

Fear

Part 1: Not From God, Not a Virtue

(preached 7/25/21)

Please turn to *2 Timothy 1*.

Is the reason we struggle with fear is that we think it's good...a virtue?

Some believe that fear...

- Protects us and grants security.
- Makes us wise.
- Places us on the moral high ground.
- Allows us to prophesy accurately.

When fearful people look upon those who aren't, their temptation is to...

- Judge them as being unwise.
- Decide they are less moral and more self-serving.
- Prophesy their impending injury, demise, or some other calamity.
- May even claim them as "rebellious" and "dangerous."

MEM DAY PICNIC. Many years ago when my parents were younger, they would host Memorial Day picnics and invite most everyone they knew. It wasn't uncommon to have 30-40 people at one of our gatherings. One year they told me they invited Mr. & Mrs. Smith with their young son, whom we'll call Junior. I was skeptical: the Smith family were city folk, through and through. While the husband had some exposure to the country when he was younger, he'd moved to Rochester and settled into city life as if he'd been born there.

CITY FOLK. His wife had always lived in larger cities and her idea of "roughing it" was a State Park with full bathroom/shower facilities, a swimming pool, and vending machines. Most of you have been to our cabin and pond area—while it's certainly in nature, it's well-manicured and still has many modern comforts.

FEARFUL. Nevertheless, when they arrived and got out of the car Mrs. Smith got out, clutched her young son's hand, and demanded he stay near her side. She bent over and peered at the ground, then the pond, and then scanned the entire property. "What's all this stuff on the ground?" she asked me and I gave her the bad news that Canadian Geese were plentiful and saw our property as their toilet. Her eyes got big and she gingerly stepped around the bird bombs and made her way to the cabin.

NOT A GOOD TIME. Neither she, her husband, nor Junior had a good time. Junior tried...he saw acres where he could finally run, even sprint, vs. the small fenced in yard he was used to. Yet whenever the kid tried to spread his wings and fly his mother screamed at him to slow down because “he would fall and hurt himself.” When Junior tried to go on the dock and look down into the water, hoping to spy some fish or a turtle, his mother yelled at him to get off the dock and away from the shoreline because he could fall in and drown. When one of the other kids grabbed a fishpole and began to bait his hook with a wriggling worm, all Junior could do was watch because mom didn’t want him touching those things, getting germs, and become sick.

PROPHESYING. When someone made the mistake of suggesting Junior be allowed some more freedom, mom made it clear she was raising her son to be safe, healthy, wise, and self-controlled...unlike parents who allowed their kids to do whatever they wanted. Finally, mom’s injury prophesying appeared to come true! Junior clutched his hand and began caterwalling at the top of his lungs with tears flowing like Noah’s flood! Panicked, both parents ran over to him and all of us expected some major calamity.

FISHHOOK. A fishhook had scraped him but barely broken the skin, and he wasn’t even bleeding. Despite this, it took his parents a few minutes to calm him down and his mother rolled her eyes. “Junior always makes such a big deal out of the slightest injury” she said, with a little frustration, “and we don’t understand why.”

FLEE! It was everything I could do to bite my tongue. I turned and quickly walked away like Joseph from Potiphar’s wife, before I said something to offend them. Let’s sum up: Junior’s mother....

- Believed her fear was wise and keeping her son safe.
- Believed other parents who were allowing their kids to run, jump in the water, etc. were less wise than her and therefore compromising their children’s safety.
- Believed her fear was moral—her child was more restrained and behaving better than the other kids.
- Believed her fear gave her prophetic abilities to predict the future.
- Was not enjoying herself and not allowing her son too, either.
- Was clueless as to why her son was so dramatic about every sickness or injury he experienced.

FRUIT OF SPIRIT. I read to you now from the famous Fruit of the Spirit:

Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

HOLY SPIRIT. The Spirit being referenced is the Holy Spirit, Who is part of the Godhead. “Fruit” is symbolic to these experiences that take place within us and please understand—all of the above are sourced by the Holy Spirit. In other words, they come right from Him.

- Where do you get apples out in the wild? From an apple tree.
- Yesterday my family went to pick blueberries at a farm—what produced the blueberries? A blueberry bush.

Apple trees don’t produce beets and blueberry bushes don’t make celery.

The fruit of fear does not come from the tree of God.

