".*

In the Scriptures there are places that admonish us **to fear** some things—even extolling fear as a *virtue*—

Proverbs 9:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...

Isaiah 66:2 (NKJV)

² "...But on this *one* will I look: On *him who is poor* and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word. [fears to disobey Me]

But in contrast there are over 300 places in the Bible where we are commanded by God, as His people, **not to fear** certain things. We are commanded in Scripture not to fear man or crises or the uncertainty of the future—just to name a few.

What causes us to fear?

First of all, we become fearful when we lose the awareness of God's presence in our lives—and therefore, the *antidote* for the poison of fear is to remember that God is with us as His people—

Hebrews 13:5b (NKJV)

⁵ ...For He Himself has said, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*"

But secondly, we become fearful when we stop trusting God to watch over us and take care of us—

Isaiah 41:10, 13 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Fear not, for I *am* with you; Be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'...¹³ For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'

So those two things are the *cause* of fear—but what is the *consequence* (result) of fear?

Fear (and its companion *worry*) robs us of our peace and our joy—and why is that? —Because it robs us of our faith!

The Cure

So, simply put, the cure for fear is faith—putting our trust in the Lord!

Psalm 56:11 (NLT2)

¹¹ I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?

Psalm 56:3 (NLT2)

³ But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you.

Let me illustrate the relationship of fear and faith to each other with a story:

At a certain college, there was a professor with a reputation for being tough on Christians. At the first class every semester, he asked if anyone was a Christian and proceeded to degrade and mock their statement of faith.

One semester, he asked the question, and a young man raised his hand when asked if anyone was a Christian. The professor asked, "*Did God make everything, young man?*" "*Yes, he did, sir,*" the young man replied.

The professor responded, "*If God made everything, then God made evil, and if we can only create from within ourselves, then God is evil.*"

The student didn't have a response and the professor was happy to have once again proved the Christian faith to be a myth.

Then another man raised his hand and asked, *"May I ask you something, sir?"*

"Yes you may," responded the professor.

The young man stood up and said *"Sir, is there such thing as cold?"*

"Of course there is, what kind of a question is that? Haven't you ever been cold?"

The young man replied, *"Actually, sir, cold does not exist. What we consider to be cold, is really only the absence of heat. Absolute zero is when there is absolutely no heat, but cold does not really exist. We have only created that term to describe how we feel when heat is not there."*

The young man continued, *"Sir, is there such thing as darkness?"*

Once again, the professor responded, *"Of course there is."*

And once again, the student replied, *"Actually, sir, darkness does not exist. Darkness is really only the absence of light. Darkness is only a term man developed to describe what happens when there is no light present."*

Finally, the young man asked, *"Sir, is there such thing as evil?"*

The professor responded, *"Of course. We have rapes, and murders and violence everywhere in the world, those things are evil."*

The student replied, *"Actually sir, evil does not exist. Evil is a term man developed to describe the absence of God. God did not create evil. It isn't like truth, or love, which exist as virtues like heat and light. Evil is simply the state where God is not present, like cold without heat or darkness without light."*

The professor had nothing to say."

In a sense, I think the same thing is true when we speak of fear—fear is really only the absence of faith.

That's why fear is so bad for you spiritually because it's the absence of faith and faith is our spiritual *'umbilical cord'* that connects us to God and allows everything we need to survive and flourish spiritually to flow from God into our lives—fear strangles and cuts off that flow!

And so, when we talk about overcoming fear—we really need to talk about increasing our faith. As our faith *increases*—our fear will *decrease proportionately*! Look at it this way, how do you overcome darkness? —By turning on the light.

- How do you overcome cold? —By turning up the heat.
- How do you overcome fear, by spending years in therapy learning how to fight fear? **No!** As a believer you overcome fear (and worry) by increasing your faith.

➤ **“How do I do that?!”**

The Bible says that—*“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”* Fear and faith are mutually exclusive—in other words, you can’t walk in faith while at the same time live in fear! This goes for whatever circumstance we find ourselves in—but we must choose to live in faith and not fear.

