

August 30, 2020 AM  
Pastor Ken Hepner

***“Rejecting the Message of Fear”***

Matthew 14:25 – 33

**Introduction:**

This morning as we turn our attention to the Word of God, we are looking at a powerful theme, which so many people in our culture today have had to learn to live with. Our topic today is fear, the internal, nagging sense of dread, fearing the unknown, fearing “what if” or “what could happen,” that plagues the thoughts of so many people.

Our source for insight into this topic is God’s Word the Bible. It is God’s revelation of His thoughts He wants us to know. In Scripture, God reveals to us His heart, His desires, and His ways for our lives, the direction He desires for us to go. As we read the pages of Scripture, we see His interaction with people. He reveals tremendous amounts of truth about Himself as He speaks to us through the Biblical record.

**From Scripture we learn that God reveals Himself as Merciful and Gracious to us in all of His ways. From Scripture we learn that God is absolutely Faithful to perform His words of promise, and that He has the Power to accomplish what He says He will do. From Scripture we learn God is our Shield and Defender,** a mighty Fortress to whom we can and should run when we need protection. He is a shelter for us in the times when life is stormy. He is a companion to us on life’s journey!

One of the things that touches my heart about people who are found in Scripture, is that they are models for taking actions born of faith. The people we find in the Biblical record were normal human beings who were convinced of spiritual realities their physical eyes could not see. Scripture teaches, through the record of these people’s experiences that faith is a powerful thing in our lives. In fact, **the truth is Faith will drive Fear out of our lives or fear will prevent us from believing God, as He wants to be believed!**

The people we read about in Scripture knew they couldn’t defeat their giant-sized problems by themselves, but they also knew that by His strength and power they would win. They were so convinced of this fact that very often they actually guaranteed victory on the way to the battle! The Lord God smiled on them and honored their faith, giving them incredible victories.

Our job today is to seek to be like them, taking by faith the exact same provisions they had. We have the record of our Lord Jesus and what He has done for us, faith, God’s Spirit, and His promises. Our job is to be armed with similar hearts to know and please God and attitudes created in us by faith, we are called to face issues that are hard in our lives. We all have obstacles and problems, which face us today.

The presence of obstacles and problems in our lives, generally, are by the design of the enemy to get us to look at our circumstances rather than the Lord. The choice of how we view life is ours

and is not dependent upon our circumstances. **The Attitude and Desires we cherish within, how we choose to live our lives on earth, is always a choice we make from the depths of our being!**

## **I. The Internal Messages Sent by Fear:**

In this message we are facing the issue of Fear. As we begin this subject, I want to remind you that the ability to feel and have fear is not bad in and of itself. Fear is a creation of God, imbedded in our humanity that is meant to be a protective, safety device for us. When we feel fear, we become more attuned to our circumstances, our senses are put on edge, our heart rate increases, and we take a defensive posture.

In essence what I am reminding us is that fear is a good thing. Its root in Old English means “sudden danger.” It refers to fright that is justifiable, to a danger that is concrete and knowable. In this sense fear is appropriate because by it we are warned of and can be kept from personal harm.

However, the issue of fear we are addressing today is more an internal anxiety of the heart resulting in heart-sickness, or tightness in our chest. This sense of fear comes from within and remains in us even when there are no discernible stimuli to cause it to be there. This fear is that of the possible, what might happen, the unknown, the “what if” syndrome of life. **It is an inner anticipation of pending doom that sends the internal message, “Something bad is about to happen, I just know it.”**

This is hard to pinpoint because so many other things, which can and do plague us as human beings, accompany it. **It lives with traveling companions like Discouragement, Suspicion, and Falsehood.** Fears for which we can’t pinpoint any cause can often be traced back to old wounds of the heart, debts created in us by others, or unmet needs we experienced. The old, unresolved issues can be a real breeding ground for our enemy to sow lies that bring about irrational fears and anxieties within.

It is really important that we understand the aim of the enemy Satan, in these unhealthy fears, is to Paralyze us and to keep us from taking actions born of faith, even though we may be quite sure of God’s will. Satan has been using paralysis as a tactic for thousands of years and he’s gotten pretty good at it by sheer repetition. His tactic is much like that of a lion that seeks to paralyze its prey with fear through its intense roar. The lion’s aim is to get the prey to react or run away a bit slower so it has an advantage.

