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#### SPIRIT OF FEAR

#### WEEK 1 – Then there was fear

#### <u>DAY 1</u>

#### DO NOT BE AFRAID

It was a dark and stormy night. The sound of the raging wind pounding on my ears masked the sound of my rapidly beating heart. With no light to break the darkness, the darkness immersed me; blinding me to everything except my worst fears. My fear of loneliness, my fear of helplessness, and my fear of death consumed me as I stood paralyzed by the sum of those fears. There was no way of escape and every passing moment was like a countdown to the one that could be my last. Suddenly, out of the darkness, emerged a ghost. The hairs on my neck stood straight up and I fell on my face trembling and overcome with a fear that made the sum of all previous fears pale in comparison. Suddenly, there was a voice...A voice that pierced through all the darkness...A voice that defied the sound of the raging wind. This voice in this moment should have increased my fear, but it didn't. This voice cut through the fear and brought calm to my pounding heart. The winds continued to rage and death still seemed to be the only logical outcome, yet all I could hear is these 4 words: "Do not be afraid."

<sup>422</sup> Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. <sup>23</sup> And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. <sup>24</sup> But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.

<sup>25</sup> Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. <sup>26</sup> And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out for fear. <sup>27</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.''' Matthew 14:22-27 (NKJV)

Can you imagine being on that boat, with so many things to fear? The paragraph that opened today's study was just me imagining how it might have felt to be Peter with the other disciples on that boat in the wee hours of the morning on that day. Imagine the darkness. Imagine being on a boat in that darkness that is literally being tossed around. Imagine the helplessness of not being able to stop the darkness and not being able stop the boat from being tossed. The question is, though, was the darkness and storms the cause of the disciple's fear that night? This factually accurate historical event begs the question: "Where does fear come from?" If their fear came from the darkness, then Jesus would have ended the darkness to alleviate their fear...right? If their fear was the result of the boat being tossed, He would have ended the storm to end their fear...right? If fear is hinged on how something affects our senses, then would Jesus have even sent them on the boat to begin with if His desire was for them to not be afraid? Jesus told them to not be afraid in the midst of all their senses telling them there is much to fear. If this was Jesus' command in this moment, then maybe fear is not caused by what we can see, hear, and touch. Maybe fear is not caused by what we don't know or can't control. Maybe, just maybe, all those things simply reveal a deeper cause of fear. 365 times throughout Scripture mankind is commanded to not be afraid, but how can we heed that command without truly knowing and exploring the very origin of the fear that we are supposed to be free from. In John 15:12, Jesus says, "*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*" If Jesus commanded love, than we know that love is not just a feeling, but a choice. In the same manner, if Jesus commanded His disciples to not be afraid, then fear must be more than a feeling derived from circumstance. So, what is the origin of fear?

Why are some people afraid of heights and others will go cliff diving? Why are some afraid of spiders and others allow them to crawl up their arm? Why are some afraid of the dark and others will willingly walk right into it? Imagine you are walking all alone in a wooded area in the deepest darkness of the night. Suddenly, you hear a twig break not far from you. For many, all the hairs on their arm will stand up and their heart will begin to pound out of their chest. It could be a little chipmunk or it could be a gigantic grizzly bear. Was that fear caused by the sound of a little twig breaking or did the twig breaking simply reveal a deeper fear within you? Throughout this study we will be exploring what the Bible teaches us about fear, the effects of fear, and overcoming unrighteous fear. Here, in this first week we will be looking at the first mention of fear in the Bible and we will start to build the foundation of righteous fear versus unrighteous fear.

Understanding the root of righteous and unrighteous fear, helps us to meet unrighteous fear and address it where it begins, instead of just living with the effects of that fear. Do you want to overcome unrighteous fear in your life? God gives us all the tools we need to overcome it, but we have to want to overcome it. Fear, like bitterness and a variety of other life-hindering weights, is easy to sweep under the rug and will design your life to avoid it and pretend it doesn't exist. To overcome it, you have to want to overcome it. You have to be willing to let God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit guide you to make adjustments in your life as you pursue a life unhindered by the chains of fear.

<sup>412</sup> Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." Romans 8:12-17

- According to verse 15, we didn't receive the spirit of what?
- Also according to verse 15, what Spirit did we receive?
- The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are what?

# FOREVER FAMILY

A few years ago I had the honor of attending an adoption finalization at a court house. Our dearest friends had been fostering three children (siblings) and as our friends fell in love with these precious children, so did we. By the time of the ceremony, everyone in attendance already loved these children as family. Foster children are often passed from house to house, so imagine the joy of finding a "forever family." Every time I hear these beautiful children run up to me bringing a great big hug and calling me "Uncle Bobby", my heart just becomes filled with joy thinking of the life they could have lived – a life of believing that they are unwanted. What a joy it is to think that every morning they get to wake up in a home that is their own, with two wonderful and loving parents and a huge circle of extended family that adore them.

In the above Scripture from Romans, chapter 8, we see that there is a spirit of bondage that leads to fear and a Spirit of adoption that is counter to that fear. This Spirit of adoption is our invitation to be adopted into an eternal forever family. No matter what a person's family situation is on earth, God invites all to be adopted as children of God and be a part of His forever family. It would be a mistake to believe that every person sitting in church on Sunday and everyone taking this study are a part of that forever family. Are you? Let's take a look at what the Bible tells us about what it means to be a part of that forever family:

# <sup>426</sup> For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3:26-29 (NKJV)

The above passage is so beautiful. When you look at the largest religions of the world, you will find that they are for the most part geographically centralized. These religions are engrained into the culture of certain regions of the world. Christianity is

different. Many Americans believe that America is the cultural center of the Christian world because of the religiously free bubble we have lived in, but that is simply not true. America has been a free country and considered a "Christian country" for almost 250 years, but Christianity has been around for almost 2000 years and the family that we can be adopted into began even a couple thousand years before that. One of the things that make Christianity unique is that it knows no geographical boundaries. People from every kingdom and culture, every nation and tongue, every social status, every economic status, and people of ever skin color have been adopted into the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Christianity is the most diverse religion in the entire world throughout history...on purpose. So, no matter who you are, what you have done, or where you come from – all have the opportunity to be adopted into the family of God.

<sup>48</sup> Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? <sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.

<sup>11</sup> Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup> "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. <sup>13</sup> And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. <sup>15</sup> "If you love Me, keep My commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— <sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup> I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. <sup>20</sup> At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup> He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to

him." John 14:8-21 (NKJV)

- Verse 21 says in part "...And he who loves \_\_\_\_\_ will be loved by

An orphan is a child without a parent. Orphanages are places for parentless children who have not been adopted. No matter what the dynamics of your earthly family, if you have not been adopted into the family of God, you are a spiritual orphan. Many people believe that God is their Father simply by believing that there is one God.

The problem is that even the Pharisees believed in one God – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, yet Jesus told them their father was the devil (John 8:37-47). But why? Why would Jesus tell descendants of Abraham that God was not their Father? Here's why:

<sup>422</sup> Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. <sup>23</sup> Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also." I John 2:22-23 (NKJV)

- Who is a liar? \_\_\_\_\_\_.
- "Whoever denies the \_\_\_\_\_ does not have the \_\_\_\_\_ either..."

You see, anyone who does not know Jesus (the Son) does not know the Father. If you believe in one God, but reject salvation through Jesus Christ, you are still spiritually orphaned. The great news is, though, that John 3:16 says: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* It is only through faith in Jesus that we know the Father and are adopted into the family of God. Romans 10:9-13 says: *"P that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.* <sup>10</sup> *For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* <sup>11</sup> *For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."* <sup>12</sup> *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.* <sup>13</sup> *For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."* 

The question to ask yourself in this moment is, "am I an orphan or have I been adopted into the family of God? Just like the Scripture we read from the book of Romans at the bottom of page 2: Have you received "the spirit of bondage again to fear"? Or "the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father"? Forget for a moment any sense of religion or of good deeds that you have put your hope in. Forget the amount of time you have spent in church and the amount of time you have spent believing in the idea of one God and Creator. Have you accepted the fact that Heaven is perfect, and you are not? Have you accepted the reality that you don't deserve Heaven on your own merit? Have you concluded that not only are you not entitled to Heaven on your own, but your sin condemns you to Hell? Have you believed that because of all this, Jesus paid the price for your sin on that old rugged cross to SAVE you from the eternal consequence of your sin? Do you believe the Jesus victoriously rose again three days after being crucified? If you genuinely believe this and have confessed it to the Lord, you are found – you are saved – Jesus is your Savior and nothing can ever change that. Take a moment to express your gratitude to Your Savior.

If your answer is "no" to those questions, then you are a spiritual orphan. No matter what your religious background or affiliation or charitable deeds, you are lost according to Scripture. Will you now take a moment and accept Jesus as your Savior? Will you accept this free gift of salvation that your loving God and Creator is offering you?

If you have made that decision right now for the first time, the Bible says (Luke 15:7) that all Heaven is rejoicing for you. Please contact your small group leader or pastors and leaders of your church and tell them about the decision you just made. They will be filled with joy and will help you in growing and maturing in your faith.

## SPIRIT OF FEAR

### WEEK 1 – Then there was fear

### <u>DAY 2</u>

### MADE PERFECT IN LOVE

<sup>417</sup> Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup>We love Him because He first loved us." I John 4:17-19 (NKJV)

- Perfect love does what? \_\_\_\_\_\_.
- He who fears has not been made what?

We ended yesterday's study with an invitation to become a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The reason that invitation was given on day 1 is because without having been made perfect in love through Jesus Christ, the rest of this study will be of little value to you. Step 1 in a life that is free from the bondage of fear is turning your life over to the only One who can break those chains. The above Scripture says that "*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear...*" It goes on to say that "*...he who fears has not been made perfect in love.*" Perfect love can only be found through Jesus Christ. It is only by His death and resurrection that we can be made perfect in love. If you are still wrestling with that, please **stop this study here** and contact a pastor or the person who invited you to this study or your small group leader and talk to them about

the most important decision you can ever make in your lifetime. My hope in every study is that every single person reading it has been made perfect in love. Anybody is welcome to take this study and I pray that every person is blessed by it and if you still are not certain of your salvation, I pray that as you continue in this study you discover more and more from the truth found in Scripture just how loved you are by a great great God. We will now dive into the very first Biblical mention of fear.

### ...AND I WAS AFRAID

<sup>46</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.
<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

<sup>9</sup> Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?' <sup>10</sup> So he said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." Genesis 3:6-10 (NKJV)

The above passage is the first time in Scripture that we see fear. It is no coincidence that it comes immediately after the first sin. The first question we must ask is, "What is Adam afraid of in the first ever fear?" Verse 10 says, "*I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked*." Could it have been hearing the Lord's voice that made him afraid or was it his nakedness that made him afraid or was he afraid of the Lord's voice because he was naked? Let's take a deeper look at the first ever recorded fear.

The word "naked" here comes from the Hebrew word "êrôm." This word is used again in verse 11 when God asks, "*Who told you that you were naked?*" The next time we see this specific word for naked used is in the book of Ezekiel. In the book of Ezekiel, we see the personification of Jerusalem and the phrase "naked and bare" is used several times (16:7, 22, 39; 23:29) to describe both their physical and spiritual deficiencies and vulnerabilities. It essentially described what Jerusalem would be if not for the Lord. This is important to remember as we now apply it back to Genesis.

Before sin corrupted their innocent minds, there was only righteousness. Absent from sin, there is innocence and purity and no shame in nudity. Anyone who has had children can probably relate to this. When children are little (innocence intact), there are times where you are getting them ready for their bath and sometimes the moment they are completely undressed is the moment they feel inspired to RUN!!! No shame, no insecurity...just free streaking fun. As self-awareness increases and instructions in modesty take root and innocence begins to fad, the streaking period of a child's life ends. As innocence is lost, there comes a time when shame and vulnerability are increasingly attached to nudity.

To this point Adam and Eve knew God as their perfect Creator, Sustainer, and Provider. Living in perfect communion with God, they did not know His wrath. Eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would not only give them knowledge of evil, but also knowledge of good. The eating of the tree was the corruption of innocence. Their nakedness was not just corrupted by knowledge of evil, but it was also corrupted by knowledge of good. To be good is to be completely righteous and the knowledge of good is also the knowledge of how we fall short of the perfect righteousness of God. The notion of standing before the Perfect and Righteous God now knowing they fall short of that perfection and righteousness is an incredibly vulnerable and shameful realization. Throughout Scripture, the fear of God is a good thing, but the fear of God was never instructed prior to sin. Adam does not say he is afraid because of what he did, he said he was afraid because he was naked. In fact, when God specifically addresses the eating of the fruit, Adam responds in verse 12 by saying, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." When it came to disobedience, he passed the blame on to the woman, but when he heard the voice of the Lord, he was afraid because he was naked.

So why is all this important to understanding fear? Clearly, there are protective and instinctual fears built into us that are good: the fear of jumping into lava, walking off a cliff, etc. as well as awareness fears that can warn us of impending harm. This Bible study, however, will be addressing the bigger picture of fear and focusing on the fears addressed specifically in the Bible. Throughout Scripture, righteous fear is the fear of God. This is a reverent fear that comes with knowing who God is and who you are not. A healthy fear of God would always bring us to our knees in His presence. Standing before God we are always vulnerable and fully exposed - naked and bare. There is nothing that He doesn't know about us, from the hairs on our head to our deepest thoughts. God and God alone is worthy of our fear. Fear of anything other than God is never condoned in Scripture. Without sin, there would be no need for fear, but at the same time, our loving Father offers redemption. When God was communicating the individual consequences for what the serpent, Eve, and Adam had done, He was already communicating His redemption plan for mankind. Genesis 3:14-15 says: "So the Lord God said to the serpent: 'Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise *His heel.*" The very first fear was the result of the very first sin, yet the very first fear was a fear of God and it is in that fear that we discover the essence of His redemption plan. We come to know our need for Christ in knowing that He is perfect and we are not. We realize that we fall short of God's perfect righteousness and that sin creates a gap between us and God. On our own, we are naked and bare and have a spirit of

bondage and a consequence of an eternity in Hell for that sin. It is only God's gift of salvation that offers us life and life more abundant (John 10:10).

# THE FEAR OF GOD IS NOT IN THIS PLACE

"And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar.<sup>2</sup> Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.<sup>3</sup> But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, "Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife."<sup>4</sup> But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also? <sup>5</sup> Did he not say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she, even she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this." <sup>6</sup> And God said to him in a dream, "Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.<sup>7</sup> Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."<sup>8</sup> So Abimelech rose early in the morning, called all his servants, and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were very much afraid. <sup>9</sup> And Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done."<sup>10</sup> Then Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?"

<sup>11</sup> And Abraham said, "Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife." Genesis 20:1-11 (NKJV)

- What relation did Abraham tell Abimelech Sarah was to him?
- What did God say would happen if Abimelech did not restore Sarah?
- In verse 11, why did Abraham say he did it?

This factual historical event (I would never call something in the Bible a mere story) always makes me laugh. I laugh because it's not even the first time Abraham plays this card. Back in Genesis 12:10-20, he does the same thing in Egypt with pretty much the same results. We find out in Genesis 20:13 that this was the plan since he left his father's house. Can you imagine attending a wedding and the bride says, "I vow to love and honor you in sickness and in health and to always pretend to be your sister when we enter a foreign land?" I digress. What is really interesting here is the first

reason Abraham gives for claiming that Sarah is his sister. He said he did it because he "thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place..." In the first half of today's study we talked about the origin of fearing God and the mindset of fearing God. So, what would a kingdom look like that didn't fear the Lord? What would be the aim and focus of a kingdom that did not fear the Lord? If the fear of the Lord humbles us and causes us to bow down and worship God in all His awesomeness, then a kingdom without the fear of the Lord would be focused on increasing it's own status – making a name for itself. A kingdom without the fear of the Lord would not fear His wrath and have no desire to walk with the Lord and live His way. We don't know the "would ofs" of this situation. Would the king have taken her if he knew she was Abraham's wife? Would he have killed Abraham? Would he have restored Sarah to Abraham if the Lord hadn't warned him what would happen if he didn't? We may never know the answers to those questions this side of heaven, but what is ironic about this historical event is that Abraham was a man who feared the Lord, yet it was his fear of a kingdom who he assumed didn't fear the Lord that led him to call Sarah his sister. Doubly ironic is that fear of the Lord is what led the king to restore Sarah to Abraham.

There is no fear in Scripture that is condoned other than the fear of God. If the fear of God was the only thing at play here, would Abraham have acted deceitfully? Some will argue that Genesis 20:12 informs us that she was technically his step sister, so he wasn't lying, but true truth doesn't require the word "technically." Clearly Abraham feared death here. Clearly Abraham feared this king and kingdom. The fear of the Lord did not seem to be the fear that was guiding him here. Abraham's life is a great illustration of what life looks like when the fear of the Lord is guiding you and when the fear of anything else is guiding you. This is a man that packed up his whole family and everything he owned and began to travel without knowing his destination (Genesis 12:1-3) just because the Lord told him to. This is the same man who placed his promised son on an altar out of obedience to God (Genesis 22:1-19). When the fear of God was guiding Abraham, he flourished. When the fear of anything else was guiding him, he made very poor decisions.

# What about you? When your life is being guided by only the fear of the Lord, what does it look like? Write down the last time you did something or made a decision that was solely guided by a righteous fear of the Lord:

What was the result?

On the flip side, write down the last time you did something or made a decision that wasn't solely guided by the fear of the Lord: When you saw the title of this study, you may have thought that this was a study solely focused on demonizing fear and exhorting you to be more courageous in the face of your fears. I hope after the first couple of days of this study, you are finding that the goal of this study is not to get you to go skydiving, but simply to get a Biblical perspective on fear. To understand what it means to fear the Lord and to better understand how other fears influence our life. I hope you are now seeing that the first step of overcoming the unrighteous fears is to establish and fully embrace the only righteous fear. Take a moment now to reflect on your life through that lens. Think about your everyday life and your everyday decisions and consider how much of your life is truly guided by a fear of the Lord and how much is guided by your fear of failure, loneliness, death, embarrassment, persecution , public opinion, etc. Go to the Lord in prayer. Acknowledge Him as being the only One worthy of your fear and pray that He will help you and guide you to make the fear of Him rise above all other fears. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

## SPIRIT OF FEAR

### WEEK 1 – Then there was fear

## <u>DAY 3</u>

## FEARING GOD FOR NOTHING?

"<sup>6</sup>Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. <sup>7</sup> And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

<sup>8</sup> Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" <sup>9</sup> So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? <sup>10</sup>Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. <sup>11</sup> But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" Job 1:6-11 (NKJV)

• How does God describe Job in verse 8?

## • Why did Satan believe that Job feared God?

Job can be difficult to understand, so I think it's important to offer some context to this passage. Many people view this as God simply offering up Job as a taunt to Satan, but I think it's important to look at this through the scope of all Scripture. When God asks Satan "*From where do you come?*" Satan responds by saying "*From going to* and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it." The only way we could see this passage as God offering up Job as a taunt is if we read Satan's response as simply meaning that he was taking a stroll. Satan does not take strolls. Satan simply taking a stroll is not in context with what Scripture teaches us about him. I Peter 5:5-9 says "5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, <sup>7</sup> casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. <sup>8</sup> Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.<sup>9</sup> Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world." So when Satan says that he was "going to and fro on the earth", what was he really doing? Is there ever a time where his intent is not to destroy? Revelation 12:9-11 says, "9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. <sup>10</sup> Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our

*kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.* <sup>11</sup> And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death." You can also check out Luke 22:31, Zechariah 3:1, etc. and see that Satan has one single intent with no "off" switch. If he shows up here in the first chapter of the book of Job and says that he's been going to and fro on the earth, then you can be assured that he is the one doing the taunting. Taunting about all the people he has devoured and that is when God points out like a proud Father that he has not devoured His God-fearing Job. I know Job went through a lot, but it would be such an honor to live a life that would give my Father God cause to look Satan in the eye and say, "Have you considered my servant Bobby?" I yearn each and every day to try and make my Daddy proud and I feel awful when I know I haven't.

God describes Job by saying "...*there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil.*" God describes him as blameless, upright, and one who shuns evil, but what is the one part of God's description of Job that Satan scrutinizes? Let's take another look. In verse 9 is says this: "*So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?*" Do you think it is a coincidence that Satan chooses to scrutinize Job's fear of God? Why would it be so important to break down this aspect of Job's life above all else?

Proverbs is a book that is often used to highlight individual wisdom verses in order to provide supplemental Scripture for a specific point, but have you ever read the prologue of Proverbs in the first 7 verses of the first chapter? It states the purpose of the book of Proverbs. Check this out:

*The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel:*<sup>2</sup> To know wisdom and instruction,
To perceive the words of understanding,
<sup>3</sup> To receive the instruction of wisdom,
Justice, judgment, and equity;
<sup>4</sup> To give prudence to the simple,
To the young man knowledge and discretion—
<sup>5</sup>A wise man will hear and increase learning,
And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,
<sup>6</sup> To understand a proverb and an enigma,
The words of the wise and their riddles."
<sup>7</sup> The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,
But fools despise wisdom and instruction."

- List a few of the purposes of Proverbs from the first 6 verses:
- With all that, what does verse 7 says is the beginning of knowledge?

The first 6 verses say that the purposes of the Proverbs are to know, to perceive, to receive, to give, to understand, yet verse 7 says that "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.*" Later in Proverbs 9:10, it says "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*" Even Job acknowledges this in Job 28:28 where he says, "*And to man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*" Without the fear of the Lord, what is the value of knowing anything? Romans 1:18-22 says it this way:

<sup>"18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup> because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, <sup>21</sup> because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup>Professing to be wise, they became fools…" With this in mind, is it any surprise that Satan chose to scrutinize Job's fear of the Lord? Let's revisit what Satan had to say about Job's fear of the Lord.

Looking back at Job, chapter 1, verses 9-11 say this: "<sup>9</sup> So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? <sup>10</sup>Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. <sup>11</sup> But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" Satan is attempting to cheapen Job's fear of the Lord by connecting it to his blessed life. The reverent fear of the Lord is acknowledging who God is and who we are not. Someone who fears the Lord sees everything they have as being the Lord's and from the Lord. A God-fearing person does not view anything they have as their own – not even their own life. God described Job as a God-fearing man, but do we have any evidence of this in Scripture? The answer is "yes." *Read all of Job, chapter 1:* 

## What evidence do you see that Job feared the Lord in the following areas of his life:

- His kids:
- His possessions:

Verse 20 clearly indicates that Job was greatly grieved by all this loss, but in all this He looked at his life as being God's and blessed the Lord in the midst of these devastating tragedies. Satan knows that an enemy of godly fear is entitlement. The moment we feel entitled to what we have is the moment that we will tend to blame God when it is taken away. The fear of God in our lives is diminished and replaced by thoughts of entitlement and thoughts that what we have is because of us. Jesus calls Satan the ruler of this world (John 12:31 for ex.) and I John 2:16 says "*For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.*" Satan not only desires to tempt us with the temporary pleasures of fleshly lusts and visual provocation, but also with the pride of status and making a name for ourselves – self-attained success. Satan believed that if Job was

stripped of everything that gave him status and pride, he would curse God. At the end of this first round of affliction, not only did Job not curse God, but he blessed the name of the Lord because he truly was "...one who fears God..."

Much of this study is going to be about approaching our unrighteous fears from a Biblical perspective and with the Lord's guidance and strength try to overcome them and the influence they can have on our life. This week is all about the origin of fear. I believe that the key to overcoming and guarding against unrighteous fear is fully embracing righteous fear. All throughout Scripture, we see that the fear of God is so crucial to a successful life. Now that we are finishing up day 3 of the first week of this study, let's continue to assess our lives. Do you feel like your life reflects a life of godly fear? If so, what have you found to be the key to maintaining that mindset? (be prepared to share this with your small group):

Do you feel like you struggle to live a life that reflects godly fear? If so, what are some things that cause you to stumble in this?

Take a moment to pray. If you have found some victory in a life that reflects godly fear, pray that God would help you to maintain godly fear in your life and use you to help those who struggle with this. If you struggle with this, pray that He would give you the strength to make adjustments in your life and mindset that continue to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Write down anything God is showing you:

# SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 1 – Then there was fear

# <u>DAY 4</u>

## VANTAGE POINT

<sup>41</sup>And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them." <sup>3</sup> So Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran according to the command of the Lord, all of them men who were heads of the children of Israel." Numbers 13:1-3 (NKJV)

• What does verse 2 say God was doing with the land of Canaan?

• What did God tell Moses to do in this passage?

<sup>25</sup> And they returned from spying out the land after forty days. <sup>26</sup> Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. <sup>27</sup> Then they told him, and said: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. <sup>28</sup> Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there." Numbers 13:25-27 (NKJV)

- What was the good news they reported?
- What was the bad news they reported?

<sup>430</sup> Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it." <sup>31</sup>But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." <sup>32</sup> And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. <sup>33</sup> There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight." Numbers 13:30-33 (NKJV)

- What was Caleb's belief on what they should do?
- What was the opinion of the other spies?

<sup>\*1</sup>So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. <sup>2</sup> And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! <sup>3</sup> Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"<sup>4</sup> So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt." Numbers 14:1-4 (NKJV) • Upon hearing the reports, what did the children of Israel desire to do?

<sup>6</sup> But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; <sup>7</sup> and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land.<sup>8</sup> If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.'<sup>9</sup> Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them." <sup>10</sup> And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel." Numbers 14:6-10

- Who did Joshua and Caleb tell the people not to fear?
- What reason did they give the people for not being afraid?

Wow...talk about a battle of opposing fears! This factually true historical event is a perfect snapshot of the role both righteous fear and unrighteous fear can play in our lives. Have you ever wondered why God told Moses to send spies into the land of Canaan in the first place? I have often wondered this. In the first part of Numbers 13:2 the Lord tells Moses: "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel..." Throughout Scripture, God led His people to miraculous victories in the face of insurmountable circumstances and seemingly overwhelming opponents. Neither the size of an army nor strength of an army nor size of a defense wall ever stood in the way of God's will for His people. So why would it matter what these spies found? Is there any information they could bring back that would change God's desire to give them this land? I believe it was a test of fears. Would His people fear God and God alone? Would they remember how He miraculously delivered them from slavery at the hands of the powerful Egyptians? They had hundreds of years to try and deliver themselves from the Egyptians, but the Lord sent Moses to show the people the power of God and deliver them from this powerful nation. To this point they had seen His power, His authority, His love, His mercy, His provision, etc. God knew there were giants in the land when He instructed Moses to send the spies. The question was, would the people fear God and God alone and go take the land that the Lord was giving them or would they fear mere men and put their trust in their own strength?

Ten of the spies who were sent reported back that "*There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.*" Joshua and Caleb said, "<sup>7</sup>*The land we* 

passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. <sup>8</sup> If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' <sup>9</sup> Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them." Ten spies feared the descendants of Anak and two spies feared the Lord, so who would the people of Israel fear? They feared mere man; to the point that they even wanted to return to the bondage of Egypt.

Anyone willing to take a moment to look would be able to see the goodness and greatness of God. Remember the words of Romans 1:18-23: "18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup> because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.<sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, <sup>21</sup> because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup>Professing to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things." It's easy to look at this factual historical event in hindsight and criticize the people of Israel, but which opposing fears generally win in our own lives? Over the years I have had many opportunities to offer counsel to people who were having financial struggles and looking for answers. The first question I usually ask is, "are you tithing?" Almost every single time, the reply is, "no, we can't afford to tithe because of the financial struggles we are having." At that moment, they no longer need my counsel because they have answered their own question. Struggling married couples will come to me and they will openly share all the "reasons" for their struggles, but upon my questioning, I always discover a couple who has kept God out of their marriage. They will say some version of "we struggle to pray together or read the Word together because of the tension that our struggles are causing." Once again, they've answered their own question. If you fear God and God alone, you will do things His way and trust that He will provide for you, He will protect you, He will deliver you, He will be your strength and shield. When you fear something or someone, you essentially bow to it/them. What would happen if a person put as much stock in God's ability to provide as they put in the cause of their poverty? What would happen if a couple put as much trust in the Lord's ability to heal a marriage as they put in the things that caused their struggles to destroy it? Looking back at the people of Israel; it's not just asking who they feared more, you could also ask, "who were they worshiping more?" Imagine if they thought of God what they thought of the descendants of Anak? If people are commanded 365 times throughout Scripture to not be afraid, then fear is not a reaction or feeling it is a choice. It is not only a choice of what or who we will fear, but what or who we will worship. Who or what will we bow down to? In whom or what will we

trust? In Deuteronomy, chapter 5 the people of Israel have heard the voice of God from the mountain and they tell Moses to go and listen to the Lord and report back all that He says. In verse 29 the Lord says through Moses, "*Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!*" What affliction or obstacle is bigger than God? What trial or temptation is more worthy of bowing down to than God? What way of living will lead us to greener pastures than the way of the Lord?

