

Gospel and Spirit of Fear

Outline

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1. Fear and the Spirit of Fear

The greatest commandment is to love your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. It occurs about 16 times in the Bible. But the commandment that occurs most frequently in the Bible is *“Do not fear”* or *“Do not be afraid”* — 87 times. God gives us this command not to shame or expose us but to tell us that He is near. And with Him comes the grace to be victorious over fear. God gives us this command to partner with Him against the devil. With God as our partner, we can do what we previously couldn't do ourselves. God's grace enables us and empowers us not to fear.

Acts 2:25 David said about him: “I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken (Ps 16:8).”

I remember my youngest daughter when she first went to school at the age of 4 years. In her first few days, she would cry and be fearful. My older son, in the same school, would spend all his break time trying to comfort her. Then one day, she remembered the song from Ps 56:3-4 that we taught her — *“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You, I will trust in you, I will trust in you etc.”*. She sang it softly; faith came into her heart. She stopped crying and wasn't frightened anymore.

I used to preach the gospel regularly on the streets of Mumbai for many years. Once, as I was preaching on the road, a notorious local gangster decided to stop me and push me around. He then stopped a taxi and pushed me inside, sat with me and began to threaten me. He told the taxi driver to drive at full speed. The driver recognised the gangster, obeyed, and was very afraid. The gangster tried to intimidate me. He would control and stop me from preaching in his area if I showed fear. Of course, I could preach in another place, but fear would follow me, sooner or later, everywhere. Someone said, *“Courage is fear that has said its prayers.”* As a habit, I pray every morning and also before I preach. But sitting with this gangster, I wasn't praying. Instead, I was respectfully smiling at him. I refused to be frightened. *God has not given us the spirit of timidity but a spirit of power, love, and self-discipline (2 Tim 1:7)*. After about 20 minutes of threatening me, the gangster gave up and released me. I returned to my preaching point and preached there regularly for several weeks without any problem. Then later, I moved on to another street.

The emotion of fear is natural and spontaneous—it is not a sin. But surrendering to fear as though it is in charge, allowing fear to dominate your thoughts and actions, is unbelief and sinful. It opens you to an evil spirit, which we call “the spirit of fear”. It can paralyse you. It is like a dog paralysed with terror when a panther comes to attack and eat it. But with his master by his side, the dog will not fear, especially if the master has a gun. **Fear does not exist when your Master (Jesus) is beside you.**

2. Spirit of Fear and the Presence of God

Isa 51:12-16 “I, even I, am he who comforts you. Who are you that you fear mere mortals, human beings

who are but grass,¹³ that you forget the Lord your Maker, who stretches out the heavens and who lays the foundations of the earth, that **you live in constant terror everyday** because of the wrath of the oppressor, who is bent on destruction? For where is the wrath of the oppressor?¹⁴ The cowering prisoners will soon be set free; they will not die in their dungeon, nor will they lack bread. Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar — the Lord Almighty is his name.¹⁶ I have put my words in your mouth and covered you with the shadow of my hand— I who set the heavens in place, who laid the foundations of the earth, and who say to Zion, ‘You are my people.’”

God tells Israel that they are His covenant people (51:16). God is the Maker of heaven and earth—so don’t forget His presence by your side against oppressors who are mere mortal human beings (51:12). Don’t open yourself to fear because then you will live in **constant terror every day** (51:13) — which is the spirit of fear. **Fear cannot exist when there is trust and rest in God.**

The Apostle Paul preached the gospel wherever he went. And everywhere he went, people wanted to beat, kill, and jail him. And yet, through it all, he taught his disciples to rejoice. “*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*” (Phil 4:4). In fact, he wrote this to his Philippian disciples whilst he was in prison. What was Paul’s secret of rejoicing even in difficult times and places? He yielded his thoughts and emotions to God’s presence, and this relationship with God brought him joy. **Fear cannot exist when there is joy in God.**

3. Overcoming the Spirit of Fear with the Gospel

Rev 12:10-12 *Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God, day and night, has been hurled down.”* ¹¹ **They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.** ¹² *Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury because he knows his time is short.”*

“Overcoming” occurs 17 times in the Book of Revelations. And the primary way to overcome (triumph over) the evil one is by the gospel. Many Bible scholars say the martyrs sang Rev 12:11 in heaven. Let’s examine it and apply their principles to overcome fear:

- **By the blood of the Lamb** refers to **the gospel** (good news). Jesus fulfilled God’s justice by living the life we should have lived but didn’t and paid the punishment for our sins that we should have paid. He did all this for us because He loves us. Here we see the gospel of victory because Christ is the triumphant Lamb on the cross. He won the cosmic battle over the devil (Col 2:15 *And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross*).
- **Our testimony:** What we believe and confess about who Jesus is, what He did on the cross, and who we are in Him.
- **Did not love our life as to shrink from death:** The fear of death is Satan’s most significant weapon over human beings. But the resurrection of Jesus defeated death. And believers know that God will resurrect us from the dead. So, the fear of death is gone. The Romans fed the early church Christians to the lions. But the Christians faced death, knowing God would resurrect them when they died. If we believe in the resurrection, we can meet any persecution thrown at us by people. We examine their threats and say calmly, “**So what?**” So, what can they do to me? They can kill me at the maximum, and I am ready to die for Jesus. **So what?**

Another way we can overcome fear is through perfecting love by seeing that Jesus loved us so much that He gave His life for us while we were still sinners —**the gospel**. What a remarkable thing that we can rely on the love of God. Our love for God is not perfect or complete, but His love is perfect and complete. As we remain trusting in His love, our love will grow towards perfection. We know God loves us more than we can imagine in all our trials. This love rescued us from darkness and brought us into his marvellous light. This love covers all of our sins. His love is so powerful that we can live victoriously and fearlessly because

we grow in His love. And “perfect love expels all fear.” (1 John 4:18). We know that after death, there is the judgment where eternal life or eternal punishment awaits all humanity. But His love will equip us to stand before the Lord on the day of judgment with confidence, not fear. Remember, just before the Jews stoned Stephen in Acts 7:54-56, he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and Stephen’s face shone as he died. He had no fear.

Heb 9:27-28 Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love

4. Satan fears those who overcome fear: *Phil 1:27-28 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel ²⁸ without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.*

When we grasp what the martyrs teach in Rev 12:10-12, we will conduct ourselves worthy of the gospel of Christ. We will overcome fear, especially the fear of death, Satan’s ultimate weapon. Then Satan and his demons become fearful because they are reminded of their coming doom in hell and that their time is short (Rev 12:12, Phil 1:28).