

Fear Not

Acts 18

INTRODUCTION:

- **Layoffs.** Some of you lay awake at night gripped with fear over what your employer might do.
- **Doctor's Reports.** Mom and Dad how many of you watch your kid like a hawk and analyze every twitch in his eye. And the next thing you know your brain has turned that twitch into a tumor and you are convinced a tumor is growing somewhere?
- The **Unknown** - Some of you are gripped with fear because of **what your spouse might be doing**. You have no evidence, you have know reason to doubt... but you do.
- **Opinions** - Some of you live your life afraid of what others might think. That's why you don't share your faith.
 - You know what i believe, I believe some of these young people are called into the ministry, but they won't surrender because of fear of what mom or dad will think.

Here is what I want you teach you today - if you could see from God's perspective, there is **ABSOLUTELY nothing to FEAR**. That is so true that fear itself is a sin against God.

As a matter of fact, "Fear Not" is the most often quoted encouragement in the scripture. It is found some 366 times, once for every day of the year and an extra for leap year.

Despite all of those verses - fear is a daily battle and **the Apostle Paul knew what fear was all about**. Perhaps he never felt it stronger than when he came to the first century city of Corinth.

CONTEXT: He had just completed his ministry in Athens a city known for it's ACADEMIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS. From there he traveled to Corinth a city known for it's SENSUAL PERVERSIONS.

Corinth was the Las Vegas of it's day. It was sin city. What happens in Corinth stays in Corinth.

It was a port city. In ancient times all sea traffic to and from Athens had to pass through the city of Corinth.

Interesting fact: The oldest marketing plan ever discovered was in the city of Corinth. It was a set of footprints painted onto the main street, leading to a brothal.

High above the city was an acropolis that had a commanding view of the gulf of Corinth. The **acroCorinth** as it was called was a place both for defense of the city as well as pagan worship. It was large enough to hold all of the citizens of the city in a time of siege. It also held a famous **temple to Aphrodite**, goddess of love. The temple normally housed some one thousand priestesses, ritual prostitutes, who each night would come down into Corinth and ply their trade among the many foreign travelers and the local men - which explains why, "To Corinthianize" was synonymous with a sexually loose and drunken lifestyle.

Now that seems Bizarre to us, but keep in mind to them it was not only normal it was considered a sign of deep patriotism. If a man refused to "worship" with the temple priestesses, it was believed to bring the displeasure of the gods.

As Paul enters into Corinth and is brought face to face with every illicit temptation one can imagine.

It is this sort of occurrence that causes a man or woman to **tremble with fear**. Fear of opinions, fear of temptations, not to mention Paul's very real fear of physical beatings.

All of this is summed up in his own words in **1 Corinthians 2:3 (NASB95)**

³ I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.

To add to this - at Corinth Paul experienced a **harsh conflict** with the men of the local Synagogue.

Acts 18:1-22 (NASB95)

⁵ But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul *began* devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. ⁶ But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood *be* on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

Paul has done this one time before, remember it was symbolic of ex-communication. He was saying to these Jews, you are outside the commonwealth of Israel.

⁷ Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue.

I love that, he march out of the synagogue and travel all of about 20 ft. next door to the home of Titius Justice. Well Paul continued to preach Christ and apparently he could be heard next door by those of the synagogue because verse 8 tells us -

⁸ Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.

Now, while this was something to rejoice in greatly, it only increased the anxiety in Paul's heart. He knew the storm that was brewing. He knew that his enemies weren't going down without a fight.

IMAGINE IF YOU WILL - Paul laying in bed that night with:

- Memories of the 39 lashes
- The words of his enemies echoing in his head
- The news reports from Rome that tells of a sharp increase in Christian persecution.

It is in these night hours that **REAL FEAR** begins to strike.

2 Corinthians 11:27 (NASB95)

27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights..

Have you ever lost sleep because of fear? I have!