Let me highlight a few of the Holy Spirit fruits:

- PEACE which is also a feeling of security and well-being. How can we have peace and feel secure? ***It must come from the Spirit of God. Only He can produce this fruit.***
- If we go to a tree or bush that’s not the Holy Spirit, we won’t have peace and security.
- Fear is another tree/bush and does not produce the fruit of peace and security.
- GOODNESS is righteousness and holiness, the morality of God in action in and through us.
- Goodness is a fruit that comes only from the tree of the Holy Spirit, it cannot be found anywhere else.
- Fear is another tree/bush and does not produce goodness of any kind.
- SELF-CONTROL is the temperance of God to curtail us from doing and saying foolish, dangerous, unhealthy, and wicked things that could harm us and others.
- Self-control is a fruit produced only by God’s Spirit and cannot be found anywhere else.
- Fear is a different tree/bush and the berries of self-control aren’t found there.

GIFTS OF SPIRIT. Switching now to the Gifts of the Spirit, which are different than Fruit in this way: ***fruit is produced and can be picked and eaten at leisure. Gifts are actively given by the giver to the receiver and must be asked for.***

If you’re looking for a particular gift, you must approach a Giver Who has said gift and ask.

1 Corinthians 12:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,

WISDOM is a gift that the Holy Spirit contains in His possession, and other verses tell us that He gives it to anyone who asks, and does so generously. Same goes for knowledge. The only Person Who has these gifts, the only Source of these, is God the Holy Spirit. ***If we go to any other “giver” they’ll give us something else.***

FEAR IS A DIFFERENT GIVER WHO DOES NOT HAVE THE GIFTS OF WISDOM OR KNOWLEDGE.

1 Corinthians 12:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits...

PROPHECY & DISCERNMENT. Prophecy is a gift possessed only by God’s Spirit. Discernment is also a gift that He alone has to give. Again I say: he will give to anyone who asks and He’s generous!

ONLY FROM HIM. Yet I also repeat that wisdom and discernment come only from Him, and fear cannot and does not give us these things.

Our problem with fear is NOT that we know it’s bad and need to stop feeling it.

I think our problem with fear is that we think it’s good.

- We think it protects us and those whom we love, giving us peace and security.
- We think it grants wisdom we wouldn’t otherwise have, wisdom to discern between good and bad situations and people.
- We think it gives us self-control to not do and say things that might harm us or another.
- We believe it grants morality and righteousness. I’ve had a finger wagged at me several times in the last year for not social distancing, wearing a mask, or getting vaccinated from people who feel moral for doing so.
- We believe it grants prophetic powers to see into and predict the future with accuracy.
- We think it gives us the power to judge others as less secure, less moral, less wise, and less discerning than we are. We may even go so far as to deem them “dangerous.”
- ***If we truly believe fear can do and give all these things and we rely on it for the same, then isn’t that the same as worship?***

NOT AN IT. The Holy Spirit isn't an it.

- He's not an emotion, thought, or concept.
- He's not an amorphous, ambiguous force like what's in Star Wars either. He's a Being, a Person, part of the Godhead.
- He has a will, a purpose, feelings, He can hear and speak, and He's living and active.
- When you and I were Saved, we were given the Holy Spirit to come and live inside of us, literally.

BLUEBERRIES. I love blueberries and yesterday we picked a boatload. I've thought about planting blueberry bushes on the tree farm...why? Not to sell them, but for myself and my family to pick and eat. It would be even better if I had several next to my house...it would be so convenient to walk outside and have them.

TREE INSIDE ME. The tree/bush which produces peace, goodness, and self-control was planted inside of me and His name is the Holy Spirit. The generous giver of wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, and discernment also lives in me and so thus He's right here for me to ask for these things any time I want. What's more is He's generous and not stingy, giving freely when I ask.

That is the Spirit that you and I have been given!

NOT GIVEN.... Now let me tell you the spirit we have NOT been given. In Paul's final letter to his protégé Timothy, he's encouraging young Tim to act and move in the gifts he's been given and, ironically, two of said gifts Paul points out are wisdom and goodness. He urges Timothy to evangelize, make disciples, and use every gift and fruit given to him. He utters this famous verse:

2 Timothy 1:7 (AMP)

⁷ For God did not give us a spirit of timidity (of cowardice, of craven and cringing and fawning fear), but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of calm *and* well-balanced mind *and* discipline *and* self-control.

PICK APART. Let's pick this apart, which is especially important for well known and oft-quoted verses we tend to gloss over.

