

# Saying “NO” (Learning How To)

## *Part 2: Ruling Over Fear*

(preached 9/1/24)

### LAST WEEK:

- We’re learning how to say “no” when we ought to.
- God says “no” and so can we.
- 2 types of willpower: static and dynamic.
- Static is low-level “autopilot” WP: things we can do w/o thinking and don’t take too much energy.
- Routines: get up in morning, make coffee, browse social media.
- Dynamic WP is stimulation: mentally and physically breaking autopilot patterns and thinking/doing something different.
- Requires a “push”: more mental and physical energy/effort.
- I get up in the morning and go jogging, or read 3 chapters in my Bible (vs coffee and SM).
- Reason we have hard time saying “no” is we’re caught in holding pattern: static.
- Beginning of breakthrough is to bring things from static to dynamic: break mental and physical pattern and routine.
- ***Enemy aren’t the “takers” in our lives, it’s our inability to say “no.”***
- Must be practiced and premeditated: not reactionary due to triggers. Do on own time.
- Tense up your body, take a deep breath, and loudly say “no!”
- Then think of consistent times in your life when you should have said no. Someone asking for money, trying to rope you into something, etc.
- PRACTICE the interaction, and imagine yourself saying “no” to them. Do it out loud and not just in your head. Act it out.
- Second, have internal convo with your guilty conscience that drives you to say “yes.”
- The one that says *“this is what a good Christian would do”* and makes you feel horrible when you actually deny someone else.
- Tell it you already have forgiveness and righteousness given to you by Jesus.
- That you don’t have to perform righteous works to earn righteousness.
- Tell it the payment has already been made and you already have what it’s telling you that you need to earn.
- ***Tell it you want to do good deeds FROM a clear conscience and not FOR one.***
- Set your boundaries inwardly: ahead of time, before the “event” when you must answer.
- Ex: *“I’m not lending any more money this year”* or *“I’m only going to serve on the volunteer committee, not lead it”* or what have you.
- Decide these things ahead of time, set these boundaries within you first.
- Then when you’re asked to \_\_\_\_\_ you can answer according to your boundaries.
- ***You will disappoint and anger others by doing this.***

- Thus before you face said anger & disappointment, you'll have the internal convo and say "*my righteousness isn't decided by the anger/disappointment of others*" and "*my worth is determined by the anger/disappointment of others.*"

TODAY we're going to talk about fear because there's confusion over it in the church.

- Is it good or bad?
- Does it have a place in our lives or should it be eradicated completely?
- Does fear come from God or the devil? Is it a sin?
- We're going to ANSWER these questions.

Confusion over fear and its role may come because the Bible SEEMS to say opposing things about it. On one hand we have verses like these:

**[Psa 111:10 ESV]** 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

*This verse tells us that fear is good*, wise, and that we should "practice" it. Then we read verses like these:

**[1Jo 4:18 ESV]** 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

**John seems to indicate fear is a bad thing** and is only present because God's love hasn't yet been completed within us.

Don't worry, there is an answer.

Do you recall the sermon series I did on the heart? Here's what I said at the time: *the heart in and of itself is not evil...but when it's allowed to rule over us it will lead us to wicked desires, words, and actions.*

I went on to say that it was meant to **follow and not lead**. To submit to our authority and not the other way around. **The same applies to fear.**

**Do have a toddler or can remember when you did?** Let me ask: was there ever a time when you left the toddler at home unsupervised while you left for a few hours? Of course not: if you did, the kid would run amok! He might hurt himself, consume something he shouldn't, break something, or set it on fire!

**IS YOUR TODDLER EVIL?** No...he's a toddler and can't be left alone and unsupervised. Let's take it one step further and worse: suppose you sat the toddler down and told him *he was now the head of your household* and you meant it.

- You go to serve meat and vegetables that night, he says he wants ice cream. He's the head of the house: you serve ice cream.
- You're preparing to go to work the next day to earn a paycheck, and the toddler commands you stay home and play with him. So you stay home.
- See where this is going?

