

Our Fears And God's Power

2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (NKJV)

I. Contrast The Source Of Your Fears With The Source Of Your Faith

A. Fear Is A Perception Originating In The Gut Of Man

- Defined: *Fear is a natural response of awe or dread from a real or imaginary power*

B. Faith Is A Provision Originating In The Gifts From God (Power, Love, Sound Mind)

II. Conquer The Power Of Your Fears With The Superiority Of God's Power

A. Fear Estimates That Something Is More Powerful Than God (Prov 3:25)

B. Faith Elevates God's Power Over The Power Of What We Fear

- The Definition Of God's Omnipotence: *Omnipotence is the absolute ability and power for God to accomplish His will.* (Ps 115:3; 62:11; Job 9:19)
- The Descriptions Of God's Omnipotence: The Almighty God (Gen 17:1; Ps 91:1; 2 Cor 6:18; Rev 1:8), He Rules Over All (Rev 19:6), He Never Tires (Isa 40:28), He Creates Out Of Nothing (Gen 1:1-3), He Upholds Everything (Heb 1:3), He Has All Power Over Good And Evil (Eph 6:10-11)
- God's Power Conquers Our Most Powerful Enemies: The Power To Save Sinners (Rom 1:16), The Power To Resurrect The Dead (1 Cor 6:14)

III. Cast Out Your Fears By Resting In His Love (cf. 1 Jn 4:18)

Perfect Love	Prevailing Fear
Love self-sacrifices (1 Jn 3:16; Jn 3:16)	Fear self-protects
Love is trusting – "believes all things" (1 Cor 13:7)	Fear is suspicious
Love "thinks no evil" (1 Cor 13:5)	Fear is always concentrated on evil
Love serves people (1 Jn 3:16-18)	Fear moves away from people
Love never fails (1 Cor 13:8)	Fear immobilizes and flees

IV. Cultivate Sound Thinking When Your Mind Plays The Fear Game (cf. Phil 4:6-7; 2 Cor 10:5)

- Expectation: If Christ Was Persecuted, So Will His Followers (Matthew 10:24-26)
- Vindication: We Can Endure Temporal Persecution Knowing We Will Be Eternally Justified (26-27)
- Redirection: Fear God Rather Than Men (28)
- Realization: Find Confidence In The Sovereignty Of God (29-31; Mt 6:30)

Conclusion:

- Fear is not the sin. Our response to fear is the moral issue: *paralysis* or *faith*.
- Boldness comes when we walk in obedience, not when we hesitate in fear. (Acts 1:8; 4:29)
- We fear because we're afraid of losing; but look at what the church will lose because we fear.
- Compare the power of what we fear to the Power of God (Ps 73:26; 27:1; Prov 29:25)

Discussion

- Describe what you fear most? Why?
- What fears do you have when it comes to your Christian life or serving God? Why?
- Why do we sometimes attribute more power to what we fear than the power of God?
- How has God's omnipotence been demonstrated in your life and/or ministry?

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2 Timothy 1:7

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Introduction:

- Ie/ When the Cowardly Lion, in the Wizard of Oz, met Dorothy, Tinman and Scarecrow, he pretended to be brave by threatening this charmed trio. He portrayed an external bravado, though we all know he's "Lyn". He taunts: "Put'm up, Put'm up!" When Dorothy bops him and he starts crying and cowering.
 - So many of us act brave until we get bopped by trials, whacked by surprises or confront the "power of the darkside"
- ie/ Calvin & Hobbes - Calvin thinks he's Stupendous Man until the fear of monsters under his bed threaten him at night
 - What are the biggest monsters in our life?
 - What are your monsters when it comes to serving God?
 - What is your Dorothy in the ministry that whacks you on the head causing you to cringe and cower?
- I've struggled with fear
 - First day of school
 - Rejection
 - Pastoring the church I grew up in