"Oh, that they had such a heart in them..." So often in this life people say "face your fears." If you are scared of heights, they say "go jump out of a plane." If you are afraid of spiders, they say "Let a spider crawl on you." What I pray you are seeing through these Scriptures this week is that if you struggle with fear of any sort, the first step is not to face that particular fear, but to face the only One worthy of our fear. I John 4:18 says in part "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear..." But what we need to remember is the context verse 17 gives us. It says in part "Love has been perfected" among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgement..." This isn't just about casting out all of our frivolous fears, it is about directing our worship towards the King of kings and Lord of lords whom by His sacrifice we can have boldness and not fear even the day of judgment. The willingness to run into gun fire isn't necessarily the evidence of godly fear. Don't ask what you should or shouldn't fear, ask who is worthy of my fear? Take a moment now to look at your life in this context. Do you give more credence to the cause of your struggle than you give to the God who can deliver you? Do you think more highly of the obstacles in your life than of the God who can break them down? Even if you don't find yourself struggling with the effects of various tangible fears, how much of your life reflects the fear of the Lord? Write down the ways in which your life demonstrates godly fear:

Write down the ways in which it doesn't:

Take a moment to pray over those answers. Write down anything God is showing you:

SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 1 – Then there was fear

## <u>DAY 5</u>

### MY OWN HAND HAS SAVED ME

<sup>4</sup> Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. <sup>2</sup> And the Lord said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.' <sup>3</sup> Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.' " And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained. <sup>4</sup> But the Lord said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, that of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' the same shall not go."<sup>5</sup> So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink."<sup>6</sup> And the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.<sup>7</sup> Then the Lord said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place."<sup>8</sup> So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And he sent away all the rest of Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men. Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley." Judges 7:1-8 (NKJV)

• Why did the Lord say there were too many Israelites to defeat the Midianites?

• How many men did they start with? \_\_\_\_\_.

• How many men did they end up with? \_\_\_\_\_.

I love this factual historical event. Every time I feel like I don't have enough resources to do what God has called me to do, I think of this. Every time I feel like I don't have enough volunteers to accomplish an event or ministry the Lord has put on my heart, I think of this event. The Lord never needed the biggest army to accomplish His will. In verse 2, the Lord tells Gideon *"The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me."* You see, God was in control and He was going to give the Midianites into the Israelite's hands, but He wanted Israel to know that all

their victories are because of Him. Remember in the beginning of this study when we did a word study on the word "naked?" Do you remember how the same word that Adam used was used to describe Israel if not for the Lord? The word was "êrôm" and it was used in Ezekiel to describe Jerusalem as bare and naked without the Lord. Something to keep in mind when looking at Gideon's army is that when chapter 7 begins, the Midianite army was about 135,000 men strong and the Israelite army was only 32,000 strong. Already Israel was the underdog with an army less than 25% the size of the Midianite army. Even after the first round of "weeding out" the Israelite army, there were only 10,000 men remaining which is less than 14% of the Midianite army. So why would God have to dwindle the army down to 300 or .22% of the Midianite army in order for them to not glory in themselves? Answer: Because He knows mankind and the intentions of our heart all too well.

Most genuine born again believers you run into will gladly admit that salvation is a free gift from God that cannot be earned "lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8). The question is: is salvation the only aspect of our lives that we should not boast in? Many years ago I was scheduled to teach Junior Church one Sunday for 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> graders. I was teaching on how we need the Lord everyday of our lives. I remember a little 7 year old girl raised her hand and asked, "What did you need Jesus for today?" Suddenly, it struck me, "what did I need Jesus for today or yesterday or this week." I was serving the Lord, but not relying upon Him. I was worshiping Him, but not allowing Him to be glorified through me. I was self-reliant and making a name for myself – even while serving the Lord. I was so convicted by the precious words of this little girl that I knew I needed to make a change. I purposed to adjust my life to be one that was fully reliant on the Lord. Every night before I went to bed I started asking myself the very words of that little girl, "Did I need Jesus today?" Was God glorified by my day or was I? If I discovered that my day was self-glorifying, I would repent and commit the next day to glorify God and God alone. You know what is amazing about human nature? I still ask myself that question almost 20 years later. There is still a need for that accountability. This is why I started my own personal mantra: "Stay weak." That may sound like a bad mantra, but let me explain the premise. It comes from these words from the apostle Paul:

<sup>47</sup> And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. <sup>8</sup> Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. <sup>9</sup> And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." II Corinthians 12:7-10 (NKJV)

• What did the Lord say to Paul in verse 9?

#### In verse 10, when did Paul say he was strong?

"Stay weak" is not a mantra that implies inviting sin into your life or intentionally stifling your spiritual growth. It means to purposely maintain a mind-set of full reliance on God. There are many times in life when people will praise you and many times in life when they will scrutinize and criticize you, but we cannot rely on the opinions of people for our strength. We cannot use man-made measurements of success for our strength. We must ensure that in every aspect of our life God is glorified. He must be lifted high. We are naked and bare without Him and in nothing can we boast apart from Him. This will not come naturally though. In Gideon's army of 300, we understand what God knows about our human nature. Israel would have gloried in themselves if they won a battle of 32,000 against 135,000. Israel would have gloried in themselves if they won a battle of 10,000 against 135,000. He knew that it was only in a laughable and impossible victory of 300 against 135,000 that Israel would glorify God in their victory. Unless we purpose to let Him be glorified in all things, our nature will be to glory in ourselves. A righteous fear of God and God alone is knowing that we are nothing without Him and in everything we do, we desire God to be glorified high above all else. With this in mind, I would like to end my words and finish this first week of study with the beautiful words of Psalm 115:

> <sup>4</sup>Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, But to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, Because of Your truth.
> <sup>2</sup> Why should the Gentiles say, "So where is their God?"
> <sup>3</sup>But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.
> <sup>4</sup>Their idols are silver and gold, The work of men's hands.
> <sup>5</sup> They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not speak; Noses they have, but they do not smell;
> <sup>7</sup> They have hands, but they do not handle;

Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat. <sup>8</sup>Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them. <sup>9</sup>O Israel, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield. <sup>10</sup> O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield. <sup>11</sup> You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; He is their help and their shield. <sup>12</sup> The Lord has been mindful of us: He will bless us: He will bless the house of Israel: He will bless the house of Aaron. <sup>13</sup>He will bless those who fear the Lord. Both small and great. <sup>14</sup> May the Lord give you increase more and more, You and your children. <sup>15</sup> May you be blessed by the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. <sup>16</sup> The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; But the earth He has given to the children of men. <sup>17</sup>The dead do not praise the Lord, Nor any who go down into silence. <sup>18</sup>But we will bless the Lord From this time forth and forevermore. Praise the Lord!"

Amen. Feel free to read it again. Make that the cry of your heart. Take a moment now to commit all this to your Great Great God. Write down anything God is showing you:

Watch the weekly introduction videos at https://crosspointchurchonline.org/spirit-of-fear/

#### SPIRIT OF FEAR

#### WEEK 2 – Returning to Egypt

#### <u>DAY 1</u>

THE CRUELTY OF THE OSCILLATING FAN

\*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.
<sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." Romans 8:12-17 (NKJV)

• Verse 15 says that you "did not receive

I have spent my whole life going to church. That is a testimony I'm proud of and the impact it has had on my life is immeasurable. With spending your whole life in church, though, also comes a whole bunch of humorous platitudes of church life. If you haven't grown up in church, some of these things can seem silly and surface-level (because they are), but many can relate and laugh at these moments of flesh. It's good sometimes to laugh at our humanity so we don't cry. Tell me if this particular one has ever happened to you. It's summertime and even though the doors and windows were opened up early with fans in them to blow in the cool morning air, the church building is hot. You are sitting in a Bible study, prayer meeting, etc. in a smallish room with a single oscillating fan. You feel somewhat connected to the realities of Heaven and Hell because every time the fan turns your direction, for that one glorious moment, you are in Paradise. Then, just as quickly as it came, it turns and goes the other direction and suddenly the sweet breeze of Paradise becomes the stale, humid torture of heat. You're trying to pay attention and be involved in the discussion, but all you can do is count the seconds until that fan returns to your direction. Every once in a while you even convince yourself that it got hung up longer in the other direction than in yours. You begin to wish you sat exactly at the point of the turn so that you can get that extra second or two of paradise. As the cruel fan continues to run away from you, the heat begins to wear down your patience, and you begin to long for the ending. That is when the leader says, "ok, unless anybody has anything to add, let's close in prayer." The words ring in your ears like the sweet sound of a perfectly harmonized choir as you imagine the wonderful feeling of your car's air conditioning blowing on your face...and then it happens...every group has the one person who always feels compelled to speak in that moment – compelled to say something and that something is never short. In the moment you feel like standing up and yelling "FIRE!!!", but all you can do is smile and nod and pray for a smoke alarm to go off, a meteor to strike, or the Lord to return...

For anyone who could relate with me on that one, let's take a moment to repent. I did not tell that story, though, just for a chuckle. In Romans 8:15 its says in part: "*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear...*" The word that "*again*" comes from is the Greek word "*palin*," and just like that fan it refers to oscillating repetition. The word could also describe the pendulum on a grandfather clock – swinging back in the exact path from which it came. The Bible says here that in Christ we did not receive a spirit of bondage "*palin*" to fear. Through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, Romans 8:15 says that we received a spirit of adoption as joint heirs with Christ. Whether people realize it or not, anyone who does not know Christ is in bondage – bondage to fear. Look at what is says in Hebrews 3:10-15:

<sup>410</sup> For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. <sup>11</sup> For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, <sup>12</sup> saying: 'I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.' <sup>13</sup> And again: 'I will put My trust in Him.' And again: 'Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.' <sup>14</sup> Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

According to verse 15, why were they subject to bondage?

There is bondage in fear. The only thing that sets us free from that bondage is faith in Christ. In Week 1, we talked about the only righteous fear, which is the reverent worship and total trust in Who God is and who we are not. When we put our faith and trust in the Lord, yes, we fear Him with godly fear, we are set free from the bondage of sin and the bondage of fear. In Hebrews it attributes bondage to the bondage of the fear of death. I think this is crucial to a Bible study on fear. If Christ sets us free from the bondage of the fear of death, then why would a believer return (*palin*) back to that bondage? Remember on Day 4 of Week 1 when Moses sent the spies into the land of Canaan? When ten of the twelve spies returned with a bad report, do you remember what the congregation of Israel said? Numbers 14:1-4 says this: "So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night.<sup>2</sup> And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!<sup>3</sup> Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"<sup>4</sup> So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to *Eaypt."* Think about what they are saying here. They were afflicted and in bondage to the Egyptians for 400 years, then God sent incredible plagues upon Egypt to free His people from that bondage. He parted a great sea to lead them out of that bondage, He fed them with bread from heaven. He freed them, protected them, provided for them as He promised them a land flowing with milk and honey that He was giving them. After all that, they take one look at the descendants of Anak and are ready to go back to that place of bondage. The choice was: trust the same God that has proven His might time and time again to keep His promise, or live as slaves. Just at the moment that I'm about to speak a scathing rebuke of Israel, I remember who I am. I remember the times that I have returned again to the bondage of the fear of death. How about you? What role does fear of death play in your life? Does it influence decisions? Does it influence obedience to God? Does it influence reaching the world for Christ? Does it influence living to fulfill His purposes for you?

As I said in Week 1, base jumping and swimming with sharks is not the manifestation of godly fear. It does not equal a life free from the bondage of the fear of death. Have you ever learned about how adrenaline works in our body? It's pretty amazing. Adrenaline is naturally produced in our bodies as a reaction to stressful situations, fear, illnesses and injuries, etc. In these situations it can raise blood pressure, oxygenate our bodies more effectively, increase our heart rate, block out pain, it can sharpen our senses, it can increase blood flow to muscles causing us to be temporarily stronger, etc. The rush of this adrenaline can even be addicting for some. So much so that many will intentionally engage in dangerous and stressful activities and situations in order to produce this natural adrenaline. The thing to remember is that adrenaline is our bodies natural response to things like fear. There is a deep irony to thrill seekers: they are pursuing a feeling that can only be produced if they feared the very thing or the potential outcome of the thing they are doing. The rush produced from a fear of death is the goal. Without the fear of death, there would be no rush. This is how we often misplace genuine courage and fear. Later in this study we will be talking about genuine Biblical courage, but right now we have to give context to the bondage of the fear of death. If you are reading this and you have used your pursuit of adrenaline to convince yourself that you are living in godly fear or free from the bondage of fear, you are fooling yourself. If you are reading this and you think the ability to jump out of a plane is your goal in conquering fear, you are also fooling yourself. That may be the world's definition of fear or the world's response to fear, but it is not the Biblical one. Let's learn from Jesus:

<sup>45</sup> Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup> and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: "He shall give His angels charge over you," and, "In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone."<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God."" Matthew 4:5-7 (NKJV)

• In verse 6, Satan says, "If you are the Son of God,

# Jesus responds in verse 7 by quoting from Deuteronomy 6:16, saying: "You shall not the Lord your God."

As a man, reading the words of Satan saying "*If You are the Son of God...*" makes me cringe. It feels like when someone tries to taunt my manhood. This is not a dare, this is a double dog dare, which is the mother of all dares – the ultimate test of manhood. This is questioning what Jesus is made of. So let me ask you this: "Was Jesus a coward for not jumping off?" I hate even typing that, but it's an important truth to understand. Of course Jesus was never a coward, but if Jesus was not a coward here, then maybe we sometimes misplace what true courage is and therefore what true fear is. They say the pinnacle of the temple would have been around a 450 foot drop, and I'll admit I think it would have been cool if the Bible said that Jesus walked backward to get a running start, then just ran and did a front flip jump off the pinnacle of the temple and nailed a perfect hand stand landing and yelled up to Satan, "Ok, your turn!!!" But that's not what He did. Instead He boldly proclaimed the Word of God and in quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, He spoke a truth that we must understand to understand fear. That truth is: the most courageous thing a believer can ever do is to live in obedience to the Word of God. Show me the courage of an adrenaline-seeking skydiver and it will pale in comparison to the courage of a godly Christian woman seeking to live a life of obedience to God's Word that her life may glorify Him. In a world that strays further and further from that truth, true courage is standing upon that truth. Isn't that what Jesus did here? Our own pride and our desire to make a name for ourselves is an effect of fear, and Satan was tempting Jesus to value His own pride more than Who He is in the eternal purpose, and Jesus courageously stood upon the Word of God and rejected Satan's attempt.

Last week we looked at the origin of fear and this week we are going to look at the bondage of fear and some of the manifestations and misunderstandings of fear. Sometimes the influence of fear on our lives is not so obvious, so I pray this week will bring clarification through God's Word. For now, though, let's close out today's study.

# What about you? Have you returned to living in the bondage of the fear of death? Looking at what we have discussed in today's study, write down anything you see in your life that reflects that bondage:

Now spend some time in prayer. Ask the Lord to help you identify those areas and to help you as you seek to live courageously for Him. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

# SPIRIT OF FEAR

## WEEK 2 – Returning to Egypt

Returning to bondage

<sup>413</sup> "You came down also on Mount Sinai, and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments.<sup>14</sup> You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, and commanded them precepts, statutes and laws, by the hand of Moses Your servant.

<sup>15</sup> You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger, and brought them water out of the rock for their thirst, and told them to go in to possess the land which You had sworn to give them.

<sup>16</sup> "But they and our fathers acted proudly, hardened their necks, and did not heed Your commandments.

<sup>17</sup> They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of Your wonders that You did among them.

But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage. But You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them." Nehemiah 9:13-17 (NKJV)

• According to verse 17, what did they appoint a leader to do?

In yesterday's study we looked at Romans 8:15 and how it talks about returning back from the bondage in which they came. Here, in Nehemiah, the children of Israel are confessing their sins and they are referencing one of the events we discussed in Week 1. It is referring to when Moses sent the twelve spies into Canaan and when the people heard of the men who occupied the land, they actually sought out a leader who would lead them back to bondage in Egypt. Most would agree that freedom is better than bondage, but would most agree that freedom is easier than bondage? When America was under British control, many opposed their oppressive taxes and state run churches and other oppressions and wanted to be free. The fight for freedom, though, cost the lives of many and shed much blood. Our freedom did not come for free. You could argue that the "easy" route would have been to accept oppression. Sometimes there is a comfort in things as they are – even if they are oppression because the notion of making changes that embrace the victory and freedom we have in Christ is just too hard or...may I say...too scary.

In Nehemiah, the people confessed that their forefathers "*hardened their necks,* and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage." The question is, what does returning to the bondage of fear look like in the life of a believer? Verse 16 says: "*But they and our fathers acted proudly, hardened their necks, and did not heed Your commandments.*" What would your life look like if the only thing that mattered to you was being completely obedient to God in every single aspect of your life? What would look the same in your life, and more importantly, what would look different? So often Christians compartmentalize their lives into the areas that are aligned with God's Word and the areas that aren't. Some call it their church life and their out-of-church life. What would your life look like if every single moment of it was on full display for all your brothers and sisters in Christ to see? Every day would probably start to look more like our Sunday best, wouldn't it? God's way is always, always the best way for your life to be lived. I think this passage in Nehemiah can give us some clues as to what causes the mindset of returning to bondage, rather than moving forward in faith. I don't believe it's usually a one-time all-encompassing decision. It's usually a slow fade. Let's take a look at the five ways shown in this passage in Nehemiah that lead a person to return to bondage.

# 5 THINGS THAT LEAD A PERSON TO RETURN TO BONDAGE:

# 1. Acted proudly:

Remember yesterday when we were looking at Satan's second attempt to tempt Jesus at the pinnacle of the temple? Through the worldly definition of courage, it would have made sense for Jesus to jump off to prove He could when Satan was questioning His authority. The worldly definition of courage deals, in large part, with proving yourself. This is one of the sneakiest lies that creep into the mind of a believer – this notion that you are here to "prove yourself"..."to see what you are made of." This mission is one of Satan's biggest lies and the Bible warns us of this.

<sup>#15</sup> Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." I John 2:15-17

According to verse 16, all that is in the world is what?
 A. \_\_\_\_\_\_ B. \_\_\_\_\_ C.

I want to focus on that last one in context with this portion of our study – "the pride of life." What is the pride of life? I want you to know that the pride of life pops it's ugly head up throughout Scripture and, unfortunately, often in our lives. In Genesis chapter 2 we see the historical account of Satan tempting Eve to eat of the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil that God had forbidden them to eat from. Look at the three aspects of that temptation that Eve was seduced by: verse 6 says "*So when the woman saw that <u>the tree was good for food</u>, that it <u>was pleasant to the eyes</u>, and a tree <u>desirable to make one wise</u>, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." Mankind is living in a perfect world with perfect communion with God, yet there is an allure to making a name for themselves. There is a draw to be their own god and their own master. This is the pride of life. I believe that worship is one of humanity's basic instincts. There is no such thing as a human that doesn't worship – it's just a matter of what or who they worship. Even if the focus of their worship is the same thing that Satan tried to tempt Jesus with. What Jesus demonstrated is courage through the eternal lens. What Jesus demonstrated was that we are not here to make a name for ourselves, but here to magnify the Lord.* 

In John 3:27-30, John the Baptist says this: "John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease." I think sometimes as Christians we forget the last four words of that passage. Most Christians would agree that Jesus must increase and that our lives should increase the name of Christ, but we don't always do it at the expense of our own name. John said that Jesus MUST increase, but that he MUST decrease. You cannot increase your name and increase the name of Jesus simultaneously and expect to walk in freedom. Pride is one of the things that lead us back into bondage. Think about the famous story of Moses hitting the rock. *Read* Numbers 20:1-13. The Lord told Moses to speak to the rock and water will come out, but Moses and Aaron stood in front of the people and Moses said "Hear now, you *rebels*! *Must <u>we</u> bring water for you out of this rock?*' Who did he say would bring water out of the rock? Moses said "we" not "He". In that moment "we" became "We" and "He" became "he". Notice what the Lord said to Moses and Aaron in verse 12: "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel..." God wanted Moses and Aaron to speak to the rock to hallow the Lord in the eyes of the children of Israel, but instead they hallowed themselves.

This is how easily it can happen. You start serving in your church and God begins to do awesome things in you and through you and you begin to make a name for yourself in your church and in the midst of the respect, honor, and adulation you receive, your ministry can slowly become more about you and your name more than it is about magnifying the name of the Lord. Some warning flags that this is happening are: 1. You start rejecting criticism and rejecting the criticizers. 2. You begin to spend more time defending yourself and less time humbling yourself. 3. You begin to lower protective safeguards and boundaries in your life and increase entitlement, justification,

and self-centeredness. This happens all the time in lives of Christians. You know what? I've been in ministry for over 20 years and it's happened to me time and time again. I always try to be aware of these warning signs so I can catch it before it gains momentum.

It is pride...It is the pride of life. It is in our sin nature to desire to make a name for ourselves. There is great pride and adulation that can accompany a great act of courage through the lens of the flesh, but our perfect Savior, Jesus Christ, stood at the pinnacle of that temple while His identity was being questioned by the great tempter. He chose not to jump and make a name for Himself and tempt the Lord our God, but instead boldly stood upon the truth of Scripture. Turning the rocks to bread when He had been fasting for forty days sounds like a temptation of the flesh. Looking out over all the earth and being told that all He sees could be His sounds like a temptation of the pride of life. Jesus passed with flying colors, but what about you? We will continue looking at the 6 things that lead a person to return to bondage as we continue with this week's study, but to end today's study lets focus on the effects of pride in our life.

Think about your life right now. If you were to look at your focus, your ambitions, your time, your energy, your relationships, etc., do they more reflect a life seeking to increase, glorify, and magnify the name of Jesus or more a life that is making a name for yourself? This is an important self-check because pride is part of what caused the people of Israel to see the mighty works of God – His deliverance, His protection, and His provision, and yet try to find a human leader who would bring them back to the bondage that the Lord miraculously delivered them from. It can happen so easily if we don't purpose to stop it. Write down any aspects of your life that only magnify you:

# Now write down any aspects of your life that only magnify the Lord:

He MUST increase, but I MUST decrease. A life of courage and freedom from the bondage of the fear of death and a life that is led by the righteous fear of the Lord is a life that shows a shrinking of the number of things listed on the first lines and a growing of the number of things listed on the second lines. Take a moment now to pray. Ask the Lord to show you what things need to be removed from the first lines and what things need to be added to the second. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

#### SPIRIT OF FEAR

#### WEEK 2 – Returning to Egypt

### <u>DAY 3</u>

#### 5 THINGS THAT LEAD A PERSON TO RETURN TO BONDAGE (continued):

I pray that the Lord used our discussion yesterday on pride. That was the first thing we discussed from the 6 things we learn from the passage in Nehemiah that can lead a person to return to bondage. Today we are going to look at #'s 2 and 3. Let's take a look at #2:

#### 2. HARDENED THEIR NECKS

The word here for "hardened" is from the Hebrew word "qashah" which means to make stiff. I have worked in children's ministry for over two decades. I always felt like God gave me an extra measure of patience to allow me to minister to children for so long, but every once in a while I'm reminded that my patience can still run a measure short. I remember when our church put on a free community fun day. We had cotton candy, hot dogs, games for kids of all ages, and an inflatable obstacle course. A ton of people from the community came and for one portion of the day I was serving at the inflatable obstacle course section. This obstacle course had a series of obstacles and ended with a climbing-rock-wall type hill that at it's peek became a big slide that brought you down to the exit point. My job was essentially to encourage the kids to exit immediately after sliding down the slide and run around to starting point so that they wouldn't get hit by the person coming down the slide after them. For the most part, kids understand this concept and were hopping right off and everything flowed as it should...until this one kid...for the sake of privacy let's call him...ummm...Chucky (appropriately based off the adorable doll in those Child's Play horror films of the late 80's-early 90's). Chucky came down the slide and when I said, "good job buddy, come on and hop off before the next person comes down." He responded by looking me in the eye and saying, "NO!!!" With a sterner, yet compassion-filled voice, I said, "Come on buddy, you need to get off now because I don't want you to get hurt." He looked me in the eye and said, "NO!!!" I could tell that Chucky suffered from a condition that I call "lackofspankingitis", but since this was someone else's child and this was a community outreach event, I decided to stick to a diplomatic approach. This time with my sternest voice yet, I said, "If you are not going to listen, then you won't be able to go on this anymore." So he looked me in the eyes and said, "NO!!!" Desperate and trying to keep my cool, I started going deep in the how-to-get-a child-to-listen playbook – I probably said versions of..."Do you need me to get your parents?", "I guess we will have to shut down the whole ride", "I saw on the news that a little boy died the other day because he wouldn't get off the obstacle course", "The Bible teaches us to obey and God is the one who controls lightening", etc. To all of my attempts, he looked at me and said,

"NO!!!" Now at a community outreach event, you don't want to go get a parent because you believe you can reach all children, even Chucky, and don't want them to think you can't, but I was at my wits end. Before I could decide my next move, a bigger kid came careening down the slide and pummeled Chucky. Chucky flipped backwards over the kid and landed flat on his back. I'll never forget what happened next. Chucky slowly gets up, as if making sure everything still worked, and slowly walked to the exit where I was standing, looked up at me and said, "Ouch!!!" He then ran around to the beginning and went down the slide again and I never had a problem with him the rest of the day.

I tried everything I could to explain to Chucky the dangers of what he was doing, but he would not be turned until he finally learned the hard way. A stiff-necked person is someone who refuses to be turned. Their head is fixated on their way of doing it and won't be turned. Another way of saying it would be "STUBBORN." Or as my favorite band of all time, DC Talk, says it in their song The hard way, "The warning signs are like flares in the night, still I proceed my greed is in spite of the fire I know that's bound to burn. Why is it that I always gotta learn the hard way?" As frustrating as the "Chucky situation" was, I have learned over the years that children, youth, and adult ministries are not much different from one another. I can harden my neck about things and get "tunnel vision" just like Chucky did. In the Christian life, we should be stubborn when it comes to not watering down Biblical truth to fit secular comfort and we should be stubborn when it comes to not lowering the Biblical standards of how we should live our life, but where Christians get in trouble is when we are stubborn about our life, our way, and our time. Think about it: Israel wanted the very thing that God wanted to give them. So that should work, right? The problem was that they wanted to get it their way. They wanted to walk in and occupy the land without any resistance. Upon doing that, who would they have glorified? Human nature says that they would have glorified themselves. Now if God gave them a great victory over the giant descendants of Anak, then they would have just one more reason to give all glory to their God – the same God that delivered them from bondage.

What about you? Do you view obstacles and afflictions as opportunities to see God do amazing things and opportunities to be used by God in ways you wouldn't have without the affliction? Or do you view obstacles and afflictions as barriers that get in the way of your life, your way? It's so important that we not become stubborn and stiff-necked about what God can do in us and through us.

## When was the last time your life didn't go your way?

### How did you respond?

When was the last time you felt God leading you to do something that you didn't want to do?

# How did you respond?

<sup>426</sup> For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. <sup>27</sup> But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; <sup>28</sup> and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, <sup>29</sup> that no flesh should glory in His presence. <sup>30</sup> But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—<sup>31</sup> that, as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.'"