In fact, Peter used that metaphor in his letter to believers, I Peter 5: 8: *“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”*

The enemy’s goal, as he attacks us as believers, is very similar. His goal is to get our eyes off of Christ Jesus our Victorious Warrior Lamb. He’s attempting to con us into believing his ability to shatter our faith is more powerful than Jesus’ ability to faithfully protect us. His bluff is to get us

to move a little further from the Good Shepherd, the old “divide and conquer” plan. He wants you and I to believe we are powerless against his wiles so we might as well just give up.

The truth that we must remember is what our Lord Jesus did for us at Calvary. When we have experienced the cleansing of sins, all sins, even the ones done to us and have been given the Holy Spirit of God to dwell in our hearts, we have been given victory over the enemy’s tactics.

Colossians 1:13 -- 14 *“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*

The Son of God purchased us for His glory, to be spiritual temples in whom the Holy Spirit of God Almighty dwells. We have been granted victory over Satan and his miserable schemes, in Christ Jesus our Lord:

Luke 10:18 – 20, *“He replied, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.’”*

I John 4:4 *“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”*

Our job is to stand firm in the faith He has given to us. We are to take and claim the victory of Christ Jesus our Lord, not to be rendered paralyzed by irrational fears! The enemy uses lies, deceit and old wounding to create fears. The choice weapon is fear of inadequacy and fear of failure. The message it screams in us is one of condemnation: “Who do you think you are? What if you do attempt something for God and you fail miserably?” When we sense the nudge of the Spirit let’s choose faith in the mighty Lord God. Let’s take His truth to defeat both the enemy and the weapon of fear.

## **II. Fear of Failure and the Unknown: Gideon**

The story of Gideon that comes to mind -- when we think of unhealthy, paralyzing fear which dreads the unknown, the potential of pending disaster -- found in the book of Judges 6, 7. When we meet Gideon, in chapter 6:12 -- 26, he is threshing grain in a winepress, while hiding in the hills in fear of the Midianite oppressors.

He has surveyed the circumstances and has concluded the he can’t possibly do anything about his Midianite oppressors, so he hid himself for fear of having what little food he can provide for his family stolen. One thing he has not done is to ask God what He thinks about the Midianites or the apparent powerlessness and cowardice of Israel. He is operating solely on the basis of the internal message created by his human reason. He has embraced fear in his heart and has concluded it hopeless!

I find it encouraging that the Lord didn't share Gideon's opinion of his circumstances. When God's angel came to him, he was told the Truth of God and it overwhelmed him, "*The Lord is with you mighty warrior.*" From that point on Gideon was taken on a really remarkable adventure of faith that is just priceless to witness. Gideon led a small group of men into an unlikely Battle and to an improbable Victory. As you read through the story God has him take small actions of faith and obedience to His ways and rewards him tremendously for his willingness to walk with Him.

God had him tear down his father's idols and told him to restore the sacrifices to Jehovah as the one true God. He led him on a journey to gather 32,000 soldiers to face possibly 100,000 of the enemy. Then, having mustered an army that is vastly outnumbered and under-equipped for the battle, God gave him tests to put the soldiers through which resulted in him only having 300 soldiers left with him to go into battle. All along the way, however, God built up this man's faith. He assured his man Gideon that if he fought God's way, trusting in the Lord for His power to save, he would see God's victory.

The Lord had Gideon and his men march out with a trumpet with one hand and a clay pot with a lighted torch inside. He had them surround the Midianite camp in the night, shout to God and break the pots exposing the fire. Then they blew the trumpets from every direction around the camp and shouted "A sword for the Lord and Gideon. Folks they didn't have swords! They were holding a trumpet in one hand and a torch in the other. In essence God asked them to proclaim what they didn't have!

The Lord fought for them and the Midianite army was destroyed. **But perhaps more important to this study, Gideon first acted to defeat paralyzing fear of the unknown in his own heart. He defeated fear of failure by trusting in and watching God come through on His promises.** I'm personally convinced the Lord God was equally delighted with both of the victories; the one on the battlefield delivering Israel and the one in the battlefield of the heart delivering Gideon!

