

# Faith vs Fear • The Battle for our Hearts and Minds

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We are between book studies. We finished 1 Timothy last week. We're going to start 2 Timothy soon, but I often do this between book studies. I'll just take some time and go through something that I feel like is on my heart. And I've got something on my heart. That's why I'm sitting down today.

We're going to have a family talk. If I could have put a fireplace behind me, I'd have done it. Little fireside chat. But when I'm sitting down like this, it puts me in a little conversational mode, and we need to have a conversation. Except I'm going to do all the talking.

Would you open up your Bibles please to Romans chapter 12. I'm going to start us off with 2 passages. The first one we'll read together and then the second one I'll put up on the screen, but Romans chapter 12, please. Do you remember those talks like with your parents where they said we need to sit down and have a talk and then they did all the talking? Yeah, me too.

Romans chapter 12, are you there? We're going to read the first 2 verses. It says, *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."* (ESV)

It's a powerful, powerful passage. And then I'm going to put the second one up on the screen for you so that we can see it together. It is from Luke 18:8. This is Jesus talking and He says,

## **Luke 18:8 (ESV)**

*"...when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"*

*"...when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"*

Would you pray with me?

Heavenly Father, as we get into Your Word today and as we talk about some very important things, I just really pray that your Holy Spirit would lead and guide. I pray that You would speak to hearts. I pray that You'd bring clarity and understanding and comfort and blessing.

Lord, we look to You to accomplish what You desire through Your Word today. And we thank You and praise You for it in Jesus' precious name, amen.

The last year and a half has been hard. Hasn't it? It's been very hard. And I have come to believe that in the light of everything that has transpired in the last year and a half or so, that Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. The verses that we started off reading here this morning are some of the most important exhortations that, frankly, have ever been given to the body of Christ.

And even though they were given by the apostle Paul for any age, any time, any time period, any church, they are very, very relevant to we who are living in this day and age and dealing with the things that we're dealing with.

Here's the sad part, and this is where we need to have a family talk. I believe that these verses have gone largely unheeded today by the body of Christ. And I want to get into what the passage is saying to us, but first I want to explain why I'm feeling the need today to share this message with you.

We all, nobody has to tell us that we've all been dominated by a particular virus for the past year and a half, and it has become literally all we talk about. It is most certainly all we hear about and it dominates the news. It dominates our attention. It dominates our lives, but I'm not going to talk about the virus. I'm going to talk about the effect that the virus has had on the body of Christ, because I think that's the more important topic, to be completely honest with you.

I have to tell you, I am far more concerned about how we, the body of Christ, are reacting to the virus. I'm far more concerned about that than I am the virus itself. And you might hear me say something like that and think that maybe I don't truly understand how serious it is. I would respectfully differ with you.

In August, Sue and I got COVID part 2, 2.0, whatever you want to call it. And it was hard. We were sick for 14 days straight. We, interestingly enough, we both got sick at the same time. We're sitting across from each other in the recliners, just going, oh, you know what I mean? And it hurt to move. It hurt to, we were

exhausted. Couldn't hardly get up to get a glass of water. Come back to your chair and you're like out of breath like you just ran a marathon or something. It was hard. It was really hard.

I understand that particular perspective, but I've also personally performed 3 memorial/graveyard gravesite services for people who have passed away from complications related to COVID. So, I think I get it.

I mean, it's pretty tough to be with people who've just lost a loved one and not understand the gravity of what we're dealing with, okay. But even as difficult as all those things are, it is my sincere and unyielding belief that there are things far more serious than COVID in our midst as believers that we need to be aware of. Far more serious.

And the reason I say that is because I believe that born again Christians have fundamentally failed to discern the danger that is going on through this pandemic in the world today. We have failed to see that we are in the fight of our lives, and it has nothing to do with a physical battle.

Because the physical battle, I mean, if it ends up taking you, guess what? Then you're home. You're with Jesus. If it takes you, you walk into glory and behold the never removed presence of Jesus. That's the worst it can do for you.

There's something far greater here. There is a sickness that is going on in the body of Christ that is not a virus, and it is not something you can catch physically. But our fight is against the sickness of fear and dread. And it has been rampant in the body of Christ, and it distresses me. I just have to tell you. It distresses me.

And honestly, I think it's far more serious and has farther reaching implications, than any sickness of the body could ever have. I expect the world to freak out when something like this happens.

