

Exalting Jesus Christ

"Overcoming Fear"

INTRODUCTION:

- I. If I were to ask you what you fear most, what would your answer be?
 - A. All of us have fears of one kind or another.
 1. But in reality, most fears are generally prompted by irrational thoughts.
 - a. Some fears are prompted by irrational thoughts of something we've experienced in the past – some painful experience. And we're fearful of that experience being repeated.
 - b. Other fears are prompted by irrational thoughts of something that could happen, but most likely will not.
 2. And yet, no matter how irrational those thoughts may be, they can grip us like a vise, or freeze us in our tracks, and render us completely helpless.
 3. Fears are very difficult to overcome – but not impossible. We can conquer our fears.
 - B. In the fourth chapter of Mark, we read of a dramatic event that produced fear in the hearts of the Lord's disciples.

1. One evening Jesus and His disciples got into a boat to sail to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.
2. Sometime during their journey, while Jesus was sleeping in the rear of the boat, a storm suddenly swept across the waters leaving the disciples helpless as they struggled against the wind and waves.
 - a. Sudden storms were common on the Sea of Galilee – many times they came without any warning whatsoever.
 - b. Sometimes, even the most experienced fishermen would lose their lives when their boats would become swamped by huge waves driven by gale-force winds.
3. As the boat began taking on water, fear struck at the hearts of the Lord's disciples. Mark picks up the story here:
 - a. **Mark 4:37-41-** *And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. 38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" 39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. 40 But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" 41 And they feared exceedingly,*

and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

4. Despite having the Lord Himself in their boat, their hearts were still overcome with fear – all because they lacked faith that He could calm any storm.
 5. Unfortunately, we get overwhelmed by fear for the same reason.
- II. As we continue our studies through the gospel of John, which we've entitled "Exalting Jesus Christ", we come to the fourteenth chapter of John where we find the Lord's disciples once again facing fear.
- A. Just like the time when the winds and waves of the Sea of Galilee threatened them, the Lord's disciples are gripped with fear on the night before Jesus' crucifixion.
1. But just as Jesus quieted their fears when He calmed the storm with His presence, here He promises His disciples there would be another who would do the same when He was gone – the Holy Spirit.
 2. And so, in this lesson we want to take a closer look at fear, and what the Scriptures teach us about "Overcoming Fear."
- B. To do this I think we need to begin by understanding some facts about fear.

1. First, we need to know where fear originated, and what was its result.
2. Then, let's see why fear stuck the hearts of these disciples in John chapter fourteen.
3. And finally, let's learn the four things the Lord taught in these verses about overcoming fear.

BODY:

- I. So, to begin, what does the Bible tell us about the origin and result of fear?
 - A. To find the answer, we need to go back to the book of Genesis – to Genesis chapter three where we find the serpent tempting Eve in the Garden of Eden.
 1. **Genesis 3:6-10** – *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. 8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are*

you?" 10 So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

2. This is the first time in the Bible anyone said "I was afraid."
 - a. Fear had not existed until this moment.
- B. But look at the result of fear.
 1. When Adam and Eve sinned, they suddenly became self-conscious, and immediately covered themselves with fig leaves.
 2. They both knew they had been disobedient to God, and so what do they do?
 3. They did what most do when we know we've sinned – they tried to hid their guilt and shame.
 - a. They were afraid to face God – afraid to admit their sin – so they tried to cover it up with denial.
 4. Notice how Adam and Eve refused to take responsibility for their own actions, and tried to blame others.
 - a. **Genesis 3:11-13** – *And He [God] said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" 12 Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." 13 And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

b. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent.

5. Sadly, fear of facing the truth about ourselves often leads us to blame everyone and everything else for our failures.

II. But what caused the Lord's disciple's to be so fearful?

A. Upon hearing Jesus speak of His own imminent death, the Lord's disciples were plunged into a swirling vortex of confusion.

1. This is when Jesus threw them a lifeline.

a. **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."*

2. The words of Jesus here are very important.

a. When He said, *"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid,"* Jesus was telling His disciples that they had the ability to control their reactions – they could control the fear that engulfed their hearts.

3. So, if they could keep their emotions afloat during the tempests they experienced, then maybe there's hope for us as well.

