

Rev. Janet Doyle  
Elmer Presbyterian Church  
Sunday, August 22, 2021  
Scripture: Mark 4: 35-41

## **Sermon: Overcoming the Spirit of Fear Through Prayer**

All of us know what it's like to be afraid. Fear is a big problem in the world right now. There is a fear of getting sick and even dying from Covid-19 or the Delta Variant.

There are other fears though; fear about finances, fear of losing our job, fear of flying, fear of spiders, fear of snakes, fear of heights, fear of going out of your house, fear of speaking in public, fear of the unknown, fear of uncertainty, fear of loneliness, fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of storms.

We must overcome the Spirit of Fear, or it will take over our lives. Hebrew 12: 1-2 says: "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

God wants nothing to hinder or hold us back. One of the biggest things that holds people back is fear. Fear keeps you from entering into everything God has for you.

We see this in the children of Israel in the Old Testament. They had been in slavery for 400 years and God heard their prayers and set them free. He used many miraculous signs and wonders to deliver them. They saw His power first-hand time after time but, when it came time to enter into the Promised Land—when they finally got to where they were going, they refused to enter in. Why? Because of fear. They were afraid.

They sent spies into the land to check it out and when they got back all the spies except Joshua and Caleb said "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are. The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We seemed like

grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.” Caleb and Joshua said to the people: “Do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them. “

But the people did not overcome their fear and fear kept the children of Israel from entering into their promised land.

Fear can hold you back, just like the Israelites, from entering into your future calling and God’s promise for your life.

Fear of the unknown, fear of change, fear of the Giants in your life, causes most people to avoid trying anything new or unknown in life because of a fear of failure.

Not only does fear hold you back, but it can impact those around you as well. Fear affects relationships in your life by keeping people from making the call to ask for forgiveness and restore a relationship. Fear hinders people also from starting new relationships. Fear hinders people from making a career change or going back to school.

1 John 4:18 says: “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” It says, “fear has to do with punishment,” and that word “punishment” comes from the same root word as “torture.” It means to cause pain and suffering—physical, mental, or emotional.

Fear wants to stalk you, track you down and capture you. Fear will hinder you—limit you—paralyze you.

What is causing you fear? Know this: Fear is not from God. The most common command in the Bible is “FEAR NOT.” If God commands us not to fear, then it must be possible to not fear.

Another great scripture verse is 2 Timothy 1:7, and it tells us: ***“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”*** This verse tells us that fear is not of God. Fear can only get worse when we don’t let anything stop it or reverse it. Fears only get worse. They don’t just go away. They must be overcome. God has given us the tools to overcome the spirit of fear. Fear must be resisted—it will not just go away.

Today we read the story of Jesus calming the storm. Like the disciples in the boat, we need to decide whether we will respond to the situations of our lives with faith in God or with fear. The response of the disciples reveals both their fear and their lack of trust in Jesus. They are frustrated and angered by Jesus' apparent disregard for their situation.

This story of Jesus calming the storm is often misunderstood. Some are quick to conclude that Jesus is revealed as the One who will calm every storm in our lives, but this misses the main point of the text. This scripture doesn't promise that Jesus will calm every storm. The central truth of this passage is that Jesus is God. He has power over the wind and the waves. He is in fact God in flesh. Because Jesus is God, we can trust Him and choose to live in faith in Him rather than fear, regardless of situations in our lives.

In the midst of the chaos of the storm Jesus is asleep in the rear of the boat. His sleep is a reminder to us of his humanity and also of the sovereign plan of God. God planned to use Christ's sleep to reveal both the weaknesses of the disciples' faith and the true identity of Jesus. After rebuking the storm, Jesus rebukes his disciples. Their response revealed that their fear of the situation was greater than their faith in Him and His ability to care for them. Mark acknowledges the great fear of the disciples as they consider who Jesus really is and they realize they are in the presence of God Himself.

How do we overcome the Spirit of Fear? To overcome fear, we cannot deny it, hide from it, give in to it or run from it. We must face it with the power of prayer and with the power of intercessory prayer from others. When you face your fears by doing what you are afraid to do, you break the power of fear in your life. 1 John 5:4 says: "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith."

We overcome fear by the power of prayer and by reading the scriptures. It helps to memorize Bible verses that can help you during the fearful times.

- ***Psalm 56:3 says: “Whenever, I am afraid, I will trust in You.”***
- ***Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.”*** We must believe through His power, we can do anything God wants us to.
- ***Acts 1:8 says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.”*** Instead of being filled with fear, be filled with faith. Instead of being filled with a spirit of fear, be filled with the Spirit of God.

You can overcome fear with the power of God. Overcome the Spirit of Fear with the power of God and with a sound mind. A sound mind is calm, well-balanced, disciplined and self-controlled.

A mind controlled with fear is the opposite of this. Instead of being calm, a mind controlled by fear is constantly stirred up and stormy. A mind controlled by fear is out of balance.

Fear will impact the way you think. If you think fearful thoughts—fear will control your mind. But if you think God’s thoughts—faith will control your mind! If you speak fearful words—fear will control your life. But if you speak God’s word—faith will control your life.

Renew our minds through the word of God. We have to choose to believe God more than we believe circumstances. We can choose to be afraid, OR we can trust in God and accept His word that He will protect us and meet all our needs according to His riches in glory.

We overcome the Spirit of Fear with Love. 1 John 4:18-19 says, *“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. We love Him because He first loved us.”*

Fear and love cannot coexist. When one comes in, the other must leave. The more we love God, the less fear we will have. It’s a matter of trust. When we realize that God loves us and will take care of us, it relieves our fears.

When we trust in His perfect love; it casts out all fear. The more secure we are in the fact that God loves us and works all things for our good, the less fear we will have.

Remember the Lord is with us wherever we go, and his love casts out all fear! Once we understand the perfect love of God, we have nothing to fear.

Do not fear—God meets all our needs according to his riches in Glory!

Don't fear the devil---Because greater is he that is in me than in he that is in the world.

Don't fear the future because the future is in our Father's hands.

We shouldn't fear what people can do to us because if God is for us, who can be against us?

We shouldn't fear because God has given us the power of prayer.

Perfect love casts out all fear when you know he works all things together for your good.

You overcome fear by practicing the presence of Jesus.

Remember God is always with you, and he would never leave you nor forsake you.

Joshua 1:9 says, ***“Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”***

Remember fear and trust cannot live in the same heart at the same time.

Psalm 27:1 says, ***“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?”***

Be strong and have courage. And do not be afraid. Why? Because God is with us.

- We overcome fear when we know God is with us.
- We overcome fear when we know God is in us.
- We overcome fear when we know God is for us.

God has given you the way to overcome fear: prayer, power, love and a sound mind. Overcome the Spirit of Fear with the power of prayer, with the love of God, and with a renewed mind that resists the Spirit of Fear with the Word of God!

Overcome the Spirit of Fear with prayer in Jesus' Name.