I mean, we live in a godless world today and all they have is this life. That's all they have. They have nothing beyond this. They don't believe in God. They don't believe in any kind of a, life after this life. And so, what are you going to do when something comes along and threatens everything you have and all that you have, what are you going to do? You're going to freak out. And I expect the world to freak out.

And I don't really, frankly, get all that upset when the world freaks out. It's well, so what happens when you, that's all you got. When all you have is being

threatened. Yeah. I expect people to get weird about it. And we've seen from the world that's exactly what they're doing. They're freaking out.

I mean, we have, Sue and I have a lovely, adopted daughter living in Australia. Have you heard about what's going on in Australia? They're not letting people leave town. They have the roads blocked. It's been absolute craziness. The world's freaking out.

What has troubled me deeply though, is seeing the body of Christ have the same reaction. That's what bothers me. And that's why I started off with this passage here in Romans chapter 12 because I think that the big question that we need to ask and answer today is how did this happen? How did we get here? How did we get to the point where we're freaking out just like the world? That's really the question of the hour.

And so, we come to this passage here that we started off reading Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. And you'll notice in those verses that there are 2 things that we are to do and there's one thing that we are not to do. These are the do's and don'ts of Romans 12. Let me put them up on the screen for you. The do's and don'ts for us to:

#### **DOs and DON'Ts of Romans 12:1-2**

- DO offer your bodies as living sacrifices
- DO NOT be conformed to this world
- DO be transformed by the renewing of your mind

DO offer your bodies as living sacrifices. We are to NOT be conformed to this world. And the other DO is that we are to be transformed. DO be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

And these are the 3 things we're going to look at here this morning. And we're going to see how these things apply to what is going on in our lives and in the world today.

First, look with me again here in your Bible. Chapter 12, verse 1, look with me again at that verse.

#### **Romans 12:1 (ESV)**

*I appeal to you, therefore brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

*I appeal to you, therefore brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

Now, this is a very interesting verse because the apostle tells us here that it is an act of spiritual worship to present to the Lord something that frankly is not spiritual, but rather physical. Did you notice that? He says, offer your bodies, “*your bodies as a living sacrifice.*” And offering your body is in a sense, it's surrendering your body to the Lord.

Can I tell you why he asks us to surrender our bodies to the Lord? It's the same reason he asks us to surrender anything else that we happen to have. It's because it belongs to Him anyway. But He gives those things to us as stewards of them that we might offer them back to Him and that He might use them according to His purpose.

Have you ever thought about the fact that, your body belongs to the Lord, all of your material wealth belongs to the Lord, your spouse belongs to the Lord, your kids. These are my children. No, actually they're the Lord's children. He gave them to you for a short period of time and you have this stewardship over them for that period of time, but He constantly wants you to be giving those things back to Him.

He constantly wants you to be offering those things back to Him, right? My marriage, my wife, in my case, my children. Even though they're grown, we offer our Lord them back to you. All that we have we offer these things back to you.

Our physical bodies Paul says, is a spiritual act of worship to offer this physical body. Why? Because the physical body is the recognition of our life on this earth. Your physical body is something you are going to set aside at some point, but for now, He ought, He asks you to offer it up to Him because it represents your life, right? The physical life.

Let me show you something interesting. In 1 Corinthians chapter 6, we've already made reference to this. Paul writes,

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)**

*...do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own ....you were bought with a price.*

*...do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? (look what he says here) You are not your own....you were bought with a price.*

We talked about that in communion. How did Jesus purchase us? With His blood, right? He says, don't you understand? Don't you realize, "*your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...*" It doesn't belong to you. You can't say what the world says.

The world says, it's my body. I can do what I want with it. You can't say that. It's His body, right? It's His body and conversely, not only can you not do whatever you want with it, He can do whatever He wants with it. It's His.

And so Paul says, in light of this merciful God who has given all these things, offer your physical life, literally your body, to the Lord as an act of spiritual worship. Offer it up.

Well, here's the deal. We've failed to worship Him in that way. Largely as the body of Christ, we've failed to worship Him in that way. We have viewed, or at least tended to view our bodies like the world views their bodies.

We look at our bodies like, it's my body to dress and feed and work out and make it do what I want it to do. And it's all about me and all about my life and it's all about how I live and what I live for. Rather than taking these physical bodies that we've been given as stewards over for a short time and use them for Him.

