TITLE: Fear

TEXT: Pr. 9:10; Lk. 12:4-5; 1 Jn. 4:18; Heb. 13:6; Isa. 41:10; Deut. 31:8; Jn. 14:27

A pastor went into the pulpit one Sunday morning wearing a pair of new bifocals. The reading portion of the glasses improved his vision considerably, but whenever he looked through the top portion of the glasses he got dizzy. He explained to the congregation that the new glasses were causing problems, then said, "I hope you will excuse my continually removing my glasses. You see when I look down I can see fine, but when I look at you, it makes me sick."

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about one of the most commonly dealt with things that, not just Christians, but all men have to deal with and that is fear.

In Scripture the Greek word for fear is:

**phobos *fob'-os* (to *be* put in *fear*); *alarm* or *fright:*—be afraid, + exceedingly, fear, terror.**

It is where we get the word Phobia from.

 We live in a world full of phobias.

My wife has claustrophobia (fear of closed places), I have a son with acrophobia (fear of high places). I have a niece that I believe had astraphobia growing up-(fear of thunderstorms).

When I worked for Dahls Foods I had a customer with mysophobia (a fear of dirt and germs).

She would carry her own box of Kleenex in her grocery cart with a small paper sack open in her cart and whenever she picked something off the shelf she would never touch it with her bare hands but use a Kleenex to grab the item and then throw the Kleenex in the paper bag and then to do it all over again with the next item she would pick up.

 When she went through the check out lane she would not take her change directly from the cashier but would have the cashier put the money on the counter then she would pick it up with a Kleenex and put it in her purse.

 Some people have Achluophobia- Fear of darkness, Agliophobia- Fear of pain, Aichmophobia- Fear of needles or pointed objects, Ailurophobia- Fear of cats, Amaxophobia- Fear of riding in a car, Arsonphobia- Fear of fire,

Blennophobia- Fear of slime ( I have another son that may fall into this category), Catagelophobia- Fear of being ridiculed,

 Glossophobia- Fear of speaking in public or of trying to speak. Some may even have pantophobia which is fear of everything.

Of all the phobias out there my biggest one to have overcome is Glossophobia- Fear of speaking in public or of trying to speak.

Great phobia for a preacher to have, right?

 In one study on fear it found that those surveyed ranked fear of death as number 7 and guess what came it at number 1? Fear of speaking in public!

The point is that we live in a world full of potential fears, and fear is something that we all deal with, probably on a daily basis.

So, it is no wonder that Scripture deals with the subject of fear so often.

Do you realize that fear is not always a bad thing?

Fear, within its proper limits, can actually be a very good thing.

A fear of getting burned may very well keep you from placing your hand on a hot stove burner. A healthy fear of pain can keep us from doing a lot of stupid things….

The Greatest positive fear we find in:

**Proverbs 9:10(NIV)**  **10 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.**

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.**

—Oswald Chambers once said:

*The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else.*

**Luke 12:4-5(NIV)**  **4“I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more.**  **5But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.**

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.**

The specific Greek word Luke uses for fear here is:

**phobeō *fob-eh'-o***

**to *frighten*, that is, (passively) to *be* *alarmed*; by analogy to *be* *in* *awe* of, that is, *revere--*reverence.**

We are not to be terrified of God but we are to be in awe of Him, have a great reverence for Him.

 And it is in the resulting wisdom that enables us to handle and defeat all other fears we may have.

As a child it was fun to watch the movies about the swamp monster that ate an entire city, or the space alien that tried to conquer New York or Tokyo. These movies were fun because you could be afraid for an hour or so, and then it was all over. The monster was killed; the aliens were fought off.

It is not fun to be afraid in the “real” sense. Fear is that emotion that is so well known. It is produced by a sense of danger, impending calamity or some dire emergency, or even by walking into a dentist’s office. It is a powerful emotion that can damage both the physical body and the personality. Fear can even block the thought processes.

John Madden, of CBS Sports crisscrosses the country many times each fall in a customized bus because he is afraid of flying.

A few years ago, one first-round draft choice in the NBA quickly ended his career with an unconditional release by his team because of his paralyzing fear of flying.

Several years ago, a televised circus act with Bengal tigers was broadcast live. The tiger trainer went into the cage with several tigers to do a routine performance. The door was locked behind him.

The spotlights highlighted the cage, the television cameras moved in close, and the audience watched in suspense as the trainer put the tigers through their act.

 However, in the middle of the performance, the lights went out! For 20 or 30 seconds the trainer was locked in a dark cage with Bengal tigers, a whip and a chair. The tigers have very good night vision and could see the trainer, but he could not see them!

After the event was over, in an interview, the trainer was asked how he felt about his situation in the cage. He first admitted to the chilling fear of the situation, but he pointed out that the tigers did not know that he could not see them. He said, “I just kept cracking my whip and talking to them until the lights came on. They never knew I could not see them as well as they could see me.”

This story says something about many fears. Face them and go on doing the best you can. As a child you may have had a fear of the dark. As an adult you may fear failure or rejection, the future, some potential health crisis, or of your death or the death of a loved one.

The Bible has the answer for all of our fears.

John wrote:
**1 John 4:18(NIV)**
**18There 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**.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear….” Christ’s love is the perfect defense against the physical and mental effects of fear.

Paul said it this way in; **Phil. 4:13** **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me**”.

The phrase “fear not” is found at least 365 times in various forms throughout the Bible. Divide that in the number of days in a year and we have God telling us to fear not every day!