1. What We Fear:

- **Failure** - Why stick our neck out if it might get cut off?
 - **Rejection** – It's not what we've done, but what we're expected to do
 - **Change** - If the "comfort zone" is so cozy, why give it up?
 - **Problems** - If any ministry ran smoothly, there would be no need to rely on God.
 - **Inability** - The only *ability* God is concerned with is our *availability*.
 - **Sacrifice** - Blood, sweat and tears just doesn't seem worth it!
 - **Spiritual Warfare** – Soldiers get shot at and hurt. Are we ready to rumble?
 - **Faith** - To walk by faith means to abandon what we see and interpret for ourselves.
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- **Failure** - Why stick our neck out if it might get cut off?
 - Many of my suggested ideas for ministry haven't worked
 - When I look at what I could have accomplished vs what I have – I've fallen short
 - But I've learned that it is Christ building His Church, not Steve employing innovation
 - **Rejection** – It's not what we've done, but what we're expected to do
 - Rejection: my 1st biggest fear

- Abraham Lincoln: "You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time." (which Lincoln adapted from a poet named John Lydgate)
- This stems from **pride** - concerned about my image and reputation over the needs of people
- my ego vs. God's glory
- Ie/ when I started as Senior Pastor in 1992, several of the adults at church expressed their doubts about me, I told them I had the same doubts
- **Change** - If the "comfort zone" is so cozy, why give it up?
 - We're comfortable with routine
 - We're comfortable with peer group - not accept new people to fellowship or church
- **Problems** - If any ministry ran smoothly, there would be no need to rely on God.
 - smooth - why pray?
 - easy - who needs God?
 - struggle, challenges - learn to depend on God
- Q:** How many of you feel like giving up your ministry right now because there are problems?
 - wrong attitude
 - giving devil opportunity to let you run
- Q:** How many of you find it easier to go to another church than to fix the problem you have with someone in the church - maybe even the pastor? Have you tried? Have you prayed? Are you forsaking an opportunity to see God work?
- **Inability** - The only *ability* God is concerned with is our *availability*.
 - afraid of evangelism - not know what to say, apologetics
 - afraid of discipleship - commitment, lead in exploring Scriptures
 - they are **commands** - and God would not make us do something He won't equip us for
 - ie/ God gave you helmet, pads, playbook and even the skill
 - you just need to be willing to play the game
- **Sacrifice** - Blood, sweat and tears just doesn't seem worth it!
- **Spiritual Warfare** – Soldiers get shot at and hurt. Are we ready to rumble?
 - confronting sin is tough
 - dealing with issues that are demonic is even creepy
- **Faith** - To walk by faith means to abandon what we see and interpret for ourselves.

Swindoll, *Quest for Character*, p.83
 "To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.

To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.
To reach out for another is to risk involvement.
To expose feelings is to risk exposing your true self.
To love is to risk not being loved in return.
To hope is to risk despair.
To try is to risk failure.”

2. **Fear Leads To:**

- **Worry** – fear of the unknown
- **Isolation** – fear of rejection, fear of getting burned
- **Indecision** – fear of messing up, failure
- **Doubt** – fear of the unknown outcome
- **Suspicion** – fear of what others might do to us
- **Inferiority** – fear of rejection
- **Over-aggression** – fear of losing control

3. **Pastor Timothy seemed to fear aspects of the ministry.**

2 Timothy 1:5-8 ⁵I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. ⁶For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. ⁸Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,

- V. 5 “sincere faith” = *anupokritou pisteos*
 - Homer Kent: “Such faith is genuinely from the heart, not mere lip-faith.” (*The Pastoral Epistles*, Moody Press, 1982, p. 248)
- V. 5 abiding or deep seated faith (“a faith ... dwells in you as well”)
 - Timothy’s grandmother (Lois), mother (Eunice) and himself demonstrated this sincere faith
- V. 6 “for this reason” – because of his faith ... fan the flame of the gift of God (spiritual gifts for ministry)
 - What God put in each believer is His gift for ministry – spiritual gifts
 - God called us to serve Him and gave us the ability to serve Him
 - **Don’t be timid with your spiritual gift**
 - **Don’t be shy in serving God**
 - **Don’t fear being used of God**
- V. 6 “fan into the flame”
 - “fan into the flame” = *anazpureo* = “to keep the fire alive; to kindle afresh” (MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, p. 15)

2 Timothy 1:6-7 God doesn't want us to be shy with his gifts, but bold and loving and sensible. (Eugene Peterson, *The Message*)