And see what happens when we begin to live and take that which is created, and we begin to live for it ,and we begin to focus on it. We begin to worship the creation rather than the creator. Right?

Paul says to offer your body as a sacrifice is to live for the Creator. To keep your body as your own, to do with as you see fit, is to worship the creation. You get it? This is what we're supposed to do, but it is frankly what we have not done. How should believers view their bodies? I think the best way is Paul said it when he wrote to the Philippians up on the screen. I love this. He says,

**Philippians 1:21-22 (ESV)**

*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me.*

*For to me to live is Christ, Christ* (and frankly, I could just quote that part of it and that would be all I would need to quote. He does go on, however, and say) *and to die is gain.* (he said, and he says) *If I am to live in the flesh,* (and that means in this body, if I'm to continue to function in this body, well, you know what that means?) *that* (just basically) *means fruitful labor for me.*

If I stick around in this physical body a little bit longer, Paul says, then it's just, okay, cool. Then it's God's purpose. It's God's will. It's God's time and service. If He takes me home, that's His business. And in that case, for me, that's gain. Right?

Isn't this an interesting perspective? Isn't it so different from what we see in the world, though? I mean, the world's perspective is just so completely opposite and so foreign to what the Bible tells us here.

But I want you to consider thinking about those, that phrase, *“For me to live is Christ.”* Just think about even writing that down or just thinking, put it in your brain. *“For me to live...”* And that means, for me to live in this body, is Christ. *“For me to live is Christ. For me to live.*

See, again, the world tells you for you to live is you. It's you because it's all about pleasure, entertainment, joy, happiness. No, Paul says, *“For me to live is Christ.”* It's all about Him. It's all about Him.

Let's keep looking at Romans chapter 12. The next portion of the passage you'll notice says in verse 2, *“Do not be conformed to this world.”* Okay. The word, conformed means to comply with the world in its rules, its standards, and its principles. Paul says, don't do that. Don't be conformed to the world.

And what I hear the Holy Spirit saying here in this verse is that it's possible for a born-again believer to become conformed to the world. Otherwise, why would he give the warning, right? Why give the warning if it's not even possible that it could happen? Of course it's possible.

He says, *“Do not be conformed to... (the) world.”* What is being conformed to the world look like? Well, it looks like loving what they love. It looks like desiring what they desire. It looks like fearing what they fear. Okay? It looks like living the way they live.

In my own Bible time lately, I've been going back over the Sermon on the Mount. It's funny. That's what Sue's teaching right now on the Women of the Word series. But I've been reading and going back over the Sermon on the

Mount too and really enjoying it because I love that passage. Back when I was going through Matthew, I think I took about a year to get through the Sermon on the Mount. I wanted to drag it out as long as possible.

But there's an overriding theme, I don't know if you've ever noticed in the Sermon on the Mount. Over and over and over again in that sermon, Jesus says, this is the way the people of the world are, you be different. You've heard that it was, has been said, but I say to you right?

And there's even one point in the Sermon on the Mount where Paul, or excuse me, where Jesus says, do not be like them. He talks about something the world is all about and then says but you don't be that way don't be like them. See that's the theme of the Sermon on the Mount, do not be conformed to the world around you.

See this is a problem isn't? This is really a challenging sort of a thing because I don't know about you, but I came to the Lord when I was, well, I mean, really got serious about walking with the Lord when I was about 25 years old. And by that time, 25 years, I had become well acquainted with the ways of the world. The way the world does things, the way the world thinks and loves, and desires, and acts, and responds, and it was part of me. It was ingrained in me.

And then I come to Jesus, goodness gracious. And He says, don't be that way. Don't be like the world. I'm like. It's okay. The Lord tells me I've given you My Spirit. I've given you My Spirit, but here's the deal Paul, you must constantly choose Me every day. You must reject that which is of the world and you must embrace that which is of me every single day. That's hard, isn't it?

Can I just tell you right now that if you guys weren't here today, I'd be going through this same message because I need to hear this myself. I still struggle with not being conformed. Not falling into that form of worldliness that I learned so well before I came to know Christ.

But we, as the body of Christ, need to admit we've been conformed. We've taken our cues from the world, and we've become very much like them in our ways, our responses, our feelings, and yes, our fears. We have become very much like them.

