

NOT GIVEN A SPIRIT OF FEAR 2 Timothy 1:7

In our text, Paul is writing his second letter to Timothy, a young man believed by some that he was working with to carry on his work. He is thankful for him and desires to see him (this is his last letter). He reminds him to “*stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*” As always, there is much to glean from this text, but I want to focus on a subject we need to think about from time to time – fear.

Our text declares that God has not given us “a spirit of fear”. In other words, it is not His desire that we live our lives in fear. Yet that is how far too many live, including Christians. So with that in mind, let us notice some things the Bible says about fear. This is a deep subject that cannot be fully addressed in a single lesson, but we will notice here a few fundamentals.

I. What is fear?

- a. There are actually 2 different ideas
 - i. Webster defines the word as, “*an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger.*”¹ As a verb, it means to display that feeling.
 - ii. The other definition is tied to reverence – a profound sense of awe. Hebrews 12:28-29 speaks of serving God with reverence and godly fear (NKJV). Newer versions use the word “awe” for godly fear (ESV, NASB, LSB).
 - iii. We know what it means to be fearful of something. But understand that fear can be good or bad. A “healthy fear” will keep up FROM doing something or going somewhere because of the potential for harm. It provokes caution if we must do something.
 - iv. But often, it is a negative feeling that hinders us from acting. It can be unhealthy. It is this unhealthy fear that is my primary focus in this lesson.
- b. We may be fearful of many things
 - i. Men often fear failures and rejection. Some fear what others will think about them or say.
 - ii. Some fear the unknown future. There are insecurities about their future survival (will they have enough, will their health hold out, etc.).
 - iii. Some fear old age and the infirmities that come with it.
 - iv. Some fear growing – growth often involves changes and adaptation. Some do not want to move ahead.
 - v. Some fear their future before God (which can be a good thing). Many fear death because it is unknown.
- c. What are some of the effects of fear?
 - i. ***It can make you miserable and consume you –***
 1. There are some who are afraid of everything (or almost everything). It is no fun to live in constant fear.
 2. Consider King Saul at the end of his life. 1 Samuel 28 records his misery. He has spent years trying to kill David because he knows he’s the future king. He takes

¹ “Fear.” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, [Fear Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](#)
Accessed February 20, 2025.

drastic measures including consulting a medium. When Samuel “returns from the dead” and tells him his fate, Vs. 20 tells us Saul fell full length on the ground and was dreadfully afraid.

- ii. ***Fear paralyzes. It can keep you from moving forward and obeying God –***
 - 1. Israel refused to enter Canaan at first because of fear – Numbers 13-14.
 - 2. That “fear” caused the “one talent servant” to bury his talent – Matthew 25:24-25.
 - 3. How many do nothing because they are fearful of what MIGHT (and most likely will not) happen?
- iii. ***It can make you useless to God –***
 - 1. Consider Israel against the Philistines – 1 Samuel 17:11, all Israel was afraid as Goliath defied YHWH and Israel. They did nothing.
 - 2. Consider Judges 7:3 with Gideon and his 300 soldiers going up against the Midianites. Starting with an army of ~32,000, YHWH declares to send home all who were fearful. 22,000 leave.
- iv. ***It can affect your ability to trust others.***
 - 1. I think of King Saul failing to trust David. David was ALWAYS loyal to King Saul, even after he was pursued by him.
 - 2. And of course, there is the failure to trust God.
 - 3. How many today will not put their trust in anyone (even their brethren) because of fear? NOTE: There is a place for healthy caution, but I am talking about not trusting anyone. Sadly, this is often the product of past betrayals, but it is not what God desires.
- v. ***Often fear brings about the results feared.***
 - 1. Think of Peter walking on water – Matthew 14:28-32. He begins walking on water, but the winds caused him to fear and he began to sink.
 - 2. Could this also be a product of his denials of Jesus. Recall how he said he would never deny Jesus, even to the death. But he does.
 - 3. It is possible that one’s fear causes them to fail to act and thus they do nothing to prevent what they were afraid of. So it happens.
- vi. ***It can be contagious***
 - 1. Often, when one is fearful, others will join in on that fear. Especially when that fear is broadcast. People have a tendency to follow others. It can have an impact on others as well – our failures may result in unpleasant consequences for others because we failed to take a stand.
 - 2. Deuteronomy 20:8, dealing with principles of warfare, *“The officers shall speak further to the people, and say, ‘What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart.’*
 - 3. Joshua 14:7-8, as Caleb encourages the people to begin dividing the land and takes his inheritance, he reminds them of the 10 spies who *“made the hearts of the people melt...”* WHEN leaders express fear, it is especially contagious.
- vii. ***Fear may cause us to sin.***
 - 1. We see that in some of the examples above – Peter denying Jesus, spies rebelling against God, Saul’s wicked behaviors, etc.
 - 2. Galatians 2:11-12 finds Peter being a hypocrite *“fearing those of the circumcision.”*

