

# Perfect Love Casts Out Fear

“A scared world needs a fearless church.”<sup>1</sup>

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## Prayer

Today is the hour for the Church to be a light and hope to the world — we will not be ruled by fear. We will trust in the Lord and hold to his promises. We will be strong and courageous. Please Lord, fill your people with courage and power today, in Jesus name. Amen!

## “On Living in an Atomic Age”

*“In one way we think a great deal too much of the (corona virus). “How are we to live through a (pandemic)?” I am tempted to reply: “Why, as you would have lived in the sixteenth century when the plague visited London almost every year, or as you would have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia might land and cut your throat any night; or indeed, as you are already living in an age of cancer, an age of syphilis, an age of paralysis, an age of air raids, an age of railway accidents, an age of car accidents.” In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the (Corona virus) was discovered: and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways.*

*We had, indeed, one very great advantage over our ancestors—anaesthetics; but we have that still. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at all, but a certainty.*

*This is the first point to be made: and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by a (global pandemic), let that (virus) when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about (Corona Virus). They may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but they need not dominate our minds.”<sup>2</sup>*

~ C. S. Lewis

“On Living in an Atomic Age” (1948) in *Present Concerns: Journalistic Essays*

- **Proverbs 23:3 (NLT)**

“A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences.”

***We need to walk out this narrow path without falling off the cliff on either side.***

- One cliff is being dominated by **paranoia and fear**.
- The other is being foolish and **cavalier**.

***Christians, we must keep our composure.***

***We must not retreat, or set up camp — we are to be a light in a dark world.***

<sup>1</sup> Tozer, A.W. *This World: Playground or Battleground?* (Moody Publishers, Jun 1, 2009)

<sup>2</sup> Lewis, C.S. *Present Concerns: Journalistic Essays* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002)

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## Jesus forewarned us that this would happen

- **Luke 21:10-19**

Then He said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. <sup>11</sup> And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. <sup>12</sup> But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name’s sake. <sup>13</sup> But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. <sup>14</sup> Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; <sup>15</sup> for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. <sup>16</sup> You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. <sup>17</sup> And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. <sup>18</sup> But not a hair of your head shall be lost. <sup>19</sup> By your patience possess your souls.

- Jesus told us what would happen
- He told us what to do
- Church — get ahold of yourself — Possess your souls, heart, mind strength (hope in Him)!

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## The Bible speaks a great deal about fear

- It is, by far, the main way that people order their lives.
  - **Procrastination:** Whatever you procrastinate has an element of fear in it.
  - **Avoidance:** fear dominates decisions every day — doctors, friends, relatives, conflicts
- God never guides His children through fear!
- People respond in strange ways when they are afraid.
  - They even hoard toilet paper

### What happens in our brains when we are afraid?

The human brain has two major systems

- Love and desire
- Fear and avoidance

**Front of the brain** — Cognitive ability — how we should act

- In order to be in good relationship, we need to confess and work it out.
- Front Brain — thinks about how we should act like ourselves — possess our souls — act with composure and confidence in the Lord.
- Brain for **two**. Desire to love God, please God, trust God, love others...

**Back of the brain** — Survival — self

- Afraid? What is the fastest way out?
- LIE! Change the subject, run!
- Back of the brain makes no logical decisions — it cannot do that. It can only think for the protection of self. We call this brain for **one**.
- When fear comes along, it takes us out of relational part of the brain.
- It is not a way of truth — it is not a way that leads to relationship.
- It literally shuts down the thinking brain and turns on survival mode.

## Fear brain —

- Has nothing to do with your identity, values, or relationships.
- You cannot think about others when you are terribly afraid
- You can only think of yourself. Brain for **one**.

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## The difference between anxiety and fear

**Fear and anxiety often occur together but these terms are not interchangeable.** Even though symptoms typically overlap, a person's experience with these emotions differs based on their context. Almost 30% of the population struggles with anxiety.

*Fear relates to a known or understood threat*

*Anxiety follows from an unknown, expected, or poorly defined threat*

### Anxiety

#### **Luke 12:22-26**

“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?”