### **III. Fearing What Is Seen In the Physical Realm**

One outstanding Scriptural example, of fearing what is seen in the physical realm, is story of Simon Peter when Jesus came walking on the water to the disciples in the middle of the night. Lest we get too hard on Peter I often ask myself the question; would I have been in the boat with the guys who played it safe or on the water walking with Peter and Jesus? Let's consider the story:

Matthew 14:25 – 33: "*During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, 'It's a ghost,' they said and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.'* 'Lord if it's you,' Peter replied, 'tell me to come to you on the water.' 'Come,' he said.

*Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. **But when he saw the wind, he was afraid** and, beginning to sink cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. 'You of little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?'*

*And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God'.*" (Emphasis mine)

Faith in the awesome Son of God moved Peter to get out of the boat and walk on the water to Jesus. Fear drove faith from his heart and he began to sink in the sea of his adverse circumstances.

A second clear example of permitting the fear of what we can see to create paralysis of faith is found in the Israelite army the day the teenage shepherd boy, David showed up. David heard the giant Goliath of Gath's words through the filter of faith in an awesome and majestic Lord God he loved. David was in outrage at the defilement of the giant's words, the obscenities against the Lord's holiness. You know the rest of the story.

But consider with me the fact that there were many men who heard the same words every day. Yet they heard them through the grid of fear. They stayed behind the rocks and looked in fear at the giant who was so big he couldn't be defeated. Think about King Saul, who was himself the biggest male specimen in the Israelite army, and all of his soldiers who were, supposedly, the armies of God.

I Samuel 17:4 – 11: *"A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. He was over nine feet tall. He had a bronze helmet on his head . . . Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, 'Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us.' Then the Philistine said, 'This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.'* **On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.**" (Emphasis mine)

Look carefully at what is happening here. The giant has reduced the arena to the human arena. He has made it a contest between the Philistines and the servants of Saul. He has taken the battle out of the spiritual arena, where God Almighty rules and has brought it squarely into the human arena where Goliath had all the advantages. Because he has successfully done this, he is able to create tremendous fear and dismay in Saul and all of his soldiers.

They aren't there to fight for Saul. They are there to march into the battle for the Lord's majesty. The Lord who was with them and among them desired to be trusted and adored, and He Himself would have given these Philistines into their hands. Yet because their eyes are full of the giant, all of them, even the king cowered in fear in the rocks and played it safe!

How adept the enemy is at getting us to focus all of our attention and activity primarily on the human and physical arena. Then we wonder why we live in fear and defeat. We haven't walked with God into the battles of life to see what His perspective is on the issues we are facing, let alone having desired to do His will!

When David arrived on the scene, he didn't stay on the human plane very long at all. It quickly became a contest between Goliath, whose power source was a block of stone named Dagon, and

David who was empowered by God Almighty. The outcome was Jehovah 1; Dagon 0. Goliath, who served a block of stone, got stoned by a shepherd boy who loved God. ***Please understand this: Goliath was killed by what he worshipped!*** What we worship has the power to give life or take away life. **David knew the battle was the Lord's and fear in his heart was destroyed by faith in the living God.**

#### **IV. Remedial Actions We Can Take:**

**The Word of God** – Unhealthy Fear must be attacked with the weapon of the Word of God. The Lord has made it very clear to us that He is omnipotent and awesome God. He is a mighty fortress and a strong tower of defense around us. We need to grasp and be gripped by the power of God who lives in us by His Spirit. He makes His Word come alive in us with anointing and teaches us to use it as a weapon confessed through lips of faith. We can not permit the enemy to reduce the issues of life to the human arena or to having our perspective limited by the size of the obstacles we face in life. Fear of failure or the unknown diminishes when exposed to the truth of God:

Romans 8:15 – 16: *“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received a Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”*

I John 4:16b – 18: *“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. 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.”*

**Embrace a Broken and Contrite Heart** – Permit the message delivered by the unhealthy fear to have its way in breaking your heart. Brokenness is special to God. Choose to face the issues in your heart, fear has permitted you to see, and be broken by your needs. Perhaps you will find old wounds in your heart in which the fear has taken root. Permit the brokenness of your heart to draw you to seek Him, in majesty and holiness and choose to look at yourself in the light of His love and grace.

