

The Kingdom of God – Part 13

The Author of Fear

1. Review – Kingdom of God...where God rules and reigns, and we depend/rely upon Him, walk with Him, worship Him and He meets all of our needs. God invaded earth! Heaven invaded our space. And God is returning this earth to His rule, one day to be fulfilled in glory!
2. Fear – is a subject that runs through the entire bible and is addressed in a multitude of ways. Not only am I going to cover the subject of fear today, but we will be doing a study beginning next Sunday night at 6pm on becoming FEARLESS!
3. A stage coach robber names Bart was a professional thief whose very name struck fear as he terrorized the Wells Fargo stage line. From San Francisco to New York, his name became synonymous with the danger of the frontier. Between 1875 and 1883 he robbed 29 different stagecoach crews. Amazingly, Bart did it all without firing a shot. Because a hood hid his face, no victim ever saw his face. He never took a hostage and was never trailed by a sheriff. Instead, Bart would later say from prison that he didn't need to fire a shot; all he had to do was to use fear to paralyze his victims. "Fear, the face of the unknown, was my weapon of choice, my weapon of intimidation." Bart's sinister presence and his threat of words was enough to overwhelm the toughest stagecoach guard.
 - a. I have cornered a rabbit in my blueberry patch and had it freeze from fear. Even though the rabbit could easily outrun me, I was able to reach down (with gloves on) and grab a hold of it. Fear, the thing that should have helped this animal escape was the very thing that led to its capture. Why? Because fear controlled the animal's behavior.
4. So what is fear?
 - a. Fear is a belief that something bad is going to happen to you.
 - b. Webster defines fear as, "A painful emotion or passion excited by an expectation of evil."
 - c. Fear not only informs you of a danger; it can also fill in blanks that aren't even there.
 - i. (Fear: if the car runs out of gas, then I will be stuck in the middle of nowhere and someone will probably mug me and break my arms and I will be lying in the gutter and no one will call an ambulance and rats will come and gnaw at my fingers)
 - d. Fear is the emotion that **the kingdom of this world** is built upon.
 - e. Fear is the opposite of faith, in fact, fear actually erodes faith to a point where faith becomes powerless. The same way that the rabbit froze, fear can freeze our faith to the point where we cease to have a meaningful walk with God.
5. **Fear is a God given emotion.**
 - a. Fear is a God given self-preservation mechanism.
 - b. Fear is a God-given emotion that alerts us to danger. It is to inform us, not to control us.
 - c. Allowing fear to control you is not God's design. If fear controls us, (as with any emotion), we will find ourselves acting outside of God's intentions for our lives.
 - d. When God made Adam, He designed him to have a relationship with Himself, one in which Adam would bring his needs to God to have them met.
 - e. Adam was created in world that fear shouldn't have ruled in, because God was there to meet all of Adam's needs. The serpent offered what appeared to be a sweeter deal to them "has God indeed said...", and "you will be like God" he offered. And Eve became afraid. Some say she became prideful and defiant, but wasn't she really first afraid that God was holding out on her, that God couldn't deliver, that God wasn't enough for her?
 - i. Suppose Eve and Adam had defied those fears and said, "no, your wrong, God has provided for every one of our needs, we have no reason to doubt him." But that isn't what they did. They "mishandled fear and fear handled them."

- ii. Eve quit trusting God and took matters (and the fruit) into her own hands. “Just in case God CAN’T do it, I will” And Adam followed compliantly along. Then like fear filled people, they ran for their lives, they hid themselves from God and when God called out to them, they replied, *“I heard Your voice in the garden and I was AFRAID.”* (Gn 3:8-10).
- iii. Fear leads to sin, sin leads to hiding, and because we have all sinned, we all are hiding...hiding in 80 hr workweeks, hiding in fits of anger, religious busyness, etc. We avoid contact with God.
- f. WHY is that?
 - i. **It is still God’s plan that you and I come to Him when we have a need that we need met.**
 - ii. The problem is that we don’t always come to God with a need that our fear has alerted us to. And as a consequence, our lives are built upon meeting and dealing with that fear instead of allowing God to still it.

6. Examples of Fear:

- a. You grow angry when someone at work takes down a poster you spent hours creating. But did you know that your anger is the result of fear? Fear that you aren’t valuable and that your efforts aren’t appreciated. It is about needs that aren’t being met by God...and that because of your experiences in life, you have sought to meet on your own.
- b. You are rejected by someone of the opposite sex – and so you endeavor to make yourself more attractive, going to great lengths to catch someone’s eye. This too is about fear, fear of not being acceptable or fear that you will not find a spouse. You have sought to meet the need yourself instead of seeking God to meet it for you.