- George W. Knight III: "Paul probably reminds Timothy of this both because of his own temperament and also because of the difficult situation in which he and Paul found themselves." (*The Pastoral Epistles, New International Greek Testament Commentary*, Eerdmans, 1992, p. 371)
- **Why Timothy Struggled With Fear:**
(summarized from Hendrickson – see below)
 - Timothy was frequently **ill** (1 Tim 5:23)

1 Timothy 5:23 "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities"
 - Timothy **feared rejection** (1 Cor 16:10-11)

1 Corinthians 16:10-11 "And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do. Therefore let no one despise him."
 - Timothy was young in the ministry a "**young man**" (1 Tim 4:12)

1 Timothy 4:12 "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity."
 - Timothy battled **false teachers** infiltrating the Ephesian church (1 Tim 1:3-7; 4:6-7; 6:3-5; 2 Tim 2:14-19,23)
 - Roman Emperor Nero **persecuted** the church (1 Tim 4:6)
- Credit to William Hendricksen:
 - a. Timothy was handicapped by frequent physical ailments (1 Tim. 5:23).*
 - b. He was naturally timid ("Now if Timothy comes, see to it that he is with you without fear," 1 Cor. 16:10).*
 - c. He was, in a sense, "a young man" (1 Tim. 4:12; cf. 2 Tim. 2:22).*
 - d. The Ephesian errorists who opposed him were very determined (1 Tim. 1:3-7, 19, 20; 4:6, 7; 6:3-10; 2 Tim. 2:14-19, 23).*
 - e. Believers were being persecuted by the State. Think of Paul (1 Tim. 4:6).*
(*Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, Baker New Testament Commentary, Baker, 2002, Logos edition, p. 229)

2 Timothy 1:8 Therefore **do not be ashamed** of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,

- Ashamed, embarrassed

- Homer Kent: “The mode of expression in the phrase ‘be not ashamed’ (aorist subjunctive) offers clear evidence that Timothy was not at fault along this line. The connotation is, ‘**Don’t start being ashamed,**’ rather than, ‘Stop being ashamed’ (for which the present imperative would be necessary).” (*The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 251)
- Timothy feared using his gifts in ministry. Timothy potentially struggled with shame.
- Do we fear ministry?
- Are we ashamed or embarrassed about our faith at times?
- What did Paul share with Timothy to help him with fear?

Proposition: It’s been said that we need to “**face our fears.**” But today, we will examine four faith facts in 2 Timothy 1:7 to “**faith our fears**” head on.

2 Timothy 1:7 for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

I. Contrast The Source Of Your Fears With The Source Of Your Faith

2 Timothy 1:7 *For God has not given us a spirit of fear,* but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

A. Fear Is A Perception Originating In The Mind Of Man

Defined: *Fear is a natural response of awe or dread from a real or imaginary power*

- The main Greek word for “fear” is ***phobos*** - from word “to run”
 - fear makes us run from spiritual danger to Him
 - Though in our text today, another word for fear is used
 - “In ordinary use the group has the nuances of ‘flight,’ ‘fright,’ ‘apprehension,’ ‘anxiety,’ and ‘awe.’” (Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W.. “*Phobos*”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*)
 - Ie/ The God *Phobos*: “In Greek superstition *Phóbos* is a powerful deity, the son of Ares, and a god of war. Sparta has a temple to *Phóbos*. He is depicted in a fear-inspiring form that actualizes the god of terror presented by Homer.” (Kittel, “*Phobos*”)
- Like the rest of the emotions we have been covering, fear in itself is neither right or wrong. It’s a natural reaction to something more powerful than us.
- What matters before God is what we do with our fears. Fight or flight. Faith or flee.
- The word for “Fear” in v. 7 is ***deilia*** = timidity, cowardice
 - Only used this time in the Bible (*hapax legomena*)
 - Not *phobos*, the more general word
 - This particular word is more negative in its usage
 - Though the 2 words are related