I Corinthians 1:26-31 (NKJV)

Take a moment to pray and make this passage the cry of your heart. Commit to and pray for help to make this passage the lens through which you view your life.

3. DID NOT HEED YOUR COMMANDMENTS. THEY REFUSED TO OBEY.

"<sup>1</sup> Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. <sup>2</sup> By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. <sup>3</sup>For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. <sup>4</sup> For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 1 John 5:1-5 (NKJV)

1. How do we know we love the children of God?

2. "For this is the love of God, that we what?

I cannot count the number the times in my life when someone has said to me some version of "I don't know what God's will for my life is." Over the years I've changed my response to this statement. The way I have responded for the last decade or so is, "Sure you do." How can a Christian not know God's will for their life when they have His Word? Think about it: What if I said to you, "*I want you to get a bunch of nonperishable food and clothing and load them into the trunk of your car today. Tomorrow I want you to get up and get dressed and put your jacket on and grab your*  car keys and walk out to your car. When you get to the car, I want you to open the door, get in and then shut the door. Once in the car, I want you to adjust your seat and mirrors and put your seatbelt on. Next I want you to start the car and turn your radio to a Christian music station. I want you to put your foot on the break and put your car in gear and after looking both ways, carefully pull out onto the road in the eastern direction. I want you to stay on that road and if you see a person in need of a ride, I want you to give them a ride to wherever they need to go. If you see a person in need of clothes, I want you to go to your trunk and give them the clothes they need. If you see a person in need of food, I want you to go to your trunk and give them the food they need." Now I did not tell you what your final destination is, so should you not even go get the food and clothes and put them in the trunk? Should you not get in the car and drive until I have given you your final destination? I have given you plenty of instructions to get to work.

We don't get to choose where we are born. We don't get to choose the family we are born into. So wherever we are, we must accept that God has a purpose for us there until He calls us elsewhere. He gave us the Bible and the Bible teaches us what to believe, what not to believe, what to do, and what not to do (II Timothy 3:16). The Bible tells us how to know God and it tells us our mission from God. The question shouldn't be: "Do I know God's will?" It should be: "Am I doing God's will?" He has made His will clear to us in Scripture. The people of Israel had heard God's commandments before they sent those spies into the land of Canaan. God had delivered them from bondage and had provided everything they needed along the way and He promised them a beautiful land that He was giving to them and all they had to do was heed His voice. Just doing what God had told them to do would give them the great blessing of a beautiful promised land.

Remember a couple paragraphs ago, when I said I couldn't count the number of times a person has come to me feeling confused about what God's will is in their life? Almost every single time, there were areas in their life where they were not doing the will of God – they were not obeying His standards clearly spelled out in Scripture. God called me to be a pastor over 20 years ago and back then I assumed that He would give me this perfect road map that laid out exactly how that would go. I was wrong. Since God called me to be a pastor, I have never experienced a burning bush moment of clarity of direction. Instead, what I found is that the more I try to align my life with God's Word and share the gospel with the lost, and use my gifts and passions and talents to edify His church, the more I am exactly where I'm supposed to be. Remember the analogy I shared a couple paragraphs ago about my instructing you to take a car ride with no final destination? Applying the same analogy back to my life, I feel like giving a ride to the person who needed one brings me to my destination. When I found the people in need of food: that was my destination. I have never met a missionary who was called to be a
missionary while doing nothing. Most of the time they were serving in their church, going on short term missions trips, and just doing God's will right where they were.

Keep the Lord's commandments and do what you already know He is commanding you to do and live how you already know He is commanding you to live. Often the return to bondage begins when we stop doing things His way and make all these little justifications and exceptions to not trying to live life His way. Take a moment to pray and ask the Lord to convict you of areas in your life that are not in line with His commands, and to exhort you to do what He is calling you to do right now and right here where you are. Write down anything God is showing you:

# SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 2 – Returning to Egypt

#### <u>DAY 4</u>

5 THINGS THAT LEAD A PERSON TO RETURN TO BONDAGE (continued):

4. WERE NOT MINDFUL OF YOUR WONDERS

<sup>41</sup>And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the Lord spoke to Joshua, saying: <sup>2</sup> "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe, <sup>3</sup> and command them, saying, 'Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm. You shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight.'"

<sup>4</sup> Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; <sup>5</sup> and Joshua said to them: 'Cross over before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, <sup>6</sup> that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?'<sup>7</sup> Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.''' Joshua 4:1-7 (NKJV)

1. In verse 6, what question would the children someday ask?

2. According to verse 7, what was the purpose of the stones?

The human mind is a mystery. I'm always amazed by what we remember and what we don't. Why is it that when our spouse says something that pushes our button,

we don't instantly in that moment remember all the times when our spouse has blessed us? Wouldn't that bring needed perspective to the situation? Why is it that when my child makes a mistake, I don't instantly in that moment remember all the joy they bring to my life? You could probably apply this to almost any relationship. Why is it so hard to remember times of blessing in times of famine? Why is it so hard to remember times of joy in times of sorrow? Why is it so hard to remember the good when faced with the bad? In looking at my own life and in observing the lives of those who have invited me to be a part, I've concluded that our flesh lives for the moment. In our flesh, we don't reflect on what has been done, we tend to focus on what has been done for me lately. If my spouse says something that pushes my button, the only thing that matters in that moment is winning the moment and defending myself. Here, in Joshua, and in a multitude of other passages, Israel was instructed to build an altar as a memorial to when the waters of the Jordan River were cut off so the people could cross. The memorial was placed there to answer a question future generations may ask: " What do *these stones mean to you?*" The waters of the Jordan River were cut off before the Ark of the Covenant. This would be one of the most amazing things a person could witness in a lifetime, why would an altar need to be built to remind them to tell the story? I believe the answer is in the question. The reason a memorial would need to be built to remember the amazing thing that God had done for them is because our human nature needs a memorial to be built to remember the amazing things that God does for us. Without it, our flesh would be consumed by the now.

This problem in our flesh is clearly understood by the Lord. Look at what Paul says in the book of I Corinthians:

<sup>423</sup> For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; <sup>24</sup> and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'<sup>25</sup> In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'<sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." I Corinthians 11:23-26

- 1. What reason did Jesus give for eating the bread?
- 2. What reason did Jesus give for drinking from the cup?
- 3. When are Christians to stop doing this in remembrance of Him?

Every church has a different approach to when they take communion together. Our church does it on the first Sunday of every month. Jesus said, "*….do this in remembrance of Me.*" He also said, "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*" We are supposed to take communion together in remembrance of Him until He returns. Why would Jesus think it was necessary to do this in remembrance of Him, when the only reason we can call ourselves Christians and the only reason we would even be the church is because of this amazing sacrifice – because of the greatest act of love in the history of the world. Jesus set us free, and gave His life to give us eternal life and life abundantly. Why would He find this necessary unless He knows that human nature lives for the moment? Do you think He knew that a time would come when people would claim a belief in Him and demonstrate that belief by attending church every Christmas and Easter? Do you think He knew that Christians would get so caught up in the temporary things of this world that they would not often remember the price Jesus paid for them? To be honest, I feel like all the trappings and traditions surrounding Christmas and Easter often increase the amount of things distracting us from what we are celebrating in the first place. Israel wanted to return to Egypt because they were so focused on the challenge and obstacle they faced in the moment, that they forgot all the amazing things the Lord had done to get them there. Had they only remembered the power of God, the descendants of Anak would be nothing in comparison and they would have run to that land flowing with milk and honey.

What about you? Do you see the obstacles and afflictions and stresses in front of you and forget that the "*...Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*" (Romans 8:11)? Brothers and sisters, I Corinthians 7:23 reminds you that "*you were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men*." One of the quickest paths to returning to bondage is to forget what the Lord has done for you. Your life is a living memorial of what was won for you at the cross. Be vigilant to let no obstacle or affliction cause you to forget what Christ was paying for on that cross. Let not the stress and business of this temporary flesh cause you to forget. He allowed Himself (an innocent Man) to be arrested and tortured and crucified, so that you can be free! *Take a moment to make the following Psalm your hearts cry and commit it to the Lord in prayer:* 

<sup>4</sup>Oh, give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples! <sup>2</sup> Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works! <sup>3</sup> Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord! <sup>4</sup> Seek the Lord and His strength; Seek His face evermore! <sup>5</sup>Remember His marvelous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth, <sup>6</sup> O seed of Abraham His servant, You children of Jacob, His chosen ones!" Psalm 105:1-6 (NKJV)

Is your life a living memorial to the Lord? The best way to not forget this is to make it the focus of your every day. I am a basketball coach for the high school boys' team of a small Christian school. I have been coaching that team for 8 years now. In all 8 of those years I have only done one chant with my players as we break out of our huddles before each quarter and at the end of every time out. We put all our hands in a pile in the middle of our huddle and the chant starts by me yelling, "*EVERYTHING WE* 

DO, WE DO IT ... "Then the players join me as we finish the chant together by yelling, "1, 2, 3, 4 THE LORD!!!" Most other teams yell things like "defense", "win", or they shout their team mascot, but over 8 years and as many different players have come and gone, this has always been our chant because, to me, it's what matters most. I believe passionately that basketball is the greatest game that God ever inspired. Basketball was started when a man named James Naismith was teaching at the YMCA training school in Springfield, Massachusetts. Back then, the "C" in YMCA actually stood for "Christian" instead of just the 3<sup>rd</sup> letter motioned in the Village People song. Dr. Naismith prayed about a game to teach the young men in his care and the Lord inspired basketball. I have had a few loves in my life and basketball is one of them. It is the vehicle in which the Lord taught me and called me to leadership. It is one of the greatest vehicles I have had in sharing Christ with many many people who I may not have been afforded the opportunity to share with. As a coach, the Lord has helped me to use basketball as a vehicle to teaching boys to become men of God. This is why that chant is so important to me. I want these young men to see the ups and downs, the moments of struggle and ease, and losses and victories in a basketball game as a picture of life and I want them to see their life as the Lord's. I want every motivation of their heart and everything they do to be done for the glory of God. Colossians 3:17 says " And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

If this is our focus each and every day, we can be a living memorial of the wondrous works of our God. If this is our focus each and every day, maybe we won't so easily forget what Christ has done for us and what He continues to do both for us and in us. Are you just a dinnertime prayer? Are you just a Christmas and Easter church attender? Do you only remember the blood of Jesus when taking communion? Do you focus more on what God is going to do for you than what He has done for you? Remember at the beginning of this week when we talked about the oscillating fan and the clock pendulum returning in the exact direction from whence it came? You have to pass by a lot of memorials of God's goodness and grace and mercy and power to return to bondage. Let's not be forgetful children of God. Will you join me now in talking to our Great, Great God. Take a moment to pray and repent for the times when you forgot His wonderful works in your life. Ask for His help in being a living memorial to His greatness. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

#### SPIRIT OF FEAR

#### WEEK 2 – Returning to Egypt

#### <u>DAY 5</u>

### 5 THINGS THAT LEAD A PERSON TO RETURN TO BONDAGE (continued):

#### 5. THEY APPOINTED A LEADER TO RETURN TO THEIR BONDAGE

For most of this week we have been talking about the five things that lead a person to return to bondage from Nehemiah 9:13-17. Let's look again (as a *reminder*...wink, wink) at verses 16-17 as we finish today's study by looking at the fifth one.

"<sup>16</sup> "But they and our fathers acted proudly, hardened their necks, and did not heed Your commandments. <sup>17</sup> They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of Your wonders that You did among them. But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage. But You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them."

Nehemiah 9:16-17 (NKJV)

I must confess to you that when I was writing this portion of this study I originally wrote *4 THINGS THAT LEAD A PERSON TO RETURN TO BONDAGE*. As I was prayerful in writing the first 4 reasons, the Lord showed me that I had missed one. It's a portion of this passage that is easy to overlook, but the Lord showed me that it is equal in importance to the other 4 reasons. Verse 17 says, in part, that they "*appointed a leader to return to their bondage*." Just think about those words for a moment. God appointed Moses to lead them out of the bondage that they wanted to be freed from through His amazing wonders. They followed Moses' lead as they watched God drop

devastating plagues on their oppressors. They followed Moses across the miraculously parted Red Sea. They followed Moses in gathering the miracle bread that showed up in the morning to sustain them. They saw the glory of the Lord at Mount Sinai and saw it illuminated on the face of Moses. After all that, they wanted to appoint a different leader to lead them...BACK TO BONDAGE!!! Why would someone want to follow someone who is leading them back to a bondage they were freed from? Once again, before we spend any more time criticizing the people of Israel, let's look at our own tendencies.

It happens all the time: A person becomes a member of a church and seeks to use their gifts to build the body of Christ (the reason anybody should become a member of a church – right?). This person listens to the pastor teach and preach. They get to know the pastor and know his family. They see his strengths and weaknesses and see him do good things and also see him make mistakes. They even begin to learn the intentions of his heart and the passion he has for serving the Lord. They see him as a God-appointed leader whose lead can be followed because they genuinely believe He is following the Lord. This is not trust without accountability, but it is trust. One day they listen to a sermon on-line or read a book written by an energetic pastor who feels he has a new illumination of Scripture that all other pastors prior to him have missed on what the church should be and what the church should do. You don't know these men, you don't know their families, and you don't get to see their lives day to day. You don't know their intentions and haven't been able to observe whether or not they live as they speak, but...by golly...they speak with conviction and confidence and so people will follow them. This person you don't know has helped you to see all the problems with your church and all the things that your church is not doing and all the shortcomings of your pastors and leaders. These charismatic men and their powerful and hard hitting books and sermons usually say some version of "too many Christians are focused on their white-picket-fence life and ignore real needs in our world and our true calling." The problem is: how do you know this pastor or author doesn't himself have a white picket fence? You don't know if he drives right past desperate and needy people on his way home from the recording studio, the church office, or the publishing company. We only know that he has his finger on the pulse of what the church should be and our church falls way short of that mark. Does this sound familiar?

Please understand that I am not opposed to seeking Biblical wisdom and ideas outside the walls of our own church. Great men of God have preached sermons, wrote books, and provided on-line content that has greatly influenced and benefited churches all over the world throughout history. I have been influenced by more of those than I can count, but I try to always put it in proper context. Taking all the good we can get out of it and applying it to my life and even applying it to my church is a great thing to do, but that's different than making that person my leader. The people of Israel saw the leader Moses was and the amazing things they saw God do as they followed him as he followed the Lord. The grass often looks greener on the other side of the fence, but following a leader we don't know can be like walking blind-folded. If we don't know them and the intentions of their heart because we can't see their life lived out, then we don't know exactly where they are leading us. Their influence should only be supplemental to the influence of our personal time in the Word and the influence of the people that God has put in our lives to be our spiritual leaders. We should go to our pastors and leaders with ideas we gained and scriptural interpretations we have learned or have questions about from these outside sources, but not use it as an indictment on our pastors – again – pastors whom we know and can see their lives lived out in the fish bowl that is the life of a pastor. No pastors are infallible, but I'm going to definitely put more stock in a pastor whose life I know, than I will in a person whose public words are the extent of my knowledge of them.

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: <sup>2</sup> Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; <sup>4</sup> and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. <sup>5</sup> But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." Il Timothy 4:1-5 (NKJV)

- 1. For the time will come when they will not endure what?
- 2. Why will they heap up for themselves teachers?
- 3. They will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned to what?

How itchy are your ears? Notice that verse 3 says in part: "*…according to their own desires, because they have itching ears…*" Typically, if led by our flesh, the leaders we are willing to follow are the leaders that tickle our desires. If I'm struggling with a physical affliction and I hear a pastor preach about the physical healing we are "entitled to" and therefore must "claim" then we are likely to follow his leadership because it fits our desire for healing. If we are struggling financially and I hear a pastor preach about the worldly riches that I am "entitled to" and therefore must "claim" then we are likely to follow his leadership because it fits our desire for wealth. If we are frustrated, confused, or scared about what's happening in our world and we hear a pastor preach with conviction about exactly what is happening, why it's happening, and exactly what will happen next then we are likely to follow his leadership because it fits our desire for answers. I could name thousands of sermons I've heard on thousands of topics that can fit into anyone's desire. The problem is the Bible never says that we are entitled to physical healing and worldly wealth. The Bible makes it clear that no one knows God's timing when it comes to His future plans for our world. Anybody can pick a verse here and a verse there (I call this popcorn Scripture) and put them together and speak with confidence and conviction about something. The scary part is that they are certain to gain a following – generally a following of people who have a desire that is fed by those teachings. This is why it is so important that we stay grounded in God's Word.

Notice what Paul is saying to Timothy in the above Scripture. After warning him of itching ears, in verse 5, he tells Timothy to "...*be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*" Think about that for a second. Let's finish today's study and this week's study by breaking down these 4 pieces of advice to stay grounded in a time where we have many many truth-sounding false teachers preying on the personal desires of the flesh.

# 1. BE WATCHFUL IN ALL THINGS:

Charles Spurgeon once said, "Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong, it is knowing the difference between right and almost right." I love this quote because most deceivers start with an element of truth. Just like Satan did when he tried to tempt Jesus, deceivers will lace their heresy with Scripture (often, but not always, popcorn Scripture – 1-2 verses at a time). Colossians, chapter 2 talks about how philosophy and legalism can subvert truth and verses 8-10 say, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. <sup>9</sup> For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; <sup>10</sup> and you are complete in Him, who *is the head of all principality and power*." It is so important to continually sharpen our discernment. We must spend a lot of time in the Word. Dive in and don't just read it, but study it and memorize it and put sticky notes in your house and car with Scripture on them and try to be as immersed as possible in His Word. If you are not sure on something, before you type it in a search engine, contact one of your pastors or leaders and ask questions. Wouldn't you rather asked someone whose life you know and can see, then someone whose life you can't. Sharpening your discernment by increasing your understanding of Biblical truth is a great way to be watchful in all things.

### 2. ENDURE AFFLICTIONS:

Why would enduring afflictions be a part of advice about staying grounded? Remember in

Il Timothy 4:3 where it said "...according to their own desires..."? The place people are most often fooled by false doctrine is at the point of their desire and need. Jesus had fasted for 40 days and the first thing Satan tried to tempt Him with was food. Do you think that was a coincidence? If you are going through an affliction, you might as well

paint a target on yourself because the enemy would love nothing more than for that affliction to birth fear, doubt, and straying from truth. We need to endure afflictions by seeing them through the eyes of God instead of through the eyes of the flesh. *Read II Corinthians 12:7-10.* 

# 3. DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST:

I have often said that the best defense is a good offense. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is at the center of all Scripture. If we would spend more time focused on sharing the truth of Jesus Christ with the lost and less time sitting at home filling our heads with the philosophical, sociological, political, etc. approaches to Christianity, we would be in a better position to stay grounded in the truth. It seems these days that the straight Gospel has gotten watered down by these empty evaluations of the current state of the evangelical church. Instead of philosophizing the American evangelical church, let's just be evangelical by being evangelists. *Read I John 4:1-6.* 

### 4. FULFILL YOUR MINISTRY:

I grew up in church, I went to a Christian school from grades K-10, and I've studied at three different seminaries and I learned crucial Biblical truths from all these places, yet the most I have ever learned about God, about His Word, and even about myself has been from serving in ministry. Doing my part to build the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-16) has kept me grounded in truth and has held me accountable to continuously grow and sharpen my understanding of God's Word. Many teachers and Sunday School teachers throughout my life have always said, "Idleness is the Devil's workshop." *Read* 

Il Thessalonians 3:11-15.

This week we discussed what it means to return again to bondage. I pray with all my heart that this week's study was a blessing to you and I pray that if any of you find yourself repeatedly drawn back to the bondage Christ died to free you from, that you were able to recognize patterns in your life and make adjustments that can empower you to live fearlessly in the freedom that is found in Christ. Take a moment now to reflect on anything you discovered about God or yourself this week and commit those things to the Lord and pray that He will help you to always remember Who He is and What He has done for you. Write down anything the Lord is showing you: Watch the weekly introduction videos at <a href="https://crosspointchurchonline.org/spirit-of-fear/">https://crosspointchurchonline.org/spirit-of-fear/</a>

# SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 3 – If God is for us

### <u>DAY 1</u>

### FAST-DRYING GROUT

<sup>431</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written:
<sup>37</sup> Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:31-39 (NKJV)

 According to this passage, what are the things that <u>can't</u> separate us from the love of Christ? Were you annoyed to have to write all those down? \_\_\_\_\_\_. If yes, I apologize for your annoyance, but not for asking you to write all 17 of them down. I hope by the end of this week you will understand why it was so important to do so.

I have done a lot of tile installation in my life. Anybody can install tile, but it takes a lot of practice, experience, and skill refining to do it well. Preparing the under floor is pretty easy to learn and laying the tile with the use of spacers is also pretty easy to learn, but the finishing touch to tile work can be the trickiest part. In tile work, the final step is usually grouting. It takes an experienced touch to make sure it's mixed to the proper consistency, make sure it's applied correctly, and knowing the time period that should go by before wiping it. A lot of these decisions and techniques come from having a learned feel for grouting from experience. The funny thing about experience, though, is that it takes a lot of mistakes to get it. I have always felt that failure is the teacher that leaves the most lasting impression. As I was in the midst of gaining this experience, I remember taking on a huge tile job. It was the floor of an entire basement of a large house. It was going very well until grouting time. For a job this big I decided to mix a bigger batch of grout, but the time it takes to properly apply the grout doesn't change so you end up with grout that is setting in a bucket longer and this particular grout was very fast-drying. About a quarter of the way through the bucket, I noticed the rest of the bucket getting harder and harder and it quickly became unusable. So I had about three quarters of a five gallon bucket of grout that had hardened up. I went outside to chip away at the grout to save the bucket. By the time I cleaned out the bucket and came back inside, I realized that the grout I had put on the tile had gotten way too hard. It took me over an hour and about three sponges to smooth it out and wipe it down. I mixed another bucket of grout, but this time I kept stirring it frequently so that it didn't get a chance to harden up in the bucket...and...it worked. The problem wasn't the amount in the bucket; the problem was that if I wasn't using it, it would harden up and become useless.

In the first week of this study, we looked at the very first fear and we focused on what it means to fear the Lord – righteous fear. Last week, we looked at the bondage of fear and some of the things that cause us to go back to a bondage that we have been set free from. This week we will look at where unrighteous fear comes from. Sometimes I think we view fear as a problem in and of itself, but I believe that fear is the symptom of a problem. I don't believe fear is something we produce, I believe fear is what happens when we stop producing something else and that is what we will focus on this week.

When discussing fear, many people quote II Timothy 1:7, which says: "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*" This is a great passage – one of my favorites – but I feel it is often taken out of context. In Day 5 of last week I talked about how some teachers and preachers you find online or in books they have written will use "popcorn Scripture." This is so dangerous because you can compile one or two verses out of context from throughout the Bible and use it to support a point. I would rather let the Word of God dictate what I believe, than use the Word of God out of context to try and justify my belief. II Timothy 1:7 is a great verse on fear, but let's put it into the context in which it was written:

<sup>43</sup> I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, <sup>4</sup> greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, <sup>5</sup> when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. <sup>6</sup> Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. <sup>7</sup> For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

1. According to verse 5, what did Paul call to remembrance about Timothy?

2. What was Paul reminding Timothy to do in verse 6?

Does this context change the meaning to you? Paul is not just randomly saying that God doesn't give us a spirit of fear. He is reminded of Timothy's genuine faith that has been nurtured by his faithful grandma and mom and is reminding him to stir up his God-given gifts. What does it mean to "stir" up gifts? The Greek word used here is transliterated as "anazopureo" which means to ignite again and to arouse again. He is reminding Timothy to not let his spiritual grout harden in the bucket. He is reminding him to be continually using his gifts. So why would he follow that by telling him that God has not given him a spirit of fear? We looked at the verses preceding verse 7, but the context of a verse is found in the Scripture on each side of the verse, so now let's look at the proceeding verses:

\*\*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, <sup>9</sup> who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, <sup>10</sup> but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, <sup>11</sup> to

which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. <sup>12</sup> For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day." II Timothy 1:8-12 (NKJV)

- 1. In the middle of verse 8, what does Paul call himself?
- 2. Also in verse 8, what did Paul ask Timothy to share with him in?
- 3. In verse 11, what did Paul say he was appointed to that caused him to suffer these things?

Why would Timothy have reason to fear using his gifts? He is getting this letter from a man who has experienced extreme persecution for using his gifts and Timothy is living in a world where Christianity is being heavily persecuted. I believe Paul is telling Timothy to not let the fear of persecution stop him from using his gifts and being everything that God has called him to be for the glory of God and the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. I don't know how applicable this verse is to overcoming your fear of spiders and heights, but I pray with all my heart that this verse inspires you to not let your grout harden. I pray it inspires you to fearlessly use your gifts and never allow any form of persecution to make you ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I pray you are inspired to fearlessly live for Him for the same reason Paul shares in part in verse 12: "...for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day."

This week we will continue to dive into what God's Word teaches us about fear and more specifically looking at what fear is really a symptom of. Today, I do hope you learned some home improvement tips for your next tiling project, but more importantly, I hope you were able to see fear as more than just an emotion or feeling that falls upon you in a moment. My prayer for you today is that you will ask the question: "Am I stirring the bucket?" Are you stirring up the gifts that God has given you or are they hardening up for lack of use? Write down a gift that you believe God has given you:

What are you doing with that gift?

Sometimes people don't know their gift and can't seem to find their place in the body of Christ. If this is you, sitting around waiting for it to dawn on you is not the answer. You need to go to your church leaders and a big part of their job is helping you find your place, because what I know for sure is that everyone has a place in the body of Christ. Please don't wait – talk to someone this week. If you are a person who has found their gift, but has allowed a busy life and other excuses to justify you not stirring it up, then it's time to drop the excuses and get busy. Remember that the grout in the bucket became useless – completely wasted because I didn't stir it up. God loves you and has chosen you to do your part. Take a moment to pray now. Be vulnerable before the Lord about your life and ask Him to convict you of the areas that are getting hard and ask Him to help you fearlessly stir up the gifts that He has given you. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

# SPIRIT OF FEAR WEEK 3 – If God is for us

#### <u>DAY 2</u>

#### WHY DID YOU DOUBT?

I sincerely hope this study is not what you expected. Writing a study on a subject that has been written about, talked about, and preached about so many times is actually a "scary" proposition. I don't believe I would personally choose to write on the subject of fear. I am writing this study because God flooded my heart with this perspective on fear. Through His Word and the power of the Holy Spirit, He has been shaping my view of fear. I now see fear differently than I did before and He put it on my heart to share it. It all started when the Lord helped me to see the manifestation of fear in the life of someone I was ministering to. I wanted so much to help them with the fear that gripped their life, that I began taking a deeper dive on the subject of fear than I ever had before. It helped me to minister God's truth on fear to them, but it also helped me to recognize fear in my own life. I am a person that tends to be hard on myself and when I become aware of things in my life that fall short, I want to try and fix them.

the recesses of my heart and mind and influenced my life, but never stood out as THE problem. It was like the way the Bible describes how a little yeast leavens the whole lump (I Corinthians 5:6). It effected so many aspects of my life, but I never realized it was the root. When I started understanding more about what the Bible teaches on fear, I began to discover what I was afraid of and how that fear manifested itself in my life, but it was much harder to figure out the "why." As I began seeking the Lord for understanding, He began to give me a deeper understanding of fear and He helped me understand the "why" of my fear, which allowed me to meet it at it's source and even recognize the patterns in my life that precede destructive fear. The more I understood about the root of my fear, the more I began to observe the same roots in the lives of people around me. This study is an invitation to join me as I share all that God has revealed to me on my purposed journey to "Be Not Afraid!"

As I mentioned yesterday, I now understand fear to be a symptom. I see it to be the result of something that is missing. I want to start explaining that more by going to a factual historical event that I have always loved.

<sup>\*22</sup> Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. <sup>23</sup> And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. <sup>24</sup> But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. <sup>25</sup> Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. <sup>26</sup> And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out for fear.
<sup>27</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.'

