

“A Word From God In Fearful Times”

There is a Cherokee Indian legend that illustrates how a young boy experiences the rite of passage to becoming a young man. The young boy would be taken by his father and dropped off into the forest. The father would blindfold the boy and require him to sit on a stump the entire night, and not remove the blindfold until the rays of the morning sunshine came through. The young Cherokee is naturally terrified.

As he is sitting on that stump, he can hear all kinds of noises during the night. Fear begins to creep into his mind as he hears limbs breaking and leaves rustling. Wild beasts must be all around him, or the fear enters his mind that another human being is there to harm him. But the young Cherokee boy pushes through all of his fears, because this is the only way he can become a man. Finally, after a sleepless night, the sun appeared, and the young Cherokee removed his blindfold.

It was then that the young Cherokee boy discovered that just a few feet away, the boy's father was sitting on the stump next to him all night long. The father had been there the whole night, watching and protecting his son from any harm.

In these days of political and social unrest, financial and economic instability, many of us can identify with the young Cherokee boy. We may feel as if in 2025, we are blindfolded, feeling our way around in the dark, experiencing the fears of uncertainty as to what lies ahead and what dangers are lurking around us.

But God has a word for us. When we are tempted to give into our fears, our Heavenly Father is right beside us, watching over us, guiding us, and protecting us during those times of fear. We have a Heavenly Father who reminds us that we do not have to be

paralyzed by fear, because we are never, ever alone. Our God says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Look in your Bible to 2 Timothy 1:7. Our message today is entitled "**A Word From God in Fearful Times**".

God can help you face and overcome your fears.

I want to read 2 Timothy 1:7 from three different translations.

2 Timothy 1:7 in the New International Version: "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, and love, and self-discipline."

2 Timothy 1:7 in the King James Version: "For God hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

2 Timothy 1:7 in the Amplified Bible: "For God did not give us the spirit of timidity, of cowardice, of craven and cringing and fawning fear. But he has given us a spirit of power, and of love, and of a calm and well-balanced mind, and discipline, and self-control."

The New Testament books of 1 and 2 Timothy are called Pastoral Epistles. These are two letters the apostle Paul wrote to a young protege of his, a young pastor by the name of Timothy. Timothy is referred to in 1 Timothy 1:2 as "*Paul's true child in the faith*". Timothy is referred to in 2 Timothy 1:2 as "*Paul's beloved son*."

Paul and Timothy had a father-son relationship, and Paul was preparing Timothy to become a pastor, a teacher, a leader in the early Christian church. 2 Timothy was probably written between AD 65 and AD 68. These words from Paul to Timothy in what we call 2 Timothy are some of Paul's last words before he is martyred for the cause of Jesus Christ.

You recall just three chapters later in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Paul anticipates his impending death, and he writes to young Timothy these words: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, and I have kept the faith."

The last few words from the Apostle Paul to Timothy are important words. Young Timothy was becoming a pastor, a teacher, a leader, and this would carry with it a lot of responsibility. More than likely, Timothy felt inadequate and felt self-conscious because he would be teaching people that were older than him and more mature in the faith. That's why Paul said to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12, "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, purity, show yourself an example of those who believe."

Paul is writing to Timothy, who may have experienced fear and anxiety related to his becoming a church leader at such a young age.

With this fear in mind, Paul spoke a word from God to young Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:7, and this morning, I'm going to use the King James Version. "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, love, and a sound mind."

Is this a fearful time for you? God has a word for you today.

- I. **First, when going through anxious times, be prepared to face your fears.** 2 Timothy 1:7, "*God has not given us a spirit of fear.*"

The Apostle Paul was fond of making a negative statement and then following that negative statement with positive statements.

Paul sensed there was an element of fear in Timothy's spirit, which was related to his fear of becoming a church leader. If Timothy allowed that fear to paralyze him, he would certainly fail under the great responsibility Paul was entrusting to him.

Paul's word and God's word to Timothy was this, "God has not given you a spirit of fear."

You may not be facing the fear of becoming a pastor like Timothy, but let me ask you, what are your fears today? What fearful situations are you facing in your life today?

When anxious and unsettling times come your way, you need to be prepared to face those fears. And one of the ways you prepare yourself for those fearful times is to have the Word of the Lord as the anchor of your soul. God's word to you is this, "God has not given you a spirit of fear." Now on a practical level, there are some things in life that we should fear: snakes, spiders, sharks and time share presentations!

Paul is telling us that when we are experiencing anxious times, we need to understand, we can face our fears because God has not given us a spirit of fear. He is not the author of that fear. In the language of the New Testament, the word for fear is cowardice or coward. Remember, the Amplified Bible translates this verse, Timothy 1:7, "God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, of craven and fawning fear." The kind of fear Paul is talking about here is a spirit of terror that paralyzes you and keeps you from moving forward.

What are your fears? What situation is paralyzing you today?

- Who will take care of me when I am older?
- Will I have enough money to live on in my senior adult years? *
- When our son or daughter goes to college, how are we going to adjust?
- As the parent of a teenager, your fear may be of letting go. *
- What happens if my company continues to downsize?
- What if I lose my job?
- What if something happens to my spouse?

