

CONQUOR THE SPIRIT OF FEAR

INTRODUCTION

We live in an age of social media, everyone is bombarded with information and communication. People are exposed to so much more than what they faced in the relatively sheltered lives they lived before the information and communication age! Our world is a much bigger place than what it was before. Information is instantly available, and a lot of this information is negative and frightening.

We hear of America and North Korea bumping heads and threatening nuclear warfare. We hear of plagues, natural disasters, government failures and even persecution of Christians. Photos and video feed expose us to gruesome images that no normal person should ever have to witness.

The latest trend in this ever-increasing information overload is fake news or fake information – it comes from the pit of hell. It's deception at an elevated level and, even in our own country we have seen the impact of taking fake information as the "truth". Just consider the recent events of the well-known audit firm and it's reporting on the revenue services. People lost their jobs and reputations.

Recently, there were warnings on WhatsApp that on the 3rd November all white people would be attacked and people were fearful. I sent out a message against "fear mongering".

Some time ago, someone sent me a WhatsApp message with a gruesome picture in it. This message was being used to fuel xenophobia in the black communities.

The enemy's goal in using this information to strike fear and anxiety into people's lives. When fear reigns, people are paralysed by it, faith fades and lawlessness abounds, this achieves the devil's desire to kill, steal and destroy.

Paul identifies the "spirit of fear" in 2 Timothy 1:7. This spirit is at work in our times as never before. Today I want to give us clarity around some of the ways the spirit of fear is at work, and what we can do to conquer it!

MESSAGE

IT'S NOT GOD'S PLAN FOR US TO LIVE UNDER THE SPIRIT OF FEAR

2 Timothy 1:7 (KJV) For God hath not given us **the** spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Isaiah 41:10 (AMPC) Fear not [there is nothing to fear], for I am with you; do not look around you in terror and be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen and harden you to difficulties, yes, I will help you; yes, I will hold you up and retain you with My [victorious] right hand of rightness and justice.

Some commentators write that the words "fear not" appear in the Bible 365 times. Once for every day. Others say it appears even more.

John 10:10 (NKJV) The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

Philippians 4:6-7 (NKJV) 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.

The Bible is clear, it is not God's intention that we live under the sway of "the spirit of fear". This demon is just a demon and Jesus said we have authority over it!

Luke 10:19 (NKJV) Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

We need to take back the victory that is ours, it starts in our hearts and minds. It's time to say "NO" to fear!

WHAT IS FEAR?

The noun: fear is an unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain, or harm. Other words for it are: terror, fright, fearfulness, horror, alarm, panic, agitation, trepidation, dread, consternation, dismay, distress.

The verb for fear is: be afraid of (someone or something) as likely to be dangerous, painful, or harmful, be fearful of, be scared of, be apprehensive of, dread, live in fear of, go in terror of, be terrified of, be terrified by, cower before, tremble before, cringe from, shrink from, flinch from.

Fear is a natural survival instinct that God built into us. We have heard the expression that when we are faced with a fearful situation, we can go into "fight or flight mode".

When we find ourselves constantly living under the verb description of fear and our lives are filled with fear, anxiety and dread, we are being oppressed by the "spirit of fear" and we need to deal with it.

THE IMPACT OF FEAR

Physical health. Fear weakens our immune system and can cause cardiovascular damage, gastrointestinal problems such as ulcers and irritable

bowel syndrome, and decreased fertility. It can lead to accelerated ageing and even premature death.

Memory. Fear can impair formation of long-term memories and cause damage to certain parts of the brain.

Brain processing and reactivity. Fear can interrupt processes in our brains that allow us to regulate emotions, read non-verbal cues and other information presented to us, think before acting, and act ethically.

Mental health. Some consequences of long-term fear include fatigue, clinical depression, and PTSD.

Spiritual health. Fear frustrates faith! It's the opposite of faith, it will paralyse our faith! It will destroy our God-given destiny if we allow it to.

DEALING WITH THE SPIRIT OF FEAR

1. We set ourselves to seek the Lord

2 Chronicles 20:1-3a (NKJV) It happened after this that the people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and others with them besides the Ammonites, came to battle against Jehoshaphat. 2 Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, from Syria; and they are in Hazazon Tamar" (which is En Gedi). 3 **And Jehoshaphat feared,**

- The Old Testament WhatsApp message was effective: "Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea".
- And Jehoshaphat feared...