<sup>28</sup> And Peter answered Him and said, 'Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.' <sup>29</sup> So He said, 'Come.' And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!' <sup>31</sup> And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?' <sup>32</sup> And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. <sup>33</sup> Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God.''' Matthew 14:22-33 (NKJV)

- 1. What came first, Peter seeing the wind was boisterous or Peter being afraid?
- 2. After Jesus caught Peter from sinking, did he question Peter's fear or Peter's doubt?

In verse 28 Peter said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." If the boisterous winds were the cause of his fear, he never would have said this

to Jesus. Think about it; the winds were boisterous the whole time, so if that was the source of his fear then he never would have asked to come out on the water. When Peter told the Lord to call him out to the water, he did so because he believed that with Jesus it was possible. When Jesus said "come", the only thing that could cause Peter to step out of that tossed around boat was a genuine belief in the power of Jesus. Do you see where this is going? His fear may have caused him to sink, but his fear was the result of doubting what is possible with Jesus. He believed something about Jesus when he stepped out of the boat that he began to doubt a few steps later. His fear was the symptom of his doubt. This is the classic battle between spirit and flesh. When looking through the eyes of the spirit, Peter saw nothing as impossible with Christ, so he stepped right out of that boat despite the boisterous winds. When looking through the eyes of the flesh, he saw the limitations of the flesh apart from Christ and started to sink. Peter recognized the power of the boisterous winds, then became afraid because recognizing the boisterous winds replaced recognizing the power of Christ. The focus of his attention shifted from the power of Jesus to the power of the wind and his lack of power to contend with them.

To this point, the disciples had witnessed Jesus turn water to wine, raise the dead, cast out demons, heal the sick, feed 5,000 with only five loaves and two fish, and...yes...even calm a stormy sea. To this point the disciples had every reason to believe that nothing was impossible with Jesus. Jesus didn't question Peter's fear, He questioned Peter's doubt. Earlier in this study we looked at Moses sending the twelve spies into the land that the Lord was giving them and after seeing God send plagues upon Egypt to set them free from oppression, seeing Him part a sea, and feed them bread from heaven, yet one look at the descendants of Anak and suddenly they saw the limitations of their flesh more clearly than they saw the power of a limitless God. You see, righteous fear is revering who God is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do and unrighteous fear comes from failing to. In fact, take a look at what Jesus said the previous time He calmed a sea:

<sup>423</sup> Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. <sup>24</sup> And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. <sup>25</sup> Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We are perishing!'

<sup>26</sup> But He said to them, 'Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?' Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. <sup>27</sup> So the men marveled, saying, 'Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?'" Matthew 8:23-27 (NKJV)

- 1. What was Jesus doing during the tempest?
- 2. After they asked Him to save them, what question did Jesus ask them?

Jesus asks a question and gives the answer to the question in how he addressed them. He says "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" That would kind of be like me saying, "What is your name, Joe?" Notice, however, that He didn't say they had no faith, He said they had little faith. The reason they were fearful is because they had little faith. What is funny about this factual historical event is that they didn't believe they would be saved while He was sleeping, but they did believe that He could save them if they woke Him up. Based on their reaction to Him calming the sea, it seemed that they believed He could save them from the storm, but didn't believe in His power over the storm. Apply this back to Peter on the water. In Matthew 14:30, it says "... when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid." He got out of the boat because He believed that Jesus could cause him to walk on the sea, yet the boisterous winds caused him to doubt because he didn't seem to believe in His power over the storm even though at this point he had seen Jesus calm a storm. There is a reason why I had you write down all those things from Romans 8 yesterday. I wanted you to fully embrace the list of things that cannot separate us from the love of God. Let's look at that passage again (except without all the writing):

<sup>431</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.
<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written:
<sup>37</sup> Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:31-39 (NKJV)

None of these things can separate us from the love of God. There is no circumstance in our life that reflects the absence of His love, His protection, and His provision. Some circumstances are the result of our own sinful decisions and some circumstances are the result of living in a fallen world and in an imperfect and temporary flesh, but none of those things separate us from His perfect love. When Peter began to sink because of his doubt, he cried out to Jesus and said "*Lord, save me*." Even in his doubt, he still believed that Jesus could save him, and more importantly, despite his doubt, Jesus did save him. Jesus didn't let him sink and get a little water in his lungs to teach him a lesson, the Bible says that "*...immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him...*" God is sovereign and nothing ever surprises Him or catches Him off guard. He is always in control, even when your life feels like it is not. I believe the

reason He so often tells us to not be afraid is because, in Him, there is nothing to fear. There is never a situation where the righteous reaction is to doubt that He is in control.

- Do you believe that the power of God can help you in a storm? \_\_\_\_\_\_.
- Do you believe that God has power over the storm?\_\_\_\_\_.
- I believe that in our life and in the example of Peter on the water, these are two different things. Often, we as Christians will say, "Lord, save me!" when we are sinking or when we are being rocked by a storm, but do you only believe He can rescue you from the storm or do you believe in His power over the storm and over your entire life? Write down a time in your life when you had the faith to "step out of the boat" but not the faith to believe that every single step thereafter was also in His hands:

The realization that I came to in my own life was that I did indeed have the faith to believe that God could save me, comfort me, protect me, and provide for me in any storm, but I didn't always fully believe in His sovereignty over my life. So many times I stepped off the boat because of my faith in Him, but then came to believe every step thereafter came from my own strength. After a few steps, just like Peter, that doubt can birth sinking fear and you can find yourself looking for the same Jesus that you stepped out of the boat to go to in the first place. Take a moment to pray and ask the Lord to help you see the bigger picture of His perfect love for you and the bigger picture of His sovereignty over your life – not just for the first couple steps, but every step until you reach Him. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 3 – If God is for us

### <u>DAY 3</u>

### BEEN THERE

<sup>49</sup> What do workers gain from their toil? <sup>10</sup> I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. <sup>11</sup> He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.
<sup>12</sup> I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. <sup>13</sup> That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God. <sup>14</sup> I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him.

<sup>15</sup> Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and God will call the past to account." Ecclesiastes 3:9-15 (NIV)

1.	How long will the things God does endure?
2.	According to verse 14, why does God do what He does?
3.	According to verse 15, "Whatever is has

4. Also according to verse 15, "...what will be has \_\_\_\_\_\_

I was born in 1979. My life has now spanned over four full decades. My generation has had it the hardest of any generation to ever exist. My generation has dealt with struggles that have never been seen before. It would be great to live in past generations whose lives were so easy compared to mine and...I'm just kidding! I bet for a second there, many of you couldn't believe what you were reading - especially those older than me. Those statements are ridiculous, but it is the way some people think. Sin has always been mankind's biggest problem. It can take on various forms, but sin is the problem. God created a perfect world and then mankind sinned and this was the beginning of struggles, and struggles have not skipped any generation or any individual. That's the bad news, but the great news is that God has always been at work and He has won the victory for us and set us free. A couple times this week, we have looked at Romans, chapter 8 and verses 36 and 37 say, "As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." Mankind has failed God over and over, but God has never failed mankind and in all our struggles from generation to generation all of our hope rests in God and God alone.

Yesterday I simplified fear in this way: "...**righteous fear is revering who God is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do and unrighteous fear comes from failing to**." I want to continue to build on that mindset. If destructive fear is a symptom of putting limitations on God, forgetting what He's done, failing to see what He is doing, and not living in the assurance of what He will do, then let's spend the rest of this week focusing on the mindsets necessary to live a life free from the bondage of unrighteous fear. So let's dive into what the Bible teaches us about building a righteous fear of God that will help protect us from allowing unrighteous fear to become more real to us than the realities of the limitlessness of our great God.

#### BUILDING A RIGHTEOUS FEAR OF GOD THAT GLORIFIES HIM:

- 1. for who He is. 2. for what He has done. 3. for what He is doing. 4. for what He will do.
- 1. for who He is:

<sup>418</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup> because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, <sup>21</sup> because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Professing to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things." Romans 1:18-23 (NKJV)

- 1. What do men do to the truth in unrighteousness?
- 2. What are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made?
- 3. Verse 21 says, "...although they \_\_\_\_\_ God, they did not \_\_\_\_\_ Him as God..."

I have always been fascinated by this passage. If you notice it differentiates between knowing God and glorifying Him as God. Have you ever known someone who says that they don't believe in God and when you provide them with a myriad of scientific evidence that demonstrates the clear existence of God, they instantly realize you are right and ask to be saved? If that has happened to you, you are one of the very very few. I have spoken to more people than I can count who began by establishing that they do not believe in God and factual evidence has not one time changed their mind. In fact, I have never even met a Christian who said they turned to Christ because someone provided them with enough evidence. Anybody and everybody can look around and know that God is the only explanation for all we see – that is why it says that they are without excuse. I don't even feel compelled to try and jam a secular view of science into the Biblical creation account. This is why I rarely dedicate much time to proving God exists to someone who denies He does. I don't for a second believe that in their heart of hearts they genuinely don't believe that God exists. I always try to steer the conversation to a more personal place – try to discover why they deny what they genuinely know because like it says in verses 19-20: "because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." So if knowing God is something that is in the mind of everyone, what causes a person to not glorify Him as God?

Keeping in Romans, chapter 1, verses 22-23 it says "Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man-and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. " Later in verse 25 it says, "Who exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator..." Worship is one of mankind's basic instincts. Tribes disconnected from civilization have been discovered all over the world throughout history and they all had an element of worship. No one has to be taught to worship – we are created to worship. The question is not whether or not we will worship, but who or what we will worship. The above passages make clear what the real problem is – worshipping the creature rather than the Creator. As Christians, it is so important to keep our lives in check. Ask yourself: "does my life reflect a life worshipping the Creator or worshipping the creature?" Everything God created is right in front of us - we even see His prized creation every time we look in the mirror. It's easy to become so consumed with our life, that we ignore the life giver. It's easy to become so consumed with what we have, that we ignore the provider of what we have. To revere God for Who He is, is not just knowing Who He is, but it's glorifying Who He is. Take a moment to read Psalm 115:

Verse 1 says, "*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name be the glory.*" Remember how Peter believed something about Jesus when he stepped out of the boat that he began to not believe a few steps later? The reality of the storm's power became more real to him than the reality of God's power over the storm. This is one of the ways that fear creeps into our lives. The realities of all our responsibilities, all our struggles, and all our afflictions becomes more real to us than the reality of God's sovereignty over those things – so – often we begin to sink. For many, the more they sink, the more they fail to see the reality of God's sovereignty and the more they fail to see the reality of God's sovereignty, the more they sink. I believe that clinging to the reality that God is in control starts with the patterns in our lives before the storms hit. If you often glory in yourself instead of glorying in the Lord in your successes and accomplishments and in times of peace and blessing in your life, then you are probably not going to acknowledge His power when you face the storms. Probably my favorite Christian song of all time is *In Christ Alone* by Michael English. These are the lyrics:

In Christ alone will I glory, though I could pride myself in battles won. For I've been blessed beyond measure and by His strength alone, I overcome. Oh, I could stop and count successes, like diamonds in my hands, But these trophies could not equal to the grace by which I stand In Christ alone I place my trust and find my glory in the power of the cross In every victory let it be said of me, my source of strength, my source of hope is Christ alone

In Christ alone will I glory, for only by His grace I am redeemed. And only His tender mercy could reach beyond my weakness, to my need.

# Now I seek no greater honor than just to know Him more. And to count my gains but losses and to the glory of my Lord. In Christ alone I place my trust and find my glory in the power of the cross. In every victory let it be said of me, my source of strength, my source of hope is Christ alone

For you sports fans out there who love watching inspiring sports videos – look up the video about how this song inspired backup guarterback Frank Reich to lead the Buffalo Bills in their historic comeback over the Houston Oilers in the 1993 NFL playoffs, in which they overcame a 31-0 halftime deficit to win 42-40. I still get chills watching it. Frank Reich was listening to this song before the game and in the midst of their comeback, was singing this song in his head over and over again. After the game, Frank Reich read these lyrics on national television at the post-game press conference – giving all glory to God for the comeback. I don't tell you this because I'm a big sports fan and I want to jam sports into the study anywhere I can...well...not entirely for that reason. Frank Reich went into this game in the difficult position of filling in for the injured legendary Hall of Fame Quarterback Jim Kelly in a win-or-go-home playoff game. As a back-up quarterback, he found his team down 31-0 at half-time. To this point, no team in history had ever come back from being down that many points at half-time. Everything surrounding that moment was saying, "you have failed", "you are beat", yet Frank Reich was not listening to those voices, he was singing that song. He was worshipping his King and glorying in the Lord despite the storm. The Buffalo Bills then did what no team in history had ever done and everybody wanted to give glory to Frank Reich and begin a narrative on his heroic performance. Standing in front of the cameras and bright lights and all the glory that awaited him, he made a choice. If you watch the video that includes an interview with Frank and Michael English, you find that the choice was made before the game even started. He wrote the lyrics on a piece of paper while on the bus on the way to the stadium. He put those lyrics in his locker and made a commitment in that moment, that in victory or defeat, he would read those lyrics to the media for the glory of God. When he and his team were down and sunk, he glorified the Lord and when his team stood at the top of the mountain in victory, he glorified the Lord. This is the key: If we make glorifying and revering God for Who He is the top priority every day and in every success, we are more likely to trust in Him and remember that he is in control in our afflictions.

Do you make a practice of glorifying and revering God for Who He is on a daily basis and in time of peace and prosperity? Take a moment now to pray. In this prayer, don't think about your life and all your struggles and accomplishments, let this prayer be completely about glorifying God for the awesome God He is. Shower Him with as much love, adoration, and gratitude that you possibly can, then shower Him with more. Make a daily habit of this. Make sure that you believe about God the same thing "a few

### SPIRIT OF FEAR

#### WEEK 3 – If God is for us

### <u>DAY 4</u>

# BUILDING A RIGHTEOUS FEAR OF GOD THAT GLORIFIES HIM (Continued):

2. for what He has done:

<sup>20</sup> Then Samuel said to the people, 'Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. <sup>21</sup> And do not turn aside; for then you would go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing. <sup>22</sup> For the Lord will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you His people. <sup>23</sup> Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. <sup>24</sup> Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. <sup>25</sup> But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.<sup>27</sup> I Samuel 12:20-25 (NKJV)

1. Verse 21 says, "And do not turn aside; for then you would

2. In the second half of verse 24, Samuel reminds the people to consider what?

How often do we "*consider what great things He has done*"? When the people of Israel saw the descendants of Anak, it was as though they had forgotten all the wonderful and amazing things the Lord had done to bring them to that place. Remember that by the time Peter stepped out of that boat, he had already seen Jesus do wonderful and amazing things – including calming a sea by just speaking the words. In both cases, considering all that the Lord had done to that point would have been more than sufficient to believe that nothing is impossible with God and when all of our trust is in Him there is nothing to fear. If unrighteous fear is a symptom of failing to righteously fear the Lord, then we must find a way to not just remember, but live in the perpetual awareness of all He has done. But how?

I want you to imagine a married couple for a moment. They fell madly in love and got married and were very happy together. In the beginning of the marriage they would constantly say the words "I love you" and whenever there was the presence of acts of kindness and thoughtfulness, they would make sure to say "thank you." Whenever they would make a mistake, they would humble themselves and say "I'm sorry."

#### ...then time goes by...

Now imagine that as time went on, they still loved each other and did things that symbolized it, but rarely said it anymore. Imagine that those acts of kindness and thoughtfulness became expected instead of appreciated, so there was little need to say "thank you" anymore. When they would make a mistake, they now had plenty of time to remember all the mistakes that their spouse had made over that time and instead of apologizing for a mistake, they can justify it. Over time, the relationship grows cold and those great feelings of love begin to fade and can even feel more like obligation and maybe resentment. Does that sound familiar? For some of you it may even feel really close to home. Looking at it through this wide lens, it is easy to see what went wrong, but while you're living it day to day and moment to moment, it is a slow fade.

Now think about your relationship with Christ. The moment of salvation is the moment you humbly realize that there is no goodness apart from God. Despite your best intentions, you fall way short of His perfect standards. You begin your relationship with Him by admitting your mistakes and acknowledging that without Him you are destined for eternal death and a life lived apart from all the blessings and adventure and fulfillment that come from a life lived His way and a life lived in Him. At the same time that you are realizing how you fall short, you are realizing that He does not. Your sin leaves you needing a Savior and you realize that Jesus is that Savior and you realize the great love it took for Him to take that beating, face that mockery, and die an excruciating death on that cross for you. You fully believe that He victoriously rose from the grave three days later and conquered death and gave you the gift of the Holy Spirit to seal you, convict you, and guide you. You know that He did not just give you life, but life abundantly. He gives you the opportunity to be part of the church and experience relationships that are bonded together by His blood and gives you a sense of belonging. He gives you gifts to be used to glorify Him and edify the church that give you a sense of purpose. He even empowers you to deliver this life-saving message to a lost and dying world that desperately needs it.

#### ...then time goes by ...

Those warm feelings of walking closely with Him can start to fade. The "thank you's" can become "I want" and "I need" and "thank you for this meal, Amen." The "I love You" becomes singing some songs once a week, while trying not to think about the lawn that needs to be mowed. Slowly, our genuine faith and trust can become our halfhearted religious routine. Does that sound familiar? If we want to live in the perpetual awareness of all the Lord has done for us, then we need to keep the spark alive. This does not come by feeling, but by choice. Every single day, I must purpose in my heart to not take my wife for granted. I must purpose to not assume she knows I love her, but tell her over and over again in words and actions. I must purpose every day to acknowledge my mistakes and humbly apologize to keep the fire burning. It is no different in my relationship with Christ. I must purpose every day to relive His sacrifice in my mind and say "thank you" over and over again. Hint: If you are ever at church and get bored by hearing the Gospel message because you heard it so many times before, than that is a red flag that you are taking it and Him for granted. That message should excite you every single time. That message should be a purposed thought in your heart and mind throughout your day. I must purpose to express my gratitude and love for Him throughout the day in a worshipful state of mind. Sing His praise so loudly in your car that people in the next lane think you're nuts. Sing and speak His praises in your head throughout your day. Tell Him you love Him over and over and don't get bored doing it. Confess your mistakes to Him. Don't justify them, confess them – humbly apologize to the Lord for falling short. If you keep that fire burning daily, and daily

(throughout the day) acknowledge Him for everything He has done for you, it will be harder to forget in the moments that would give you reasons to doubt.

- Do you struggle to live with the perpetual awareness of what He has done for you?\_\_\_\_\_.
- If your answer was "yes" then it's time to change. Start right now. Purpose in your heart and mind that for the next 24 hours you will try to live in the awareness of all He's done for you. Those moments typically reserved for anxiety at work or home and those moments typically reserved for road rage and anger purpose to replace them with thoughts of what He has done. Try it for every waking moment for the next 24 hours. Take a moment to make that commitment to the Lord.
- When that 24 hour period is over, do it again. Then again and again and again and again..... This is how healthy habits are made. It is a choice made over and over again. I promise you that it will change your perspective on a lot of things and you will be more prepared to look the descendants of Anak in the eye and shout at the top of your lungs, "If God is for me, who can be against me!" and march confidently into the promise land. You will be prepared to see the boisterous winds and storms in your life and not sink, but fixing your eyes on Jesus, walk confidently above them.

# 3. for what He is doing.

<sup>"10</sup> and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat." <sup>11</sup> But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.' <sup>"12</sup> So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?" <sup>13</sup> The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. <sup>14</sup> Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." <sup>15</sup> The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well. <sup>16</sup> So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. <sup>17</sup> In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working." John 5:10-17 (NIV)

1. Why did the Jewish leaders begin to persecute Jesus?

2. According to verse 17, when is God working?

In his famous and impactful *Experiencing God* study, Henry Blackaby said, "One of the greatest tragedies among God's people is that while they have a deep longing to experience Him, they are experiencing God day after day but do not know how to

recognize Him." In the first part of today's study, we looked at revering and glorifying God for what He has done. We discussed how it is so vital to live with the perpetual awareness of what God has done for you. Well...take that mindset and carry it into the present and be aware of what He is doing - because the one guarantee is that He is working both in you, through you, and all around you. If you are struggling to see God at work, then I suggest you open your eyes (both figuratively and literally). Hebrews 13:7-8 says, "7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.<sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." At first sight, verse 8 can seem random, but look again at what it says in verse 7. The author of Hebrews is instructing believers to look at the lives of the spiritual leaders God has placed in their lives and see the good work He has done in them as evidenced by their lives. The same Lord who was working in their lives is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and therefore is at work in you as well. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Look at the courage and outworking of the Spirit through the apostles in the face of massive persecution against the church and remember that their Savior is the same Savior as your Savior and the Holy Spirit being manifest in them is the same Holy Spirit living in you today. It's not just what God has done for you, but what He is doing.

#### Philippians 2:12-16 says:

"<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.<sup>14</sup> Do all things without complaining and disputing, <sup>15</sup> that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup> holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain." Philippians 2:12-16 (NKJV)

Salvation is a gift from God. This Scripture doesn't say to work for your salvation or work to keep your salvation, it says to work out your salvation. Accepting God's free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ saves us for eternity, but it is also the gift that keeps on giving. God is working in us both to will and do for His good pleasure. The more we unwrap all He is doing in us and through us, the more we discover about what a powerful thing His gift of salvation is. I love that it says to do this with "fear and trembling." This is talking about the righteous fear of God. The more we revere and glorify who He is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do, the more perpetually aware we are of what He is doing in us, through us, and around us and the more we understand the power of the gift of salvation. Verse 13 says that God is working in you, but if you look down at verse 15, it also says that He is working through us. The more we align our lives with His Biblical morality and live in accordance with His standards, the brighter our light shines in a crooked and perverse world and the brighter our light shines, the more actively aware we are of what God is doing.

Take a moment now to also commit this to prayer. Not only committing to be more aware of what He has done for you, but also what He is doing in you, through you, and around you. Pray that God would help you to not grow so dry in your relationship with Him that you take for granted all He is doing around you. Finally, pray that the perpetual awareness of what He has done and what He is doing will build a faith in you and a righteous fear of God in you that will not lose heart when unrighteous fear comes calling. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

### SPIRIT OF FEAR

#### WEEK 3 – If God is for us

### <u>DAY 5</u>

BUILDING A RIGHTEOUS FEAR OF GOD THAT GLORIFIES HIM (Continued):

4. for what He will do.

*""God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent.* Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" Numbers 23:19 (NKJV)

1. God is not a \_\_\_\_\_, that He should \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Has He said, and will He \_\_\_\_\_?

The older I get, the more hesitant I am to make a promise. There is no worse feeling in the world than making a promise and not keeping it. This is especially true with my wife and kids. Just the thought of the look of disappointment on their faces makes my stomach turn. The fact of the matter is, though, that I have and will fail them. I will make promises that I won't keep because I am a sinner by nature and choice. I want to love them and provide for them and protect them with every fiber of my being, but if I am the sole source of their hope, then, despite my best intentions, they will be disappointed. This is why I try my best to make sure that they see the Lord as their perfect Father. Whenever my children have expressed that they were afraid of the dark and want their bedroom light left on - my flesh wants to be their everything...their hero...their knight in shining armor, but my number one job is to point them to Christ. I want to say, "it's ok, daddy will keep you safe and daddy will protect you", but instead I say, "let's pray and tell the Lord that you are afraid and pray that He would protect you and remove that fear." The reason I do this is because as much as I desire not to, I will let them down, but their perfect Heavenly Father will never let them down. He will never break a promise and will never fail to provide for them.

Building a righteous fear that glorifies Him for what He will do is about trusting Him to keep His promises. God has kept every promise He has ever made, yet many Christians struggle to live as if they believe He will continue to. Ask 100 born again Christians if they believe that because they believed in Jesus as Savior they will go to Heaven when they die, and I bet pretty close to 100 will say "yes." Now ask those same 100 Christians if they fear death and I bet you will get mixed response. Why is that? When we die, we will be happier and healthier than we have ever been before, so why would we fear the very thing that Jesus died to set us free from? Hebrews 2:10-15 says it this way:

<sup>40</sup> For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. <sup>11</sup> For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, <sup>12</sup> saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." <sup>13</sup> And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." <sup>14</sup> Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. <sup>16</sup> For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham."

Both He who sanctifies and those being sanctified are all of \_\_\_\_\_\_.

#### 2. Who were all their lifetime subject to bondage?

Verse 14 says that through His death, Jesus released those subject to the bondage of the fear of death. When Jesus was being arrested, the Bible says that Peter whipped out a sword and tried to defend Him, but in Matthew 26:53, Jesus told Peter that if he wanted to, He could call on legions of angels to come save Him. Jesus chose to take the cross to save us, and through His death release us from the bondage of the fear of death. We were bought at a price (I Corinthians 6:20) and a steep price at that. If Jesus' death releases us from the bondage of fear of death, then why do so many Christians continue to live in the bondage of that fear? Unbelievers should fear death. The notion of a life ending that brings an eternity of torture should be terrifying. Believers on the other hand should actually look forward to death. As believers, our death is the end of pain, end of suffering, and end of our time in this mortal flesh and the beginning of our time in perfection. When we look at it through that lens, it can be hard to understand why we still fear death...but it doesn't change the fact that many still do. If you struggle with the fear of death (and maybe aren't sure why), my prayer is that as you go through the rest of today's study, you will be able to discover the "why" of your "what." My prayer is that by discovering your "why" you will be able to make adjustments that can help you return again to the freedom from the fear of death that Jesus offered in His death on the cross.

So let's dive into the "why." I believe God's Word gives guidance for Christians who struggle with the bondage of the fear of death. So let's dive into Scripture and hopefully illuminate the "why" of the "what" if the "what" is fear of death.

<sup>21</sup> From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

<sup>22</sup> Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"<sup>23</sup> But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.<sup>25</sup> For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. <sup>26</sup> For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:21-26 (NKJV) (personal opinion questions)

1. Do you see anything in the above passage that speaks to why some Christians may still struggle with the fear of death? If so, explain:

<sup>2.</sup> What does it mean to you when Jesus says: "whoever loses his life for My sake will find it?

When Jesus was talking to Nicodemus in John chapter 3, He said in verses 5-7 "...Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.<sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'" If you grew up in church, you may have heard the song *Bullfrogs and Butterflies* as a kid. The premise of the song is that bullfrogs, butterflies, and born again believers have all been born again. A bullfrog starts as a little tadpole swimming around under water, but then eventually transforms into a bullfrog singing up a storm on top of a Lilly pad. A butterfly starts as a caterpillar, then it basically digests itself (gross, but true) into a cocoon and eventually emerges as a beautiful butterfly with wings. A born again believer was once living a life absorbed by flesh and heading down a road that leads to eternal damnation in Hell. Upon coming to faith in Jesus Christ, that same flesh becomes a new creation (II Corinthians 5:17) and is filled with the Holy Spirit and is now born of the Spirit and heading down a road that leads to eternal life. But what happens when someone that has now been born of the Spirit is clinging too tightly to the flesh? What happens when a born again believer values and prioritizes the life of the flesh more than the Spirit? If the flesh is what we are clinging to, then we don't want to lose our grip on it, so we hold on as tightly as we can. The fear of death comes from holding on too tightly to this flesh that the Bible calls a mere tent. The apostle Paul spoke in a couple different places about this struggle, but I love what he says in II Corinthians 5:1-8: "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.<sup>2</sup> For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, <sup>3</sup> if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.<sup>4</sup> For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.<sup>5</sup> Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. <sup>6</sup> So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. <sup>7</sup> For we walk by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup> We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord."