**Confessing Your Needs to Him** – Choosing to face and admit the fears and confess them to God brings them out into the light of His love. The enemy only works in that which we permit to live in the darkness of our hearts and lives. When we reach out in faith and open ourselves to Him, He is delighted to come to our rescue! Openness to God is done through the choice we make to confess what we are permitting to live in us and our need of His power and majesty in our lives.

**Drawing Near to Him at the Cross** -- As we bring the things to the cross of Jesus by faith, and lay them in His bosom there He crucifies and destroys our fears. He also destroys everything that is in us that offends the heart of God. All that has wounded us, or the things that can and do act as prisons of the heart, are destroyed as we bring them to the cross by faith and see them

crucified with Him there. Irrational, unhealthy fears of the unknown or fear of failure that have imprisoned us in the past must be destroyed by Him if we expect to be victorious over them.

**Asking Him to Live in Your Heart by His Spirit** – He longs to fill us with His presence and walk with us by His Spirit. Jesus told us all we need to do is ask Him and the Father will give us the Holy Spirit to live in us. Jesus told us He would send another Counselor to be with us forever, The Spirit of Truth who would live with us and be in our hearts. The promises of Scripture relative to the filling of the Spirit are in the present indicative tense. We are to go on being filled with the Spirit. When He lives in us He doesn't permit fear to live with Him, He causes us to trust the Lord in everything. He is the very presence and the power of God in person in our hearts.

## **“Rejecting the Message of Fear”**

Matthew 14:25 – 33

### **Introduction:**

The topic today is “Fear.” The internal, nagging sense of dread, fear of the unknown that plagues many people. Our source of insight into this issue is the Bible: God’s word of His holy love for us, His word of truth!

The people in the Bible were normal people who did extraordinary things because they had been touched by God. The axiom: Faith will drive out fear or fear will prevent us from believing God.

Our job today is to be like them, taking by faith the same provisions they had and armed with similar hearts to know and please God.

The attitudes and desires we cherish, how we live our lives, always boils down to choices we make from the depths of our being.

### **I. The Internal Message Sent by Fear:**

I Peter 5:8, Colossians 1:13, 14, Luke 10:18 – 20, I John 4:4

### **II. Fear of Failure and the Unknown:**

Gideon: Judges 6:12 – 26

### **III. Fearing What is Seen in the Physical Realm:**

Matt. 14:25 – 33

### **IV. Remedial Actions We All Can Take:**

**The Word of God** Romans 8:15, 16 and I John 4:16b – 18

**A Broken and Contrite Heart**

**Confession**

**Coming to Jesus By Faith at the Cross**

**Inviting the Holy Spirit to Live in My Heart**



### **Discussion Starter Questions for Groups**

1. What are some things you have witnessed in our culture, over the past five months, which have created the internal message of fear?
2. Why do you think there are so many stories in the Bible that address the issue of fear in the human heart?
3. As you think about faith and fear, dwelling in our hearts and minds, is it a choice we make to permit either faith or fear to be our guiding attitude through which we face issues in life?
4. How would you describe the differences between healthy fear and irrational fear, inner anxiety about what could happen?
5. Do you think most Christians today understand the goal of our enemy Satan is to paralyze us with fear, to prevent us from taking actions born of faith in the Lord God?
6. As you think about the wonderful story of the reluctant hero of the faith Gideon, found in the book of Judges 6 and 7, what are some things that really stand out to you about Gideon's journey from fear to faith?
7. What are some of the key differences between King Saul and his army, opposed by Goliath? What are some key differences between David, the soldiers in the army, and Goliath?
8. Read together aloud Matthew 14:25 – 33 and discuss insights you have regarding Jesus' call to His man Peter, and Peter's fear when he saw the waves and the storm.
9. Read together aloud I John 4:7 – 21 and discuss insight you have regarding walking in fear and walking in the holy, self-emptying, other-oriented love of God.
10. Share words of faith with one another in your group about your own journey of taking actions born of faith and love, as opposed to choosing to be paralyzed by fear.