The toddler isn't wicked, **HE JUST CAN'T BE IN CHARGE**. When 1) left to himself or 2) is put in charge wouldn't you experience anxiety, stress, panic attacks, and feel like your life had spun out of control? Wouldn't you become more pessimistic, consistently predicting bad outcomes and be afraid of said outcomes?

**If you're living this life right now, fear is the toddler in your life ruling over you.**

**Not only is he (fear) running amok unsupervised within you, but you've made him (fear) head of your internal household.**

*When fear is in charge the results are the things just mentioned:* stress, anxiety, panic attacks, and feeling out of control...as if life is happening TO you. Perhaps you've become pessimistic which is defined as follows:

*Pessimistic is an adjective that describes a tendency to see the worst aspect of things or to believe that the worst will happen. It often implies having a gloomy, negative, or defeatist outlook on life<sup>12</sup>. For example, someone who is pessimistic might expect bad outcomes in various situations, even when there is no clear reason to do so.*

*Some synonyms for pessimistic include:*

- Gloomy
- Negative
- Defeatist
- Downbeat
- Cynical

**Fear first appeared within humanity after Adam disobeyed** and both he, his wife, and everything outside the GOE became corrupted. *It was the Lord Who programmed it there* because the First Couple was no longer living in a place where both their surroundings and all the animals were friendly.

**After they were kicked out of the Garden** the earth itself was against them—hostile environment. They could get too hot, too cold, die of thirst or hunger, get sick, or wounded. They were even occasionally hostile toward each other and any other humans looking to survive who might see them as a threat. After Noah's Ark landed, the animals changed. Prey animals fled for fear of being killed and eaten, and predatory animals stalked both other animals and humans.

*With no fear whatsoever, they would be dead.*

**When we experience fear, it puts us into “fight or flight.”** A hostile robber bursts through our door: do we run to preserve ourselves or do we fight to protect what's ours and drive him away? If we just sat there and invited him to join us watching Netflix, we'd be robbed and maybe killed.

**Toddlers and small kids don't have much fear** which is why parents must always protect them. I remember when Jordan was 3 he kept wanting to touch the hot woodstove and I would warn him against it. Sure enough when I wasn't looking guess what he did? Put his finger right on the stove! I heard a blood-curdling scream and there he was, holding his finger and bawling like the devil himself had appeared. If his fear mechanism had been working, it would have said “danger! Danger!” when he started reaching for the stove, *giving him the opportunity to stop what he was doing.*

**Ever get “the creeps” around a person?** Kept your distance and said “no” when they came close or wanted to get you alone? Suppose you come to find out later you had good reason for feeling the way you did...you can say you “dodged a bullet.”

**WHEN WE RULE OVER IT, FEAR IS GOOD WARNING SYSTEM:** an alarm that goes off inside of us, trying to keep us from harm.

**When it rules over us we live lives of stress, anxiety, chaos, and panic attacks.** Why? Because every time we feel fear, our brains react by injecting a chemical cocktail into our bodies of adrenaline and cortisol.

- **Adrenaline** is released and provokes the “fight or flight” syndrome resulting in an increase of heart rate and blood pressure. We'll get “the shakes” from all the excess energy it's given us. People who live consistently in fear have high BP, can't sleep, can't relax, etc.
- **Cortisol** is actually called “the stress hormone” and is injected at the same time to shut down bodily functions, dedicating as much energy as possible to either run or fight. It literally decreased the functions of our vital organs and our immune system.

**PROBLEM IS MUCH OF THE TIME, WE'RE NOT IN ANY REAL**

**DANGER.** When was the last time you had to flee from a mugger or predatory animal? Or with a gun to your head?

**Here in America, most of our fear** comes from contemplation about everyday life—first world fears. What if I lose my job, how will I pay bills, what will so and so think if I \_\_\_\_\_, what about this upcoming deadline I need to meet, what about my kid being bullied at school, what about this medical condition I have, etc.