Let me show you one reason why I believe this is true. I'll put up a passage from Colossians 3. Look at this on the screen. Paul writes and says,



### **Colossians 3:1-3 (ESV)**

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. (or if you will, of the earth) For you have died, and your life (he says) is hidden with Christ (right) in God.*

Simply put, the apostle Paul is saying in this passage that our thoughts and desires as Christians are to be on the things of eternity and heaven and less, and less, on the things of this earth.

Now listen, I understand that as a human being living on the earth, you've got to deal with stuff. There's things we have to deal with. We have to go to work. We have to earn money. We have to be able to buy food. We have to buy cars and maintain them. And get insurance and all these other things that are all part of living on earth. I get it. And I know that those things take up a lot of our time and a lot of our attention.

But what we have to fight against is those things drawing us down to a place where that's where we live all the time, and we don't give the time and attention that otherwise needs to be given to things that are above.

And the reason I'm giving you that exhortation is because if there's one thing I've learned by our reaction to this pandemic, our reaction as the body of Christ, if there's one thing I've learned, it's that we have not focused our attention on eternity. We have focused it on the here and now. And we have been filled with the same fear, the same dread as the world.

And can I stop for just a moment to tell you that fear and dread and all those other things have nothing to do with whether you wear a mask or get a shot. Oh, everybody focuses on these externals. I'm talking about what's in your heart.

Do you know we have a lot of people even in our fellowship here who work in the medical industry and the medical profession, and some of them come to church with a mask on because they want to be careful not to do anything against their patients. We have some cancer nurses and things like that, and they want to be in church, but they also want to protect their patients. And yet there

are Christians who are judgmental about that. That shouldn't be. That shouldn't be.

And frankly, that's the other thing that's really bothered me about the pandemic. I'm not going to get into it a whole lot, but the other thing that really bothered me is that it has divided the body of Christ. It has divided us to the point where on social media or even to somebody's face we're willing to be cruel to our brothers and sisters in Jesus because they have a different opinion.

I was mentioning before and I told Sue, I said, if the apostle John was here right now, you know what he would say to the body of Christ? Little children love one another. And we'd say, yeah, but John, you don't, let me tell you what's going on in the world and here's all the thing that we tell them all about the pandemic. And all this stuff and all the stuff we're going through. And we'd say, what should we do about that?

He'd say, little children love one another. Yeah, but John, you don't understand. We're really under a lot of stress here. I mean, this is a really difficult situation. Little children love one another. That was John's message in a nutshell. We haven't gotten that one down very good.

But I want to come back to this issue about not being anxious about your life. Jesus actually makes that statement again. I told you I've been going through the Sermon on the Mount and I came across that in Matthew chapter 6, where Jesus says, *"Do not be anxious about your life."*

And we've probably all read it, and we know what a challenge it is to not be anxious. I deal with anxiousness just like you do. But we hear that, and we think, do not be anxious about your life. And we're okay, how do I do that?

We forget that right before Jesus said, do not be anxious about your life. Do you know what He said? If you read that passage, if you go right ahead of do not be anxious, that section of Scripture says, *"do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth."* You see, that's the secret to not being anxious about your life.

Make sure that this isn't your treasure, or whatever you can have in this life because I've got news for you. If your treasure is in this life, you will be anxious about your life because everything goes away. Everything except Jesus goes away at one time or another. And so, if your treasure is here, what happens? He says, your heart is here also, right? And so, if your heart is here, then your anxious thoughts are going to be here.

But He says, don't do that. Lay up instead treasures in heaven because those aren't going to go away and you'll never be anxious because He's protecting what you treasure, right?

See, that's the interesting thing about this whole idea of don't be anxious, don't be anxious, don't be anxious. Well, that's just really easy to say, but if you don't connect it with what He said earlier about laying up treasures in heaven, you're just going to continue to be anxious and then feel guilty about it. And that's the way a lot of Christians live frankly. They know what the Word says, but they're not doing it and they just feel guilty about it.

We all once again, see daily that the world is living in total fear for their lives. I mean, you don't have to look very far, but once again, that's what we expect among people who have no hope outside of this life.

But listen, we're Christians. We're followers of Jesus. We are born-again believers. We serve the one who has conquered death and the grave. And we ought to be showing the world confidence in the one who conquered death and the grave rather than responding in fear and dread like they are.