As humans, we have all kinds of fears, but those fears don't have to paralyze. They do not have to incapacitate us to the point where we cannot move forward. What are your fears? Hear the words of Jesus in John 14:27. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world gives, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."

When going through anxious times, be prepared to face your fears. The good news is God is with you in those fearful times. But there is a second word from God in fearful times:

II. **You can face and overcome your fears with the spiritual resources available to you.**

When we are going through anxious times and we have fear coming at us from all directions, what do we have to confront those fears? What do we have to offset, to counterattack those fears?

Here is the answer: **We have spiritual resources God has made available to us.** And what are those spiritual resources? 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "God has not given us a spirit of fear; but what has God given us? What has he made available to us? **Power, love, and a sound mind.**

When you're going through your most fearful time, you have spiritual resources, spiritual supplies God has made available to you. Now, what are some of these spiritual resources?

This is not an exhaustive list. But Paul says, first of all:

- a. **God has given you a spirit of power.** When you're going through a fearful time where fear has gripped your heart, you may feel powerless. You may feel weak, inadequate, spiritually anemic. But the God of the universe reminds us in Second Corinthians chapter 12, verses nine and ten, "My grace is

sufficient for you, Paul, for my power is perfected in weakness." Paul goes on to say in that verse, "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." Paul says, "For when I am weak, that's when I am strong."

The word for power in the New Testament is that little word *dunamos*. Dynamic. It's where we get the English word dynamite. When you are filled with fear and you feel you are at your weakest, that's when the power of Jesus Christ, the dynamic power that raised Jesus from the dead, comes in and sustains you. And this dynamic power gives you the grace to be stronger than you could ever imagine. We serve a powerful God.

What are some of these spiritual resources?

a. **God has given you a spirit of power.**

b. **God has also given you a spirit of love.**

The word for love here in 2 Timothy 1:7 is that word *agape*, meaning Godlike love, perfect love, enduring love. In this context, Paul was reminding Timothy that when he became a church leader, he would encounter difficult people, and even people who might oppose his message. But the spirit that Jesus places within us is not only the ability to love God, but the ability to love other people even when it's difficult to love them.

What are some of the spiritual resources God makes available to us in fearful times? God has given you a spirit of power. He has given you a spirit of love.

c. **God has given you a sound mind.**

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but he has given us a spirit of power, and love, and a sound mind. Some translations, like the New International Version and the New American Standard Bible render,

"God has given us a spirit of power, and love, and self-discipline." In the language of the New Testament, sound mind is translated here as restraint, self-control, a sober mind, a well-balanced mind that is under the right influences, a mind that is seeing things from the right perspective. It is a mind that is controlled by the thoughts of Jesus Christ.

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 10:5 that we are to make every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ.

Have you experienced days where you felt as if you were losing your mind? Maybe you have experienced these feelings recently.

There have been times in my life where I felt as if I were losing my mind because of various things going on in my life.

Because of difficult circumstances, I did not possess a sound mind. I had thoughts in my head and voices in my ear that were not the right influences, voices and thoughts that were preventing me from seeing things from the right perspective. I did not have a sound mind. The thing that has sustained me and given me the sound mind to move forward from fear to faith is striving to make every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ, and it really is a battle of the mind.

Satan and the world continually try to influence our thinking and our mind. I have found that one of the ways I can have the sound mind Paul is referring to, I have to continually saturate my mind with the word of God. If I'm going to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ, I must memorize, and internalize, and repeat scripture after scripture all throughout the day. For example, 2 Timothy 1:7, "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power and love and of a sound mind." Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Jesus Christ who strengthens me." Luke 1:37 says, "With God all things are possible." Psalm 118:24 says, "This is the

day which the Lord hath made. I will rejoice and be glad in it." Psalm 19:14 says, "May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing and acceptable in thy sight, oh Lord, my rock and my redeemer."

Knowing God's word and internalizing God's word will help you have a sound mind, a well-balanced mind, a mind that is disciplined and under the right influences, a mind that is seeing things from the right perspective.

When you are going through a difficult time, you may say to yourself, "I think I am losing my mind." You're thinking to yourself, "I have received a troubling diagnosis. I'm raising young children. I'm raising teenagers. My aging parents are driving me crazy. I am caring for a sick relative. I, I don't know if I can make it much longer. I have lost a job. I have a prodigal son or a prodigal daughter that's not living in the will of God."

I want to encourage you today. God has given you the ability to possess a sound mind. I am not talking about a medical illness. I am not talking about a mental condition that needs to be addressed by a medical doctor or a mental health professional. I am referring to a situational condition or a spiritual condition, we all face on a regular basis.

I am talking about daily spiritual warfare, where Satan is doing all he can to get us thinking in negative and destructive ways, wanting us to be paralyzed by our fears.

When these fears and negative ways of thinking enter our minds, we need to remember, we have spiritual resources available to us. But we have to reach out and receive those resources." God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, love, and a sound mind."