3. 1 Samuel 13:9, King Saul offers an unauthorized sacrifice and disobeyed God. Later, 1 Samuel 15:24, after sparing king Agag and various animals, when confronted by Samuel he made excuses saying he feared the people.
4. Many today, fearing rejection or ridicule, will go along with sinful activities. Or they will fail to obey God's instructions which is just as much a sin as if you had committed a sinful act. James 4:17 – to him who knows to do good...

II. Facing our fears

- a. **Understand what God commands about fear.** The Bible is filled with examples and passages that tell us not to fear, and others that call for us to fear. Contextual studies makes the distinction clear.
 - i. In the NKJV the expression, "Do not be afraid" is found 50 times, "Do not fear" is found 51 times, "Fear not" is found 11 times. That is more than 110 times the expression is directly mentioned. And those are the direct statements, usually from God to someone.
 - ii. Luke 12:4-5 - *"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. Jesus proceeds to warn us to fear God.*
 - iii. John 14:27 - *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*
 - iv. 2 Timothy 1:7 – our text, *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of..."*
 - v. WHY does the Bible address this so much? Because it is a real concern and most of us face. And, as we have noted, there is healthy fear and unhealthy fear. We must distinguish between these.
- b. **Genuine faith helps us to overcome fear –**
 - i. There is a correlation between fear and faith. A strong faith tempers our fear.
 - ii. Luke 12:32, *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. This is in the context of not worrying about this life as God is able to sustain us.*
 - iii. Psalm 27:1, *The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?*
 - iv. Proverbs 29:25, *The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.*
 - v. Psalm 34:4, *I sought the Lord, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears.*
 - vi. Hebrews 13:5-6, *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"*
- c. **Think of God as your Father.**
 - i. We are often reminded of our spiritual, familial relationship with God and Jesus. That ought to be a great source of comfort to us.
 - ii. He cares and wants what is best for you. Matthew 7:7-11 where Jesus says to ask and it will be given, He notes that if evil men give good things to their family, how much more will God give us what we need.
 - iii. Even when He chastises us (Hebrews 12:5-11), it is with the genuine love of a father.
- d. **Learn to love God and others –**
 - i. Perfected love casts out fear. 1 John 4:18-19.
 - ii. Often love motivates us to move beyond our fears and act anyways. The one we love is simply more important than what we are fearful of.
- e. **Face your fears –** this is simple to say, but always difficult to do.
 - i. But one observation to consider – more often than not, what you fear does not materialize or is not as bad. Whatever you fear – admit them and work to overcome them.

- ii. Recall Luke 12:4-5 – it is more fearful to face God than what man can do to you.
- iii. Jesus, while in the garden was very apprehensive – Luke 22:41-45 tells us He was in agony. Matthew 26:39 says He fell on His face. Yet he resolved He would face His fears and whatever came His way.
- iv. WHEN you face your fears, it will make you better in the long run.
- f. **Get rid of the sin than ensnares.**
 - i. Often we are fearful because we know we have not done as we ought to.
 - ii. Why did the one talent servant fear his master. He didn't even try.
 - iii. Hebrews 13:5-6 notes that if we are living godly, we can confidently say, "*The Lord is my helper, I will not fear. What can man do to me?*"
- g. **Pray about it –**
 - i. Paul prayed for and asked others to pray for boldness – Ephesians 6:18-19.
 - ii. Be reminded of the promises of Philippians 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:7 – cast your cares on Him.
 - iii. Pray for strength in facing your fears.
- h. **Live your life one day at a time.**
 - i. Many of our fears are based upon things far into the future. If we learn to simply take matters one day at a time, we will not be fearful.
 - ii. 1 Peter 3:13-15, who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good.
 - iii. As Paul faced death, he was not fearful – 2 Timothy 1:12. What a source of comfort that is.

In our lives, we will all deal with fears of one sort or another. We have even noted in this lesson there are things we OUGHT to fear. But, as with so many challenges we face, it is not about having fear, but how you handle it. We must learn to rule over our fears rather than letting them rule over us. What about you? What impact does your fears have in your life? Think about it.