

The Commands of Christ

Sermon # 20

"Fear Not"

Matthew 10:28

So what are you afraid of? Some of you macho men, are saying, at least to yourselves, *"I'm not afraid of anything, man!"*

In response to that thought I like to share the story about a little boy who was afraid. *"One summer night during a severe thunderstorm a mother was tucking her small son into bed. She was about to turn the light off when he asked in a trembling voice, 'Mommy, will you stay with me all night?' Smiling, the mother gave him a warm hug and said tenderly, 'I can't dear, I have to sleep in Dad's room.' A long silence followed. At last it was broken by a shaky voice saying, 'The big sissy!'"* [www. bible.org/illus/f/f-22.htm]

All of you are "big sissy's" whether you admit it or not. Because everyone has something they are afraid of, for some it is things in the physical realm; some are afraid of snakes or spiders, or mice, some of you are afraid of things in the emotional realm, such as loneliness, or commitment or _____. Or your fear may physical, job related, economic or even spiritual.

Psychology Today asked 1,00 respondents what they feared the most. The answers in order of frequency were: *death of a loved one, serious personal illness, financial worries, nuclear war, being a victim of a crime, spiders, loss of a job, natural disaster, the dark, loneliness and being unloved.* Probably some of your fears are on this list. Although I can't understand personally why spider made the list and snakes did not.

According to recent research in the United States, 20 to 30 million people suffer from some form of fear. God knew this, and that is why *"Fear Not"* is in the Bible 364 times.

Tonight in our study of the "Commands of Christ," Jesus deals with that most common of all of man's enemies, fear. Turn with me to Matthew chapter ten and verse twenty-six where we read,

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

The imperative in these verses is (*probessithe*) “do not fear” and is repeated in verse 31. The context of this statement is the challenge of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in a sometimes hostile world.

First, What is fear?

It is the vicious, tormenting spirit that produces felling of disquiet caused by an expectation of danger. Some times fear is justified. If the external circumstances are perceived correctly, sometimes fear can be an appropriate reaction. I was told that during the ladies retreat a group of ladies was sitting on the porch visiting when a skunk decided to take a stroll through. I heard that Julie Kerr gave some sound advice when she said, “*Ladies sit very still.*” I think you ladies might appreciate this story. “*Two explorers where on a jungle safari when suddenly a ferocious lion jumped in front of them. “Keep calm” the first explorer whispered, ‘Remember what we read in that book on wild animals? If you stand perfectly still and look the lion in the eye, he will turn and run.’ ‘Sure, replied his companion, ‘You’ve read the book and I’ve read the book. But has the lion read the book?’* [www.bible.org/illus/f/f-22.htm]

But another possibility is that your fear may not be justified at all.

This unjustified fear can be defined by the acrostic F.E.A.R.

F alse

E xpectations

A ppearing

R eal

Secondly, What does Jesus mean when he says we are not to fear?

First we need to understand that Jesus is not forbidding us to ever experience fear, but teaching his disciples to not allow themselves to be paralyzed by fear, covered by it, or allow it to prevent them from accomplishing their mission because of it.

Third, How Can I Handle Fear?

Charles Swindoll in consideration of fear in his book *Three Steps Forward, Two Steps Back* gives four practical steps to handle fear.

1. Admit Them.

If we have something that is cause us to fear in an unhealthy way we need to name it and acknowledge it to God.

Fear is not of God for we read in 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."* Fear is a tactic of our enemy, the Devil. His purpose is to make our lives miserable and to keep us from doing what God has called us to do.

"During World War II, a military governor met with General George Patton in Sicily. When he praised Patton highly for his courage and bravery, the general replied, 'Sir I am not a brave man...the truth is, I am a utter craven coward. I have never been within the sound of gunshot or in sight of battle in my whole life that I wasn't so scared that I had sweat in the palms of my hands.' Years later, when Patton's autobiography was published, it contained this significant statement by the general; 'I learned very early in my life never to take counsel of my fears.'"
[www.bible.org/illus/f/f-22.htm]

Courage then is not the absence of fear but what we do in the presence of fear.

2. Commit Them to God.

You not only need to admit your fears to God, you need to verbally declare ourselves in his care.

But sometime I believe we are a little too simplistic in that. *"Five year-old Johnny was in the kitchen as his mother made supper. She asked him to go into the pantry and get her a can of tomato soup, but he didn't want to go in alone. 'It's dark in there and I'm scared.' She asked again, and he persisted. Finally she said, 'Its OK – Jesus will be there with you.' Johnny walked hesitantly to the door and slowly opened it. He peeked inside, saw it was dark, and started to leave when all at once an idea came, he said, 'Jesus, if you're in there, would You hand me that can of soup?'"*

[Connecting Point. Fear and Phobias: Replace Panic With Peace. Wednesday, March 19, 2003.
ConnectingPoint@Hope for the Heart.org]

3. Release Them. The Psalmist David wrote in

Psalm 55:22 *"Cast your burden on the LORD, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved."* This thought is repeated in the New Testament when Peter wrote in the precious invitation found in (1 Peter 5:7) to *"casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."*

4. Refuse to Retreat. Refuse to submit yourself again to the fear that you have released to him. Again the Psalmist says (34:4,6-8) *"I sought the LORD, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears. (6) This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles. (7) The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them.*

(8) Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!"

[Principles drawn from Charles Swindoll. Three Steps Forward, Two Steps Back: Persevering Through Pressure. Chap 11 – Fear: Fierce Grip of Panic (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1980) p. 146]

In our last study on the commands of Christ we considered the command to “Be Wise As Serpents” in Matthew 10:16-22. We found this command in the Lord’s instructions to His disciples as He sent them out. In fact there were three commands found in those verses. The first command was that we are to “Behold,”- “pay special attention to” the fact that we are sent as sheep among the wolves. Our primary defense is dependence on the Shepherd. The Second command is two-fold; We are to be Shrewd Minded And We are to Soft Hearted. The Third Command is that we are to beware of men, that is we are to be on guard against being taken unaware.