ON TOP OF ALL of this - was the constant temptations that every believer faces.

- I'm telling you I know what it's like to **sleep in the bed** of the Apostle.
- I know what it's like to be **gripped with fear, worry, anxiety.**

It is at this point when you start to grab at straws - Perhaps I can slip out of town in the middle of the night?

- How do you deal with that kind of fear?
- When a friend is struggling with fear, how do you encourage (add courage) them?
- How do you encourage yourself?

I want you to notice something unusual verses 9-10 are written in red.

Jesus shows up and gives Paul three reasons he doesn't need to fear. To teach you this I want to show it to you in the form of three questions.

1. The Principle of Mission

"Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent;

The Principle of Mission states:

You are invincible until your mission is complete or resigned.

So take courage, they can't kill you till God is through with you.

So long as you are breathing you have a mission to accomplish, if you wish to continue breathing, you best get on with it.

Acts 13:36 (NASB95) ³⁶ “For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep.

The same was true for Paul, nobody could kill him until he was finished with his mission. The same is true for you! You are like superman until your work is complete.

But FEAR is like Kryptonite - it paralyzes us.

ILLUSTRATION:

Peter - It was when he began following at a dangerous distance that he was terrified by a slave girl and denied Jesus.

We tend to be paralyzed when things get scary. Hence the phrase, “gripped with fear”. You wouldn’t believe how many people resign ministry in the midst of difficulties.

The Bible teaches the opposite, when fear grips you, allow it kick you into ministerial overdrive.

“Do not be afraid *any longer*, but go on speaking and do not be silent;

Romans 12:11 (NIV) ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

FOCUS ON WHY GOD PUT YOU HERE.

- He didn’t put you here to make a fortune **building widgets**, he let’s you make widgets so you can afford to have time to **prepare to teach 10th grade boys S.S.** class. Don’t you know that?
- He didn’t give you children so that they could be the best athlete, the most popular, the most intellectual and the cutest thing ever to walk down the hall of Fernandina Beach High School - **THOSE are arrows in the hand of a mighty warrior**, Polish Them, Point Them and Propel them into the future and leave your mark for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

You see, the things that you are afraid of don’t have anything to do with what will really matter in eternity.

ILLUSTRATION: Do you remember your **first day of 3rd grade**? It probably seemed like a big deal at the time. You wanted to dress right, act right, because THIS is the first day of 3rd grade. But now? You hardly remember it!

That’s what all the things that terrify you will seem like after you have **been with Jesus for about 1Million years.**

- What was life on the old earth like? I think I wore a hat...

- Did you get laid off? haha, that's right I was an engineer...
- Didn't you get cancer? haha, you know it seems like there was something like that...

That's the Principle of Mission... you are invincible till your work is complete.

IS YOUR FEAR BIGGER THAN GOD'S MISSION???

2. The Principle of Presence

Acts 18:9 (NASB95)

⁹ And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent:¹⁰ for I am with you,

**The Principle of Presence states:
No matter what frightens you, Jesus is bigger.**

Now that is the DIVINE Trump card. I am with you.

It doesn't matter what you put on the other side of the equation - it just doesn't stack up against I am with you.

- I may be going to get **laid off** - It's ok, I am with you.
- **People may not like me** if I say that - it's ok, I am with you. I am a friend that sticks closer than a brother.
- The **Dr. says it doesn't look good** - It's ok, he's a practicing physician, I'm the great physician.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the Shadow of Death, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL for THOU ART WITH ME!!!!

Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB95)

¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Did you see that? Who get's lo I am with you always? Those who go make disciples. You want to get point two - get busy in point on.

Isaiah 41:10 (NASB95)

¹⁰ 'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

Jeremiah 1:17-19 (NASB95)

¹⁷ "Now, gird up your loins and arise, and speak to them all which I command you. Do not be dismayed before them, or I will dismay you before them.

That's where my daddy used to say, "Boy don't cry or I will give you something to cry about!."