SPIRIT. The word Paul uses is spirit. Not emotion, not thought, not concept. The Lord didn't give us a spirit of fear—***which means there is a spirit of fear***. Not symbolic of a thought or emotion. Not an amorphous force like Star Wars. A spirit being with a will and a purpose. Since fear is neither a fruit nor a gift of the Holy Spirit, it does not come from God. There are no neutral spirits—one is either of God or the Devil.

The spirit of fear is of the devil. The fruit it produces are of the devil. The gifts it gives are of the devil.

WISDOM FROM ABOVE. Speaking of the Gift of Wisdom, the Apostle James told us it comes from either God above or from demonic forces “below”:

James 3:15-17 (ESV)

¹⁵ This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

WICKED SPIRITS. Wicked spirits aren’t like the good ones: they like worship. They’ll assert themselves upon us in whichever way they do to get us to worship them. It’s like an addictive drug to them.

NOT THIS SPIRIT. Back to 2 Timothy 1: God did not give us this spirit. So why are we going to it as though it has something to offer?

If we truly want wisdom, security, goodness, discernment, and the ability to prophesy why not approach the One Who has them?

BLUEBERRY FARM. The blueberry farm is in Prattsburgh, a 40 minute drive from here.

- If I had healthy producing blueberry bushes in front of my house, would it make any sense to drive 40 minutes to get them?
- That’s not an accurate comparison, I only made that one to set us up for this one:
- if I had healthy producing blueberry bushes next to my house, and I really wanted blueberries, would it make any sense to drive to Prattsburgh and get celery stalks from what I thought where blueberry bushes?
- Would it make any sense to call them blueberries, eat them, and continue to drive there to get them?
- Yet that’s what we’re doing when we bypass the Holy Spirit, Who lives right here AND is the only Producer and Giver of what we need, and we go somewhere else to get a counterfeit product and call it real.

FEAR TRANSLATED. Fear translated in 2 Timothy 1 means timid, cowardly, cringing, and fawning. This isn’t the same sort of fear as when our car begins sliding on the ice or wake up to discover a robber is in our house. That type of fear is reactionary (phobos)...something that comes to and upon us.

DEILIA FEAR. 2 Timothy 1 fear, called deilia (di-lee-uh) is proactive—*which means I went to it...*like going blueberry picking. **I sought it out and grabbed hold of it on purpose to eat it.** Maybe I popped the berries right into my mouth or baked them into muffins, but the same fear is consumed either way.

POSSIBLE TRANSLATION. So let's review the translation of the first part of 2 Timothy 1:

WE SOUGHT SOMETHING FROM GOD. For God did not give us...we sought out something from God. Something we want to grab hold of. In other words, this isn't something that just came upon us like a robber in our house, it's something we sought God for.

NOT TIMID. For God not give us a spirit of that makes us timid or afraid. He didn't give a spirit that makes us cringe or fawn over something bad/potentially bad...like a helicopter parent who won't let their kids run, touch a worm, or jump into a pond.

SIDE NOTE: POND WATER. I'll take pond water over public pool water any day! I've swam among algae, seaweed, and mud before and while it's not pleasant I'll take that any day vs. over-chlorinated water that hasn't been changed in forever, that people have peed in! The ponds on our property have constant water flowing in and out, whereas pool water....

GOD GAVE US GOD. God gave us a different Spirit and not just any One—but part of Himself. God gave us God. I read from the AMP version on purpose, because there we see a fuller explanation of the fruit and gifts He gave:

of power and of love and of calm *and* well-balanced mind *and* discipline *and* self-control.

POWER is dynamis, translating to mighty work, strength, and BEING ABLE.

Fear stops, prevents, and paralyzes.

Proverbs 15:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ The way of the lazy *man* is like a hedge of thorns, But the way of the upright *is* a highway.

HEDGE. The picture Solomon is giving is that the lazy made builds a hedge of thorns around himself, preventing himself from going anywhere and doing anything. Now look at the upright: his life is a highway where he is free to go and do!

Proverbs 22:13 (NKJV)

¹³ The lazy *man* says, "*There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!*"

SHRINKING BACK. Again, timidity and “shrinking back” cowardice keeps this man in his house, unable to go out and do anything.

COVID FEAR. Which spirit sequestered us in our homes, locked everything down, told us we were unable to hug and visit loved ones, couldn't go to church, made us wear masks and called it the new normal, shut down the economy, increased depression and alcohol consumption, and causes people to give up their hard fought rights?

