

The Lord Delivers Us From Fear

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Welcome to the fourth part of our online healing retreat in which I'm going to talk about a different kind of healing, healing from fear, liberation from the power of fear, let's pray. *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Oh Lord, our God, how often You tell Your people, "Fear not. Be not afraid, have no fear." And yet how easy it is for us, oh Lord, weak and fragile mortal creatures as we are, to be gripped by fear at certain times. Lord, we ask you to liberate us from our fears through the blood of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that we can walk in the freedom from fear in the peace and the joy that you intend for us. We ask all this through Christ, our Lord. Amen. Mary, Star of Evangelization, pray for us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

There's a beautiful line in Psalm 34. It says, ***"I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears."*** Deliverance from fear is part of the great healing work that the Lord does. And Jesus, throughout his public ministry, along with healing many physically-ill people, and disabled people, and demonized people, I think also healed many people from their fears. Fears of the Roman Empire, fears of sickness, fears of death, fears of loss, fears of bad things happening. I think those who followed him, and got to know him, and began to live in fellowship with him, experienced an increasing freedom from any of those kinds of fears. Even though those fears would still rise up, because we're human beings, we have emotions, they would no longer dominate.

So, think about how big a role does fear play in your life, or anxiety, or worry? There's an interesting verse in Hebrews, in a letter to the Hebrews 2:15. It tells us that ***Satan keeps the whole human race in lifelong bondage through fear of death.*** Now that's referring not only to physical death, probably not everybody walks around constantly worried about physical death, but if you broaden that fear of death to every form of diminishment, every form of loss of control, which is like a little death, a kind of foreshadowing of death, then we recognize that many of us have fear as a part of our lives. -Sometimes a very heavy part of our lives. There are people who are afraid of sicknesses, of accidents. Young women are afraid that they'll never be married. Young men may be afraid of getting married. Parents are afraid of losing their children, losing their jobs, losing their home. Teenagers are afraid of being made fun of, or not being cool, or failing a test.

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And so, deep down, we all have, on some level, a fear of failure, of rejection, of loss. And through those fears, if they're not dealt with properly, the evil one can start to get a foothold in our lives, and he can keep us in various kinds of bondage. And those fears are actually the source of many unhealthy behaviors. Addictions, self-medication, coping mechanisms that are really a way to kind of push down that paralyzing fear that we feel within us. But I'll tell you a secret. You know why the evil one works so hard to keep us in bondage through fear? -Because he himself is terrified of fearless Christians. The evil one knows that fearless Christians are not intimidated by his tactics. They know God is their Father. They know they wear the armor of God and are totally protected by the blood of Christ. They know that He is victorious over death, that He is alive, and is with them always. And in this great battle in which we are engaged, which is the whole of our life on Earth, fearless Christians know that nothing can harm them. They've read the book to the last page, and they know who wins. And when the church is filled with disciples who are like that, who walk in the confidence, the trust, the peace, and the joy, free from the enemy's bondages, growing in holiness, effective in the mission that God has called each one of us to, well, then, the dominion of darkness is in big trouble, and the evil one runs scared.

In fact, there's a well-known vision that Saint Thérèse of Lisieux talks about her autobiography, that she had when she was just four years old, a dream actually. And in it, she saw all these ugly demons, and to her surprise, they actually ran away from her, a little innocent child. And the Lord taught her something very profound from that. For a person who is in the state of grace, meaning we're not in a state of grave sin, we're walking in fellowship with the Lord, we have nothing to fear from the evil one. On the contrary, he's terrified of us.

So how can we be healed of that fear that is so common in human life, and in a particular way is common today? Well, for one thing, we need to establish ourselves in the Word of God. We need to feed on the Word of God. And actually, people have done a count. You know how many times scripture tells us, "***Do not fear,***" or, "***Fear not,***" or, "***Be not afraid?***" It just so happens to be 365 times. The Lord knew we needed to hear it every day. Here's one beautiful passage in Isaiah 41:10-13. God says, "***Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. Behold, all who are incensed against you shall be put to shame and confounded. Those who strive against you shall be as nothing and shall perish. You shall seek those who contend with you and you shall not find them. Those who war against you shall be as nothing at all, for I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand. It is I who say to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'***"

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Isn't that beautiful? That's worth sitting with that scripture and meditating on it. And really, every fearful event that crosses our path, every trouble, every difficulty in life, is an opportunity to stretch our faith, and therefore diminish our fear.

One great example is a man named Jairus in the gospels. You can look in the gospel of Mark chapter five. Who comes to Jesus, begging him, "Please come and lay your hands on my daughter. She's deathly ill. She's at the point of death." And so Jesus graciously comes with him, and there's a whole crowd following. And then, probably to Jairus' great consternation, there's a big, long interruption where Jesus ends up healing a woman with a hemorrhage. And Jairus is probably standing there biting his fingernails, "Hurry up, hurry up!" And then, he gets the news that he dreaded. "Don't even bother anymore. She's dead." But what does Jesus say to him at that point? ***"Do not fear. Only believe."*** Replace your fear with trust. Replace your fear with faith in Jesus. You may not know what the outcome will be, but He is trustworthy, and He will work everything to good, for those who love Him. And so Jairus stretches his faith, -he makes an act of faith, and Jesus comes to his house, and He does an even greater miracle than Jairus could have imagined. He raises his daughter from the dead.

Paradoxically, there's only one thing that God actually tells us to fear, the scripture tells us to fear. There's one thing. Fear the Lord. Well, why are we asked to fear the Lord? -Because it's a different kind of fear. It's the fear of a holy reverence. It's the fear that says, "I would rather die than displease the Lord." It's a holy fear that keeps us from sinning, that keeps us on the straight path. Not a servile fear, not the fear of a servant who's terrified of getting punished, but a reverent fear, of children who love and honor their Father. And really, to fear the Lord in that sense is synonymous with, to love him.