¹⁸ "Now behold, I have made you today as a fortified city and as a pillar of iron and as walls of bronze against the whole land, to the kings of Judah, to its princes, to its priests and to the people of the land. ¹⁹ "They will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, **for I am with you to deliver you.**" declares the Lord.

INTRODUCTION;

When I was in about the 7th grade. I remember going to a Bluegrass Convention with my cousins, Tatum, Zeke and Boone. We were having a great time when in walked 4 guys I knew from school. These guys were bullies. These were the guys who shaved in little league. These were the guys who drove to middle school. They were stuck there all day and we were stuck there all day and it didn't take them long to decide to have some fun with us. They saw us walking outside and when we got away from our parents, one of them walked up and just shoved me into the wall. I turned around and said, "boy what's your problem" he said to me, "I ain't a boy, I'm a man". The proceeded to tell us how they wanted to fight all of us at 3 o'clock in the men's room. Well, for the next couple of hours we were scared out of our mind. We couldn't call the police or tell our dads. We had no idea what we were going to do. Then at 2:45 Tatum and Zeke's brother Scotty came in. Now Scotty was known for making the paper every Saturday for ending someone's football career on Friday night. Scotty was huge! All of a sudden, the decks were stacked a bit more in our favor.

IS YOUR FEAR BIGGER THAN GOD'S MISSION? GOD'S PRESENCE?

3. The Principle of Sovereignty

and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city."

Now this is very strange statement from the lips of Jesus. Up to this point very few people had believed and a great MANY rejected.

But here we see our Lord calling those things which are not as though they were so.

**The Principle of Sovereignty states:
God's Word and Work are destined to succeed.**

Paul might have thought as he ministered in Corinth? "God, I'm wasting my time here! If any city in the New Testament world appeared to be God-forsaken, it was Corinth." Why don't I just throw in the towel and move on!!!

Yet Christ said, "I have many people in this city!"

The doctrine of God's Sovereignty over the salvation of man is one of the greatest antidotes to fear.

Imagine the perspective that this gave Paul as he ministered in Corinth for the next eighteen months.

J. I. Packer summarizes that, "...the sovereignty of God in grace gave Paul hope of success as he preached to deaf ears, and held up Christ before blind eyes, and sought to move stony hearts."

Notice how this same doctrine is cited in **Acts 13:48 (NASB95)**

⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

ILLUSTRATION: I learned in Evangelism it if was just up to my creative presentation, my ability to sway the emotion then I was GRIPPED WITH FEAR, but when I realized that I worked in concert with the Living God. He did the saving, he did the drawing I was FREE.

ILLUSTRATION: When I think that this churches success or failure rest in my weak hands, I am gripped with fear, but when I realize that Jesus said, "I will build MY church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" I take great courage.

Acts 15:14 (NASB95)

¹⁴ "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name.

CLOSING:

NOW TAKE YOUR SITUATION:

Is what you fear going to matter in 3 million years?

Is what you fear bigger than God?

Could what you fear possibly keep God's Ultimate plan from being accomplished?

Why fear it?

INVITATION:

I was reading about a Japanese soldier, at, during World War II, 1944 when the tide began to turn, this soldier was living on the island of Guam. And when the tide began to turn and he thought that the Japanese were going to loose, he deserted the Japanese army and holed up in a cave in the jungles of Guam. And for 28 years this soldier stayed in that cave and he would only come out at night. And he ate frogs and he ate rats and he ate shrimp that he could catch in puddles. And he ate wild fruit. And anything he could get his hands on. And for 28 years he lived as a prisoner of his fear.

Well the war was over and we're driving Toyotas, watching Sonys, and taking vacations to Tokyo. And here's this guy living down there in fear because he doesn't

know the war is over. **Hey friend, I want to tell you the war is over and Jesus has won.** It's finished. And he's offered amnesty and forgiveness. We can all come home.