THE SPIRIT OF FEAR, TIMIDITY, FAWNING OVER THE DETAILS & PROPHECIES OF SICKNESS AND DEATH.

SAME SPIRIT VILIFIES OTHERS. The same spirit has inspired people to judge others who don't bow to it and vilify them, now to the point of calling them "a danger to society." Any challenges to the current narrative are considered "dangerous misinformation that's killing people."

WEAPONIZES POPULACE AGAINST ITSELF. The same spirit allows the populace to be weaponized to the point of becoming a voluntary extension of the executive branch of the government, enforcing said "mandates" and "policies" upon their fellow citizens and business owners.

God did not give the Church this spirit!

Ben Franklin was right:

"Any society that will give up a little liberty to gain a little security will deserve neither and lose both."

The Spirit which God gave us enables and empowers us to DO which is the opposite of the spirit of fear.

LOVE. The next word Paul uses in 2 Timothy 1 is love, which is agape—the Love of God. The translation is a feast of charity and benevolence. Taken in proper context to the chapter and how he's encouraging Tim to be a doer of the word, let me do the STV of what we have so far:

"God hasn't given us a spirit that makes us timid and afraid to act, but He's empowered us to perform great acts of charity."

COMPASSION. Paul isn't just talking about doing good things, he's referring to being moved by the compassion and affection of God toward our fellow man. Jesus never just did good things for people, He CARED about them. It was this love that inspired and motivated Christ toward feeding people and sharing the Gospel with them.

FEAR SUCKS O2. If love and compassion can be compared to a flame, then fear is what sucks all the oxygen from the room and causes the flame to flicker and die.

Fear will harden a person's heart, make them suspicious and mistrustful, and assume the worst of others.

The love of God, on the other hand, opens our hearts and allows the compassionate power of God to flow and light up someone's life.

SOUND MIND. The last word Paul used was is "sound mind" and the AMP translation says "calm, well balanced, and self-controlled mind." The literal translation of the Greek word is "disciplined."

We don't need fear to have a disciplined mind.

We don't need fear to have proper restraint and control.

WE DON'T NEED FEAR.

FEAR TELLS US WE DON'T HAVE.... Take a step back and observe in the spirit: fear tells us that we don't have _____. One way to convince someone to buy what you're selling is to persuade them that:

- They don't have what you're selling
- They need it.

DON'T HAVE. Fear tells us we don't have peace, security, discipline, morality, safety, or wisdom...and that it can sell it to us. I use the word "sell" and not "give" because we pay a heavy price when we enter into fear. It's a liar and a thief. A snake-oil salesman with the miracle tonic which cures what ails us.

Fear tells we don't have what the Lord has already given us.

FALSE PROPHET. It's also a false prophet of the highest order. Let me ask you something: suppose that 5 years ago I said "the Rapture is going to happen in the next 5 years." Suppose I went on, within the same time frame, to make other predictions like a world war, CA falling into the ocean from an EQ, the coming of the Antichrist, worldwide economic collapse, a volcanic eruption, and an alien landing.

“ONE OUT OF 7 AIN’T BAD!” My 5 years is up and the only one of those predictions which came true was the volcanic eruption...all the other prophecies didn’t happen. Am I a real prophet who needs to be listened to, or a false one? What’s my track record?

FEAR PROPHECIES TO AND THROUGH US. Yet this is what fear does when it prophesies to us...and even worse THROUGH us. We lend it our minds and our tongues and tell Junior to quit running or he’ll fall and hurt himself, don’t mess with sharp fish hooks or he’ll get cut, don’t swim in that yucky pond or he’ll get sick, etc. and the one time in 5 or 10 that the prediction comes true, we bow to Prophet fear like he’s Elijah. Our eyes grow wide with awe and admiration that he successfully foresaw this calamity and if we had just listened to him sooner, Junior wouldn’t have cut his hand on the fishhook.

WE HAVE GOD’S SPIRIT! Saints of God, the Lord has given us the Holy Spirit Who produces the fruit of holiness, peace, and self-control without us having to be afraid.

- He’ll give us the gifts of knowledge, wisdom, and discernment along with a clear mind so we can avoid nasty situations and people.
- We can trust Him with our minds and tongues to accurately prophesy what He would say, whether good or bad.

GET THEE BEHIND ME! Fear is a spirit and it’s not your friend. It’s time to tell it “get thee behind me!”