Psalm 46:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; ³ *Though* its waters roar and be troubled, *Though* the mountains shake with its swelling.

Habakkuk 3:17-18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls-- ¹⁸ Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

In the days ahead our faith might be tested in ways we wouldn’t have thought possible a few months ago—if not from this crisis, then possibly from something else coming down the road.

The devil will no doubt try to come at us (the people of God)—*“like a flood”* to overwhelm us with fear and uncertainty about the future.

Jesus said that prior to His return:

Luke 21:26 (NKJV)

“People’s hearts would be failing them from fear of those things coming upon the earth.”

So, what do we do when we find ourselves in difficult and even frightening situations that seek to rob us of our faith and fill us with fear?

Well, let me give you 6 things (very basic):

1. Remember that God is still on the throne (Sovereign)

The first thing we always do in the face of any difficult or frightening circumstance is to remind ourselves that—God is in control of every situation (He is sovereign) and therefore what are we worried about?!

Psalms 42:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul? And *why* are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him For the help of His countenance.

When I’m facing a terrible problem, I can go on being fearful, depressed, discouraged and defeated or I can say to myself, as the Psalmist did in Psalm 40:1-3: *“What’s wrong with you? God is still on the throne. He is with me in this circumstance. He will see me through this. I’m going to hope in Him, and He will deliver me and put a new song of praise in my heart”.*

2. Take some time to quiet your heart in God’s presence

The world takes refuge in pills and alcohol—but we in the Lord our God!

Psalms 27:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!

Isaiah 30:15 (NKJV)

“...In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.”

When you’re facing terrible news don’t panic or rely on your own strength—spend some time in His presence and let *Him* calm and strengthen you.

3. Take refuge in His Word and cling to His promises.

Joshua 1:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God *is* with you wherever you go.”

Psalms 34:17-19 (NKJV)

¹⁷ *The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.* ¹⁸ *The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.* ¹⁹ *Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the Lord delivers him out of them all.*

4. Spend some time worshipping the Lord.

Praise is a manifestation of faith, and without faith it is impossible to please God! (Hebrews 11:6) We don’t praise God *for* the circumstance—we praise God *in* the circumstance.

We are commanded in Scripture—*“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18)—Why?

Because *“Everything is working together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”* (Romans 8:28)

And so, I believe that offering up praise to God in the midst of this terrible circumstance gets our eyes off the circumstance and onto God—which honors Him and allows His peace to fill our hearts.

Consider Peter on the Sea of Galilee who began to sink when he took his eyes off of the Lord during the storm

“But what if I don’t feel like praising God when I’m in the midst of a terrible circumstance?”—that’s why the Bible calls it a “sacrifice of praise!” (Hebrews 13:15)

I have been encouraged and strengthened many times when facing difficult circumstances by taking time to get alone with God and putting on some worship music and praising Him. Praising God for what He’s going to do—even before He does anything is a manifestation of faith which is essential if God’s power is going the flow into our lives and help us in our time of need.

5. Pray

Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT2)

⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

So often when adversity strikes, we spend most of our time worrying about what *we're* going to do to 'fix it'—instead of asking God what *He* wants us to do!

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. ⁶ Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

6. Obey God completely and with all your heart in all He tells you to do

The very first thing He is telling you to do is—not to fear!

➤ **Aren't you glad that you know Jesus Christ?**

What peace there is from knowing that our future is secure as children of God and that we don't need to fear what's coming—

Matthew 6:25-34 (NLT2)

²⁵ "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? ²⁸ "And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, ²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? ³¹ "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. ³⁴ "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Psalms 33:18-22 (NLT2)

¹⁸ But the LORD watches over those who fear him, those who rely on his unfailing love. ¹⁹ He rescues them from death and keeps them alive in times of famine. ²⁰ We put our hope in the LORD. He is our help and our shield. ²¹ In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. ²² Let your unfailing love surround us, LORD, for our hope is in you alone.