**Negativity Bias** — what could go wrong slowly begins to dominate our thinking

- Worst case scenarios and fear begin to overtake our minds — *when we do not cultivate setting our minds on things above.*
- Look at **what is good and true.**
- One of the most effective treatments for anxiety is CBT therapy
  - **Put effort into confronting the lies that we believe and replacing them with the truth!**
- **Philippians 4:4-8**

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 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. 8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

**Great Commandment** — *love puts brain back on right track*

- **Matthew 22:34-40**

34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, testing Him, and saying, 36 “Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law?” 37 Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” 38 This is *the* first and great commandment. 39 And *the* second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

**Perfect love casts out fear** — *hearts and minds fixed on loving God — fear disappears*

### 1 John 4:18

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”

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## Fear in Scripture

There are NO examples in scripture where God's people were afraid of something and they profited from it.

### Promised Land

- **Numbers 13:30-33**

<sup>30</sup>Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it." <sup>31</sup>But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they *are* stronger than we." <sup>32</sup>And they gave the children of Israel a **bad report** of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it *are* men of *great* stature. <sup>33</sup>There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

- Result? They wandered around for 40 years!

*Repeatedly God comes to people and  
the first thing he says is...  
Do not be afraid!*

- **Isaiah 35:4**

"Tell everyone who is discouraged, Be strong and don't be afraid! God is coming to your rescue..."

- **Isaiah 41:10**

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

- **Isaiah 43:1**

"But now, this is what the Lord says...Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."

- **Psalms 23:4**

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

- **Joshua 1:9**

"Have I not commanded you? *Be strong and courageous*. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

**Courage is not** denying that you are afraid.

**Courage is not** repressing your true feelings and pretending you are not afraid when you are.

**Courage is** doing what is right when you are afraid.

- **Psalm 91:1-16**

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." ...He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you...For he will command his angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways..." "Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him..."

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## Jesus on fear

- **Mark 6:50** (when Jesus walked on water)  
“Immediately he spoke to them and said, 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.'”
- **Mark 4:39-40** (when Jesus calmed the sea)  
“He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”
- **John 14:27**  
“Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid.”
- **Revelation 1:17**  
“Then he placed his right hand on me and said: 'Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.'”

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## God's enemies and fear

**If you are God's enemy — it makes good sense to be afraid.**

**That's why the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom.**

**God will use fear to guide his enemies, but He doesn't use fear to guide His friends.**

**Fear-based decision-making beginning in Genesis...**

- **Adam** — I was afraid — so I hid from God. Good or bad? Hiding from God is a stupid idea. Not a great plan
- **Abraham lied twice about Sarah** — Lord brought plagues on the Egyptians even though they were innocent
- **We bring plagues on the people around us when we are guided by fear.**
- **Sarah denied laughing** — No I didn't say that...
- **Lot went to live in Sodom** when the angels came — he was afraid of what would happen to the angels — so in fear he was going to give his daughters to the men. Afraid to leave, afraid to go to the hillside — begged to go to a little town. God saved that little town. Then he went to the mountain — because he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. Daughters were afraid they would have no children — got him drunk — their children became Moabites, Ammonites — whose religion practiced child sacrifice

**The consequences of being guided by fear were carried on for generations!**

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## Ask the right questions

To be guided by God we have to be courageous, we need to have composure, and **we have to learn how to ask the right questions!**

**Wrong perspective gets us to ask the wrong questions.**

- Is this a big problem or not?
- Who is to blame?

## Right perspective gets us to ask the right questions.

- How can we pray for those who are sick?
- Who is God calling me to love in the midst of this crisis?