The writer of the book of Hebrews says this in:
**Hebrews 13:6(NIV)**
**6So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”**

Someone once said that: *Fear makes the wolf seem bigger than he is.*

 Isn’t that true? Fear makes the wolf seem bigger than he really is…..

 Many times once a fear of something is faced than it doesn’t seem nearly as big of a threat after all.

 Often in our anticipating something we fear, that fear actually becomes greater as we let our mind dwell upon it…

When you fear that the worst will happen, your own thoughts may help to bring it about.

 Someone once wrote, “*Fear is the wrong use of imagination. It is anticipating the worst, not the best that can happen.”*

 A salesman, driving on a lonely country road one dark and rainy night, had a flat tire. He opened the trunk—no lug wrench. The light from a farmhouse could be seen dimly up the road. He set out on foot through the driving rain. Surely the farmer would have a lug wrench he could borrow, he thought. Of course, it was late at night—the farmer would be asleep in his warm, dry bed. Maybe he wouldn’t answer the door. And even if he did, he’d be angry at being awakened in the middle of the night.

 The salesman, picking his way blindly in the dark, stumbled on.

 By now his shoes and clothing were soaked. Even if the farmer did answer his knock, he would probably shout something like, “What’s the big idea waking me up at this hour?”

 This thought made the salesman angry. What right did that farmer have to refuse him the loan of a lug wrench? After all, here he was stranded in the middle of nowhere, soaked to the skin. The farmer was a selfish clod—no doubt about that!

 The salesman finally reached the house and banged loudly on the door. A light went on inside, and a window opened above. A voice called out, “Who is it?” His face white with anger, the salesman called out, “You know darn well who it is. It’s me! And you can keep your blasted lug wrench. I wouldn’t borrow it now if you had the last one on earth!”

 We can, and often do, make things a lot worse than they really are when we dwell upon them and let our imaginations get the best of us, don’t we?

 Why do we do this? Why do we so often dwell negatively upon a situation that we may fear and just make the fear worse?

 One writer said it this way: “*The greatness of our fears shows us the littleness of our faith.”*

*The greatness of our fears shows us the littleness of our faith.”*

 We need to pray about our fears and our faith, and turn to the Lord for help to face our fears.

 Faith is the answer to our fears!

I like what one unknown writer once said:

*Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered. No one was there.*

 Faith will always displace fear!

 Why? Because they are polar opposites! They cannot reside in the same place at the same time for one will always displace the other….

 They are like oil and water, they just will not mix…..

 One of my favorite illustrations of this is when I was in Grocery management.

 As a grocery manager I ran a pretty tight ship.

 If the store got slow in the evening I had a tendency to start sending people home early to save on payroll cost.

 In the evenings when I worked I would usually put one of our more responsible young men in charge of running the front end, making sure people got there breaks and that the customers were taken care of and that too long of lines did not develop.

 Scheduling in a grocery store, or any retail store, is not an exact science.

 There are too many variables that can change the customer flow—the weather, sporting events, ext.

 Now for those working as checkout people and baggers they would always want all the help there just in case it did get busy.

 As a manager I had to also conceder the cost involved.

 So, those who worked with me knew that if I came up to the front end and people were just standing around not doing anything I would start sending people home early.

 The unwritten rule was that usually as soon as I would do that then it would get busy again a little later and people would have to work harder to make up for the absence of those I had sent home early.

 So, the guys I had on the front end running things would usually make sure all the help at least looked busy.

 One winter night it had slowed down extremely early and we had a new bagger working that night.

 The young man I had running the front end had run out of things for people to do so he told this new guy to go over to the salad dressing isle and start shaking down all the oil and water based salad dressings.

 This young man went over and started to do just that!

 He would be shaking one bottle to get it mixed up and while he was working on the next one the first bottle was already starting to separate so he worked all the faster at it.

 About this time I come out of the back room and walking toward him I see this kid frantically shaking all these salad dressing bottles.

 I stopped and watched him a minute and finally asked him what in the world he was doing…

 He looked up and with a big smile of personal satisfaction on his face said: I am shaking down the salad dressing!

 Out of the corner of my eye I see my front end guy doubled over laughing….

 So I told this young man: and you’re doing a fine job at it….And just shook my head as I passed the guy that had sent him to do it…..

 What this young man learned was that oil and water just don’t mix! No matter how much you strive to shake them together they instantly will start to separate when the shaking stops.

 Faith and fear are like oil and water---they just will not mix---they cannot be in the same person at the same time as one will always displace the other.

 Over 350 times in Scripture God tells us to fear not.

 We are to replace our fear with faith and faith will always prevail over our fears.

**Isaiah 41:10(NIV)
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.**

 As a Christian we can live our lives fearing not because we have one who is always with us that is greater than all of our fears.

 **Deuteronomy 31: 8(NIV)**
**8The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”**

Jesus says the same thing to us in:

 **John 14:27(NIV)**  **27Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.**

What is it that you fear today?

Death—Disability-- Disease?

Fear of Flying, close places or heights?

Fear of Spiders, snakes or the boogie man?

Fear of getting up and speaking in front of other people?

Fear of not be successful or being ridiculed or made fun of?

Whatever your personal fears may be Jesus is greater than them all!

 As a Christian we have the Spirit of the Living God alive within us!

And He has said to us: I will **go before you and will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. So let your hearts not be troubled and do not be afraid.**

Again, faith is the antidote to fear. Do you want to be a person of little fear than be a person of great faith… Faith in Him who is greater than all of our fears…