Here's the question. Are we showing the world our hope and our confidence in the Lord? We should be showing them an unshakable faith. Unshakable. And that doesn't mean we're cocky. It doesn't mean we go around arrogant and criticizing other people. It means showing in love and compassion what it is to be confident and have your hope in something greater than this life.

Because I've got to tell you something. I've pastored, I think long enough in my 35 years or so as a pastor, in my 64 years now of living as a human being, I've learned a little something about human nature. And that is, the more you focus on something, the bigger it gets. And that includes both negative and positive.

I don't believe this fear thing is going away in the world. I'll just be honest with you. I've got to be careful what I, how to say this. I believe the world is being prepped for even greater control. We all know that there's an anti-Christ coming one day, and he will be revealed. And I believe he will rule by fear, and the world is being prepared for that.

But you, as a believer in Jesus, you're not being prepared for that. You're being prepared to live by faith, not by sight. You are being prepared to live courageously in faith, trusting the Lord. Because I've got to tell you something. When we begin to give in to fear, we give in to an unrelenting master. Fear will not let you go apart from the Lord. And as Christians, we have no business

bowing at the feet of fear, no business. Cause he's a task master let me tell you. And it's the tool of the enemy. And we've been given to another master. We've been promised to another master and guess what? He doesn't deal in fear. Let me show you a passage on the screen from 2 Timothy.

**2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)**

*...God gave us a spirit NOT of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

*...God gave us a spirit NOT of fear (notice I emphasize that for you on the slide there) but of power and love and self-control.*

This is a wonderful passage that reminds us that this whole fear thing, this isn't of God. This is 100% the making of the world and too much to the enemy's joy and delight that people are walking in it. But this is not what the Lord is doing. The Lord is not preparing you through fear. The Lord is preparing you or desiring to prepare you through faith.

Here's the question, which spirit are we conveying to the world? Are we conveying the spirit of faith and confidence in the Lord, or are we conveying the same spirit of the world, which is fear. Fear of what might happen? Because there's a spirit in the world. There's a spirit of the world.

There's, we all, John tells us in one of his epistles, he says we know that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know that. And I know that sounds like a dramatic statement, but I didn't make it. He did.

And so, there's this spirit of the world that is very prevalent and very controlling. We've seen it. We have seen the world fall under that spirit's influence. Have we not? The whole stinking globe is under the influence of that spirit.

And then Paul comes along, and he says, but God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of love and power and self-control. That's what we've been given.

Here's my question. Are we walking in the right spirit? Because, just because you're a Christian doesn't mean you're going to walk always in the power of the Holy Spirit. You probably have learned that by now, right? I mean, that was a real disappointment to me when I figured it out that this is something I have to continually choose to yield to. I used to think it was going to be automatic, it's like, I'm a Christian now. Woo hoo! Boy, that's when the battle begins doesn't it?

Because now you've got the spirit of the world and the Spirit of Jesus Christ who has now come to live inside of you, and He's not going to dominate you. He's a gentleman. And that whole, and He'll convict you when you get off base, but he's not going to, He's not going to turn you into a puppet. That would demean you as a human being and someone created in the image of God. You have to choose Him every day.

I choose to follow the Spirit of Christ in me rather than the spirit of the world that has dominated the world. The last portion of Romans chapter 12:2, look at it there in your Bible. So, this is the final do, he says,

**Romans 12:2 (ESV)**

*...but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

*...but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, (and then Paul speaks of the powerful benefit of that renewing, he says) that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

And I love this last portion of Romans because it exposes for us that I think the primary reason that much of the body of Christ is acting just like the world. And that is because we have not been renewed in our minds. We've not fully been renewed. Because you see, renewal of the mind doesn't just take place when we hear the Word of God. It's when we lay hold of it by faith. Okay?

You can know the Word of God here. But people like to talk about that incredibly long 18 inch journey from here to here. And it's true. There is a need among born-again believers to not just hear the Word of God, but to embrace it by faith. And when that happens, we get set free.

Do you guys remember that letter I read to you from that gal a couple of weeks ago? Who talked about just that transformation in her life, when she got serious about the Word of God, and began to embrace it by faith. Remember one of the elements, she talked about the kind of person she was before, and then the kind of person Christ is making her today.