III. And so, in the verses that follow, we find Jesus teaching His disciples four distinct ways to overcome fear – four ways of overcoming fear that will work for us just as effectively as it did for them.

A. First, Jesus taught His disciples to depend on the work of the Holy Spirit.

1. **John 14:25-26** – *"These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."*
2. The Holy Spirit would be a *"Helper"* to the Lord's disciples by teaching them all things, and by bring all things the Lord had taught them to their remembrance.
3. How does all this relate to fear? The answer is simple.
 - a. We are usually overcome by fear when we either ignore what God has said, or when we forget what He has said.
 - (1). In the case of Adam and Eve, they were overcome by fear when they ignored what God said.
 - b. The work of the Holy Spirit was to reveal new things to the Lord's disciples, and also remind them of all Jesus had taught them.
 - c. And we have that revelation today in the form of the New Testament.
4. Faithfulness to those things revealed in the Word of God is one of the most powerful weapons against fear in the hearts of Christians.

- a. We can receive great peace and comfort during times of trouble by simply picking up our Bibles and begin reading.
 - b. But only those who truly love the Word of God will do this – which is why the psalmist wrote: **Psalm 119:165** – *Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.*
5. Therefore, the next time fear begins to grip your heart, open your Bible and begin reading – depend on, and trust in, the work the Holy Spirit did in revealing God's Word to us, and in reminding us of His promises.
- B. Another powerful way to overcome fear is to claim the peace of Jesus Christ.
1. Remember, Jesus told His disciples: **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."*
 2. The peace that Jesus promised was not the power of positive thinking, or some feelings the disciples could magically conjure up.
 3. The peace Jesus promised was real and tangible – even though it's not really understood.
 - a. It was a peace Jesus gave His disciples, and left with His disciples.

- b. It's the inner calm and assurance that guards our hearts while the tempest rages on the outside all around us.
4. Jesus spoke of this same peace in the sixteenth chapter of John:
John 16:33 – *"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*
 - a. What things had Jesus said to them that brought them peace?
 - b. He had just been talking about praying in His name to the Father, and asking the Father things in Jesus' name.
5. Praying to the Father in the name of Jesus brings us inner peace as well. This is what prompted Paul to write:
 - a. **Philippians 4:6-7** – *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.*
 - b. Like the words of the song, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" – *"O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer."* (Joseph M. Scriven, 1820-1886)
6. The next time the storms of life threaten to overwhelm you, claim the peace of Jesus by taking everything to God in prayer.

- C. But there's a third powerful tool we have to overcome fear, and that's accepting the Lord's plan.
1. The Lord's disciples had trouble accepting His announcement that He would soon be departing.
 2. Verses 28 and 29 tell us why.
 - a. **John 14:28-29** – *"You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I. 29 And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe."*
 - b. The reason the disciples were having such a hard time with this revelation is simply because their love for the Lord was deficient.
 - c. Sure, they loved Him, but not in the way they should.
 - d. Their love for the Lord was a selfish affection, a desire to keep rather than share.
 3. Although the Lord has given us people and things to enjoy, it's important that we hold them all with a loose grasp.
 - a. Someday God may choose to take them from your hands.
 - b. If He does, the loss will be less painful if we realize God may be taking the people and things we love as part of a much bigger plan.

4. Job understood this better than anyone.
 - a. He suffered the loss of everything he had – all his material possessions and all his sons and daughters.
 - b. And yet, Job said: **Job 1:21-22** – *"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." 22 In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.*
5. The Lord's disciples didn't want to accept the fact that Jesus was going to die and would be going back to the Father in heaven – they wanted to selfishly keep Him all for themselves.
 - a. But just imagine where we would be today if Jesus had not gone to the cross, and had not been crucified and died, and had not been buried and resurrected again on the third day, and had not ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God.
 - b. We would still be in our sins!
6. So the next time the loss of someone or something you love threatens to destroy your peace, and clouds your heart with fear, just remember Job.