Isn't that such an awesome way of looking at it? Paul is not a suicidal maniac on a death mission. He is not living a reckless life based off a worldly premise that true courage is putting your life in danger (remember that Jesus did not throw Himself off the pinnacle of the temple). Paul is a great example that you don't have to pursue death to prove you don't fear death. Paul is talking about a life lived absent of the bondage of the fear of death. That life is a life where we don't prioritize or cling to the flesh, but use our time in the flesh fully for the glory of the Lord and if by living our life for the glory of the Lord we die, than we are instantly present with the Lord and happier and healthier than we have ever been before. The fear of death stems from focusing too much on your person and not enough on His promise. If you read Psalm 139, you discover that the days of our life are determined before we are conceived. God, in all His omniscience, knows the exact day this "tent" begins (conception is when life begins – Amen and Amen) and the exact moment it will end. Knowing that God already knows the number of days your flesh has means that your flesh is in the right hands. Your flesh in your hands is a major downgrade from your flesh in His hands. Better yet, He does not just know the days of your flesh, but has made a promise for your eternity. This tent God gave us is a gift and we should be good stewards of that gift. We should care for this tent, we shouldn't be reckless with this tent, but we definitely shouldn't fear the end of this tent. It is the apostle Paul who also said in Philippians 1:19-20: "For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live *is Christ, and to die is gain.*" Look at the portion of that passage that is underlined. Does his fearlessness lead him to bungee jumping and swimming with sharks or does it lead him to live completely for the Lord without the fear of death? Paul knew that he would most likely die for preaching the Gospel, but he did not fear the death of his flesh because he clung to the promise of God that death is gain.

I want to conclude today's study and this week's study by sharing with you just how near and dear this topic is in my life. Years after God called me to be a pastor and after years of serving Him in ministry, I was speaking at a week-long youth camp. At the end of the week, one of the young adult counselors was sharing his testimony at the final campfire and at one point he said, "I can't wait for Christ to return, I wish it would happen today." When he said it, I knew that every fiber of my being should agree with him. I knew that the return of Christ is something we should look to with great and joyful excitement, the problem was; I didn't. In that moment, I was filled with grief at the thought of this life on earth ending. Here I was standing up in front of 150 teens two times a day for an entire week inviting them to cling to the eternal promise of God and in that moment I realized that I wasn't. I felt like the biggest hypocrite and felt so ashamed. The thing that caught me off guard is that I didn't realize it until that moment. I started asking myself, "when did this start?" "How did I become a believer who clings to the flesh?" "How do I get back to being a believer that fearlessly clings to His promise?" Haunted by this moment, I was determined to fix it. I remember going home and dropping to my knees and asking God to reveal all that was wrong with me and help me to get my focus back where it should be. Today's study came from a lot of what God revealed to me that night and other things He's taught me over the years of seeking Him and what I've learned from helping others who struggle with fear. Fear of death can be a sneaky little fear that develops over time, but has a huge impact on your

life. The fear of death is a symptom of holding on to our flesh too tightly and valuing our person more than His promise.

How about you? Do you have a righteous fear of God that glorifies Him for who He is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do? The effects of unrighteous fear in our life is a symptom of a deficiency in this righteous fear. The key to addressing fear in your life is not to face the fear, it's to face the cross. Building your faith in God, is the key to reducing your fear. This week's study began in Romans, chapter 8, so let's end it there as well. Brothers and sisters – if God is for you, who or what can be against you? If God is for you, than what do you have to fear? If you discovered this week that, like Peter and the people of Israel, you either stopped believing something about God that you believed before or have never put the level of faith in Him that He deserves, then the time to change is now. Every day is a day closer to Christ's return and a day closer to the end of your life, so there is no time to waste being chained and weighted down by fear. It's time to live this life with boldness for the Lord and truly be able to say, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Take a moment now to commit all these things to the Lord and don't forget to ask Him to convict you of the places you fall short. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

Watch the weekly introduction videos at <a href="https://crosspointchurchonline.org/spirit-of-fear/">https://crosspointchurchonline.org/spirit-of-fear/</a>

SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 4 – Power, Love, and Sound Mind

# <u>DAY 1</u>

SPIRIT OF FEAR

# <sup>46</sup> Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. <sup>7</sup> For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." II Timothy 1:6-7 (NKJV)

Verse 7 of this passage is where the title of this study is derived. It is also the foundational passage of this week's study. This is why on day 1 of week 3, I spent some time making sure this passage was put in proper context. If this passage is foundational

to this week, it's important to understand that context. When I see a poisonous snake, I don't quote this verse to give me the courage to kiss it. When I see hot coals, I don't quote this verse to give me the courage to walk on it barefoot. Remember as we go throughout the rest of this study that true courage doesn't glorify the flesh - it glorifies God. It would have been cool to see Jesus front flip off the pinnacle, and it would have been awesome if when the soldiers came to arrest Him He unleashed a legion of angels to devour them. Though it would make an interesting movie, that's not what Jesus did. Instead, He demonstrated that true courage was doing the will of the Father and seeking the glorification of God instead of Himself. Throughout this study I have tried to make clear the difference between righteous fear and unrighteous fear. Thus far the focus has intentionally been on righteous fear and the application to our lives. As stated over and over again in this study, I believe that unrighteous fear is a symptom of a lack of righteous fear. With that as a foundation, I want to take a closer look at unrighteous fear in our lives. As we begin that venture, make sure that you carry with you the foundation of the first three weeks of this study. Make sure you don't misinterpret the rest of this study as rebuking all fear. We are not going to talk about the fear that prevents us from climbing ladders and wrestling alligators. We are going to talk about the fear that hinders us from living out God's purpose in our life, and the fear that gives the reverence that God alone is worthy of, to someone or something else.

With that said, let's zoom in on this passage from II Timothy, chapter 1. Verse 7 says that "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound *mind.*" As I'm sure you have heard many times, including in this study, some version of "Do not be afraid", which occurs 365 times in Scripture. We've spent three weeks talking about righteous fear, but this verse is talking about a different fear. There are several different Greek words used for fear throughout the New Testament, but the word used here for fear only occurs one time as a noun and that is in this verse. The Greek word used here for "fear" is transliterated as "deilia." The same word used as a verb (deiliao) is also used only one time and that is in John 14:27, where Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be <u>afraid</u>." It is used as an adjective only three times and those are Matthew 8:26, Mark 4:40, and Revelation 21:8. In Matthew 8:26 and Mark 4:40 it is used in the same account of Jesus calming the sea and saying, " Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" In Revelation chapter 2, where John is describing the vision of a new heaven and a new earth and the Lord says in verses 7-8: "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. <sup>8</sup> 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.*" The word "cowardly" is the same word used as an adjective (deilos). So why is it important to know this? Il Timothy clearly says that "God has not given us a spirit of fear ...", so if there is a righteous fear that we are supposed to have for God, then it is important to find out exactly what kind of fear does not come from God. God has not given us a spirit of "deilia." This word means timidity and fear (noun), to be timid and afraid (verb), and timid and fearful and faithless (adjective). God has not given us the spirit of this fear. This fear does not come from God. We already broke down the use of this word in II Timothy 1:7, but let's break down the applications of this word in a couple of the other passages. Because Matthew and Mark are an account of the same event, I will use the Matthew account:

<sup>423</sup> Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. <sup>24</sup> And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. <sup>25</sup> Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" <sup>26</sup> But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. <sup>27</sup> So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" Matthew 8:23-27

1. What was Jesus doing when the tempest arose? \_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. What did the disciples ask of Jesus when they woke Him?

I love the fact that Jesus was sleeping at the exact moment the disciples were frantic. This is such a great illustration of the difference between the flesh and the spirit. It says that the boat was covered with the waves, but Jesus was sleeping. They franticly woke Him and essentially said, "Save us!!! "We are going to die!!!" So Jesus arose, told the storm to stop and it did - the end. How many times in your life have you been frantic about something that God was in control of the whole time? Have you ever looked up to the heavens and frantically cried out some version of "God, why aren't you stopping this thing from happening???" as if God is unaware and caught off guard by your situation? As if God needs to be awakened so you can make Him aware of what He must do. This is why, after calming the storm, Jesus looked at the disciples and said, "Why are you 'deilos'?" God has not given us a spirit of "deilia." He even followed that up by referring to them as "you of little faith." When our trust and faith is completely in the Lord, there is nothing to fear. When our trust and faith is completely in the Lord, there is no sickness, no circumstance, and no person to fear. If God is your Father, you don't even need to fear death. If you find yourself frantic in the midst of a storm, remember that it's not God who you need to wake up - it's you who must wake up and remember who God is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He has promised He will do. Isaiah 26:3-4 says this:

> *You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You,*

# Because he trusts in You. <sup>4</sup> Trust in the Lord forever, For in YAH, the Lord, is everlasting strength."

He is not a shot of a 5 hour energy drink or a shot of steroids – they are temporary. The peace and strength He offers is everlasting. We just need to keep our mind "stayed on (Him)" and He offers perfect peace and He is everlasting strength. Read the following passage (*Psalm 34:17-22*) and make it the cry of your heart:

<sup>#17</sup> The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles.
<sup>18</sup>The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.
<sup>19</sup> Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the Lord delivers him out of them all.
<sup>20</sup> He guards all his bones; Not one of them is broken.
<sup>21</sup> Evil shall slay the wicked,
And those who hate the righteous shall be condemned.
<sup>22</sup> The Lord redeems the soul of His servants,
And none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.

God has not given us a spirit of fear. This "deilia" is not supposed to influence our lives. Having looked at its application today, do you find that it influences your life at times? Do some of you find that your life is consumed by it? When faced with a storm, do you frantically try to wake up Jesus and then put your trust in other things? Brothers and sisters, Jesus offers His perfect peace. The rest of this week, we will look at what a spirit of power, love, and sound mind looks like, but for right now, take a moment to confess the "deilia" in your life. Ask the Lord to reveal to you where it is and repent for being influenced by it. Repent for any lies of the enemy you have believed to open the door to it. Repent for the times you've found your peace in temporary things, then ask for the peace that Jesus spoke of in John 14:27. Ask the Lord to help you make Him the source of your peace. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:
#### SPIRIT OF FEAR

#### WEEK 4 – Power, Love, and Sound Mind

#### <u>DAY 2</u>

#### SPIRIT OF POWER

#### <sup>46</sup> Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. <sup>7</sup> For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.<sup>4</sup> II Timothy 1:6-7 (NKJV)

Yesterday we talked about the spirit of fear. Once again, the above passage says that God has NOT given us a spirit of fear. What's interesting about verse 7 is that it says what God has not given us, and then it contrasts that with what He does give us through His Spirit. According to this verse, the contrast to fear is power, love, and a sound mind. If these three things are a contrast to fear, then understanding them and applying them is key to living a life that is free from the bondage of fear. Today, we will focus on power. The Greek word used here for "*power*" is transliterated as "*dunamis*." Rather than give you a list of English words to try and articulate what this word means, I would rather allow the context of Scripture to speak to it's meaning. I could go to a Bible concordance and simply look at every place a particular Bible translated from

several different Greek words. Today we are going to be looking at some passages of Scripture where the specific Greek word "*dunamis*" or a word derived from it is used to try to get a better depth of understanding through direct Scriptural application. So what does it mean that "...*God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of POWER...*"?

<sup>6</sup> For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. <sup>9</sup> Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, <sup>10</sup> who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, <sup>11</sup> you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many." II Corinthians 1:8-11 (NKJV)

1. The same Greek word, *dunamis*, that is used in II Timothy 1:8 for *power* is used in verse 8 of the above passage. Which English word above, in verse 8, do you think also comes from *dunamis*?

How did you do? It's not easy to see the word "*power*" used in II Timothy and then try to find a word in II Corinthians 1:8 that comes from the same Greek word because the English word "*power*" isn't used in this passage in most English translations. This is what I love about studying Scripture – it's an awesome adventure. To be honest, I think it could get boring if there was only one English word for every one Greek word, but I digress. The word "*strength*" in II Corinthians 1:8 is the word that comes from "*dunamis.*" II Corinthians 1:8 says: "*For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.*"

Underline the word "strength" in that verse:

Paul is talking about troubles that he encountered in Asia Minor while sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He says that he and his traveling companions were "*burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.*" The New Living Translation says it like this: "*We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it.*" Paul is saying that his strength is not enough – his "*dunamis*" is not enough. This is important, because II Timothy 1:8 says that God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind. The power in that verse is given to us by God – it is not our own. We don't have enough "*dunamis*" on our own, but God has given us a spirit of "*dunamis*." The same word is used, but the source is different. Did you notice in verse 9 of II Corinthians, chapter 1 (previous page) that Paul also says, "...that we should not trust in *ourselves but in God who raises the dead, Who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in Whom we trust that He will still deliver us.*" God has given us a spirit of power that contrasts a spirit of fear. As you have seen throughout this study thus far, fear is a symptom of giving more attention and value to our frail, limited, and mortal flesh, than to the limitless power of our great and awesome God. We are afraid of what we are not capable of because we don't fully trust what He is capable of. Check out this passage also from the book of II Corinthians:

<sup>47</sup> But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. <sup>8</sup> We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—<sup>10</sup> always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. <sup>11</sup> For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
<sup>12</sup> So then death is working in us, but life in you." II Corinthians 4:7-12 (NKJV)

1. "...that the excellence of the power may be of \_\_\_\_\_\_ and not of \_\_\_\_\_."

Why oh why do I ever return to the bondage of fear that is derived from the limitations of my flesh when my perfect and loving Savior, Jesus Christ, died so that I can be free from that bondage and adopted as a child of Almighty God and given the Holy Spirit of God to dwell in me until the day I die? The same power that raised Jesus from the grave is the same power that lives in me and is manifest in me, despite the weakness of my limited flesh. In my own strength, I am crushed, in despair, alone, forsaken, and destroyed, but the power of God living in this limited flesh makes me more than a conqueror (Romans 8:37) over anything that could seek to destroy me. He is more powerful than anything or anyone that could cause us to fear, which is why "... we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." This is why I don't believe that you overcome fear by facing fear. By facing my fear, I am trusting that something inside this limited flesh will adapt to that fear. All I'm really doing is testing the limits of my capabilities. What we have to remember though, is that the peak of my performance and the outer limits of my capabilities still fall way short of the capabilities of my unlimited and omnipotent God. If you want to overcome fear in your life, don't just face that fear and try to reach the outer limits of that which is very limited. If you want to overcome fear, don't face your fear, face the Cross. Put more of your faith and trust in God and less in yourself - "... that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."

<sup>47</sup> And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. <sup>8</sup> Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. <sup>9</sup> And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities,

## that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." II Corinthians 12:7-10 (NKJV)

- 1. Circle the 3 words in the above passage where you think the English word came from "*dunamis.*"
- 2. When did Paul say he was strong? \_\_\_\_\_

The word "*dunamis*" (or a form of it) was used where you see: "strength" (verse 9), "power" (verse 9), and "strong" (verse 10). This passage is truly remarkable – one of my favorites. It makes clear something that a lot of Christians miss or forget. Just think about what this passage is saying for a moment. *Reread it as slowly as you need to in* order to fully digest it. I could read that all day and not stop needing to read it. Think about this: In verse 9, after Paul had pleaded with the Lord to end his affliction, the Lord says in part "... My strength is made perfect in weakness." So Paul hears that and comes to understand that he should "rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." WOW!!! Is that not amazing? Paul concludes this passage by saying "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." He started that passage pleading with the Lord to remove his afflictions, but ends the passage realizing that the power of God is most prevalent in those afflictions. He does a complete 180 degree turn on how he views affliction because of how he viewed the power of God. A key to overcoming fear in our life is coming to the same conclusion. Our life was never meant to be lived as a testament to the limits of our strength and power, it is supposed to be lived as a manifestation of the power of God in us. Do you want to boast in overcoming your fear of water by, in your own power, jumping in the deep end of the pool and saying "look what I can do", or do you want to boast in the power of the Lord by seeing your infirmities, reproaches, needs, persecutions, and distresses as opportunities to see the power of God be made manifest in your weakness?

Brothers and sisters, may the excellence of the power be of God and not of us. The power of God in our weakness contrasts the spirit of fear that comes from bowing to our weakness. We need not fight fear by the power of what we can overcome in our flesh. We can fight and overcome the bondage of fear by the power of what our limitless God can overcome and has overcome. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power – His power. Write down the most recent fear you have been faced with: What did you believe about that thing that made you afraid?

Now, take a moment to pray about that fear. Always ask the Lord to convict you and reveal to you where you are falling short.

In light of our discussion today, write down what that fear would look like, if you relied only on the power of God and not the limits of your own power.

Commit this to the Lord in prayer.

#### SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 4 – Power, Love, and Sound Mind

#### <u>DAY 3</u>

SPIRIT OF LOVE

#### <sup>46</sup> Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. <sup>7</sup> For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." II Timothy 1:6-7 (NKJV)

Yesterday we looked at "*Power*" as a contrast to, and a way of overcoming the spirit of fear. Today we will look at "*Love*" as a contrast to the spirit of fear. Obviously, love can be a very broad subject with many applications. The English word "*love*" in II Timothy 1:7 comes from the Greek word that is transliterated as "*agape*" and this word is used 116 times in the New Testament. For the next two days, our focus will be on how "*agape*" directly correlates with overcoming fear – as a contrast to fear. We are going to focus mostly on the book of I John, which has a lot to say about this love, but first I want to take a look at the author of the book of I John. Jesus' disciple John wrote the book and when we read what the Bible teaches us about his time with Jesus, we find that he had a very unique and special connection in how he articulated and understood the love of God.

I think we should start with the most obvious hint at John's understanding of God's love – in the book of John, written by John, John refers to himself as "the disciple that Jesus loved." John refers to himself in this way on 5 different occasions in the book of John. This always made me laugh. For years I assumed it was an ego thing. I

assumed that John was like that annoying kid in school who handed his completed homework to the teacher before she asked for it, reminded the teacher of an assignment that everybody else hoped she had forgotten, sat in the front row, raised his hand to answer every question, laughed at all the teacher's jokes, and all the other kids probably wanted to beat up. I mean just look at some of the evidence that led me to this conclusion:

- Mark 10:32-37 Jesus just finishes telling His disciples that He was going to be killed and then rise again. The very next thing you see is John and his brother James asking Jesus if they can be the ones to sit on each side of Him in His glory.
- John 13:21-27 Jesus is telling His disciples that one of them will betray Him. What is John doing? He's laying his head on Jesus' chest. Just picture a group of grown men sitting around a table and one of them is laying on Jesus chest while He's talking.
- John 20:1-10 This one always really cracked me up "Let history forever state that John was indeed a faster runner than Peter!" Two different times in this passage, John sees the need to point out to the reader that he got to the tomb first.
- John 21:20-21 Two observations in this passage: 1. Jesus has just taken Peter aside and restored him and he turn around and sees John following them and says, "Lord, who is the one who betrays you is it that guy?" I always wondered if that indicated some animosity.
   Instead of just saying that Peter looked back and saw him, he says, "Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper."

The more I study Scripture, however, the less I see this as an ego thing. I believe that the reason John wrote so much about the love of God is because he had a very important understanding of it and connection to it. I think sometimes we can slip into a state of mind where we view our relationship with Jesus through the corporate lens more than the personal lens. The Bible makes it clear that God so loves ALL the world, but it also makes clear that God so loves YOU!!! As a follower of Jesus Christ, you are the disciple who Jesus loves. You know He loves all the disciples, but it's so important to understand that He loves you individually. Through every answered prayer, every time just the right song comes on the radio at just the right time, every time the Lord gives you peace about a situation or decision, every time the Lord gives you wisdom, discernment, and understanding right when you need it, and, yes, every time He chastens you – you are the apple of His eye and His attention is on you. Think about that - the Almighty God of the universe, the Creator of all things, the eternal God Whom has no beginning and no end is thinking of you – it's personal. Yes, He can do that with everyone at the same time, but it's important to personalize it and I believe that's what John is doing. I don't know if he truly believed he was loved more than the other disciples, but I know he believed he was individually loved by Jesus and, boy, did he also want to love Him back. He wanted to sit next to Jesus at the table and be in

constant contact with Him – he even wanted to sit next to Him for eternity. Mark 14:50 says that they all forsook Him and fled after putting up some resistance. But we then see in John 18:12-18 that Peter and John are following Him by the time they got to the courtyard of the high priest. Peter ultimately denies Christ and stays outside, but John goes in with Him and we see in John 19:25-27 that John is even standing by the cross at Jesus' last breath and cared for Jesus' mother as his own from that time on.

So why is this important in the context of love contrasting fear? I have found that the more I understand about the writer of I John and his personal connection to the love of God, the more I understand what I John reveals about the love of God and how that relates to fear. So, with this in mind, let's go to I John.

<sup>417</sup> Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> We love Him because He first loved us." I John 4:17-19 (NKJV)

- 1. "Love has been perfected among us in this:
- 2. "There is no \_\_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_; but perfect \_\_\_\_\_\_ casts out

3. He who fears has not been made what?

4. Why do we love Him? \_\_\_\_\_

Notice that it doesn't say that love reduces fear or that there is little fear in love. It says there is NO fear in love. The verse immediately following that statement clarifies what love this is: PERFECT LOVE. Not only is there no fear in this perfect love, but perfect love actually casts out fear. You can't cast something out that's not there in the first place, so even if you greatly struggle with fear in your life, there is hope because perfect love actually casts out fear. If there is no fear in love, and if perfect love casts out fear, than how can we fully embrace that perfect love? Remember, the person writing this, John, had a very personal and profound understanding of God's love, so we will stay right here in I John and look at the passages leading up to the above passage.

<sup>412</sup> No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. <sup>13</sup> By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup> And we have known and believed the love

#### that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." I John 4:12-16 (NKJV)

1. What two things are evident when we love one another: 1.

2. \_\_\_\_\_. 2. How do we know we abide in Him? 1. \_\_\_\_\_\_. 2.\_\_\_\_\_. 3.

It's important to make the distinction that there is a difference between how we know we abide in God and what the evidence of abiding in God is. There are people in this world who believe that they will be saved by their love for others, but that is simply not true. John makes that clear in this passage. He says that no one has seen God at any time, but when we love one another as He has loved us, then His love is on full display. To make sure that no one would leave believing that their love for others will save them, he clarifies, in verses 13-15, that we know we abide in Him and He in us: 1. " because He has given us of His Spirit. " 2. " we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world." 3. "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God." The perfect love of God, the same love that casts out fear is most clearly seen in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Remember, in verse 17 of this same chapter, it says that "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment." Jesus' perfect love was on full display when He, the Son of God, the King of kings, humbled Himself to come as a baby and even though he could have called on 12 legions of angels to stop the soldiers from arresting Him (Matthew 26:53), He took the cross out of His great great love for us, but more specifically for you – personally. He died to pay the price for the sins of all so that all could be forgiven and all could have access to His eternal kingdom. When you put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are fully believing and accepting that perfect display of His perfect love. We are incapable of loving perfectly on our own, but through Jesus, we know perfect love and the perfect love of God can be manifest through us. God's perfect love is on full display when we love one another. It is because of His perfect love that we can have boldness in the day of judgement and we can no longer live in the torment of the fear.

Tomorrow we will continue with this look at how perfect love casts out fear, but I want to end today's study on this note. Do you embrace the love of God personally? Do you fully accept that God loves you individually? If the goal is to overcome fear and perfect love casts out fear, then step one must be fully embracing God's individual love for you – as seen in John's testimony. Unfortunately, for some of you, you struggle with the concept of being loved. Many things throughout your life have tried to tell you that you are not loved, you are not worth loving, and you are incapable of knowing true love, but THAT is a big fat LIEI It's a lie that the enemy wants you to believe and it's time to tell that enemy to go away. On the line below, I want you to write, "God loves (your first, middle, and last name)." I want you to write your full name so that you know it is only you:

Now, I want you to go somewhere alone, where nobody else can hear you and lift your head as if looking at the sky, close your eyes and slowly and clearly say those words out loud 10 times:

Now, take a moment to talk to the Lord. Tell Him that you know He loves you personally. Ask Him to help you not to forget that. Ask Him to protect you from the enemies attempt to cloud that truth. Ask Him to help you love as He loves. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

#### SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 4 – Power, Love, and Sound Mind

#### <u>DAY 4</u>

SPIRIT OF LOVE (continued)

"You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy."
 "H But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,
 "That you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?
 <sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? <sup>48</sup> Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."
 Matthew 5:43-48 (NKJV)

1. In verse 44, Jesus says, "But I say to you: 1.

2. \_\_\_\_\_



2. You shall be \_\_\_\_\_\_, just as your Father in heaven is

The perfect love of God is not some feeling and it's definitely not just some reaction. How would your flesh react to your enemy? How would your flesh respond to someone who curses you? How would your flesh treat someone who hated you? What would your flesh do for someone who spitefully uses you and persecutes you? The natural reaction of our flesh would be to return in kind. There are several places in Scripture where a false teaching or false proverb in circulation at the time would be addressed (see also Matthew 5:38 and Ezekiel 18:2) and corrected. Jesus is pointing out one of these in verse 43. Loving those who love you comes just as naturally as hating those who hate you. The perfect love that God calls us to emulate is a much a higher calling. It's a love that chooses to see people through the eternal lens, instead of the reactionary lens of the flesh. Without this perfect love, how could Jesus have heard the people mocking Him and heard the crowd yell "crucify Him" and still while nailed to a cross look out over the people and say "Father forgive them..."? THAT, my brothers and sisters, is love perfected. We are not perfect, but we are being perfected and completed throughout our entire lives and our goal must be to be like Jesus. The apostle Paul says it this way in Philippians 1:6: "being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

So let's look at this perfected love in the context of fear because perfect love casts out fear. Jesus did not need to fear those who sought to harm Him and ultimately destroy Him because He loved them. Think about it: When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus (who was innocent) in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter whips out a sword and cuts off the soldier's ear (Matthew 22:50-51). Peter did this to defend His Messiah. Peter saw that soldier as his enemy and sought to hurt that enemy. What Peter did sounds noble and brave and looks like it is motivated by his love for Jesus. Love perfected on the other hand – looks like Jesus touching the ear of that same soldier (who was there to arrest him – an innocent man) and heals his ear. Imagine what your life would look like if you genuinely loved every person that your flesh would fear. How, then, can we pursue this perfect love?

<sup>43</sup> Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. <sup>4</sup> He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. <sup>5</sup> But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. <sup>6</sup> He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." I John 2:3-6 (NKJV)

1. According to verse 5, the love of God is perfected in who?

#### 2. What ought he who abides in Him do?

Many years ago, I was counseling a Christian who came to me because he was struggling. He said he was beginning to doubt God because he felt like God was ignoring him. He had lost his job recently, he had a huge fight with his girlfriend, he didn't have enough money to pay his bills, he wrecked his car, and his parents were giving him the silent treatment. He felt like he had reached rock bottom, but was afraid because he felt like he was still falling. He said that if God really loved him, his life would be better. Wanting to understand how he got to this place in his life, I began asking lots of questions about his life. In our conversation I discovered that he lost his job because he got caught taking company property, the fight he had with his girlfriend occurred in the apartment they shared together even though they were not married, years prior to this he had stopped tithing, he wrecked his car because he was driving drunk, and his parents were upset with him because he refused to go to his sister's wedding because she didn't ask his girlfriend to be part of the bridal party. Upon learning all of this, I said, "Do you really blame God for your struggles?" Without hesitation, he replied, "I do. All my life I believed in this super loving God, but He seems to be just attacking me and denying me my happiness." I was so amazed at his lack of self-awareness and his attitude of entitlement and I wondered if I would even be able to get through that thick layer of arrogance to help him. Knowing that he did not have any children of his own at this point, I asked him to pretend he had a teenage son. I then asked him if he would have rules for his son to follow and he said, "oh yeah, definitely." I asked what some of those rules would be, and he said, "One thing for sure, he would have to have a job and earn whatever he gets." I replied, "Wow, that is a good rule. Let's say your son disobeys your rules and doesn't get a job and then asks you to buy him a car, what would you say?" He laughed and said, "Keep dreaming buddy, if you want a car, then get out and get a job." I looked at him with a confused look and said, "Wait, you wouldn't just give him a car for disobeying your rules?" He said, "No way!" I asked again, "Are you sure you wouldn't?" This time he hesitated to respond and seemed shocked that I thought he would just buy his son a car, but before he could gather his next words, the light bulb came on. Still, sitting in silence his head dropped and he began to sob uncontrollably. He realized in that moment that he was not living his life God's way – that he was living in complete disobedience to the Word of God, yet still expecting him to shower him with blessing. I bet he cried for 15 minutes straight, but when he ran out of tears, he committed to changing his lifestyle and began trying to live God's way.