## God's Perspective

### 2 Kings 6:8-23 (*Elisha captures the Syrian Invaders*)

<sup>8</sup> Now the king of Syria was making war against Israel; and he consulted with his servants, saying, "My camp *will be* in such and such a place." <sup>9</sup> And the man of God sent to the king of Israel, saying, "Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are coming down there." <sup>10</sup> Then the king of Israel sent *someone* to the place of which the man of God had told him. Thus he warned him, and he was watchful there, not just once or twice. <sup>11</sup> Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was greatly troubled by this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you not show me which of us *is* for the king of Israel?" <sup>12</sup> And one of his servants said, "None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who *is* in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom." <sup>13</sup> So he said, "Go and see where he *is*, that I may send and get him." And it was told him, saying, "Surely *he is* in Dothan." <sup>14</sup> Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. <sup>15</sup> And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" <sup>16</sup> So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who *are* with us *are* more than those who *are* with them." <sup>17</sup> And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. <sup>18</sup> So when *the Syrians* came down to him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said, "Strike this people, I pray, with blindness." And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. <sup>19</sup> Now Elisha said to them, "This *is* not the way, nor *is* this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." But he led them to Samaria. <sup>20</sup> So it was, when they had come to Samaria, that Elisha said, "LORD, open the eyes of these *men*, that they may see." And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and there *they were*, inside Samaria! <sup>21</sup> Now when the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, "My father, shall I kill *them*? Shall I kill *them*?" <sup>22</sup> But he answered, "You shall not kill *them*. Would you kill those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow? Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master." <sup>23</sup> Then he prepared a great feast for them; and after they ate and drank, he sent them away and they went to their master. So the bands of Syrian *raiders* came no more into the land of Israel.

## Prayer

**God open our eyes to see our part in the coming days;  
Give us Spiritual eyes to see what is really going on.  
In you, around you, and through you.**

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## Discussion Questions

1. Have each person in the group choose one of the 33 Bible verses below, and tell why it specifically speaks to their fear and gives them peace.

### 33 Bible Verses to Remind Us — We Do Not Have to Fear

1. *“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” ~ Isaiah 41:10*
2. *“When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.” ~ Psalm 56:3*
3. *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, 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.” ~ Philippians 4:6-7*
4. *“Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid.” ~ John 14:27*
5. *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” ~ 2 Timothy 1:7*
6. *“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” ~ 1 John 4:18*
7. *“When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul.” ~ Psalm 94:19*
8. *“But now, this is what the Lord says...Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.” ~ Isaiah 43:1*
9. *“An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.” ~ Proverbs 12:25*
10. *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” ~ Psalm 23:4*
11. *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” ~ Joshua 1:9*
12. *“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” ~ Matthew 6:34*
13. *“Humble yourselves, then, under God’s mighty hand, so that he will lift you up in his own good time. Leave all your worries with him, because he cares for you.” ~ 1 Peter 5:6-7*
14. *“Tell everyone who is discouraged, Be strong and don’t be afraid! God is coming to your rescue...” ~ Isaiah 35:4*

15. *“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?” ~ Luke 12:22-26*

16. *“The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?” ~ Psalm 27:1*

17. *“Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.” ~ Psalm 55:22*

18. *“Immediately he spoke to them and said, 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.'” ~ Mark 6:50*

19. *“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” ~ Deuteronomy 31:6*

20. *“For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. Do not be afraid, for I myself will help you,' declares the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” ~ Isaiah 41:13-14*

21. *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” ~ Psalm 46:1*

22. *“The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? The Lord is with me; he is my helper.” ~ Psalm 118:6-7*

23. *“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.” ~ Proverbs 29:25*

24. *“He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” ~ Mark 4:39-40*

25. *“The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.” Psalm 34:7*

26. *“But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats.” ~ 1 Peter 3:14*

27. *“I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears.” ~ Psalm 34:4*

28. *“Do not be afraid of them; the Lord your God himself will fight for you.” ~ Deuteronomy 3:22*

29. *“Then he placed his right hand on me and said: 'Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.'” ~ Revelation 1:17*



30. *“Jesus told him, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe.’” ~ Mark 5:36*

31. *“And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love.” ~ Romans 8:38-39*

32. *“The Lord your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.” ~ Zephaniah 3:17*

33. *“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”...He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you...For he will command his angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways...“Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him...” from Psalm 91:1-16*

## NOTES