And one of the things she said in that second description of herself is she said, I no longer fear the death of the body. I wonder how many Christians can say that. I no longer fear the death of the body. Her mind had been transformed, and she was now walking in a peaceful confidence that Jesus has me and He's not letting go. And my life is His. I am literally bound up in His arms and He won't

let go. And all the days ordained for me were written in His book before one of them came to be.

When you begin to really get a hold of that, by faith, changes the way you live. It changes everything. It's a dynamic that begins to enter into your life that is just incredibly powerful. I want to share with you just some quick promises from God's Word and the blessings that go along with it. Let's start in, oh, you know this, Proverbs 3:5 and 6. Who hasn't put it on their refrigerator?

**Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV)**

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart*, (oh, by the way, how much of your heart are you supposed to trust the Lord with? Oh yeah, it does say that, doesn't it?) *and do not lean on your own understanding*. (that's your ability to figure things out, but) *In all your ways acknowledge him*, (oh, by the way, how many of our ways should we acknowledge the Lord in? Yeah, all of them. That's what it says) *and he* (here's the promise) *will make straight your paths*.

Now, this passage is interesting because it actually, and we're not going to read it or put it up on the screen, but if you keep reading in this passage, it goes on to talk about the physical benefits of trusting the Lord.

Have you ever gone on to read in that passage? It goes on to talk about how it'll be health to your bones. Isn't that crazy? It literally will have a healthful effect. When you do what? Trust in the Lord with all of your heart. I know, easier said than done, but this is our goal, right? Because the promise is that He will direct our paths.

And when we get a hold of really trusting the Lord, and we realize that it's his job to protect and direct in my life, and I don't have to be the one white knuckling it, holding on for dear life. Oh God, what's going to happen now? And I just start sitting back and saying, you know what, I'm an idiot and you're in charge. And all this time I thought I had to hang on tight or something bad was going to happen.

Instead, I have to start choosing. I have to start choosing to trust and praying that God would help me to do it with all of my heart because I'm not there yet. Look at John 14:27. This is Jesus. I love this.

**John 14:27 (ESV)**

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

*Peace I leave with you; (Jesus says) my peace I give to you. (check this out) Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

You see there's something that we have to do, and there's something that He does. And what we have to do is we have to be careful not to let our hearts be troubled. Oh, I know. I know. When you've been bowled over by fear and all the reaction of the world, it's pretty tough for God to come along and just say, don't let your hearts be troubled. And we're all going, I'm there. I am in the midst of trouble. My address is trouble avenue, right?

And so that's when we have to come back to the cross and confess that we have given in to a spirit other than His. And do you know that you can do that? That was, I got to tell you something guys. One of the most freeing things I ever learned in my Christian life was that fear is something I can confess as a sin. It was freeing because before I just thought it was just part of me and there was just nothing I could do about it, and God just had to put up with it. Literally, I did. I didn't think of fear like lying or cheating or adultery or something like that. I just thought fear was just me. Fear is me. It's not what I do. It's who I am.

And God made me aware of the fact that fear is something you do. It's something you've been choosing, and it's become habitual in your life, and so you need to come to Me on your knees and confess it and say, Lord, I'm a fearful person, and I ask You to forgive me. I ask You to wash me and cleanse me, and I ask You to give me the strength, not to just jump into fear when I feel threatened. No, it's a toughie. That's a toughie. But you know what?

It gives me hope because it reminds me that I can do something about fear. I can bring it to the cross and I can be forgiven and strengthened, not to go back there again, because I want His peace. I want His peace.

You guys remember me telling you that story about Corrie Ten Boom? She was telling about after she, some of you know who she is. Some of you don't, doesn't matter. She's a woman, lovely woman that tramped all over the world for the Lord, taught people about Jesus because she herself lived through a German concentration camp. And learned how to trust God in the midst of a... When you learn how to trust the Lord in the midst of a German concentration camp, you learn how to trust the Lord.

And she was on a plane one time going somewhere and the cabin of the plane started to fill with smoke, smoke. That's not a good sign. And this you don't want that to happen, and you never want to hear, like the captain go, uh, oh. It is the first thing he says or something like that's just not what you want to hear.

Anyway, they got through it and they landed the plane safely. And there was this businessman who came up to Corrie afterwards and he said, ma'am, I just have to talk to you because I happened to notice during that whole issue with smoke in the plane, you never were worried. You never were upset. The rest of us were absolutely going berserk and you sat there with this peace on your face the whole time.