7. Fear and the bible:

- a. As I looked through the bible at the “fear response” of people to situations, I saw a loving God reaching down to His covenant people when they were afraid and offer to meet the need that they were fearful of not having met.
 - i. **Hagar:** Gen 21:17 *“God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.”*
 - 1. Hagar was fearful of death, she had been rejected and cast out of the Abraham’s family by Sarah. She was wandering in the desert and anticipated death. Yet, in the midst of her fear, God ministered to her and met her need.
 - ii. **Jacob:** Gen 32:11 *““Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me and the mothers with the children.”*
 - 1. Jacob had wronged his brother, and faced the wrath of several hundred armed men coming toward him. He turns to God in the midst of his fear...and is delivered.
 - iii. **Moses:** Ex. 14:13 *“But Moses said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.”*
 - 1. Moses and the Israelites stand with their faces to the Red Sea and their backs to a raging Egyptian army. Moses calls upon the Lord and God delivers them. (I wonder, was their fear of the army greater than their fear of walking through a pathway surrounded on two sides by great walls of water?)
- b. This entire week, as I talked, prayed, met with folks, ministered to people, I was able to see the power of fear at work in their lives and my own. I could at times see clearly how a choice would really be a choice of fear vs. faith. I hope that you, once aware of the tangled roots of fear, learn to recognize it and reject it in favor of faith/trust in God.
- c. If you haven’t experienced the forgiveness of God, you are doomed to a life filled with fear. Nothing can deliver you from the gnawing truth that you have turned your back on God. You may be able to deaden the fear with something...but you can’t remove it. Only Jesus can. If you haven’t accepted the love and forgiveness of God, you can. You can pray a simple prayer like

this...(lets bow). “Dear Father God, I need forgiveness. I admit I have turned away from You. Please forgive me. I place my life in Your hands and I receive your forgiveness and your love. Through Your Son Jesus I pray.”

8. **Fear affects what we worship.**

- a. If you fear being broke or not having enough money – you will so overcompensate to suppress that fear (I didn't say overcome that fear) that you will actually value money more than God. You will hoard it – because you fear not having it. You will work ungodly hours to have enough of it, because you fear running out of it. And that fear will keep you from worshipping and depending upon God because you have given your heart to the security that money brings.
- b. **Whatever you fear most losing is also what you tend to value most.**
 - i. So if you fear losing your health, you will work hard to stay healthy. But that isn't the right motivation for healthy living. Fear is never the best motivation for anything!
 - ii. If you fear something you don't respond to it properly. You respond to it defensively.
 - iii. **There was a lady who died in 1916 named Hetty Green. She was called America's greatest miser. When she died in 1916, she left an estate valued at \$100 million. But she was so miserly that she ate cold oatmeal in order to save the expense of heating the water.**
- c. God desires to be the sole focus of your worship. Nothing else should take His place. Your fears have put things on the altar that are more tangible, but they will never satisfy, and they will never take away the fear.

9. **Fear is faith in the devil's lies** – Instead of in the truth of God's promises.

- a. You have probably heard the acrostic I have used for FEAR: **False Evidence Appearing Real.**
- b. So much of what we are afraid of isn't even real! And that is the kind of fear that Satan wants us to have, because he can PARALYZE us (just like that bunny rabbit) and make us ineffective for the Kingdom of God!
- c. Eve believed Satan...her fear gave her trust to the devil.
- d. When you are afraid...of losing your home, job, car, not having enough of something...you will be giving the devil power in your life. Don't do it. CHOOSE to turn to God.

10. Here is why you mustn't give the enemy a foothold:

- a. **Fear attracts the devil's attention** (just as faith attracts God's attention and pleasure).
- b. Job 3:25 "*For what I fear comes upon me, And what I dread befalls me.*"
 - i. There is a new age movement that teaches that if you believe good things will happen to you, they will happen to you, and if you believe bad things will happen to you, they will happen to you. Guess what? They are right! They only removed God from the equation. But the principle is still true.
- c. Fear gives off a scent, not unlike a corpse of a dead animal gives off an odor that attracts all of the scavengers (vultures, flies, etc.)
 - i. Have you ever tossed something in the trash can and forgotten to empty it? It will attract every housefly in the county if left long enough. How? By its odor! (vbs TRASH – flies)
 - ii. Did you know that Satan is called the “lord of the flies” for a reason?
 - iii. Jesus said that “*where the dead body is, there the vultures gather.*”
 - iv. Fear STINKS and it attracts the attention of the enemy who desires to “steal, kill and destroy.”
 - v. And if fear is belief in Satan's lies, then where will that lead you?
- d. Fear breeds fear.
 - i. Satan wants each of us to be stunted and to walk around both emotionally and mentally wounded.

