

## **Fear the Enemy of Faith**

There is an oppression that is being experienced in this area that we need to deal with. There are principalities and powers that we need to contend with. I am going to name one of the most insidious ones this morning. It is the spirit of fear.

We have talked about the great commission, we have talked about discipleship, we have talked about faith in action and many other things, but in order for any of those things to take hold, we need to understand fear.

Over the last few weeks, I have asked various people to pray in the service. With very few exceptions, there has been a tremendous hesitation to pray aloud in church with others listening. I was so blessed when last Sunday a little girl who was maybe four years old, said she would pray. She prayed for the children and ended with a heart-felt amen. I don't know about you but I was totally blessed. This started me thinking. I know some may say, Pastor Ray be careful that doesn't happen too often and it could be dangerous!

But here is what came to mind... If a little girl who is just starting on her journey with Jesus, who is tiny in stature, probably not as strong as many of us, a person who does not have the experience of many of us and does not have the wisdom of age, can pray.... What is stopping the rest?

Prayer in the church is the safest thing there is. We will not criticize each other. We will not ridicule each other. We will respectfully listen and so on...

Here is the thing... If people will not speak to God in his house, how can we ever expect to reach the masses outside in our community? If people in the safest of contexts will not raise their voices to God, how can we ever expect that they talk to other people about God outside the church?

So what causes this effect? FEAR

Every day we have a choice. We can chose faith or we can choose fear.

When I think about the good things that God does for us every day, I wonder why we get to the place where our perspective is always on the negative. Why was I seeing a wasteland instead of a rose garden? Have you ever said: "I am afraid of losing my Job", "I am afraid that I am not going to get a job", "I am afraid my marriage won't make it", "I am afraid that my child will get mixed up with the wrong crowd", "Our business is slowing down, I am afraid we aren't going to make it" or even "I am afraid that I can't do that" If you have you are using fear instead of faith

Do we really believe that God is in control; that he is taking care of us or do we constantly utilize fear to protect ourselves?

We can either choose to employ faith or we can chose to employ fear.

Let me explain:

Fear and Faith both ask us to believe in what we cannot see. – Think about that for a minute

Hebrews 11:1 tells us:

King James Version (KJV)

***Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.***

Note that the same thing can be said of fear...

The difference is our perspective...

Fear asks us to take the negative perspective.

For example:

- “That pain in your side is probably cancer, after all that’s what your grand-father passed away from” vs. “I have pain in my side but God is in control and he is going to do something about it”
- “We are going to starve” vs. “God will supply all our needs”
- “Our best days are ahead of us” vs. “We have been through too much, there is too much water under the bridge and we will never be happy”
- “Our new pastor is going to make the same old mistakes” vs. “I believe that God is taking our new pastor under his wing”

**When it comes right down to it, fear is faith in reverse.**

How many times has someone told you about the good things that God is doing in their lives, yet the next thing out of their mouths is something like “But it is never going to last” or “It’s too good to be true” or “I’m just waiting for the other shoe to drop”

We need to change our perspective and meditate on God. Why does the scripture say about it?

***Joshua 1:8 (ESV)***

***This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.***

***Psalms 19:14***

***Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.***

***Psalms 1:2***

***But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.***

**Psalm 119:15**

*I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.*

**Psalm 104:34**

*May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord.*

**Philippians 4:8**

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

**Psalm 49:3**

*My mouth shall speak wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall be - understanding.*

**Psalm 119:148**

*My eyes are awake before the watches of the night; that I may meditate on your promise.*

**Psalm 119:48**

*I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes.*

And so on...

Why does this matter? It matters because; what we meditate on takes root within us. If what we meditate on all day is fear, we can make our fears a reality. We replay the negativity over and over in our heads until it becomes firmly entrenched in our hearts. Don't believe me check out Job 3:25:

**Job 3:25**

New International Version (NIV)

**25** *What I feared has come upon me;  
what I dreaded has happened to me.*

What is in our hearts we - speak. Check out what God says about our hearts:

**Matthew 12:34**

*You offspring of vipers! How can you speak good things when you are evil (wicked)?  
For out of the fullness (the overflow, the superabundance) of the heart the mouth speaks.*

**Luke 6:45**

***The upright (honorable, intrinsically good) man out of the good treasure [stored] in his heart produces what is upright (honorable and intrinsically good), and the evil man out of the evil storehouse brings forth that which is depraved (wicked and intrinsically evil); for out of the abundance (overflow) of the heart his mouth speaks.***

The Lord God gave us promises.

- In Psalms 23:6 he says that goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives.
- In Romans 8:28 he says that in all things he works together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purposes.

If we have faith in God's promises, then why do we fear?

We fear because in our worldly perspective there is no shortage of things to worry about...