2 Chronicles 20:3b-4 (NKJV) But Jehoshaphat knew how to deal with fear: and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. 4 So Judah gathered together to ask help from the Lord; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord.

- Jehoshaphat didn't send out a WhatsApp message (messengers) to all the people to say, "ohhh the end is nigh!".
- He set himself to seek the Lord and called all the people to do the same. They even fasted!

And God honoured this response:

2 Chronicles 20:14-15(NKJV) Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. 15 And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you,

King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the Lord to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's.

2. We praise God with thankful hearts.

We know the rest of the story of Jehoshaphat. Instead of running in fear, they stood up and stood strong. As they started to sing praise to the Lord, He fought on their behalf and they watched the enemy destroy itself!

High praise and God's word combined are a mighty tool of spiritual warfare:

Psalm 149:6-9 (NKJV) Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand, 7 To execute vengeance on the nations, And punishments on the peoples; 8 To bind their kings with chains, And their nobles with fetters of iron; 9 To execute on them the written judgment— This honor have all His saints. Praise the Lord!

3. We position ourselves with 20:20 vision and stand our ground.

A key statement was made by Jehoshaphat: **2 Chronicles 20:20b** (NKJV) Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper".

- Jehoshaphat was telling his people to position themselves in faith – "Believe in the Lord your God and in His prophets (which represented His word).

It's time to say, "I refuse to accept this spirit of fear, I position myself for victory!"

2 Chronicles 20:17 (NKJV) You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you."

Ephesians 6:10 (NKJV) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

1. We don't just take any position, we position ourselves in the Lord!
2. Ephesians 6 goes on to tell us to put on the whole armour of God!

In the book of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo, were severely threatened by king Nebuchadnezzar when they refused to worship him.

Daniel 3:15b (NKJV) "But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

But they stood their ground!

Daniel 3:16-18 (NKJV) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. 18 But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

Paul wrote, "to live is Christ, to die is gain". What can man really do to us? What can the enemy do? If we die, we gain, if we live we gain great victory.

Therefore, why should we submit ourselves to fear and intimidation? Why should we give in to the spirit of fear? We have the Spirit of love, power and a sound mind!

4. Listen to the truth.

Someone said, "Those who have fear cannot believe that which is true, or they believe the wrong thing. It is necessary that they discover the truth, for **truth is the foundation for faith**".

John 8:32 (NKJV) "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The Pharisees, even after seeing the mighty signs and wonders that Jesus did, kept denying the truth that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

The spreading of false news and lies on social media is pure deception. It's meant to deceive us like the Pharisees meant to deceive the people. The enemy's warfare is to deceive people and strike fear into our hearts.

Instead of believing everything we read or hear, we need to test whether it's the truth. Lies and deception are the tool of the devil, but the truth will free us from all fear.

Matthew 4:24 (NLT) News about him spread as far as Syria, and people soon began bringing to him all who were sick. And whatever their sickness or disease, or if they were demon possessed or epileptic or paralyzed—he healed them all.

Jesus is the "Good News", He is "The Truth". When what we hear and see starts striking fear and anxiety into our lives, it's time to have a look at the truth that Jesus is still Lord of all. It's time to embrace the truth of God's word. This Truth will make us free.

CONCLUSION

This explosive growth of fear was foretold by Jesus: **Luke 21:25-28** (NKJV) "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

We live in a time where people's hearts are failing them for fear! It's time to look up, our redemption is very close.

This is how we defeat the spirit of fear!

1. We set ourselves to seek the Lord.
2. We start to praise God with thankful hearts.
3. We position ourselves with 20:20 vision and stand our ground.
4. Listen to the truth.

The plan of this spirit is to attack our minds with fear and worry, until we are overwhelmed and intimidated into ceasing the work.

In Christ Jesus we have authority over all demons. When we attacked by the spirit of fear and intimidation or any other spiritual reality, we must take authority and rebuke that spirit!

What fear is trying to take a hold of you right now? What threat or trouble are you facing?

We can pray like this: "In the name of Jesus Christ, I take my every fearful thought captive. I rebuke the spirit of fear and intimidation that has been harassing me. You have no authority over my life. I plead the blood of Jesus over my life and I stand on **2 Timothy 1:7** (KJV) For God hath not given us **the** spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."