Well, of course, Corrie had the opportunity to tell him about Jesus, but she said, I know where I'm going. My life is in His hands and if He chooses to take it, that's His business, not mine.

What an odd thought that is, and yet that ought to be the thought of every Christian should it not? Don't you want to get there? Lord, this is that, but see, that's part of what we talked about first. I offer myself as a living sacrifice, my physical life. It's Yours. It's not mine. It's Yours. You can do with it what you want, then Philippians chapter 4, I love this too. I love all of these.

#### **Philippians 4:5-7 (ESV)**

*The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*The Lord is at hand; (Paul writes) do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (here comes the promise) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

So you see, there's an interesting and lovely promise in this passage, but there's also a condition to it, isn't there? And the condition is understand the Lord is at hand. Number 2, don't be anxious. And that's, I know again, that's difficult, but you need to be careful not to allow your heart to go into a tailspin.

And he says, and then in whatever time you would otherwise be sitting around being anxious and fretting, bring it to prayer to the Lord in prayer, he says. And be careful to offer your thanksgiving and then lay your requests out to God. Tell



Him what you need, tell Him what you need. And then he said, the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds.

We love to just quote the promise without talking about the condition. Have you been careful to keep anxiousness at bay? Have you taken it to the Lord in prayer? Have you laid your petitions at His feet with thanksgiving? Because when we get into the habitual behavior of doing that, we're going to begin to experience the peace of God that will guard our hearts and our minds. Let me just say it to you again, God is challenging the body of Christ like never before to live courageously.

We are living in a period of time in history that is very exciting. We're living in a post Christian nation. By the way, democracy is on its way out, okay? Because democracy was made for Christianity. They're made to go together. And as this nation gets away from its Christian roots, democracy isn't going to work anymore because democracy is based on human rights and valuing human life in our country. We don't do that anymore. So that thing on your dollar bill that says in God, we trust. It's not true, but that doesn't mean you can't trust Him.

But because of the fact you live in a post Christian America, it means it's going to keep getting bad. That's okay, that's God's business. He's going to take care of you. Don't be anxious. Don't be anxious about the way the world is going. You just trust the Lord and put your hope in Him and make sure your confidence is completely in Him. Here's why. We're going to revisit that first question from Jesus that we started off this message with Luke 18,

**Luke 18:8 (ESV)**

*"...when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"*

*"...when the Son of Man comes, (and by the way, He's coming. His question to you and me is) will he find faith on the earth?"*

Is He going to find that? Or is He going to find fear and dread? I want Him to find me with a heart of faith. Don't you?

Let's stand together. Well, thanks for the little fireside chat. Sometimes we need to just sit down and remind ourselves what God's Word says, don't we? And then decide we're going to get serious about it or not. But if we're not going to get serious about it, let's stop playing games. I mean, if you're going to just walk in unrelenting fear and dread like the world, then you're probably going to feel out of place among other believers.

But what we need to be doing as believers is encouraging one another daily, as long as it is today, encouraging one another, put your hope in the Lord, put your confidence in Jesus. Don't listen to the spirit of the world because that's not the spirit you've been given. You've been given a spirit of power and love and self-control.

Heavenly Father, I thank You so much for giving us this time. And Lord, I want to pray for anybody here this morning who has not yet bowed the knee to Jesus and received the Spirit from You, Your Holy Spirit.

And I pray, Lord God, that this morning they would take care of that, and they would just come to You and say, Lord, I accept what You did for me on the cross. I believe You died for my sins. I know I'm not worthy of Your love, but I accept it anyway. And along with it, I accept that free gift of eternal life.

Now, Lord, come and live in me. Fill me with Your Spirit and chase away from my heart and mind the spirit of the world that lives in perpetual fear and dread. And fill me instead, Lord God, with Your Spirit and the peace that you give that is not like the world gives, but the true peace that comes from knowing, You are the Lord of all.

I thank You. I praise You God, for Your wonderful promises. And Lord, I know that not one single promise You have uttered will ever get left behind. You will fulfill every single one.

And I thank You for that, Lord, for You're faithful. In Jesus precious name we pray, and all God's people said together, amen.

God bless you.

Have a good rest of your Sunday.