In I John 2:5, it says, "whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is *perfected in him.*" If perfect love casts out fear and the love of God is perfected in those who keep His word, then deductive reasoning would say that keeping God's Word works in contrast to fear and will help us overcome fear. If Israel had kept doing things God's way, they would have easily defeated the descendants of Anak and would have called a beautiful land flowing with milk and honey their home for generations. Verse 6 then says, "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." Earlier in this study, we looked at how Jesus demonstrated courage. It wasn't the way we often identify courage. Jesus could have easily jumped off the pinnacle of the temple when Satan tempted Him just to prove He could, but Jesus taught us that true courage is not self-glorifying, but instead, true courage is standing upon truth and seeking to glorify God and God alone. All throughout Jesus' ministry, He didn't replace fear with self-glorifying courage, He replaced fear with love – true, pure, and selfless love. If you want to know what it means to be brave, then love like Jesus and seek to walk just like He walked. In Matthew 22:37-40, after being asked what the greatest commandment is, Jesus said this: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." Is that not the most beautiful thing we could ever read? Jesus is saying that all the Law and the Prophets can be summed up in a word – LOVE. Our first love has got to be our love for God. This is loving Him with all our heart, soul, and mind. This is loving Him because He first loved us. This is loving Him by prioritizing His glory over ours. Our second love is for people. This is putting the needs of others higher than our own. This is loving people more than we care what they think of us. This is valuing their eternity higher than we value their opinion of us. After a very long day of ministry, Jesus looked at a crowd of over 5,000 people and had compassion for them and rather than send them home to eat so He could get some alone time, He fed every last one of them (Matthew 14:13-21). Jesus taught us what perfect, selfless, and sacrificial love looks like. It's a love that would cause someone to wash the feet of a man who was going to betray Him (John 13:1-27), it's a love that would cause someone to heal a man who was arresting Him (Luke 22:47-51), and a perfect love that would be mocked, beaten, nailed to a cross, and crucified to offer eternal life to a bunch of sinners by nature and choice like you and me. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love.

When the Bible talks about "perfecting" it is not talking about achieving perfection. It is talking about a continuous striving to be like Jesus – it is the pursuit of perfection. Do you pursue perfect love? Is the perfect love of God being perfected in you? Do you return evil with retaliation or with love? Do you put the needs of others above your own needs? Do you seek to live your life in accordance with the Word of God. A heart of insecurity and bias is rooted in fear – fear of being inferior. When we love like Jesus – love perfected – suddenly where we rank and how we are seen is less important, and lifting up others and living for the glory of the Lord is more important. That is the kind of love that casts out fear and that is the kind of love that true courage is founded in.

Will you commit now to pursuing perfect love? Will you commit to purposefully seek to remove the self-centeredness and insecurities and free reigning sin that may be in your life to pursue perfect love? Take a moment now to pray. Ask the Lord to reveal what needs to be revealed in you and convict what needs to be convicted in you and commit to contrast a spirit of fear with the perfect love of God. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

#### SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 4 – Power, Love, and Sound Mind

#### <u>DAY 5</u>

#### SPIRIT OF A SOUND MIND

<sup>#13</sup> Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup> That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.<sup>#</sup> II Timothy 1:13-14 (NKJV)

- 1. Paul tells Timothy to hold fast the pattern of what?
- 2. He is to hold fast the pattern of sound words in faith and love which are in who?

The book of II Timothy played a key role in shaping my life. The Lord used a passage from this book when He called me to be a pastor. So, it is fair to say that this book has a very special and sentimental meaning to my life. I know this verse has been

repeated many times this week, but II Timothy 1:7 says, "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*" The more I have studied this book, the more I see that the whole book of II Timothy is essentially teaching Timothy what it means that God has given us a spirit of A SOUND MIND. We have spent the entirety of this week looking at A SPIRIT OF FEAR, A SPIRIT OF POWER, AND A SPIRIT OF LOVE and today we will close out this week by looking at what it means to have a spirit of a sound mind. In doing that, we will be primarily staying in the book of II Timothy and I believe you will see, like I have, that this book is a study on A SOUND MIND.

Some people understand a sound mind to mean having common sense, but I believe that is an oversimplification of the meaning here. The Greek word where we derive "*sound mind*" from is transliterated as "*sophronismos*." The word translates as discipline/self control. "*Sophronismos*" is from the word "*sophronizo*," which translates to discipline or correct – teach to be sober. So you see that this is not just accepting a universally agreed upon truth such that the term "common sense" implies. In fact, as we continue to learn the application of sound mind, we will find that sound mind is having the self-control and disciplined mind to not allow ourselves to be turned from the narrow truth. So let's start by discussing the Scripture at the top of this page – II Timothy 1:13-14.

Why do you think Paul is telling Timothy to "*hold fast to the pattern of sound words*"? In I Corinthians 4:14-17, Paul describes his relationship to Timothy in this way: "I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church." Why would Paul feel the need to remind his beloved and faithful son in the Lord to "hold fast the pattern of sound words"? The answer comes in the verse immediately following this passage:

<sup>\*15</sup> This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. <sup>16</sup> The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; <sup>17</sup> but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. <sup>18</sup> The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus." Il Timothy 1:15-18 (NKJV)

• What did Phygellus and Hermogenes do to Paul in Asia?

We don't know anything else about Phygellas and Hermogenes (other than the fact that their names sound like athletic sports cream brands). What we do know from

this passage is that they abandoned Paul in his chains. If they abandoned him, who says Timothy wouldn't as well. Going back to verses 7-8, he's urging Timothy to not be afraid despite Paul's chains, but to hold fast to his teachings and share them with others. He even gives him a good example by sharing the testimony of Onesiphorus – who not only didn't abandon Paul, but zealously came looking for him. With the temptation to flee and hide that comes with persecution, Paul is telling Timothy to not be turned by chains and persecution and to not be turned by those who come with false doctrine. Instead, he urges Timothy to hold fast – have a disciplined mind that is not easily led astray or given to cowardice in the face of persecution.

#### <sup>41</sup>You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." II Timothy 2:1-2 (NKJV)

1. Paul tells Timothy to be strong in what?

2. What did he tell Timothy to do with the things he had heard from Paul?

Not only does Paul tell Timothy to hold fast the sound words he gave him, but also to find others who will be faithful to hold fast to sound words and commit these words also to them. In my 20+ years of serving in ministry, I have been blessed to serve alongside of a senior pastor who is an excellent teacher and preacher for the last 11 of those twenty years (the first 10 years are another story and a lot of therapy). I was also blessed to get excellent seminary training at 3 different seminaries, plus additional short term classes, trainings, and seminars over the years. I have and continue to learn from those sources, but one thing I have discovered is that I also learn so much from opportunities I have to teach and preach and...yes...write Bible studies. I always tell people that one of the scariest verses in the Bible is James 3:1, which says, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment." Whenever I am given an opportunity to teach God's Word to people, I always remember this verse. Teaching is the ultimate accountability. Your words have the ability to speak truth or to lead people astray and because of the potential of a teacher's influence, the judgement is greater. For this reason, I study, study, and study some more when I am preparing to teach. Typically it takes me 200 hours or more to write a Bible study, but it takes over 400 hours of collective prayer, research, and studying God's Word. If I preach a 30 minute sermon, I've usually prepared for about 4 hours. It is such a humbling thing to be called by God to teach and lead in His church and I know I'm not worthy to begin with, so I want to do everything I can to clear my own thoughts and agendas and just represent my Heavenly Daddy the best I possibly

can and try to make Him proud. I can guarantee that as Timothy taught these sound words of truth to others, it only strengthened his ability to be faithful to them in his own life. The same applies to you. You may not hold the "position" of a teacher, preacher, or Sunday School teacher in your church, but this truth is not supposed to stop at you. Your job, as a believer, is to pass it on – reaching the lost and edifying the church. Pass it on to your church family, your kids, your family, your friends, your neighbors, etc. The more you pass on the truth you learn, the more it will stick and the more accountable you will be to living it. It's kind of like putting a Christian bumper sticker on your car. If you are going to put one on, you better drive like it's on there and you better make sure that the only finger that extends from your clenched hand towards other drivers is your thumb – in the upward direction.

# <sup>49</sup> You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. <sup>5</sup> And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. <sup>6</sup> The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. <sup>7</sup> Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things." II Timothy 2:3-7

Paul continues here, in II Timothy chapter 2, by giving three analogies that illustrate what it takes to keep a perspective that maintains a sound mind: A soldier, an athlete, and a hardworking farmer.

#### A soldier: *Living for eternity*

#### "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier."

Maintaining a sound mind involves keeping an eternal perspective. No one ever promised that being a Christian is easy. Being a good and faithful soldier of Jesus Christ in a world with a ruler of this world that opposes Him, persecutes His followers, and tries to tempt us with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is going to come with hardships. Jesus both warned and prepared His disciples for this. The key to endurance is understanding that we are living for more than this short time in the flesh – we are living for eternity – *Beyond a Vapor.* A good soldier is not entangled in the temporary affairs of this life, but is living to please and glorify the Lord – the One who has enlisted us as His soldiers.

#### An Athlete: *Living God's Way*

## "And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules."

How can a believer claim to be striving for the crown of glory (I Peter 5:4) if we are not even willing to live by God's rules. If we worship God with our lips, but deny

Him with our lifestyle, we are double minded and standing on weak and shaky ground. I used to own a t-shirt that read, "Live in such a way that the pastor won't have to lie at your funeral." As a pastor, it's so important that my wife and kids see the same person as the people of our church do. My life must speak the same truth as my mouth. Our best life is the life lived God's way, so we must discipline our lives to live in obedience to Him. I Corinthians 9:27 says it this way: "*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*"

#### A Hardworking Farmer: *Living to serve* "The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops ."

"Ask not what your church can do for you, but how you can use your gifts to grow the church and reach the lost." I know this is a very short illustration, but important nonetheless. Notice that Paul doesn't say that the farmer must be first to partake of the crops, he says the "hardworking" farmer must be first to partake of the crops. The crown of glory that is promised is promised for the eternity that awaits us after our flesh has passed, so our time in this flesh is limited. This is why we've got to get busy and stay busy for the Lord. Laziness and part-time Christianity works against a sound mind. Remember the illustration about the grout on DAY 1 of Week 3 of this study? The very context of Paul telling Timothy that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of sound mind, immediately followed him reminding Timothy to "keep stirring the grout" – stir up the gift that is in you. It is not good for a car to stay parked and unused and it is not good for a Christian to not use their Godgiven gifts to edify the church and reach a lost world. In I Corinthians 15:9-10, Paul says, "For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Don't forget in all of this talk about having and maintaining a sound mind that a sound mind is contrast to a spirit of fear, just like power and love. Having a disciplined mind and a disciplined life keeps a perspective that seeks to stand upon God's truth in our lives. If we "hold fast" to God's truth in our life, we will be prepared to reject the lies that lead to fear. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of sound mind.

Reflecting on today's study and this whole week of study, did you find things missing in your life that make you more vulnerable to a spirit of fear? In terms of POWER, LOVE, and SOUND MIND, which one do you struggle to maintain the most? Taking things that the Lord may have shown you this week, write down a tangible change you have made/are making/want to make in your life to contrast a spirit of fear:

I encourage you to share that with a brother or sister in Christ and ask them to hold you accountable to that. Take a moment to pray now and commit these things to the Lord. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

Watch the weekly introduction videos at <a href="https://crosspointchurchonline.org/spirit-of-fear/">https://crosspointchurchonline.org/spirit-of-fear/</a>

SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 5 – Who can be against us

#### <u>DAY 1</u>

BURIED WITH FEAR

<sup>431</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long;

We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.<sup>"37</sup> Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.<sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:31-39 (NKJV)

As I've mentioned before, the subject of fear has been written about, preached about, and taught about millions upon millions of times throughout the course of history. I don't for a moment believe this is THE study on fear, but I do believe it is A study on fear. Some studies dive into the subjective intricacies of rational and irrational fear, God given protective fears versus unrighteous fears, etc. That is not the avenue of fear that the Lord led me to with this study. Being in ministry for over 20 years now, I've had the opportunity to see the effects of fear in my life and in the life of many other believers. I'm not talking about the fear that keeps us from jumping into a bonfire, but the fear that keeps us from fulling living out God's purpose in our life. My heart in this study was to help believers see fear through the eternal lens and to make Jesus the sole source of peace and comfort in their life in order to boldly and courageously live for Him, His way, and live out our God-given purpose and mission. With that in mind, a theme verse for this study has been II Timothy 1:7, which, in case you don't have it memorized yet, says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." We have discussed what it means to fear the Lord and what it means to live with a spirit of power, love, and sound mind. The question I want to ask as we begin WEEK 5 is, if God has not given us a spirit of fear, then where does that spirit of fear come from? If there is a fear that is not given to us by God, it must be given to us by the enemy. In my observations, including the one I see in the mirror, fear is one of the enemies most frequently used tactics. We see the effects of fear on God's people all throughout Scripture, including in the lives of Biblical Patriarchs. We know that God is for us, but this week let's look at who is trying to be against us. I use the word "trying" because Romans 8:31 asks in part: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" This week we will look at the ploys of the enemy that attempt to give us a spirit of fear and the Biblical truth that we can apply to expose his efforts as impotent when compared to the greatness of the peace and courage offered by our Awesome God.

"<sup>14</sup>"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. <sup>15</sup> And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. <sup>16</sup> Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. <sup>17</sup> And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. <sup>18</sup> But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. <sup>19</sup> After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> "So he who had received five talents; look, I have gained five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.'<sup>21</sup> His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'<sup>22</sup> He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.'<sup>23</sup> His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' <sup>24</sup> "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. <sup>25</sup> And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'<sup>26</sup> "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. <sup>27</sup> So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. <sup>28</sup> So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. <sup>29</sup> For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. <sup>30</sup> And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" Matthew 25:14-30 (NKJV)

1. How did the master determine how many talents to give each servant?

2. According to verse 25, what motivated the lazy servant to hide the one talent?

This parable does not exactly fit into the mindset of the current culture of our society. More and more you hear a mindset of taking from those who have (no matter what they did to earn what they have) and give it to those who don't have (no matter what they do to earn what they are given). The parable begins with eight total talents. The three servants were given the talents based on their already proven abilities. When they were ready to settle accounts, there were now fifteen total talents. There are several in our society that would argue that the only "fair" outcome would be to give each of them 5 regardless of effort. I love when Biblical truth clearly contradicts worldly "wisdom." I know it is hard for some to hear this, but the lazy servant didn't deserve five talents. He was given one talent because his abilities to that point proved to only be deserving of one and even that one was taken away because he did nothing with it – just buried it. Why is this important in context with this study? Verse 25 makes it clear that fear is what caused him to bury it. His excuse was that he was afraid of the master, which he perceived to be a very harsh man who seeks to profit where he hasn't invested. The master's response isn't necessarily admittance to the charge of the servant about his character, but more using the servants own words to indict him (Luke 19:22). The master essentially says that if the servant was genuinely afraid of him, he would have been more motivated to do something with the talent. The servant expressed that his fear was essentially a doubt that the master would justly deal with him.

I see this fear pop up in the life of believers all the time. A Christian will believe that God is not providing all that they need, so they stop tithing and stop giving, in order to use that money to fill the need they perceive that God is not providing for. It doesn't work...lt never works. They always end up in an even worse spot than they started financially. It's not just money either. A person will believe that the Lord is not providing them with enough time or energy to do what they perceive God wants them to do. So, they will step down from serving in ministry in order to create more time and energy for work/family/etc. It doesn't work...It never works. They end up even more stressed and stretched, except now they also feel distant from the Lord and other believers, and have an empty feeling because of not using their gifts to serve Him. I see it all the time. The fear is that God will not provide the time, energy, resources, etc. to do all that He's called us to do...SO...we bury the things He does give us and become spiritually useless. We see the weaknesses of our flesh and humanity and we convince ourselves that God has the same weaknesses. We FEAR that He won't provide, won't keep His promise, won't protect, etc., so we take matters into our own hands. Take a moment to read Psalm 50. I love how in verse 21, He says in part, "...you thought I was altogether like you...". Earlier in this study I talked about fear as a symptom of something we stop believing about God. Peter believed something about Jesus when he stepped out of the boat that he stopped believing about Him a few steps later. In that context, the best way to overcome fear is to stand more on the promises of God and stand more on who the Bible teaches us that God is...and with that...what we are not. Why oh why do I ever take matters into my own weak and temporary hands when my eternal, loving, and all powerful God wants me to place matters in His hands? The Bible teaches us to fear our limitless God only, but the enemy tells us to fear the limits of God. The only logical and inevitable outcome of fearing how the Lord will not provide, will not protect, and will not keep His promises, is that the trust we remove from Almighty God, we place in ourselves, our government, and other imperfect and limited people. That is like trading our sword and shield in for a pool noodle and shower cap in the middle of a battle.

#### Let's finish today's study by letting the Word of God speak:

"O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth, Who have set Your glory above the heavensl <sup>2</sup> Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, Because of Your enemies, That You may silence the enemy and the avenger. <sup>3</sup> When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, <sup>4</sup>What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? <sup>5</sup> For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor.
<sup>6</sup> You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, You have put all things under his feet,
<sup>7</sup> All sheep and oxen— Even the beasts of the field,
<sup>8</sup> The birds of the field,
<sup>8</sup> The birds of the air, And the fish of the sea
That pass through the paths of the seas.
<sup>9</sup>O Lord, our Lord,
How excellent is Your name in all the earth!" Psalm 8 (NKJV)

Do you ever find yourself afraid of what God won't do, how He won't provide, how He won't protect, etc.? God is not like us. He never fails and never breaks a promise. The lie that the enemy is constantly trying to push on you is that God is as limited as we are and matters in our own hands is safer than matters in the hands of our God. Take a moment to make Psalm 8 the cry of your heart towards the Lord, and pray and confess the times in your life when you didn't trust Him and took matters into your own hands, and pray for the strength to shut out the lies and stand on the truth of our Perfect Provider and Protector. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

#### SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 5 – Who can be against us

#### <u>DAY 2</u>

OUT OF CONTROL

"God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. <sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; <sup>3</sup>Though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah <sup>4</sup> There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. <sup>5</sup> God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn. <sup>6</sup>The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. <sup>7</sup> The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah <sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the Lord, Who has made desolations in the earth. <sup>9</sup>He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire. <sup>10</sup> Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! <sup>11</sup> The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah<sup>"</sup> Psalm 46 (NKJV)

1. Because God is our refuge and strength and help in trouble, we will not what?

#### 2. According to verse 10, "\_\_\_\_\_ and know that I am God..."

If you look at the statistics, it is much safer to take a trip by plane than it is to take a car. According to the FAA, NTSB, BTS, and NHTSA, in 2019 there were 287 fatalities caused by aircraft accidents, but there were 36,096 fatalities caused by traffic accidents. In fact, if you break it down by averages, according to Dr. Arnold Barnett of MIT, a person would have to fly one time a day for 22,000 years before dying in a plane crash (based on statistics from 2012-2016). When you think about that, why do studies show that on average people feel much safer in a car than a plane? I believe I can answer that in two words – "perceived control." You see, if I'm traveling on a plane at a speed over 400 MPH at an altitude of 30,000 feet and the plane breaks, my human choices are limited to essentially one...stick my head between my leqs and....well...you know the rest. I'm sitting in a big metal cylinder that weighs about 90,000 pounds, plus another 84,000 pounds of fuel, which fuels the burning rockets on each side of it. I don't have a brake pedal to press, a steering wheel to grip, or a horn to honk – I am at the mercy of the pilots, the engineers, the weather, and other aircraft or missiles that may be out there. On the flip side, in my car, I feel like I'm in total control. I decide when to turn, when to go, when to stop, and how fast or slow I will go. I am traveling across land, surrounded by airbags and secured by a seat belt. Now, realize, that this is only perceived control because you are still sitting directly behind a combustion engine and sitting on top of a tank of gas and trusting your car's engineering, and trusting all the other drivers who may or may not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Despite that, it feels like control, therefore studies show people feel safer.

That's the key. People tend to feel safer when they are in control...or...feel as though they are. This is what can make trusting in the Lord so hard – and the enemy knows that. At face value, it would seem that the circumstances that cause the most fear in the life of a believer are the circumstances that feel most out of our control. As true as that may be, I don't believe that fear begins the moment we are faced with a circumstance of which we cannot control. I believe that is signifies a failure to relinquish control to God prior to that circumstance. Circumstances can take us by surprise, but that doesn't mean we can't be preparing our hearts to overcome fear before it reaches us. It is in times of peace that we have the greatest opportunity to loosen our grip and see the reality of our perceived control. Too often, I find myself basking in the glory of the peace and comfort I feel I have either created or deserve. This self-glorification in times of peace is what sets me up to be stricken by fear in the face of affliction. Whether it be in times of peace or times of affliction, we must always be learning what it truly means to "*Be still and know that (He) is God."* 

• In Psalm 46, what comes first – Being still or knowing He is God?

Think about that for a moment. It doesn't say that knowing He is God will cause you to be still. It says be still and know He is God. That may sound like nothing more than semantics, but is it?

<sup>"10</sup> And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. <sup>11</sup>Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? <sup>12</sup> Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."
<sup>13</sup> And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of

the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. <sup>14</sup>The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace." Exodus 14:10-14 (NKJV)

- 1. What was the reaction of the children of Israel, when they saw Pharaoh's army?
- 2. According to verse 13, what did Moses instruct the people to do?

Moses said, "*Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord…*" Here we see it again – STAND STILL. Once again, it doesn't say let seeing the salvation of the Lord cause you to stand still. It says to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. This is letting go!!! There is much in this world that could cause us to fear, but the sooner that we can learn to STAND STILL and let God and the sooner we can learn to be still and know God, the harder it will be for the enemy to convince us to accept a spirit of fear. In both Psalm 46 (verse 2) and Exodus 14 (verse 13), each time it said to "be still" or "stand still," it was preceded by a "fear not." If God is for us, who can be against us? If God is in control, what is there to fear?

## <sup>4</sup>And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. <sup>5</sup> But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him

#### who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! <sup>6</sup> "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. <sup>7</sup> But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." Luke 12:4-7 (NKJV)

We are God's prized possession. He created everything that exists and yet, it is us that He created in His image and us that He gave the opportunity to know Him and speak to Him and be spoken to by Him and to worship Him. God takes care of all His creation no matter how seemingly insignificant. How much more, then, does He take care of you? He knows you better than you know yourself. There is no situation in your life that takes Him by surprise. Do you remember back in WEEK 3 when we talked about two different times Jesus' disciples were in a boat that was being tossed around by waves? Remember how they seemed to believe that Jesus had the power to deliver them from the storm, but not believe He had authority over the storm. This is the key: instead of just reacting to affliction and infirmities and persecution with faith enough to believe He can help us in them and save us from them and out of them, we need to believe that He has authority over them.

For the past couple of years in my life, I find my view of afflictions being changed. I feel like I have always had the faith to believe He can save me from the storm, protect me from the storm, and give me the strength to make it through the storm, but I haven't always had the faith to believe that the storm was part of a plan and purpose that He has for me. Peter didn't walk on a calm sea; he walked on a sea that was still rough. Sometimes the greatest opportunity we have to live out our God-given call to share His Gospel to the world is right smack dab in the middle of affliction and storm. These storms open doors of opportunity and cause us to connect with those we may not have otherwise connected with. God is over the storm, which is why we need not fear it. God is over the storm, which is why we need not simply react to it. We can put our faith and trust in Him and let go of our perceived control and RUN into the storm to do His will. Let's read, again, a portion of what we read at the beginning of DAY 1:

<sup>435</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." <sup>37</sup> Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:35-39 (NKJV)

I notice that many Christians spend much of their life trying to control more things – I am one of those. We often find safety and comfort in the things we can control. The more we can control and the more we can avoid what we can't control, the less afraid we will be...right? Unfortunately, this is a lie that comes from the same enemy that desires us to have a spirit of fear. The truth is that the more we attempt to control, the less prepared we are to trust the Lord with the things we can't. I'm not talking about self-control here, I'm talking about holding on tightly to aspects of our life because we are "afraid" to let them go. Brothers and sisters, even though letting go can be scary, you never have to be afraid of letting go when you are giving it to God. Between you and Him – when He has it, it's in much safer hands.

Write down something or some things that you know you need to give to God:

Write down what scares you the most about letting go:

Read Jeremiah 17:5-8

Let those powerful words of the Lord empower you to let go and trust your life in His hands. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

#### SPIRIT OF FEAR

#### WEEK 5 – Who can be against us

#### <u>DAY 3</u>

PEACE OUT

<sup>44</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoicel <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. <sup>6</sup>Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; <sup>7</sup> and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:4-7 (NKJV)

1. What should we be anxious for? \_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. What surpasses all understanding?

Can fear and peace coexist? Can you have peace about something you fear? Can you fear something of which you have peace about? If I was having a season of blessing and prosperity in my life, would peace surpass anyone's understanding? Probably not. In fact, peace would be expected in those times. The above passage says that God offers a peace that passes ALL understanding. The only way peace would surpass the understanding of all is if it was present at a time where fear would typically reign. I believe that fear fills the gap that lost peace leaves behind and peace fills the gap that fear would fill if not for the faith and trust the Lord invites us to put in Him. A peace that passes all understanding is a peace that exists in times of trial and affliction and circumstances that our flesh would naturally fear. This is what makes peace one of the most important aspects of the testimony of our relationship with Christ. People are not looking at you desiring to find peace in comfort, they are looking for peace in struggle. Today, we are going to talk about peace and how to embrace the peace of God to overcome fear.

<sup>423</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. <sup>24</sup> He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me. <sup>25</sup> "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John 14:23-27 (NKJV)

1. According to verse 27, what does Jesus leave with us and give us?

2. What two things should we not let our heart be?

Jesus is talking about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives and He then said, "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you...*" We know that He offers peace, so we know that we have access to peace, but He also in the same sentence, makes a distinction between two different kinds of peace. He talks about a peace that the world offers and then counters that by saying that the peace He offers is not the same peace that the world offers. So let's start there, what peace does the world offer? Let's brainstorm storm for a moment on what peace the world offers us. I want you to think like an unbeliever for a moment and answer the following questions from that perspective:

- What would be potential sources of peace if an unbeliever were afflicted with a health issue?
- What would be potential sources of peace if an unbeliever were having financial struggles?

For the health affliction, I'm quessing you wrote amongst other things- doctors, medicine, vaccinations, support from family and friends, etc. For the financial struggles, I'm guessing you wrote help from family and friends, government programs, high interest credit consolidation, etc. But where does YOUR peace come from as a believer? I think many of us struggle with accepting the world's version of peace at times. There is nothing wrong with a Christian trusting a doctor to care for them, trusting medicine that will make them well, or getting a vaccine that they believe will protect them, but there is something wrong if that doctor, medicine, or vaccine is your source of peace. Do you see the difference? Doctors are able to do what they do because God gave them the ability to do it, but the source of our peace must be Christ. The peace He offers, He does not offer as the world offers. As Christians, we can't find peace in the same places that the world does. Every ounce of peace that the world offers is fleeting and temporary. The peace of Christ is eternal and it never fades away and never fails us. If He and He alone is the source of our peace, then our heart need not be troubled, neither does it need to be afraid. Again, there is nothing wrong with trusting a doctor or medicine or anything else that can help us in times of affliction and need, but none of those things should be the source of our peace because Jesus said He offers a peace that is not like what the world offers. It's a peace that unbelievers don't know – a peace that isn't just in the storm, but a peace that comes from the One who has authority over the storm. It is this peace that the lost desire and are searching for, because it's a peace that passes all understanding – beyond our ability to comprehend. If I am suddenly diagnosed with a severe or potentially terminal condition, I will put much trust in the doctors that care for me and have the education to know more about it than I possibly could. I will probably take medicine they give me, even if I can't pronounce it...but my peace...that comes from Christ and Christ alone.