B. Faith Is A Provision From The Spirit Of God

- “has not given” = *didomi* – aorist, completed action
- Is the *Spirit* an “attitude” or the “Holy Spirit?” (either way, it’s from God)
- George Knight: “The negative first statement in this verse has understandably inclined most modern English translations to use ‘spirit’ with a lowercase letter (e.g. *NIV*), but the positive affirmation that follows seems to have the Holy Spirit in mind (so *TEV*: ‘Spirit’).”
- William Hendricksen: “The gist of Paul’s argument, then, would seem to be as follows: “My dear child, Timothy, fight that tendency of yours toward fearfulness. The Holy Spirit, given to you and me and every believer, is not the Spirit of timidity but of power and love and self-discipline.” (p. 230)
- The Holy Spirit is the giver of the ministry gifts (v. 6) and the power, love and sound mind (related to Fruit of the Spirit).
- God has not given spirit of timidity, but has given power, love & sound mind through the HS
- God has already given us what is necessary to overcome our perceived fears with actual faith

2 Timothy 1:5 I am reminded of your sincere **faith**, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

- Denise George: “The opposite of fear is not courage, but faith. When Jesus’ disciples panicked in the storm, Jesus asked them: ‘Where is your faith?’” (*Fighting Fear with Faith*, Christian Focus Publications, Kindle Edition)

II. Conquer The Power Of Your Fears With The Superiority Of God’s Power

2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, **but of power** and of love and of a sound mind.

A. Fear Estimates That Something Is More Powerful Than God

- F.D. Roosevelt: “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”
- So many of us fear “fear.” Even the Bible understands.

Proverbs 3:25 “Do not be afraid of sudden terror, Nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes”

ie/ Jay Adams in *The Christian Counselor’s Manual* (pp. 419-420) gives an example of working through fear. In this case he gives an example of a man frightened by crossing a bridge.

1. His fear was real
2. His fear was wrong and sinful – preoccupation, immobilization

3. His fear was not a fear of bridges; it was a fear that had become associated with bridges
 4. What he fears is the experiences that he has had on bridges
 5. Bridges do not produce these experiences; he himself does. He produces his own fear.
 6. What he fears now is fear
 7. What he fears is normal physical anticipation feelings of crossing bridges (associated with past fear experiences)
- "Our groundless fears are our chief tormentors." (Charles Spurgeon, "Our Needless Fears", June 11, 1874)
 - **366 times in the Bible, we read the words "Fear Not"**

B. Faith Elevates God's Power Over The Power Of What We Fear

- "power" = *dunamis* (dynamite)

Ephesians 3:16 he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

Romans 15:19 by the power of the Spirit of God

- How should we think about God and power?

1. The Definition Of God's Omnipotence: *Omnipotence is the absolute ability and power for God to accomplish His will.*

Psalms 115:3 But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.

Psalms 62:11 Power belongs to God.

Job 9:19 If it is a matter of strength, indeed He is strong

- *Omni* = all; *Potens* = power
- "The omnipotence of God is His ability and strength to bring to pass whatsoever He pleases." (Stephen Charnock, *The Existence And Attributes Of God*)
- "God's omnipotence means that God is able to do all his holy will." (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 216)
- "God's omnipotence includes the exercise of His choice to use His unlimited power to reflect His divine glory and accomplish His sovereign will." (Tony Evans, *Our God Is Awesome*)

- “Since He has at His command all the power in the universe, the Lord God omnipotent can do anything as easily as anything else. All His acts are done without effort. He expends no energy that must be replenished. His self-sufficiency makes it unnecessary for Him to look outside of Himself for a renewal of strength. All the power required to do all that he wills to do lies in undiminished fullness in His own infinite being.” (A.W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*)

2. The Descriptions Of God’s Omnipotence

a. The Almighty God (Gen 17:1; Ps 91:1; 2 Cor 6:18; Rev 1:8)

- God is described as the “Almighty” 56x in the Scriptures
- Almighty = All Might, Omni Potent
- “Almighty God” = *El Shaddai* (Heb); *El* (God), *Shaddai* (mountain) – God rules and reigns on the mountain top (Gen 17:1; Ps 91:1)

Genesis 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.”

- Abraham, in his advanced age, starts to wonder if God will fulfill His promise of giving him a child through Sarah. God proclaims that He is the Almighty God.

