



Fear Not

Week 2 - A Proper Place

Fear has a proper place and it is in the hands of God.

First Video song – I know who holds tomorrow.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GKNbmYOAw>

In John's Gospel 14:27 we are told that God's peace is very different from any peace that the world can give.

Jesus said: "I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."

I wonder, as you go through the day, do you ever pause to talk to God – take 3-5 minutes even just to thank Him. Or do you instead, allow yourself to be overwhelmed and hold onto fear and anxiety?

I want you to realize that it is possible to be free from fear and anxiety. That when you become aware of how you react to difficult or stressful situations, you have a choice as to how you respond and can choose a more faithful response.

Last week we learned that God *did not give us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*

Today we're going to be hearing again from the Apostle Paul as we go a step further in learning how to respond appropriately to unhealthy fear. For many of us fear and anxiety are ever-ready responses to the troubles of this life. It's so deeply ingrained in our thinking that you could say fear has become a habit for most of us. The good news is that like any other habit, you can develop new ones in place of the old.

At the end of his letter to the Philippian church the Apostle Paul gives 2 verses in particular that are important today:

Verses 6-7 *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

Fear and anxiety are intimately related. Doesn't it sound wonderful to be able to live a life completely free from all fear and anxiety? Do you think that maybe Paul is a little delusional when he says "*Do not be anxious about anything.*"

Afterall, Paul hasn't experienced the restrictions we are facing now with a pandemic? Paul hasn't driven along the Monash freeway, during "normal" peak hour rush. Paul didn't have a mortgage to pay, or live with social media, healthcare deductions, or had his credit card or identify stolen. Yes, Paul doesn't have any idea how difficult and troublesome it is to live today!

However, while it's true that Paul lived in a very different time and experienced life in very different ways than we do today, it's also true that he just might know what he's talking about.

Paul has as much experience as any of us with trials and tribulations. He has had ample opportunity to be scared out of his mind and to work through fear and anxiety. He says himself that he deals with daily concern over all the churches he's worked with. In light of all this, says in verses 11-12

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation

True peace is not found in positive thinking, in the absence of conflict or in good feelings. It comes from knowing that God is in control. Our citizenship in Christ's kingdom is sure, our destiny is set and we can have victory over sin.

Are you able to get along happily and be content in any circumstances you face? Paul knew how to be satisfied whether he had plenty or whether he was in need. The secret was drawing on Christ's power for strength. Let God's peace guard your heart against anxiety.

Paul found out this "secret" enabling him to live a life free from fear and anxiety? He learned how to truly live a deeply contented and satisfied life? How did he do this?

Give it ALL to God

I know it sounds too simple. I know it sounds too Christian. I know it feels like the answer should be more complicated for such a complex and destructive problem. But I also know it's true.

The secret that Paul learned about fear, anxiety, and worry is that they belong in the hands of God - not yours. What we put in our mind determines what comes out in our words and actions. Paul tells us to program our minds with thoughts that are true, honourable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and worthy of praise.

Paul received help from the church in Philippi, but he said he could get along happily because he could see life from God's point of view. He focused on what he was supposed to do, not what he felt he should have.

Paul had his priorities straight and he was grateful for everything God had given him. Paul had detached himself from the non-essentials so that he could concentrate on the eternal.

Often the desire for more or better possessions is really a longing to fill an empty place in a person's life.

The secret is to always pray a **gratitude laced prayer** in every circumstance and situation you find yourself in. It's not that fear, anxiety, worry, doubt, don't exist, it's that they have a proper place.

THE DIFFICULTY of course is developing the habit in which we place those troublesome situations and circumstances in the hands of God INSTEAD OF holding onto them ourselves.

Let me say that last part again. *The difficulty is developing the habit in which we place those troublesome situations and circumstances into the hands of God.*

One of the things I love about God is that He's not surprised about the way we feel. He formed us and knit us together in the womb, numbered our days, and knows every hair on our head. I can guarantee you He doesn't think our irrational fear of clowns is silly, or that our anxiety about getting a debilitating illness someday means we somehow have less faith than others.

But I also know *He wants to hear from us*;

“...in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God.”

We learn to present our requests, with thanksgiving to God. And when we are faithful to put our fear and anxiety in its proper place we can expect that peace will follow.

We need to examine what we are putting into our minds through the TV, Internet, books, conversations, movies and magazines. And take action to replace any harmful input with wholesome material.

One of the most important actions is to read God's word and pray each and every day. And ask God to help focus our mind on Him, on what is good and pure.

Second Video song – Faith above fear

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5z4VqK5ryE&pbjreload=101>

Expect Peace

As you pray through fear, trouble and adversity make sure that you simultaneously hold the expectation that God will come through on His end of the deal.

I cannot logically explain, "***peace that transcends all understanding,***" but I can tell you that I believe it's possible. And I can tell you, it's amazing.

I witnessed this is the struggles my sister Lorraine experienced as she battled brain cancer for 11 years and the loss of her devoted husband during this time from a massive stroke. She was always at peace, trusting in God and "just getting on with life." And on Wednesday she was taken peacefully to be reunited with her husband and to be with God.

I am sure many of you would have similar stories of observing the peace that comes from God within someone.

Paul says he has learned the secret to being content in every situation he says,

Verse 13 "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength"

Paul knows what we need to know; that in the hands of God through the power of Christ, anything is possible.

Conclusion

I know that there are some listening today who have their doubts. I know that there are some who are facing impossible situations, terrifying medical diagnoses, and adversity. I know that a life free from fear and anxiety seems completely ludicrous. All I can ask is that you commit this coming week to developing a more faith-filled response in every circumstance and situation.

I said earlier that, *the difficulty is developing the habit in which you place those troublesome situations and circumstances into the hands of God.*

To whom or what are you drawn when you feel empty inside, when you are experiencing difficulties and struggles in your life? How can you find true contentment?

The answer lies in your perspective, your priorities and your source of power.

So this week, let's commit together to changing our habits by letting go of fear, anxiety, worry, etc. and expecting a divine peace that transcends understanding.

Perhaps try taking time every morning to write out a few prayers. Begin and end your prayer with gratitude, name your request to the Lord, and trust the process. Throughout the day, as trouble comes, practice the same thing by audibly thanking God and

naming your request to Him. I trust that these small steps will lead to big breakthroughs for you over time.

There is so much unhealthy fear in our world today, and much of it for legitimate reasons. It's time we as believers recognize it and start putting it all in its proper place; The almighty and ever-capable hands of God.

Prayer - "Lord, we need Your help and guidance through the many trials and troubles we face in life. Give us the strength to respond in faith, with gratitude and thanksgiving, no matter what situation we are in."