<sup>431</sup> Jesus answered them, 'Do you now believe? <sup>32</sup>Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. <sup>33</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.'" John 16:31-33 (NKJV) 1. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that \_\_\_\_\_ you may have

#### 2. Why can a follower of Jesus be of good cheer despite the world's tribulation?

The peace that Christ offers is not predicated on peace in this world. It's important to never forget that. Our greatest struggle with fear will come when we simply react to the trials and tribulations of this world. Too often we find peace in times of peace, but then conflict and tribulation strike us and we find that peace to be fleeting and fear can grab hold. The reason that peace is fleeting is because it was a peace that was derived from the peace the world offers, but that peace won't last and that peace won't stand up to the struggles of our flesh and the tribulation of this world. There is only one peace that stands high above it all and that is the peace that Jesus offers. When you find that you are experiencing a time of peace in the world - that is the time to make sure that your peace is not founded in the temporary moment of solace, but in Christ and Christ alone. If you do that, then when (not if) that temporary peace comes crashing down and the world offers reason for fear, you will have already been grounded in a peace that surpasses all understanding and a peace that comes from He who is over the storm. So how do we do that? I'm so glad you asked...

#### Take a moment to read all of Ephesians, chapter 2

In this chapter Paul is talking about God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Nothing we can earn, but it is a gift from God that we cannot boast in at all. This gift has made us alive, who were once dead in our trespasses, but that's not all. Throughout Scripture the enmity between the Jews and Gentiles is very well documented. Jesus broke down that wall of separation and look at what it says in verses 14-22: "14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, <sup>15</sup> having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. <sup>17</sup> And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." The word "peace" is used three times in this passage. It's the same word used in John 14:27 and Philippians 4:7. It is no coincidence that the peace that comes through Christ takes strangers and makes them family. Not just family, but a family that is being built up together as a holy temple in the Lord. The same word for "peace" is used, yet again, in Colossians – check out the context:

<sup>42</sup> Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. <sup>14</sup> But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. <sup>15</sup> And let the <u>peace</u> of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Colossians 3:12-17 (NKJV)

Verse 15 says in part, "*And let the peace of God rule in your hearts...*" That's the goal, right? Not just to have peace in times of peace, but that the peace of Christ may rule in our hearts in times of peace and in times of storm. Do you notice the context here as well as in Ephesians, chapter 2? The peace of Christ is very much connected to the unity of believers. In both passages, we see the peace of Christ working in the family of Christ and I believe that is no coincidence. God made us to need each other and I believe the peace of God was never meant to be attained or enjoyed alone.

Tomorrow, we are going to talk more about how the unity of the church helps us overcome fear, but for now, we will close today's emphasis on the peace of God that overcomes fear. In the middle of today's study, I asked you to answer two questions from the perspective of an unbeliever. I asked you to write down where you would find your peace in struggles if you were an unbeliever. My question to you now is, did any of those answers match answers for you, as a believer? If so, remember that Jesus said He offers peace that is different from the peace the world offers. I can attest to many times in my life, waking up and realizing that my peace was founded in temporary things, such as smart and well educated people and government leaders whose ideals aligned with mine, but none of those things should be the source of our peace. Take a moment to pray. If you have found that you are finding peace in what the world offers, confess that to the Lord now. Ask Him to Help you find a peace that surpasses all understanding and a peace that is present in times of calm and times of storm, in times of trial and in seasons of blessing. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

#### SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 5 – Who can be against us

#### <u>DAY 4</u>

#### Together - Everyone - Achieves - More

In DAY 1 of this week, we talked about the enemy's attempt to convince you that God will not provide, will not protect, and will not come through for you. On DAY 2, we talked about the enemy's attempt to cause us to adopt a spirit of fear by finding comfort in what we can control, instead of surrendering our life to the well-qualified hands of our limitless and eternal God. Yesterday, we looked at the enemy's attempt to lead us to believe our peace is found in only what the world offers. God has not given us a spirit of fear, so the enemy desires to give us a spirit of nothing but fear. I believe that one of humanity's greatest fear is being alone and I believe that is because God made us to be together. The enemy knows this and strives to isolate us and separate us from the flock – making us much more vulnerable and exposed to be devoured by the enemy – and devouring is exactly what he seeks to do (I Peter 5:8). So today we are going to look at overcoming fear...TOGETHER.

<sup>419</sup> Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by a new and living way which He consecrated for <u>us</u>, through the veil, that is, His flesh, <sup>21</sup> and having a High Priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let <u>us</u> draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having <u>our</u> hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and <u>our</u> bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup> Let <u>us</u> hold fast the confession of <u>our</u> hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup> And let <u>us</u> consider <u>one</u> another in order to stir up love and good works, <sup>25</sup> not forsaking the assembling of <u>ourselves</u> together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting <u>one</u> another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:19-25 (NKJV)

- 1. By the blood of Jesus, we enter the Holiest with what?
- 2. In order to stir up love and good works, let us what?
- 3. As we see the Day approaching, we must not what?

Did you notice how many words in that passage are referencing us as believers instead of just me as a believer? I hope my subtle underlining helped. So often in my Christian life I have heard Matthew 18:12 quoted and taught. It says, "*What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?*" Obviously, this passage demonstrates the love God has for every individual person – none are forgotten by Him and to Him all have value and are precious. Call me morbid, but what always intrigued me about this passage was: "how did that one sheep get separated from the flock?" What is it that happened that caused this one sheep to leave the safety and comfort of the flock and go astray where it is vulnerable, exposed, and alone. Did it think it saw greener pastures away from the flock? Was it so focused on the patch of grass it was on that it didn't notice that the flock had moved? Was it mad at the shepherd? Why would this sheep stray away from the flock?

In case I'm not being obvious enough, I'm not talking about an actual sheep. I'm talking about Christians. Why do Christians isolate and insulate themselves from other Christians? Why do Christians so often neglect using their gifts to build the body of Christ? Why do Christians often surround themselves with those who would influence them away from Biblical morality instead of surrounding themselves with people who will hold them accountable to living God's way? In this world you will have tribulation (John 16:33), but you don't have to go through it alone.

In Matthew, chapter 10, Jesus is preparing His disciples to go and preach the Gospel and in verse 22, He warns, "...you will be hated by all for My sake..." I know that not all Christians will agree with this statement, but I believe the earth is about 6,000 years old (make sure you bring your Bible with you when you debate me on that). In 6,000 years, the world has proven over and over again that it will hate God's people. So, for the past 245 years, there has been this small corner of the world called America, where Christians have largely enjoyed being Christian without being hated by those within our borders for the most part. So much so, that Biblical morality has even had an impact on government and government policies. Over time, though, the influence of Biblical morality on government policy has been slowly chipped away. The voice of those who hate what Jesus represents has grown louder and louder. The religious freedoms American Christians have enjoyed are under attack and, let's be honest, at risk of extinction. If our country continues down this path (recent developments indicate it is and with increasing speed), what it will mean is simply that we will be joining the persecuted church that has been going strong for thousands of years all over the world. Persecution of believers, is not a Biblical threat, it is a Biblical promise. We will be hated for following Jesus and Jesus never tried to hide that fact. World-wide persecution is even mentioned by Jesus as one of the signs that the end is near. In Hebrews 10:24-25, it says, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." As the Day approaches, it becomes even more crucial that Christians resist a spirit of isolation and unite and assemble together in Christ.

<sup>415</sup> Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. <sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

<sup>18</sup> And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Genesis 2:15-18 (NKJV) • After God created Adam and put him in the garden, what was His first observation about man?

God had just created His prize possession and placed him in a beautiful garden He made just for him and the first thing the Bible records Him saying about Adam is, "*It is not good that man should be alone*..." God created us for relationship: relationship with Him and relationship with others. Isolation works to hinder both those relationships and the enemy knows that. Scripturally we are encouraged to spend alone time with God, but we are never encouraged to only spend alone time with God. Check out this passage from Ecclesiastes:

<sup>49</sup> Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. <sup>10</sup> For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. <sup>11</sup> Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? <sup>12</sup> Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken." Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NKJV)

What a beautiful passage. In the most recent *Planet of the Apes* trilogy, the apes had a motto that they would often refer to throughout all three movies and that motto was "Apes stronger together." When I played basketball in High School, there was a sign over the door that led from the locker room to the gym that used the word "TEAM" as an acronym for "Together Everyone Achieves More." Don't ever let the enemy convince you that you are stronger alone. This is not talking about being romantically single, this is about our need to be connected with others. God looked at Adam and said that "it is not good that man should be alone." He hasn't changed His mind since then – He still looks at us and says, "it is not good that man should be alone." It's easy to convince yourself of the pain you protect yourself from by not engaging with imperfect people, but that pain we experience in relationships plays a vital role in our growth. If I avoid people out of fear of being hurt, then I am probably forgetting that I am just as capable of hurting someone else. We can't isolate ourselves from Christian people because of the fear of being hurt or causing hurt. Romans 12:3-5 says, "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do

### not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."

We need each other. If you isolate yourself from fellow believers, you are both denying yourself of how their gifts will help you grow and you are denying them of how your gifts will help them to grow. As persecution against Christianity rapidly rises in our culture, then it is more important than ever for Christians to come together and unite in the name of Jesus and share in the name of Jesus, and together reach a world in need of Jesus. If you are unable to gather with 200 believers, then gather with 100. If you are unable to gather with 50. If you are unable to gather with 50, gather with 10. If 10 is too many, gather with 2 or 3. We all have our limitations, but it is so important that the number you are gathering with is more than 1.

What about you? Do you ever find yourself like a sheep drifting from the flock? Do you see greener pastures elsewhere? Did you get so caught up in your patch of life, that you didn't move with the flock? If you find yourself seeking isolation, write down what drives you to do that:

Did your reason involve fear? Are you afraid of the expectations that come with gathering? Are you afraid you don't have time for Christian relationships? Are you afraid that you are not wanted? Are you afraid that the Lord won't protect you if you gather in His name? Whatever your reason, remember that God has not given us a spirit of fear. Uniting together helps us overcome the very fear that can cause us to go to isolation. God gave us each other to ensure that together our needs would be met, we would not cease to grow, we would be helped up if we stumble, etc. We will talk more about this in the final week of this study, but unity in Christ helps us to boldly do what He has called us to do. Take a moment now to pray. If you have isolated yourself or are drawn to isolation, confess that to the Lord. Commit to take steps this week to connect with other believers. Ask Him to help you to have the courage to build relationships that are centered on Him. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 5 – Who can be against us

#### <u>DAY 5</u>

#### MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

<sup>425</sup> Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. <sup>26</sup> But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. <sup>28</sup> And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand." John 10:25-29 (NKJV)

1. According to verse 26, why didn't they believe?

2. What three things did Jesus say about His sheep in verse 27: 1.

2. \_\_\_\_\_. 3. \_\_\_\_\_.

Several times in Scripture believers are described as sheep and God as their Shepherd. Yesterday I touched on one of those passages and the above passage is another. I realize that sheep in general have often been described as dumb animals, but to be honest, I think it adds to the beauty of this imagery. Humans can often be impressed by their own intellect, but I'm sorry to say this – especially to those who are most impressed with their brains - but when you compare what we know to what God knows – we don't know a whole lot. I do think it's appropriate to compare us to dumb sheep and Him to the Perfect Shepherd. Others don't like this analogy because it depicts mindless drones following a leader instead of making their own path. To the people who feel that way, I want to say this to you in my best and most articulate English – "Ain't nobody following nothin" People may think that by deciding not to follow Christ, they are making their own way, but they are just following someone else. The Bible describes this type of person – you can read about it in John 8:37-44. Personally, I love being compared to a sheep knowing my Shepherd is God. What a joy it is to know the voice of my Shepherd and to know that I am known by Him. I believe a key to overcoming fear in our lives is fully embracing our role as sheep with God as our Shepherd. The enemy would seek for us to be convinced of our own superiority and would seek to tempt us and try to draw us away by offering greener pastures. The problem is that when we heed his voice, we don't find greener pastures, we find ourselves alone – hungry and desolate and we find ourselves being the 1 that strayed from the 99 and we realize that the 99 are doing just fine in the flock of our perfect and loving Shepherd. The above Scripture is just part of the analogy, but let's look at the full context:

<sup>41</sup>Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear

his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. "<sup>6</sup> Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them. <sup>7</sup> Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. <sup>9</sup> I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

<sup>11</sup> "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. <sup>13</sup> The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. <sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. <sup>15</sup> As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." John 10:1-15 (NKJV)

- 1. Who enters by the door of the sheepfold?
- 2. What three things happen when the doorkeeper opens the door for the Shepherd (verse 3)?

1.\_\_\_\_\_ 2.\_\_\_\_ 3.

3. What does the thief come to do? \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and

4. What does our Shepherd come to do?

5. What does the Good Shepherd do for His sheep?

The enemy has one objective – to steal, kill, and destroy. There is no gray area of the enemy's intentions. Any pasture that the enemy would lead us to would only be for our destruction. Life outside of the Good Shepherd's sheepfold is a very dark and scary place. It is desolate of purpose, it is absent of life, and it is void of light. There is absolutely nothing more worthy of fear than the thought of life outside of the sheepfold – alone, vulnerable, and defenseless. Brothers and sisters, it's time to stop looking towards other pastures and embrace the pasture that the King of kings and Lord of lords has brought you to. In the Lord's sheepfold there is absolutely nothing to fear.
Our Good Shepherd has laid down His life for His flock and will always provide for you and protect you. Don't be afraid to be like a dumb sheep and follow Him because you know His voice and you know His intentions and you know that Jesus gives "...them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of (His) hand." The world offers us so much opportunity to be afraid, but our Good Shepherd gave His life out of His love for you and He offers you the opportunity to not live with a spirit of fear, but to thrive under His protection in His sheepfold knowing that He has overcome this world and the enemy has been defeated. There is nothing to fear when God is your Shepherd.

One of the most beautiful passages in all of Scripture describes what a life in the Good Shepherd's sheepfold is like. Let's take a look at that now:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. <sup>2</sup> He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. <sup>3</sup> He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. <sup>4</sup> Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. <sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. <sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever." Psalm 23 (NKJV)

I am going to ask a series of questions about this passage – verse by verse, but I do not want you to have a mind-set of just filling in the blanks. The questions will be easy to answer, but I want you to write them not only on the line on the paper, but I want you to write them on your heart. Answer these questions in a prayerful state of mind as if declaring your answers and fully embracing and claiming your answers:

# Verse 1: If the Lord is my Shepherd

Philippians 4:19 says, "*And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*" I know that sometimes you are looking at your bank statement and the enemy plants seeds of doubt. I know sometimes you get a bad medical report and doubt is knocking at the door...BUT...don't listen to the enemy. The

Good Shepherd didn't die for you just to leave you in want. You are His prize possession and He will provide all your needs and you will not be left in want. Do you believe it as you write it???

# Verse 2: My Shepherd makes me to

#### and leads me \_\_\_\_

Our best possible life is a life lived in accordance to His standards and being where He brings us and living for Him there. It's easy to look over the fence and be convinced of greener pastures, but the Good Shepherd makes you to lie down in green pastures and leads you beside the still waters – full of everything we need both physically and spiritually. Don't compare your life to others and seek after what someone else has, just lie down in His green pastures and live for Him in whatever state you are in: *Read Philippians 4:10-20 and I Corinthians 7:17-24 if you struggle with this.* 

# Verse 3: My Shepherd restores \_\_\_\_\_, leads me in the

Remember yesterday, when I shared the passage from Matthew about the Shepherd who would leave 99 sheep to go get the 1 who went astray? Some people just live in fear because they are afraid for their sin to be exposed before the Lord. If you have made mistakes and have gone astray, you need to fully embrace and realize the heart of the Good Shepherd. It is not His desire that any should be lost. He has never left you and He will restore you and lead you on the path of righteousness. No matter what you have done or how far you think you strayed, I guarantee that you are not out of His reach and I guarantee that He wants to restore you and lead you back. Jesus did not come to magnify your shame, He came so that you could be restored, forgiven, and live in freedom – not shame. If you are struggling with this, it's time to let it go and take His loving hand and be restored.

# Verse 4: Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will

For my Shepherd is \_\_\_\_\_ and His rod and staff, they

There have been a few awesome Scriptures that have been repeated in this study and one of them is John 16:33. In that verse, Jesus says in part, "...*In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*" I hope that one thing you took from this study is that fear is just a symptom of something we stopped believing about God. The disciples on the boat in the midst of the tempest believed that Jesus could save them from the storm, but they didn't believe He had authority over the storm. Brothers and sisters there will be storms in your life. There will be walks through the valley of the shadow of death, but you need not fear, for your Good Shepherd is with you and has authority over the storms. You can walk into that storm with confidence and a peace that passes all understanding – knowing that God is in control and whether it be by life or death, you will be with Him and He with you because He has overcome this world and, as I John 4:4 says, "*You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*" Do you believe it??? Write it again if you have to – in Him there is nothing to fear.

Verse 5: My Shepherd prepares a table before me in

He anoints \_\_\_\_\_; and my cup

I want you to picture this for a moment. Your enemies surround you and want to devour you, yet as they look at you with contempt, they see you sitting at a bountiful table prepared by your Good Shepherd and protected by your Good Shepherd and there is nothing they can do about it. I can't say it enough – "*He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*" He doesn't just prepare a table for you – you are His guest of honor. In Middle Eastern culture it was common for the guest of honor to be anointed by oil that was rich in perfumes (John 12:3). When Jesus was speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4 and in verse 13 He tells her, "*Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.*" In Christ, your cup truly runs over and you will never thirst again. Are you just writing it or do you believe it???

Verse 6: As I follow my Shepherd, surely		and
will	-	
follow me all the	; And I will	

#### Forever.

Another big reason we have nothing to fear in the world is because this world is not our home. Our time in this world is just a vapor (James 4:14) on the backdrop of eternity. God's promises for us extend into eternity. This is why we do not fear that which can only take our flesh, but all our fear and reverence is directed at the One who seals our soul for eternity. He has already won and we are sheep of His pasture for all of eternity. I Corinthians 5:1-8 is a very clear reminder of this – *"…to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord."* We have nothing to fear in this short time because we have been called to live for more than just this lifetime – we are called to live *Beyond a Vapor*.

I pray this exercise was a special time with God and I pray that you were able to proclaim these truths about our Good Shepherd. I pray that you will write them on your heart and live in the comfort, confidence, and courage of being in His sheepfold and under His care and protection. Make Psalm 23 your prayer to your Great Shepherd. Write down anything the Lord is showing you.

Watch the weekly introduction videos at https://crosspointchurchonline.org/spirit-of-fear/

SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 6 – Point of courage

#### <u>DAY 1</u>

#### FLOATING IN A BAG IN THE HARBOR

<sup>47</sup> Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. <sup>8</sup> And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed." Deuteronomy 31:7-8 (NKJV)

1. Why did Moses tell Joshua to be of good courage?

2. Does the Lord go before Joshua or behind him?

Having 4 kids, the second half of my life to this point has been flooded with Disney movies (well at least until they became part of the "asleep"...or as our culture puts it..."woke", but I digress). I have thoroughly enjoyed the movies and have enjoyed watching them with my children. As a dad, one of my favorites is *Finding Nemo*. Disney movies tend to diminish the role of dads and parents and portray them as either holding back their child, being indifferent towards them, or absent all together, but movies like *Finding Nemo* and *Up* break that mold and portray a fatherly love and the father or father figure actually gets to play the role of the hero. One of the funniest scenes in the movie, then it cuts to a short scene and it cracks me up every time. Throughout the movie, the fish in the fish tank in the dentist's office where Nemo ends up are constantly plotting their escape back into the ocean. At one point they devise a plan to stop the automatic tank cleaner and make the tank as dirty as possible so that the owner will take them out of the tank and put them into little bags by the window.

While the owner cleans the tank, they will roll the bags out the window, across the street, and into the ocean – and conceivably be free and tank-less fish once again. During the movie, this plan never comes to fruition, but after the credits begin, it cuts to this scene. You see that the fish have successfully dirtied the tank, successfully rolled out the window across the busy street and into the ocean harbor. Once every fish has made it to the harbor, they begin to cheer and celebrate their freedom and the success of the plan, then suddenly they get quiet and realize that they are now floating in bags on top of the water and failed to consider how they would get from the bags to the ocean. There is this moment of awkward silence before one of the fish turns to the leader and says, "what now?" Then the scene cuts out and the credits continue.

Cracks me up every time. They successfully embraced all the elements that would bring about their freedom, except for the part that would actually make them free. All they really accomplished was moving their prison from the safety of a tank to the uncertainty of the ocean. They understood the need for freedom and even the path to get to the cusp of freedom, but didn't consider the application of that freedom. As funny as that is, sometimes I think Christians can understand a Biblical truth and head down the path of embracing that truth, but then don't apply that Biblical truth in a way that God has called them to apply it. A lot of Christians get discouraged because they thought they were pursuing the right thing, but don't understand why they are still floating in a bag in the harbor. Some will read about Jesus flipping over the money tables in the temple and believe that the application of that is to always be confrontational with people. Some will read about Jesus loving everyone and believe the application of that is to accept and celebrate sin. Some will even read the instruction to love your neighbor and believe that the application of that truth is to love them the way the world defines love. It's so important to learn Biblical truths, but it's equally important to apply them in a Biblical way. If overcoming a spirit of fear and living a life of God-given courage is a Biblical truth that can be taken from this study, then equally important is the application of that courage. So this week, we are going to look at the point of courage that is founded in God. What does the Bible teach us about how to apply that courage?

In the passage of Scripture that opened today's study, we see Moses directing Joshua to "*Be strong and of good courage...*" This is good counsel for anyone, but that wasn't the end of what Moses was saying to him. Moses follows that up by telling him how to apply that strength and courage. He continues by telling him, "*for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it.*" You see, Joshua was to be strong and courageous for the purpose of leading God's people to the land that He had promised them. Not only that, but Moses even tells him why he can be strong and courageous when he continues with "And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, *He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.*" This is a truth sandwich. One slice of bread is the Biblical principle of courage that comes from the Lord, the other slice of bread is the reason for believing that Biblical truth – the Lord goes before you and will not leave you nor forsake you. The meat is the purpose and application of that Biblical truth – leading God's people into the promise land. This "sandwich" occurs all throughout Scripture. It is knowing the Biblical principle, reason to believe that Biblical principle, and application of that Biblical principle. If you don't know how to apply it or you don't apply it, you are just two dry pieces of bread. James 1:22-25 says, "*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*<sup>23</sup> For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; <sup>24</sup> for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. <sup>25</sup> But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." Let's look at another Old Testament "sandwich." In I Chronicles, David is instructing his son Solomon to build the temple that the Lord did not want David to build. In I Chronicles 28:20, David says this to his son:

# <sup>420</sup> And David said to his son Solomon, "Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord God—my God—will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.

1. Now it's your turn to try and build a truth sandwich:

Biblical principle:		
Reason for believing it:		

# Application of it:

Just so you can score your work – the Biblical principle was to be strong and courageous and to not fear or be dismayed. The reason for believing that Biblical principle is because the Lord will be with you and He will not forsake you. The application is finishing the work for the service of the house of the Lord. Now I doubt that the application of being courageous in the Lord for you is to physically build a sacred temple for the Lord because the Bible says you are the temple (I Corinthians 3:16). I also doubt that the application of being courageous in the Middle East and march into the land of Canaan and proclaim the land as yours. I do, however, believe that the Bible makes very clear what the application of God-given courage is in the lives of believers today. So the first place we start is by looking at how the most courageous Man to ever walk the earth applied the courage of the Lord. We covered of portion of this passage previously in this study, but now we will look at the whole. Matthew 4:1-11 says, *"Then Jesus was* 

led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. <sup>3</sup> Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." <sup>4</sup> But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup> and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.' "<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, "It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" <sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup> And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him."

Jesus was being tempted directly by the great deceiver – Satan himself. We've already talked about the fact that Satan's one and only ambition is to steal, kill, and destroy. He roams the earth like a lion seeking whom he may devour. If you know anything about predatory animals, they usually like to draw out the weak and isolate them and prey on their weakness. In this passage, Jesus was physically hungry after 40 days of fasting. Satan saw that hunger and tried to prey on that weakness. Satan tries to tempt Him to use His power to turn stones into bread, so He could eat. Jesus had the power to do this – that's important to remember. Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, He turned water into wine, healed the blind, made the lame to walk, healed the leprous, calmed storms, and raised the dead, but none of it was done out of self-glorification or selfish gain. Turning the stones into bread to feed His hunger would be the easy thing. The courageous thing was to put His hunger aside in order to bring glory to God and place higher value on being filled with God's Word than fill His belly.

We have already covered the second temptation in this study, but let's just recap. By tempting Jesus to throw Himself off the approximately 450 foot pinnacle of the temple, Satan was tempting Him to prove His Deity and I would imagine to some degree His manhood. Jesus could have made the jump. In WEEK 2 of the study I even joked that it would have been great if the Bible said that Jesus walked backward to get a running start, then just ran and did a front flip jump off the pinnacle of the temple and nailed a perfect handstand landing and yelled up to Satan, "Ok, your turn!!!" What is important to understand about courage that is founded in the Lord is that it is never for the purpose of our own glorification – it is always for the purpose of glorifying God. Jesus demonstrated more courage by standing on the truth from God's Word than by "proving" Himself by jumping off.

Finally, in the third temptation, Satan offers Him the world. That's quite an offer. What if someone offered you everything? I'm talking about a life of total comfort, with a

side of endless riches and influence – not just for you, but your whole family...and the only thing you had to do was bow to someone other than the Lord. All three of these temptations would be appealing to anyone and hidden in these temptations were opportunities to make a name for Himself and glorify Himself, but true courage – true and righteous God-given courage – always brings glory to God and not ourselves and always prioritizes His truth above our own gain. Jesus demonstrated more courage by saying "no" three times, than anyone could demonstrate by saying "yes" to a myriad of self-glorifying things.

As we begin the final week of this study and try to take anything and everything we have learned and put it into God-purposed use, let's go into it with a heart of commitment. Think about the true courage of Jesus and then think about the application of courage or perceived courage in your life. Take a moment to pray and ask the Lord to use this week's study to use His courage for His purpose. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

# SPIRIT OF FEAR

#### WEEK 6 – Point of courage

#### <u>DAY 2</u>

#### THE LOVE OF COURAGE

Yesterday we kicked off the 6<sup>th</sup> and final week of this *Spirit of Fear* study by looking at the courage Jesus showed at the beginning of His ministry on earth. Jesus showed inspirational courage all throughout His ministry. From standing up to the often hypocritical and self-promoting Pharisees, to talking to Samaritans and women with the same truth He shared with Jews and men (very much against the grain of the culture), to touching lepers, to walking up to the tomb of His dear friend Lazarus after he had been dead for four days and declaring, "Lazarus, come forth!" As courageous as His earthly ministry was, His greatest act of courage came at the end of His life. An act of courage that lifted the sin of humanity on His shoulders and with a heart filled with self-less love made the ultimate sacrifice and died so that we could live. Today, we are going to take a look at the depth of His courage at Calvary and not only be humbled by it, inspired by it, and grateful for it, but also use it as the foundation to the courage that God is calling us to in the mission He has given us as we continue on this week's journey. Let's begin with the last supper:

"<sup>1</sup>Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. <sup>2</sup> And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, <sup>3</sup> Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and

# was going to God, <sup>4</sup>rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. <sup>5</sup> After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded." John 13:1-5 (NKJV)

- 1. According to verse 1, how long did Jesus love His own in the world?
- 2. According to verse 2, what had already happened at this point?
- 3. Knowing that His time was near, what did Jesus do?