Q: When is the last time you started to question God’s ability to lead and control your life?

Psalms 91:1 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

- “Almighty” = *pantokrator* (Gr) = lit. all ruling
- Paul Feinberg describes: “In the NT, the term that is closest to our English word “omnipotent” is the Greek *pantokratōr*. *Panto* comes from *pas*, ‘all,’ and *kratōr* comes from *kratos*, ‘power’ or ‘might.’ Hence, it is often translated ‘almighty,’ ‘all-powerful,’ or ‘omnipotent.’ *Pantokratōr* appears in the NT most frequently in the book of Revelation, where it is used only of God (Rev 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22). Beyond these words, there are many biblical passages that teach divine omnipotence.” (*No One Like Him: The Doctrine Of God*, p. 277-278)

Revelation 1:8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

2 Corinthians 6:18 “I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.”

- There is no power that is not apart of the subjection of God.
- God is all powerful over the most powerful government in the world
- God is all powerful over the laws of physics in our universe
- God is all powerful over the power of the atom – proton, neutron & electron

b. He Rules Over All (Rev 19:6)

Revelation 19:6 Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!

c. He Never Tires (Isa 40:28)

Isaiah 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.

- God is never too sleepy to hear us talk to Him
- God is never too sick to go to work for us
- God never needs to call a time out to catch His breath
- God doesn't need a substitute because He is winded
- God doesn't need power naps after lunch

d. He Creates Out Of Nothing

Genesis 1:1-3 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

- Ie/ The artist requires some form of medium to shape or sculpt – oil paint, play dough, granite, bronze, charcoal or doodling with your Bic pen
- But God creates *ex nihilo* – out of nothing. God had no media in which to manipulate or create.

e. He Upholds Everything

Hebrews 1:3 Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

- Christ calmed the storms
- God split the Red Sea so 2 million Israelites could march through out of Egypt, then to close the Red Sea when the Egyptian army was in it
 - A critic thought that it was a physical phenomena in 3 feet of water. How ridiculous for an entire army to be consumed by the water of a kid's swimming pool.
- There are so many physical calamities that leave us in awe of the power of destruction. Yet God is even more powerful than that.

f. He Has All Power Over Good And Evil

Ephesians 6:10-11 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

3. God's Power Conquers Our Most Powerful Enemies

a. The Power To Save Sinners

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

b. The Power To Resurrect The Dead

1 Corinthians 6:14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

Thus:

Romans 8:37 - more than conquerors

Isa 9:6 "Mighty God" - warrior God, victorious God fighting our battles

- As the wise prophet from Veggie Tales once said: **"God is bigger than the Boogey Man, He's bigger than Godzilla and the monsters on TV!"**

III. Cast Out Your Fears By Resting In His Love

2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power **and of love** and of a sound mind.

- **The Holy Spirit is also the provider of Love**

Romans 5:5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

- Homer Kent: "God's gift must also be exercised in love (*agapes*) without the harshness that power alone might evoke."
- Total love brings total trust
- Ie/ Superman to Lois Lane while flying: "Don't worry, I got you." Lois Lane: "But whose got you?"
- When we realize Christ's love, we know that "He's Got Us"

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

"**Love**" = *agape* – the supreme, sacrificial love of God

“perfected” = *teteleiotai* – (*teleos*) - end, perfecting, improving to be like Christ’s
 - same word when Jesus cried on the cross “It is finished”

“God’s love has reached its goal in our lives when we also love and communicate it to others. His love is the inspiration and aiding companion to our love.” (Hiebert)

“boldness” -

- can mean *confidence* or *freedom of speech*
- freedom and confidence to meet the judge

ie/ taxes audited – have records – confident because have records

“day of judgment” = *te hemerates kriseos*

- Which day of judgment? Judgment Seat of Christ or Great White Throne Judgment?
- Great White Throne Judgment is for unbelievers
- this refers to the Judgment Seat of Christ which follows the Rapture

- **Christ’s love removed judgment from us. We’re going to heaven. Don’t fear on earth! He’s Got Us!**
- Then as Christ’s love is perfect, we have a goal to perfect our love for others.