**Most of us are living lives of relative safety and provision**, yet when fear rules us our brains and body are living as though being stalked by a man-eating lion. Instead of taking command over our fear we live with it and try to manage it with pills, food, video games, and other forms of escapism.

**We'll pessimistically predict bad outcomes** to things and will continue to do so even though most of the outcomes don't come true. I've said this before: *fear is a terrible and inaccurate prophet*...but when its right even one times out of ten, we say "*there you go! I was right to be paranoid about this!*"

**Fear (that we rule over) DOES need to exist in our relationship with God**, our marriages, and others.

**Let's start with God.** The amount of verses in both OT and NT, and what they say, is OVERWHELMINGLY telling us to fear God. When I did a search on my Bible program, I stopped counting how many there were because it overwhelmed me.

**When John said "perfect love casts out fear" he was talking about Judgment Day**, when we all stand before God and our eternal fate is decided. In his letter to his people, John explained that Father sent His only Son Christ Jesus to be the substitute for our sins, and to take our punishment for having committed them.

**NOT PUNISHMENT ON EARTH, BUT IN ETERNITY.** Anyone standing before God w/o the redemption of Christ will be punished eternally for their sins. John was reassuring his people that if Christ and His love is within them, all their sins have been forgiven. Therefore when they appear at Judgment they won't have to be afraid—then or now—of where they will end up.

The times in Scripture where the *Lord is telling people NOT to be afraid* are when it comes to the plans of an enemy—whether human or spirit. He tells us not to worry about provision.

Let me summarize it this way: **we don't need to be afraid of God's decisions about our status** or whether He loves us or not. We're in no danger of God withdrawing His affection or condemning us to Hell if we're truly Saved.

**We do need to be afraid of what he thinks about our behavior and what He might do or allow in response to our rebellion.**

**[2Co 7:1 ESV]** 1 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

**When Abe and Sarah find themselves with King Abimelech**, the king takes a fancy to Sarah and decides to add her to his harem. Abe is stressed and says this:

**[Gen 20:11 ESV]** 11 Abraham said, "I did [lied about her being his wife] it because I thought, 'There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.'

In other words, **King Abim isn't afraid of God** so he will take Sarah and kill Abe even if Abe tries to say "*my God won't allow this.*" Later on God shows up in a dream to King Abim and says "*don't you dare*" then Abim IS afraid. He not only releases Sarah but spares Abe AND sends him off with a bunch of goods worth a small fortune!

**[Psa 19:9 ESV]** 9 the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.

*"Clean" means pure and holy.*

**When we rule over fear it's pure and holy, improving our relationship with God and not the other way around.**

**[Psa 25:14 ESV]** 14 The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.

**I LOVE MY 3 SONS AND WILL FOREVER.** There's literally nothing any of them could do to make me stop loving them. Their names are in my heart and on paper as inheriting everything from me for the mere fact that they're my sons, not based on their behavior. They will bear my name for all their days.

That being said, **the ones still living at home with me are wise to fear me.** If they get out of line, disobey, or rebel there will be consequences they won't like.

*Have you ever met kids who had no fear of their parents* or other authority figures? Kids like that run amok, get in trouble, break the law, and may face great difficulties when they're older.

*When we fear God we can still be secure in our eternal standing with Him as sons and daughters...but we also know He doesn't like it when we sin.* He's not turning a blind eye or ignoring it. He won't extend grace forever, but will likely allow us to fall flat on our faces so that we might learn.

### **When we fear God we're empowered to say "NO"**

- When we're about to verbally unload on someone in a harmful way, perhaps fear of God causes us to be quiet.
- When we're tempted to get drunk to escape our problems, maybe we stop ourselves knowing the Lord wouldn't like it.
- Perhaps we're tempted to swipe the candy bar from the store while no one is watching, but our fear reminds us that God can see us.