Saint Francis was a great example of fear of the Lord. He lived his whole life in the presence of the Lord. And the amazing thing that resulted from that was basically, you couldn't hurt him, because if somebody insulted Francis, he would thank them, for reminding him of his sinfulness. If somebody threatened him, he'd rejoice at the persecution. If somebody took his cloak, Francis would try to give them his robe as well. He was absolutely invincible because of his fear of the Lord and his freedom from any human fear.

So, in faith, we need to be honest with our fears. Really, that's the first step, to acknowledge the fears we have. Sometimes we try to keep them hidden. We don't want to admit them to ourselves. But we're honest with our fears, and then we bring those fears to the Lord, and we allow the Lord to deal with those fears. We

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speak to him honestly, and let him know what is weighing on our hearts, and ask him to replace that fear with faith.

One time, I was in a fearful situation. My dad had just fallen from a third-story scaffolding. He was unconscious, he was bleeding. It would take a long time for the EMTs to get there. And my mother and I were very worried, and we asked the Lord for a word, and He gave us this word from Philippians chapter four. ***"Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God, and the peace of God which passes, understand all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*** We prayed that scripture, and it's like this peace came to rest upon us. And we knew that the Lord was in control. We knew that He would turn it out for good. Whatever the outcome would be, God would work it to good. And sure enough, my dad did break a bone, but he turned out to be okay.

One more example from scripture: The disciples of Jesus, even after spending three years with him, and getting the best formation that anybody ever got, still didn't have everything they needed. Because what happened after his crucifixion and his resurrection and ascension into heaven, they were under lockdown. In fear, they were locked into the upper room, worrying that perhaps the same hostility that was shown to Jesus would be shown to them. Something more was needed. They weren't ready for their mission. But then on the day of Pentecost, everything changed. The Holy Spirit came. Their hearts were filled with the love of God. The Holy Spirit began to burn in them like a holy fire. Their fear left them to be replaced by this incredible zeal that everyone would come to know the love of God that they had experienced in Christ, and would come to know Jesus, alive and risen from the dead. And they burst forth from that upper room like new people.

What was it that the Holy Spirit did that changed them so much? Well, Saint Paul explains it well when he says in Romans 5:5, ***"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."*** When the Holy Spirit fills a person's heart, and they experience, on the deepest level, God's love for them, it pushes out, so to speak, competing forces. When you are so rooted and grounded in God's love that you know that nothing can ever separate you from his love, fear has no more place to stand. As I mentioned, it will still rise up. We have that emotion naturally, as fragile human beings, but it will not be able to dominate you. And one other thing the Holy Spirit does when he comes into a person's heart, he reveals the majesty of Jesus, the glory of Jesus. Jesus, who said, ***"All authority in heaven and on Earth has been given to me."*** That means all authority in your life. Nothing can happen without His permission. Nothing can happen that He will

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not work for your good and your salvation. And again, when you know the glory, the majesty, the Lordship of Jesus, you can't be dominated by other things like fear.

And so, those apostles, and the other Christians, the men and the women came out of the upper room so overflowing with the love of God that they began to spread the gospel like wildfire through the ancient world. And that's what the Lord wants to do again, in our time. Jesus Christ didn't die for helpless Christians who walk under oppression, and burdened by fears, and anxieties, and all of the other symptoms of the fallen world, bowed down like everybody else. No, He died and rose for a church that would be alive in the Holy Spirit, that would show the world what God has done for us, and who He really is.

So, in our present situation, many of us are very fearful. We've seen a pandemic. We've seen a lot of social chaos in the US and other places. Many of us have been victims of persecution, soft persecution, or in some cases, hard persecution. Many of us have experienced loss and various kinds of traumas. And the enemy wants to exploit those troubles. And he wants us, he wants to try to get us to act out of fear. If we allow ourselves to be led by fear, we make bad decisions. Instead of making decisions based on wisdom, based on trust in the Lord, we begin to make hasty, impulsive, poor decisions, based on fear, which can lead to further problems. And so the Lord is calling us to refuse fear, in the name of Jesus. In fact, when you recognize there's fear at work in you, you can say, "I renounce fear, in the name of Jesus. I refuse to partner with fear. I will not waste a moment on fear because it would just derail me from the mission the Lord has for me. I will not act based on fear of man." That's what Peter especially says so courageously in the Acts of the Apostles. **"We must fear God, rather than men."** "I will stand against fear in the authority of the name of Jesus."

And in closing, I want to pray part of a beautiful Psalm that really addresses our fears. It's Psalm 91. ***In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, my refuge, and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust, for He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings, you will find refuge. His faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. 1,000 may fall at your side, 10,000 at your right hand, but it will not come near you."*** And so, Lord, our God, thank you for the victory that you have given us over fear, in Christ, who conquered fear by passing through death, rising from the dead, and gloriously ascending to your right hand. We pray, Father, that you would heal us,

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in our hearts, in our memories, of all fear and anxiety. Deliver us, oh Lord, so that we may abide in trust, that we may walk in victory, holding our heads high, as sons and daughters of the King, taking ground from the enemy, and fulfilling the beautiful mission that you have for each one of us. We ask all this through Christ, our Lord. Amen. Mary, Star of Evangelization, pray for us. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Thank you for joining me on this healing retreat. And I'm excited and thrilled to know that the Lord is doing a healing in your life, and will continue to do it.