Perfected Love	Prevailing Fear
Love self-sacrifices (1 Jn 3:16; Jn 3:16)	Fear self-protects
Love is trusting – “believes all things” (1 Cor 13:7)	Fear is suspicious
Love “thinks no evil” (1 Cor 13:5)	Fear is always concentrated on evil
Love serves people (1 Jn 3:16-18)	Fear moves away from people
Love never fails (1 Cor 13:8)	Fear immobilizes and flees

- “Fear is always rooted in a failure to love (1 John 4:18). Fear is always selfish. ... Constant stress needs to be made by the counselor on ‘living in love’ and doing the loving thing no matter how fearful. Love must predominate.” (G. R. Fisher, “Those Mysterious Panic Attacks”, *The Journal of Pastoral Practice*, Vol. VI, No. 2, 1983, pp. 35-37)

IV. Cultivate Sound Thinking When Your Mind Plays The Fear Game

2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love **and of a sound mind.**

- “sound mind” = *sophronismou* = wisdom, sound judgment, disciplined mind, aware of distractions, “literal meaning of a secure and sound mind ... self-controlled, disciplined, and properly prioritized mind.” (MacArthur, p. 19)
- William Hendrickson: “If a person fears Satan’s persecuting power more that he trusts God’s ability and ever-readiness to help, he has lost his mental balance.” (*2 Timothy, Baker NT Commentary*, p. 230)

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "Fear is, somehow or other, the archenemy itself. It crouches in people's hearts. It hollows out their insides, until their resistance and strength are spent and they suddenly break down. Fear secretly gnaws and eats away at all the ties that bind a person to God and to others, and when in a time of need that person reaches for those ties and clings to them, they break and the individual sinks back into himself or herself, helpless and despairing, while hell rejoices." (Sermon: "Overcoming Fear," *The Collected Sermons Of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, edited by Isabel Best, Fortress Press, 2012)

Philippians 4:6-7 ⁶ Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will **guard your hearts and minds** through Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 10:5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

A. Expectation: If Christ Was Persecuted, So Will His Followers (Matthew 10:24-26)

Matthew 10:24-26 ²⁴ "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! ²⁶ Therefore do not fear them.

- When you know something's coming we're better prepared to handle the situation than if we were caught by surprise

IE/ Do you know when I fear mice? When I'm not prepared to see them.

- they streak across the room violating the safety and purity of my domicile
- I'll jump hoping they won't crawl up my leg
- But if I know where they are - they cease being a threat to me and become more of a nuisance
- I use to sleep in my bedroom knowing there were mice in my room - it was OK because I knew they were there, as long as they didn't crawl into bed with me
- * When you know you're going to get rough treatment from the world, you're better equipped to handle it

- That's what Jesus warns us in vv 24-25
 - a student is no better than his instructor
 - a servant is no better than his master
- Our Instructor & Master is Jesus Christ - He was persecuted - so we will be persecuted
 - v.25 - they called Christ Beelzebub - the Lord of flies - a Canaanite God - referring to him as demonic
 - you can expect insults too

Matthew 10:22 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

- ie/ the SF Giants go to Dodger stadium expecting to be booed
- ie/ 49'ers know they're hated by the jealous Cowboys & their fans
- you just expect it and you deal with it

IE/ John Wesley - ride horse from town to town preach Gospel

- realize went 3 days w/ no persecution - no brick, no egg
- alarmed, stopped horse, prayed "Can it be that I have sinned and even backslidden?"

Then he prayed too have his fault shown to Him by the Lord.

- as he prayed, a rough critic on the other side of the hedge heard his prayer and said "I'll fix that Methodist preacher."
- he threw a brick and missed
- Wesley: "Thank God it's all right, I still have his presence."

- now we're not to go around asking to be persecuted
 - persecution is not always the case with most witnessing opportunities
 - most people are polite, but there will be a few who are cantankerous who might cuss you out, ridicule you, or ignore you
 - but when you expect it from a few folks, you're ready to handle it

B. Vindication: We Can Endure Temporal Persecution Knowing We Will Be Eternally Justified (26-27)

Matthew 10:26-27 ²⁶Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. ²⁷"Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.