If this doesn't move you and absolutely bless your heart, then you need to go pet a puppy or hold a baby or something. I know we are talking about courage, but we can't talk about God-given courage without talking about love – they are completely tied together. The absolute unmatchable courage of Jesus was completely derived from His unmatchable love. Just look at this scene from history. Jesus is sitting with His disciples and already knows His time has come. Judas, who is sitting at this table and is supposed to be one of Jesus' twelve closest companions, has already decided to betray Him. With the weight of all this, Jesus kneels down and begins to wash His disciple's feet. The King of kings and Lord of lords who knows He is about take on the sin of the world and die a gruesome death, is using His last moments of earthly freedom to show one of the most humble displays of love a person can show by washing the feet of His disciples. That isn't all – drop down to verses 10-12, which says, "10 Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." 11 For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean." <sup>12</sup> So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" Think about that for moment. Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, but still washed his feet. I want you to picture yourself sitting down with your closest group of friends. Now imagine that you know for certain that one of them has stabbed you in the back and betrayed your friendship. Would you confront him? Would you sit in the corner giving him a mean stare all night? Would you make little comments under your breath and take the last biscuit as you see him reaching for it? OR – would you humbly kneel down at his feet and wash them? This is the insanely selfless love that makes true God-given courage possible (I John 4:18). Without selfless love, there would be no courage. When we forget the amazing and selfless love that Jesus demonstrated, our flesh will naturally turn to self-centeredness and self-centeredness will turn to insecurity and self-defense and that will likely lead to personal vengeance and bitterness, which is indicative of a spirit of fear – good ole selfpreserving and self-defending fear. If you apply deductive reasoning to that, you will

see that the manifestation of self-centeredness is fear, and the manifestation of selfless love is courage.

# THE COURAGE TO STAND DOWN

<sup>50</sup> But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why have you come?" Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him. <sup>51</sup> And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. <sup>52</sup> But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. <sup>53</sup> Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? <sup>54</sup> How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?" <sup>55</sup> In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. <sup>56</sup> But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples forsook Him and ford."

fled." Matthew 26:50-56 (NKJV)

- 1. What was Jesus' response immediately after the high priest's servant's ear was chopped off?
- 2. What option did Jesus say He had to prevent His arrest?
- 3. What did the disciples do upon him being arrested?

In the Gospel of John we discover that Peter is the one who drew his sword and chopped off the ear of the high priest's servant. In the Gospel of Luke, we find that Jesus actually healed the man's ear – one of the same men that was taking Jesus into custody. He actually healed the enemy that was there to take Him. After Peter strikes the ear of the man, Jesus says, "...*do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?*" Make no mistake about it, Jesus took the cross for our sake. He could have stopped it, but His love for humanity was so great, that He didn't. Jesus is an innocent man and the Pharisees have dealt corruptly in order to try and justify His arrest. This whole scene isn't fair, but was worldly fairness and worldly justice Jesus' top priority? Was free speech and religious freedom His top priority? Was self-defense His top priority? No...His top priority was saving us. The King of kings came not as a conquering king, but as a humble baby born in a manger. The Lord of lords lived a perfect life and broke no laws, yet was arrested – and He allowed it to happen. In doing nothing to stop this, Jesus demonstrated more

courage than I could in a lifetime of fighting for fairness and justice in a fallen world. In the Gospel of John's account of this historically factual event, we see in verse 8 of chapter 18 that Jesus says to those there to arrest Him "*I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way.*" In other words – "Take Me and let my disciples go." I have a t-shirt that depicts the main Marvel Avengers sitting in a circle and Jesus is sitting in front of them with a caption that has Jesus saying, "…and that's how I saved the world." Jesus is such a Super Hero. He is facing His death and in the midst of His arrest, He heals the ear of one there to take Him and pleads for the freedom of His disciples. Remember – true courage is founded in selfless love. The application of true courage is putting the needs of others above your own needs and placing the glorification of God over the glorification of ourselves. In other words – "true courage is being like Jesus."

If all this isn't enough to understand the courage of Jesus, look at what comes next:

# <sup>465</sup> Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! <sup>66</sup> What do you think?"

# They answered and said, "He is deserving of death."<sup>67</sup> Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, <sup>68</sup> saying, "Prophesy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?" Matthew 26:65-68 (NKJV)

After all these years, it's still hard for me to read this and see my Savior treated this way. He died even for these men to have the opportunity to be saved. Let's keep going:

# <sup>26</sup> Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus <sup>27</sup> Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. <sup>28</sup> And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. <sup>29</sup> When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" <sup>30</sup> Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. <sup>31</sup> And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified." Matthew 27:26-31 (NKJV)

A few verses earlier (15-25) we discover that it was customary at the feast for the governor to release one prisoner, but the crowd cried out for the release of a notorious prisoner named Barabbas and chanted for Jesus to be crucified. Pilate found absolutely no fault in Him, yet gave in to the demand of the crowd. Pilate then sent Jesus to be

scourged – let's talk about that for minute. Being flogged with a Roman scourge. This involved being strapped to a stone stump with your back fully exposed. A Roman would take something known as "the cat of nine tails." This was a long leather strap with nine tentacles splitting off at the end of it. At the end of each of the nine tentacles was a jagged piece of bone or sharp stone. Upon whipping someone with it, the jagged bones would penetrate the flesh and when the soldier pulled the whip back, it would tear off the flesh with it. Many people would not even survive this gruesome scourging. The ones who did survive would be bleeding profusely with nothing left of their back but exposed flesh. Our powerful Lord who could have called on an army of angels to stop this at any point, courageously took this beating as an innocent man. Upon surviving this horrible beating, they stripped Him of His clothing and twisted a crown of thorns – not on His head – but into His head. If all this wasn't enough, they mocked Him, spit on Him, and hit His head with a reed. But, this was still not the end.

# <sup>417</sup> And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, <sup>18</sup> where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. <sup>19</sup> Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." John 19:17-19 (NKJV)

Finally, He is nailed to a cross and is crucified. The death a person would die on a cross would be by asphyxiation. As He hung nailed to the cross, He would need to lift His chest up to breathe. When the time came when He had no more strength to lift up His chest, He would no longer be able to breathe. He used one of His final breaths to say, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." With His very last breath He said, "It is finished!" and then He bowed His head and yielded His Spirit.

As I mentioned before, I struggle to articulate the details of Jesus suffering. I don't do it often. It's hard to read because it should be hard to read, but it is truth and we shouldn't turn our eyes from truth just because that truth is hard. If we want to apply Godly courage in our life, we must see the full picture of selfless love and God-glorifying courage. Listen to the words of Jesus when He said in Luke 9:23-25, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.<sup>24</sup>For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.<sup>25</sup>For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?" Take a moment now to pray a prayer of reflection over the reality of what He suffered for you. Thank Him for His sacrifice and ask for His help to never forget it, and true courage. Write down anything God is showing you:

#### SPIRIT OF FEAR

#### WEEK 6 – Point of courage

# <u>DAY 3</u>

#### CALL OF THE COURAGEOUS

<sup>418</sup> And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and Io, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen." Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV)

- 1. What has been given to Jesus in heaven and on earth?
- 2. Jesus told His disciples to Go and do what?

#### 3. How long did Jesus say He would be with them?

There is great importance placed on a person's last words. Not everyone is given the opportunity to have a death bed – a time period where death is certain yet life still remains in them. For those whom have the opportunity to have a death bed, this is normally when their last words are spoken and remembered. The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts all record Jesus last words spoken before His ascension and they all are some version of the above commission in Matthew. The difference with Jesus' last words is that they were not spoken on a death bed – they were spoken by a risen Savior who defeated death and victoriously rose again and was and is alive and these words did not signify an end for Him. These words signified a mission for His followers to be carried out until the Day of His glorious return. Not a mission to be carried out without Him, but a mission to be carried out with Him, with us – always. Jesus had just demonstrated the greatest act of love and courage that the world has ever seen and He is calling His followers to take that same God-given courage and go into all the world and share the same message that He was crucified for. This week's study is titled "the point of courage." Jesus demonstrated a courage that we are to emulate and the point of emulating that courage is given to us in the words He spoke before He ascended to His glorious throne in heaven. The point of selfless, God-given courage whose foundation is love, is to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the world and make disciples of all nations. Today we will look at what the Bible teaches us about the courage that is required to be His witnesses.

# <sup>415</sup> So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs."

<sup>16</sup> He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." <sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. <sup>18</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." <sup>19</sup> This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me." John 21:15-19 (NKJV)

- 1. How many times did Jesus ask Peter if he loved Him?
- 2. What did Jesus indicate about Peter's future?

What a roller coaster of emotions Peter must have been on over the last few days. Jesus predicts that His disciples will abandon Him when His time comes and Peter insists that he would never deny Him and Jesus responds by predicting that he would deny Him not once, but three times. Peter chops off a man's ear trying to defend His Messiah from being arrested only to deny Him three times a short time later. The center of his entire world is then beaten and crucified. Three days later, Jesus is alive having risen from the dead, and here, now, He is restoring Peter. He asks him three times if he loved Him which matches the three times he denied Him and instructs Peter to care for His flock. Jesus then goes on to tell Peter that he will die as a martyr for answering His call. Just think about that – Jesus tells Peter what he must do and tells him he will die for doing it. The only way that Peter can possibly take on this task is if he dies to self – if he is willing to deny himself and take up his cross and follow Him. In other words, carrying out this mission is only possible with the selfless love that is the foundation of true courage. Jesus never painted an easy picture for His disciples. Jesus warned them of the hardships they would face for His sake and He told them everything that would cause the flesh to fear. If the focus is self-centeredness and self-preservation, then there is much to fear, but if the focus is our selfless love of God and the love of the people of the harvest and the people of His sheepfold, then we will live with the courage of a person who is living for more than just this lifetime.

"<sup>16</sup> "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. <sup>17</sup> But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. <sup>18</sup> You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. <sup>19</sup> But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; <sup>20</sup> for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. <sup>21</sup> "Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. <sup>22</sup> And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved." Matthew 10:16-22 (NKJV)

Jesus was never one for sugar-coating. He never pretended or spoke with false pretense. In this passage, Jesus is sending out the twelve to share the Gospel and to heal the sick. Jesus doesn't say that they might be persecuted; He told them they would be persecuted. He told them they would be hated for speaking the name of Jesus. They would be arrested, scourged, and brought before councils and courts. Even family members would deliver them up to be put to death. I believe Jesus did this because true courage is not found in pretending there is no danger. Too often Christians will live in a state of willful ignorance about the persecution that is coming directly for them in order to live in the cozy comfort of a Christian life filled with cotton candy, gummy bears, and perfect harmony. This approach is not consistent with the words of Jesus. True courage is not found in willful ignorance or diluted platitudes, it is always founded in truth. True courage is not found in denying persecution, it's found in expecting it and facing it. True courage is found in the words of Jesus in Matthew 16:24-26: "<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.<sup>25</sup> For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.<sup>26</sup> For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? You see – the theme we see over and over again is that a spirit of self-preservation stems from a spirit of fear. Jesus said that the one who loses their life for His sake will find it. Jesus said if anyone desires to come after Him, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Him. In the book of Acts we see the manifestation of the courage Jesus was instilling in His disciples:

<sup>418</sup> So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.<sup>20</sup> For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."<sup>21</sup> So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.<sup>22</sup> For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.<sup>23</sup> And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.<sup>24</sup> So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, <sup>25</sup> who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? <sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.'<sup>27</sup> "For truly" against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together <sup>28</sup> to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.<sup>29</sup> Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, <sup>30</sup> by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."<sup>31</sup> And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. Acts 4:18-31 (NKJV)

Peter and John have been arrested by the religious leaders for preaching the Gospel of Jesus. Even though Peter and John are speaking truth, the leaders are trying to figure out what to do with them in order to stop the true Gospel of Jesus Christ from spreading and thus hindering their power. An analogy in our day and age: it would be as if an influential entity with control over the flow of information would censor and cancel any opinions that differed from a powerful group of truth-challenged, control-hungry aristocrats...can you imagine if that ever happened in our country??? That would be awful...I sure hope that never happens...but I digress. Because thousands of

people believed as a result of their preaching the Gospel and thousands of people saw a lame man healed by the power of Jesus through Peter and John, they decided that all they can do is severely threaten them and that's where the above passage picks it up.

- 1. According to verse 19, what did Peter and John leave for the religious leaders to judge?
- 2. According to verse 20, Peter and John say, "For we \_\_\_\_\_\_ the things we have seen and heard."
- 3. After having been severely threatened not to speak the name of Jesus, they went back and began to pray with their companions. According to verse 29, what were they praying for?

What is the point of courage? Is it not to do what God has called us to do – what Jesus prepared His disciples for and what He commissioned them to do before His ascension? What other righteous use of courage is there – if not to do His will. Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with people is something that is way outside the comfort zone of many

believers, but what possible use could God-given courage have within our comfort zone? Our comfort zone is a place where we are made to feel safe by walls we build, obstacles we avoid, and truth we hide. Brothers and sisters, the harvest is plenty, but the laborers are few – we can no longer afford to hide in the perceived safety of a useless comfort zone instead of stepping into the call of all believers to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with all the world. Immediately after Peter and John were released from their arrest for preaching the Gospel, they began to pray for the boldness to preach the Gospel that got them arrested. How about we take a moment now to pray for boldness? This study has offered the opportunity to address fear in your life, overcome fear in your life, and live a life of God-given courage, so give the Lord your comfort zone and pray that He would give you the selfless love and Christ-like courage to do all He's calling you to do. Pray for a courage like Jesus and pray for a courage whose purpose is to glorify God. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 6 – Point of courage

#### <u>DAY 4</u>

ARMED SHEEP

<sup>40</sup> Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of

# wickedness in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Ephesians 6:10-13 (NKJV)

It can be easy for some Christians to get the wrong impression of all this. Jesus did say that He sends us out as sheep in the midst of wolves, but make no mistake, we are armed sheep and we are sheep that are sent out by the One who already won the victory and has authority over the enemy. He Who lives in us is greater than he who is in the world. Christians too often see the world through only the physical lens, but there is a reality outside the scope of the physical that we must acknowledge.

- 1. What must we be strong in?
- 2. How can we stand again the wiles of the devil?

#### 3. What do we wrestle against?

If God has not given us a spirit of fear, then our greatest enemy – the devil – desires to devour us with fear. Part of the reason why I didn't want this study to be just about overcoming the fear of heights or spiders is because those fears are derived from what we can see in the physical realm, yet there exists a spiritual realm all around us and according to this passage, a battle that rages on constantly. Why face a physical fear when our true battle is not against flesh and blood? God has given us everything we need to defend against the wiles of the devil and engage in this spiritual warfare. We can fearlessly march ahead and answer God's call on our life armed with the armor of God and the strength of the Lord and the power of His might.

<sup>\*14</sup> Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup> above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. <sup>17</sup> And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; <sup>18</sup> praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— <sup>19</sup> and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." Ephesians 6:14-20 (NKJV)

If fear is the symptom of what we stop believing or start doubting about the Lord, then being strong in the Lord and in the power of His might is the antidote for fear. Let's spend today talking about the whole armor of God and how we can be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. I have always believed that the best way to understand the figurative spiritual meaning of a Biblical parable or metaphor is to understand it's literal meaning first. When Jesus compared the Kingdom of Heaven to old and new wine skins – my first priority is to understand what wineskins are and how they worked, then I can better understand the deeper spiritual truth He is conveying. In this case, I want to understand the significance of each piece of a Roman soldier's armor, so I can get a better understanding of the deeper spiritual meaning. It appears as though Paul helps us with this because he has listed this metaphorical armor in the same order that a Roman soldier would put on their armor. So let's look at the literal and metaphorical application of each individual piece of armor in order to get a better understanding of all that God has given us to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Two times in verses 10-13, the same word for "stand" is used - "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." AND "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Here in verse 14, we see the same word used again when it says, "Stand therefore..." In verses 11 and 13, the word is used to describe being able to stand when evil and the master of evil would seek to trample us. So, here in verse 14, where it says "Stand therefore..." – therefore indicates that if you want to be able to stand, here is what you will need:

#### 1. Having girded your waist with truth:

*Literal:* Typically, the first thing a Roman soldier would put on is the belt. This belt would typically have leather that hung down from it to protect the lower body and any valuable, vital, and precious body parts that may dwell in that region. This leather would be in strips for ease of movement and would hang down to just above the knee as to not hinder running. The belt would also serve the purpose of securing garments under the armor from falling down and causing the soldier to stumble.

*Spiritual:* Before putting on all the other armor, we must gird our waist in truth. The Greek word for "truth" here is from the transliterated Greek word "aletheuo" and it is referring to the <u>spoken</u> truth – to tell the truth. This is both a general sense of having integrity and being honest when we speak as well as speaking truth in doctrine and profession of the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Word of God. I look at it this way: the next piece of armor is righteousness and righteousness without truth is the very definition of hypocrisy. Lack of truth undercuts every piece of armor to follow. I John 1:5-10 says it this way: *"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." The truth that we are to gird* 

our waist with works counter to the Sunday-Best-Smile-And-Nod Christianity that many Christians adopt over time. Pretending we have no sin when we do is a lie, and without sin being confessed and exposed it will fester and fester and slow us down, hold us back, and cause us to stumble. In our current culture, you see bold face lies being spoken as truth. You see declarations made that feast off of emotion, but are completely absent of fact – and the worst part is, these declarations are accepted without even asking for the facts. We are not of this world, but are sanctified from it, so if the world is becoming more intentional and confident in lies, then we need to be ever more vigilant to gird our waist with truth to be able to stand courageously in the evil day.

# 2. Having put on the breastplate of righteousness:

*Literal:* The breastplate of Roman armor would surround the entire upper body. It was generally made up of thick leather or metal and protected a soldier from all sides. Typically, when a person is forced to use their protective firearm, they are told to aim for the chest. It makes for a large target that is easier to hit. This is the area most targeted by an enemy and it is the hardest to hide, which makes the breastplate of great importance.

*Spiritual:* The breastplate guards the heart, which is the most vital organ in the whole body. In the same way, we must guard our heart from corruption. Proverbs 4:23-27 says this: "<sup>23</sup> Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. <sup>24</sup> Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you.<sup>25</sup> Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. <sup>26</sup> Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. <sup>27</sup> Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil." In Luke 6:45, Jesus says, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." There is an endless sea of junk in this world in which we can allow to travel through our eyes and ears and all our other senses and go directly to the heart. There are short stints of time where we may be able to absorb the junk, while still speaking and conducting ourselves righteously, but it won't last. Ultimately what we allow in is what eventually comes out. In youth ministry, sometimes you need to say something outrageous to get their attention and get the point across in a way they will remember. In over 20 years of youth ministry, one thing I have said many times to teens is, "you can't eat pizza and puke cake." What we allow in is what comes out in word and deed. We need to guard our hearts from unrighteousness. "Be careful little eyes what you see. Be careful little eyes what you see. For the Father up above is looking down in love, so, be careful little eyes what you see. Be careful little ears what you hear....Be careful little hands what you do...Be careful little tongue what you say...Be careful little feet where you go...Be careful *little heart whom you trust...Be careful little mind what you think...* Such a simple song that has been sung to children in Sunday School for years, but it stands just as true for a 3 year old as it does for a 63 year old. God's Word instructs us in righteousness. It

teaches us what to believe, what not to believe, what to do and what not to do – that a Christian may be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work (II Timothy 3:16-17). Put on the breastplate of righteousness to be able to stand courageously in the evil day.

# 3. Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace:

Literal: A Roman soldier would put on hard leather sandals with hob-nail studding on the sole for both strength and traction. Battles in this time period typically weren't fought on an indoor basketball court or a well-maintained soccer field, but on rocky, hilly terrain. Footwear that would hold up and stay on was very important. *Spiritual:* Let me pose a question for you: If a pastor takes a week off from his ministry duties and takes his family on a vacation to another state – What is he taking a vacation from? Yes, he's taking a break from the heavy load of weekly ministry duties, responsibilities, and requests, but is he on vacation from Christianity? Is he off duty from his call to go into all the world and share the Gospel? No. Wherever he's vacationing is his temporary mission field. He must conduct Himself in a God-honoring way and talk to people he comes across and look for opportunities to share the Gospel. This is true for all believers. People say they need to step down from ministry for this reason or that one, but your life is your ministry and the harvest is in front of you wherever you go. I Peter 3:13-17 says, "And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." The word for "preparation" is a word that can also mean "readiness." We must always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks us for a reason for the hope that is in us. We need to be ready wherever our "sandals" take us. Our feet are what take us where we go and we need to be ready with the Gospel wherever our feet take us, which is why Romans 10:14-15 says, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of *peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!*" Wherever you go – be courageous and be prepared with the Gospel and make your feet beautiful.

We will continue with this topic in tomorrow's study, but to close today's study, how armed are you with the three pieces of armor discussed so far – 1. The belt of truth, 2. The breastplate of righteousness, and 3. The preparation of the Gospel of peace? Do you ever feel like you have some of the other armor on, but you forgot to put on the belt of truth? It's important to remember that true courage is not found in who other people think you are, it's found in knowing who you are in Christ. The Bible has never taught us to put on our Sunday best each week, it teaches us to put on the belt of truth and pursue righteousness in every aspect of our life and always be ready with the Gospel. When we put on a show, we are only lying to ourselves. Take a moment now to pray. Confess to the Lord any fake things in your life. Confess the times your waist was not girded with the belt of truth. Ask the Lord to help you put on all His armor to be able stand and having done all to stand. Write down anything the Lord is showing you:

#### SPIRIT OF FEAR

WEEK 6 – Point of courage

#### <u>DAY 5</u>

ARMED SHEEP (Continued)

<sup>414</sup> Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup> above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. <sup>17</sup> And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit,

# which is the word of God; <sup>18</sup> praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—<sup>19</sup> and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." Ephesians 6:14-20 (NKJV)

Today we are going to pick up where we left off yesterday as we look at the whole armor of God. As we do, it's so important to remember that even though Jesus said He sends us out as sheep in the midst of wolves, He comes with us. We are sheep in the midst of wolves in the sense that we are trying to reach a world whose ruler wants to devour us. The wolves are licking their chops to devour us, but they tremble at the sight of our Great Shepherd and underneath that innocent and fluffy-looking wool, God has armed us with heavenly armor that can withstand the attacks of the enemy. Remember Romans 8:35-39 says: "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."<u>Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.</u> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." With that in mind, let's continue on to number 4:* 

# 4. Above all, taking the shield of faith:

*Literal:* A Roman shield was fireproof and could be made up of a variety of metals, leather, bronze coated wood, and other materials. It typically measured about 2 ½ feet wide and 4 feet tall. The shield could withstand a sword, spear, arrow, or fiery arrow. *Spiritual:* It says "above all," taking the shield of faith. We spent much time in this study talking about the disciples in boats. There were two separate historical events in which the disciples found themselves on a boat on rough waters and both times Jesus questioned their faith. It's clear that fear increases as faith decreases. Overcoming fear is always carrying our shield of faith that is founded in believing Who God is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. The Bible tells us that He Who is in us is greater than he who is in the world, which is why, in Him, we are more than conquerors. Our faith in the Lord is able to protect us from even the fiery darts of the devil. When we allow ourselves to stop believing everything we know God to be, we begin to lower our shield and expose parts of our life to the enemy. We must confidently hold up our shield of faith if we are to overcome a spirit of fear and live courageously for Christ.

# 5. And take the helmet of salvation:

*Literal:* a Roman soldier's helmet served two basic purposes. One purpose was the obvious – to protect their heads. The other purpose was actually to make them look taller and more intimidating and impressive. The helmets would be made of metal and

leather and it would have a plume sticking out of the top typically made of dyed horse hair or feathers. From a distance, even a soldier who was vertically challenged would look more impressive with that plume sticking proudly in the air.

Spiritual: Romans 12:2 says, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." At the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in us. The Holy Spirit helps to guide our hearts and minds and gives us understanding and discernment. Romans 8:9-11 says, "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." If the Spirit doesn't dwell in you, you are not His. There is no salvation that is absent from the dwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit that dwells in us at the moment of salvation does help protect our minds from the evil one. Satan likes to penetrate minds and camp out there, but I believe the Holy Spirit protects us from allowing him to take up residence in us. He definitely "bonks" us on the helmet and pokes us in the eyes, but I don't believe he can fully penetrate and take residence based on Scripture like this one in Romans 8. Not only are we protected by the helmet of salvation, but it also serves to make us stand out. When we live in the joy of His salvation and wear salvation with pride for all to see, we become more impressive in the sense that people are drawn to that hope and assurance. The Christ in us and the transformation that takes place is impressive and stands out in a world searching for just that. Christians can sometimes cower in their faith and believe that they are the underdog in a spiritual or intellectual conversation, but that could not be further from the truth. Wear your salvation with confidence and assurance not because of who you are, but because of the Jesus in you. Walk with the courage and boldness of knowing that any intellect that denies Christ is really just foolishness (Romans 1:22).

# 6. And the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God:

*Literal:* Here, finally, we have a weapon of offense. Most of the armor protects us, but a sword is an offensive weapon. Some believe that a sword is an easy weapon to use, but that could not be further from the truth. A Roman soldier required much training to wield a sword and be effective in battle.

*Spiritual:* Hebrews 4:12-13 says, "*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*" Can you imagine if just before he went into battle, a Roman soldier was handed a beautiful brand new and perfectly sharp sword and upon receiving it and admiring it's finished beauty, he throws it to the ground and says, "I would rather use a pool noodle." The Word of God is not old fashioned and it's not modern; it's eternal. The Word of God is how we know truth and it exposes our life in all our imperfection and points us to the only One who can save us. The word of God is powerful, yet so often Christians think that it's too sharp and water it down and trade the truth in for a truth that a lost society will feel more comfortable with. The truth of God's Word is not supposed to make us feel comfortable, it's supposed to expose us and change us and direct us. God has given you a sword, so please don't trade it in for a pool noodle. Train yourself in the word and become stronger and stronger in it and conform your life more and more to it. Let the hope and assurance of God's eternal word protect you from a spirit of fear and give you the courage and boldness to live out His purpose in your life.

#### THE JESUS FACTOR

# "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus." Acts 4:13 (NKJV)

Uneducated and untrained men are not supposed to speak with boldness...are they? How could a motley crew of fishermen, tax collectors, political zealots, and tradesmen be the chosen twelve to walk with Jesus and be charged with spreading the Gospel to all the world – making disciples of all nations in an environment that was toxic for a follower of Christ to be in? I think the men of the Sanhedrin answer that best – IT WAS THE JESUS FACTOR!!! They were amazed at their boldness and realized that the only explanation is that they must have been with Jesus. What about you? What do you need to speak with boldness and live out your God-given purpose with courage? Do you need to be educated? Do you need to be trained? Those things are helpful in our growth, but what you need is something you already have – you have the Jesus factor. With Christ, there is nothing to fear. Knowing Christ is knowing the most important thing that can be known.

"<sup>12</sup> Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—<sup>13</sup> unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. <sup>14</sup> But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. <sup>15</sup> But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. <sup>16</sup> Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. <sup>17</sup> Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. <sup>18</sup> But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." II Corinthians 3:12-18 (NKJV) The most "intellectually gifted" person in the world without Christ is just a smart guy who is under a veil and all the knowledge he knows won't mean a hill of beans at life's end. Our boldness is found in the hope we have in Christ, not it an outgoing personality or eloquence of speech. We need to live and speak as those with the Jesus Factor.

# NOUGH SAID

Brothers and sisters, we are about to complete this six week study. I don't write a Bible study to profess my knowledge of a subject to someone I believe doesn't know. Just like others I've written, this Bible study changes my life. As I spend time in prayer and in the Bible, the Lord is working on me and convicting me and showing things I need to see. My sincere heart for this study, and prayer for you, is that God's Word has transformed your life. I pray that this study presented you with truths from the Bible that have impacted the way you view fear, the way you identify fear, the way you combat fear, the way you overcome fear, and the way you live in courage and boldness. Let's just take a moment to reflect as we finish.

Did you learn anything new about fear? If so, write down the most significant thing you learned?

Were you reminded of something you already knew, but were struggling with? If yes, write it below:

*Is there anything this study brought out that you are still struggling with? If so, write it below:* 

Did you or will you make any significant adjustments or changes in your life as a result of what God has shown you over the course of the last six weeks? If so write it below:

I pray those lines were filled with God-honoring growth for all of us. I encourage you to share those testimonies with your small group and with the church as a whole. Take a moment now to commit these things to the Lord. Pray for God to remind you of changes you have committed to make – that this wouldn't just be a thing you did in the past, but that you would build on this moving forward instead of needing to return to it.

God has not given us a Spirit of Fear, but of power, love and a sound mind.