- a. Although he couldn't see the bigger picture, and even though he didn't understand why all this was happening to him, he never lost sight of God's sovereignty.
 - b. Nor did he stop praising and blessing God for all the Lord had done for him in the past.
 - c. And neither should we.
7. It's only when we selfishly struggle with God's plan for our life that we allow doubts and fears to creep into our hearts.
- D. And finally, Jesus taught His disciples that they could overcome fear by being obedient.
1. Look at the calm in the heart of Jesus as He talked about doing His Father's will.
 - a. **John 14:30-31** – *"I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. 31 But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here."*
 - b. Even though Jesus was about to come face-to-face with Satan – the *"ruler of this world"* – He had no fear of being disobedient because there was nothing in Jesus to which Satan could appeal.

- c. There was nothing in Jesus that Satan could use to entice the Lord to back out of the plan of God and selfishly save Himself from such unimaginable horror.
2. Unfortunately, we can't make that claim. We've allowed a lot of things to enter our hearts in the past that Satan constantly uses to tempt us, or draw us away, from doing the Father's will.
3. But even though our love for the Lord – like the love of those disciples – is deficient at times, Christ's love for the Father was rock-solid.
4. Obedience, motivated by love, gave the Lord great peace as the reality of death came creeping into His life.
 - a. *"But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do." (v. 31)*
 - b. His obedience provides a wonderful example to all of us.
 - b. If we're faithful to the Lord and to the Lord's commandments what do we have to fear?
 - c. This is why the psalmist wrote: **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?"*
 - d. The apostle Peter conveyed this same though in his first letter to some very troubled Christians: **1 Peter 3:13-17** – *And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is*

good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. 17 For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

5. Those who are faithful to the Lord are never overcome by fear – they may momentarily experience fear, but they will never be overcome by fear.
 - a. Why?
 - (1). First, they have nothing to hide from the Lord – unlike Adam and Eve who tried to cover their shame with fig leaves and hid from the presence of God in the Garden of Eden.
 - (2). Second, because even if the worse possible scenario happened and they lost their life, the faithful Christian knows that while their eyes may close in death, they will open them again in heaven in the presence of the Lord.

6. Perhaps the prophet Isaiah said it best.
 - a. **Isaiah 26:3** – *"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."*
 - b. If your trust is in the Lord, and your mind is stayed on Him – steadfastly anchored in Him – He will be able to keep you in perfect peace.

CONCLUSION:

- I. So, you see, overcoming fear is really very simple.
 - A. There are four simple things we can do.
 1. Depend on the work of the Holy Spirit found in the things He revealed to the Lord's disciples, and in the things He reminded the Lord's disciples about.
 - a. So when fear begins to grip your heart, it's time to open the Spirit's holy and divinely inspired Word and start reading and meditating on those things.
 2. Second, claim the peace of Jesus Christ through prayer.
 - a. Always remember we forfeit so much peace and bear so much pain simply because we do not take everything to the Lord in prayer.
 3. Third, learn to accept the Lord's plan for you and for those whom you love.

- a. When fear of loss strikes, be like Job – never lose sight of God's sovereign right to rule over your life, and always praise and bless the Lord for all He has done in the past.
- 4. And finally, be obedient in all things.
 - a. Never forget that as long as we are obedient to the Lord, we have nothing of which we need to be ashamed.
 - b. Therefore, we have nothing to fear – not even the loss of our own lives.
- II. However, knowing how to overcome fear and putting those principles into practice are two completely different things.
 - A. No one can do this for you – these are things you must do for yourself.
 - 1. But remember, if Jesus could tell His disciples, "*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (**John 14:27**), then the same is possible for us.
 - a. It's within your power and mine to overcome fear.
 - b. The Lord would have never given His disciples this command if it were not possible to carry out.
 - c. Nor would the Lord expect us to overcome fear in our own lives unless it was possible.
 - B. If you're battling with fear and anxiety I can almost guarantee part of the problem concerns your relationship with the Lord.

1. Either you haven't given your life to Christ by obedience to the gospel, or you're not living as you know you should.
 - a. If either of those are true, then you have a lot to fear.
 - b. Heaven will not be your home.
2. So, to fix the problem of fear and anxiety, the first step you need to take is to trust in the power of Jesus to save you from your past sins.
 - a. And you can demonstrate that trust by either giving your life to Christ this very morning – being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins – or by coming back to Him by repenting of your past sins and confessing them to the Father in heaven.
3. Why not take that first step today – right now?