- The world doesn't seem intimidated by God
- Man doesn't glorify God, thank God or worship God (Rom 1)
- Postmodernity believes truth is within the individual, not ultimately with God
- And Christians are attacked for proclaiming that there is an absolute truth and an overall morality
- Christians are accused on not being tolerant by claiming

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

- In other parts of the world, Christians are clearly persecuted
 - China – persecution more evident in West
 - Indonesia and other Muslim countries
- We may be slandered in America or persecuted in another country, but God will vindicate us
- Your co-worker may ridicule you faith and your boss might hold you back because of your faith, but God will vindicate

Philippians 2:10¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

- Knowing we will be vindicated, then we can (v.27) preach it from the rooftops

C. **Redirection: Fear God Rather Than Men (28)**

Matthew 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

- it has been stated that 92% of what we worry about never takes place
- in ministry, we fear so much what men might do to us
- Men could ridicule us, embarrass us, reject us
- A worse end: whip you, beat you, arrest you
- Even worse: they could kill you – but then you go immediately to heaven (it's not that bad)
- Out eternal security gives us security
- So if the worse thing that can happen to us is that we die and go to heaven, don't fear the rest of the stuff

1 Thessalonians 2:4 But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

- in evangelism, we fear rejection – well expect that most will reject, but that God has called some to be saved (election guarantees that evangelism will work)
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "Those who are still afraid of men have no fear of God, and those who have fear of God have ceased to be afraid of men. All preachers of the gospel will do well to recollect this saying daily."

D. **Realization: Find Confidence In The Sovereignty Of God (29-31)**

Matthew 10:29-31 ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. ³⁰But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

- God is sovereign - He knows all the details, He planned them out
- nothing happens outside His will

Matthew 6:30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Sign outside London church in WW II : If your knees knock, kneel on them

Conclusion:

- 1. Fear is not the sin. Our response to fear is the moral issue: *paralysis or faith.***

ie/ Habakkuk – from fear to faith

2. **Boldness comes when we walk in obedience, not when we hesitate in fear.**

- God has given you power

Acts 1:8 “When the HS has come, you shall receive power to My witnesses”

Acts 4:29 - the early Christians who were facing persecution while they evangelized prayed for boldness

“And when they had prayed...they...spoke the word of God boldly.”

- Larry Moyer, a wonderful evangelist - said “We should not ask God for boldness by saying, ‘I’m afraid. Help me to overcome the fear. Whew You do, I’ll share the gospel.’ Instead our attitude must be, ‘Help me to overcome my fear as I go do it.’ You must pray as you go and go as you pray. God then honors both your obedience and your prayers, and gives you boldness.”

IE/ Many years, a Christian man was finishing up some business with a lawyer in St. Louis and before leaving the office, asked: “I have often wanted to ask you a question, but I have been a coward.” The lawyer was surprised and said “I didn’t think you were afraid of anything!” What is the question?”

The client replied: “Why aren’t you a Christian?” The lawyer hung his head uttering “You know my weakness. Isn’t there something in the bible about drunkards having no part in the kingdom of God?”

The Christian did not want to be detoured and replied, “That’s not what I’m asking you. I want to know why you are not a Christian.” The lawyer responded “Well, I can’t recall that anybody asked me, and I’m sure nobody ever told me how to become a Christian!”

Before long, the two were praying together and God saved this lawyer who was bound by the sin of alcoholism. By the way, that lawyer was C.I. Scofield who edited one of the most popular Bibles in the country - that many of you have in your hand today.

- all because a timid man chose to be bold

3. **We fear because we’re afraid of losing; but look at what the church will lose because we fear.**

ie/ my personal fear of leadership

- can become crippled by criticism, expectations, etc.

Q: But who loses out when I’m sulking in self pity?

- not just me, the whole church does

- the church loses out on your lack of ministry because you chicken out

4. **Compare the power of what we fear to the Power of God**

- Fear Judgment – God Saves
- Fear Death – God Resurrects

- Fear Fear – Fear God
- Fear Witness For Christ – Expect Persecution
- Fear Persecution – Know God’s Power Of Resurrection

Psalm 73:26 “My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

Psalm 27:1 “The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”

Proverbs 29:25 “The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trust in the Lord shall be safe.”