- ii. He wants God's children to live in the mental torment of fear so that they will be of no use to the kingdom of heaven.
 - iii. Refuse to give in to fear. Turn to God in the middle of your fears.
 - iv. If you dwell upon your fears and they will get worse!
 - v. Refuse to even ENTERTAIN/SPECULATE on what ifs....they are founded in fear.
11. One of the most often repeated phrases in the bible is "fear not."
- a. What does that phrase really mean?
 - i. As I looked at the context of when this was said, I discovered that the person who was experiencing fear had a legitimate reason to be afraid. (not all fear is unfounded).
 - ii. The words "fear not" are generally followed by "the Lord your God is with you."
 - iii. There is the best reason not to fear.
 - iv. Do you understand that the Lord your God is with you, always? He will never leave you or forsake you? In the middle of a storm, we are given the choice...to fear the storm or to trust in the Lord.
 - b. 2 Timothy 1:7 *"For God did not give us a spirit of fear(dread, fearfulness, cowardice), but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."*
 - i. What is cowardice? It is "giving in" to your fear – allowing fear to control you. It can even be the refusal to face your fears.
 - ii. I wonder what would happen if we were to stand up and to call out our worst fear and face it down in the power of Jesus Christ?
12. Use the word of God and the promises that God has made toward meeting your need.
- a. Jer 17:8 ""For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit."
 - b. Mt 10:31 - "So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.
13. What should our response to fear be?
- a. **Corrie Ten boom once said "In my times of fear I don't wrestle, I nestle!"** drawing so close to the Lord and Master of your life that you feel his continual shelter and protection.
 - i. Claim Christ's promises as soon as fear arises. Do we store the promises of God up in our heart to draw upon them when the "day of evil comes?"
 - ii. Facts vs. truth....facts deal with stuff of this earth, truth deals with God's perspective. God's truth is always greater than our facts. Sarah was too old to have kids...fact. Truth: God says she is going to have a baby. Hmm. Which do you believe Abram?
 - b. In fact, I have been learning quite a bit about fear and its power over us, and have concluded that **we will be incapable of freely loving until we are free from fear.**
 - i. 1Jo 4:18 - *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.*
 - ii. The more we love others the less fear we will have. Love causes us to overcome our fear for the good of others...Rescue workers - Ambulance drivers...the parent trying to run back into a raging inferno to rescue their child...a soldier braving a hail of bullets to rescue a wounded friend...etc.
 - iii. Love causes us to tell others about Jesus. To teach a Sunday School Class. To help others in need.
 - iv. I HAVE A FEAR of the phone. I must overcome it every day. I have to challenge the lie that fear whispers in my ear. I overcome fear by a deeper, higher urge...that of love.
14. So, come learn to conquer FEAR in all of its ugly disguises next SUNDAY evening. Get the book by Max Lucado, "fearless" and join us! Let's pray.

15. Faith/Fear Scriptures:

- a. Psalm 23:4 “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”
- b. Psalm 27:1 “The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?”
- c. Psalm 27:3 “Though a host encamp against me, My heart will not fear; Though war arise against me, In spite of this I shall be confident.”
- d. Psalm 34:7 “The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, And rescues them.”
 - i. Whenever “fear of the Lord” is used, it is not about the kind of fear that is of danger – instead, it refers to the reverential awe/faith that the Presence of God inspires.
 - ii. The bible says that angels are attracted to faith/awe of God.
- e. Psalm 118:6 “The LORD is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me?”
 - i. Fear of Man – that’s a tough one. I have always been impressed with Bill Hill. He threw away his fear of man a long time ago. More than once he has come to me and told me what I didn’t want to hear. He considers the approval of God over the approval of man. I sometimes have cringed when I watch him walk up to a stranger and tell them about what God wants to do. (why do I cringe? – because I have fear of man – I want people to like me). But we all struggle with fear in some manner shape or form. I tell you this because I want you to know I haven’t arrived yet either. I am a co-laborer in this journey. I walk the same path you do, and I struggle with the same things you do.
 - ii. Prov. 29:25 “The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.”