**Healthy fear allows that we command inspires us to say "NO" when we ought to.**

**NO TO OURSELVES, NO TO SOMEONE ELSE, NO TO A CIRCUMSTANCE OR ENVIRONMENT THAT'S HARMFUL TO US OR WILL LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION.**

**A healthy fear-based "no" can deliver us from evil.**

I think there should also be some *fear in our relationships with others, including our marriages.*

**I'm not talking about abuse or threats which have no place.**

That being said, *there have been times when I've stopped myself from doing something I know my wife wouldn't like.*

- She doesn't want me cussing or playing hours of video games.
- She doesn't want me spending alone time with other women.
- If I have no fear whatsoever, I'll do whatever I want regardless of how it affects her or makes her feel.

## **We temper our behavior when we're in public because of fear.**

While we shouldn't be people pleasers or be fake, we most certainly should restrain ourselves in public. There are laws in public and police who enforce said laws: all of us should have a certain fear of governing authorities as Paul tells us in Romans 13. Our fear of consequences should make us rethink something we were considering that might violate one of those laws.

*It's time to rule over fear and we must think of it like it's one of our kids or an employee.*

In other words, **we're not here to kill or repress it: but to command it.**

## **The next time you're feeling fear, anxiety, or stress here's what you're going to do:**

- ***Stop and take a deep breath...maybe several.*** Doing so is a dynamic action that stops your normal static pattern of worried thoughts and negative predictions. Said thoughts/predictions are injecting adrenaline and cortisol into your body which are hurting you.
- ***Talk to the part of yourself that's afraid and ask it: "what's going on? What are you afraid of? What is the danger?"*** Again: this dynamic action breaks the unhealthy flow of your former autopilot pattern. It engages both your mind and your body actively and is literally creating a new or divergent pathway in your brain different from your former one.
- ***Let it answer you and sympathize with it,*** thereby acknowledging it. Don't try to say it's a liar or try to repress it! Don't argue with it (yet).
- ***Ex: a voice is saying you won't be able to pay your bills.***
- ***Acknowledge it and say "that's a valid concern. Paying our bills is important."***
- ***Then respond with reassuring truth. This is not the same as arguing.***
- ***Ex: "God has always covered us in the past. Remember the time we thought the lights were going to get shut off? But we ended up being able to pay?"***
- ***Or you could say "even if the power is shut off, we'll survive. We might be uncomfortable, but we'd make it until we figure something out. We're going to be OK."***
- ***Then go into prayer and thank God.*** Ask Him to help you with the bills and reassure you. To give you wisdom.



*The process I gave you will seem “hard” at first* because you’re breaking out of your usual static patterns that didn’t require much of you. Going from static to dynamic does take more energy and requires a “push.”

Yet in doing so, **you’re forming a new and healthy “go to” that will put you back on throne** over fear. You don’t have to live with anxiety, panic, and stress. You don’t have to be a cynical and pessimistic person.

**YOU CAN BE SOMEONE WITH GOOD DISCRETION AND WISE JUDGMENT IN SEEING POTENTIAL THREATS AND PROBLEMS, YET STILL LIVE A LIFE OF JOY AND PEACE.**

**Fear is a fool and even an ally when we rule over it.** Instead of being hostile toward it, telling it to shut up, saying it’s a liar, or trying to deny it...let’s command it. Let’s put it in its proper place: following our lead.

I end today with one of the most debated verses in the NT:

**[Phl 2:12 ESV]** 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

**“Working out your salvation” does NOT mean working FOR it.** Paul has made it clear in the verses surrounding this one that salvation is something the Philippian church already has.

Seeing that they already have it, **Paul is telling them to live it which then produces fruits of righteousness.** To cultivate it, fertilize it, grow it up, to mature it. To level it up from glory to glory.

Salvation began with the forgiveness of sin, but *progresses with our sanctification which is the part that we work out.*

When we rule over our fear and use it as God intended we can say “no” to temptation, habits, people, circumstances, and desires that would harm us.