Fear will take over your life, it will keep you awake at night, it will wake you up in cold sweats, it will make you ill, it will steal every ounce of joy from your life. Fear will kill your enthusiasm.

In my previous occupation I was a project manager, a planner. When you plan to do anything as a planner, you do a risk assessment. The risk assessment tool is utilized to quantify or put into numbers the potential for things to go wrong. What percentage is the likelihood of them going wrong? Many projects are never undertaken because the potential for them to fail is too great. It comes down to a cost / benefit analysis and a return on investment calculation.

If I say that I am risk adverse it means that I am afraid of the possible risk involved.

So what does this have to do with faith and fear?

In our lives we often assess what we are going to do? What is the likelihood that I will be laughed at mocked or ridiculed if I pray out loud in front of everyone? What is the likelihood that I will make a fool of myself and not know what to say? What is the likelihood that I will say the wrong thing?

What if I approach that person to tell them about Jesus and they ask me a question I don't know to answer? What if I approach that person and they hate Christians? What if I approach that person and they get mad at me and attack me? What if that person knows my boss? What if that person spreads around that I am a bible thumping Jesus freak?

Whether we want to admit it or not we constantly make assessments in our daily lives. If we have a positive perspective and act out of faith, we are likely to achieve success in what we do, because we are committed, engaged and dedicated to the success of the effort. If we have a negative perspective, we are expecting failure, we do not engage, we avoid fallout, we want to get off the ship before it sinks.

Now when we were not Christians it was okay to be risk adverse, we were lost, we were in jeopardy, we had no hope. Yet now we are Christians and we have God's assurances. So why do we still use a worldly mindset, when we have been born again into the mind of Christ. Well... Sanctification is instantaneous

in that we are positionally sanctified by Christ, yet we have a journey to take along the way, in which the Holy Spirit refines our character to be more like Christ.

Is this then an excuse? ... NO, because now you know.

We do not need to fear for:

- the economy
- our health
- our children
- our mortgage
- our car
- our job
- etcetera... ad nauseam

God's in control. We either have faith or we have fear. Fear is the Devil's tool for his followers. Faith is God's tool for us. We need to embrace that we are kings and priests in the kingdom of God. We need to grasp that we have God's assurances, God's love and God's hand on us as our great father.

Recently a young man came to me and said that he was afraid he was going to lose his job. We talked and I pointed out who he is in Christ. Many just don't know... he said "I think I might get laid off, how am I going to provide for my family?"

I showed him Isaiah 43:1b-3a

***... "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.  
2 When you pass through the waters,  
I will be with you;  
and when you pass through the rivers,  
they will not sweep over you.  
When you walk through the fire,  
you will not be burned;  
the flames will not set you ablaze.  
3 For I am the Lord your God..."***

In the end we prayed and he repeated: "Father my life is in your hands and I trust in you, I know you are guiding my steps and no matter what happens it all is for good."

The young man lost his Job... but not his faith. Two weeks later he got on at another firm in a supervisory role with an increase in pay and vacation time and every Sunday off.

God knows what he is doing. God doesn't interfere with our choices. We have to choose whether to live in fear or in faith.

Jesus wants us to have faith in him. The bible says in Hebrews 11:6 that without faith it is impossible to please God. Remember in Matthew 9 where Jesus asks if the person if he believes that he can make him see again. Jesus then heals the man and tells them that it is because of their faith that they were made whole. You know the old "According to your faith be it unto you..."

Remember the woman with the issue of blood in Luke 8:43-48 who that had spent all her money, was ostracised from the church, had no hope? What did Jesus say: "Who touched me?" Why would he say that in a crowd who was pressing up against him? He said it because someone with faith touched him and he felt the power go out from him. What did he then say? He said "Daughter, be of good comfort; your faith has made thee whole, go in peace"

What it comes down to is really simple...

## **2 Corinthians 10:4-5**

New King James Version (NKJV)

***4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ***

If we are to become a true disciple of Christ, we must discipline our thoughts and our perspective. By doing this we could truly reach a new level of understanding of whom and what we are in Christ Jesus. It is an easy thing to say, but a difficult thing to do... it requires us to choose a new way.

We must look for the indicators of negativity in our speech, we must examine our thoughts, and we must have faith in what Jesus has said he will do.

How do we know what Jesus has said he will do? That's another sermon... but here is a hint. Read the Bible, it gives us all we need to know about Gods will for our lives.

In the world there is a phenomenon of perspective. When we break light down to its core component is light a particle or a wave? Well guess what; it takes on its characteristic based on the perspective of the observer...

You know that even in the world they have a saying: "It is the definition of insanity to keep doing the same thing and expect a different result." Let's reconcile ourselves to looking at things with a Godly perspective in faith. Let's toss the fear on the fire.

I will conclude with this:

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New King James Version (NKJV)

***4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ***

Let's Pray.