

# FEAR CAN DISAPPEAR

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, September 10, 2006



**Psalms 25** To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD! Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the

humble his way. All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

**Romans 8:9-17** But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. No one who does not have the Spirit of Christ belongs to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you. So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. **For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption.** When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ--if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. **< Here ends our Scripture Readings May your life and mine be touched and changed, this very day!>**

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It was necessary to consult my on-line dictionary in order to find the term that would best describe what this second Sunday in September is and should be all about. I began with the word "celebration" because, five years ago, I first arrived in Cocoa Beach and received the privilege of this pulpit. These were five precious years and so much happened since then that could be a cause for celebration, **but then** the opposite is also true because simultaneously – 911 happened – and America changed forever. Therefore, the term "celebration" no longer made sense, and the next best term that the dictionary suggests is, "commemoration" described as **"a ceremony to honor the memory of someone or something!"**

Functions of commemoration are taking place across the world. Some call – **911** - the day when America lost its innocence. Many of us will carry the horrifying images of that day until the end of our days. Living in a dangerous world is not only a sign of our times. The Bible and world history recorded similar events that happened through the centuries. We know for sure that the earliest Christians in Rome also lived in a dangerous world. Fear was part of their daily lives. They never knew what the next day would bring. For them, and for all God's children

through the ages, the Apostle Paul wrote, **“For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption,”** In our time, millions of people all over the world are still living in fear. Through the modern media, in the comfort of our living rooms, we are given ringside seats -- often seeing bad things happening to good people. **Anxiety, fear and depression** are constant companions in our lives and in the lives of so many people around us. It is awful living with **the spirit of fear**. **Fear** of the future. **Fear** of having the past catch up with you. **Fear** of rejection. **Fear** of failure.

People have different ways of dealing with their fears. Take for instance **the timid little fellow** who went to the movie theater by himself for the first time. He paid for his ticket and went inside. Shortly afterwards, he came back to the ticket office and bought another ticket. Moments later he returned, visibly shaken and confused, and bought a third ticket. He muttered softly to the cashier, **“If that man inside the door tears up my ticket one more time, I’m going home!”**

Even when fear is not physically destructive, it adds a great burden to our lives. Two men on a double bicycle, panting and perspiring, finally made it to the top of a steep hill. **“That was a stiff climb,”** said the man on the front seat. **“It certainly was,”** replied the second man. **“And if I hadn’t kept the brake on, we would have slid backward.”**

Victor Hugo, the famous psychiatrist, tells about a ship caught in a terrific storm. **At the height of the storm, the frightened crew heard a terrible crashing sound below. They know what it is.** One of the canons below deck had broken loose and was crashing into the ship’s sides with every smashing blow from the sea. **Several men, at the risk of their lives ~ manage to fasten it again, for they knew that the heavy cannon on the inside of their ship is a greater danger to them than is the storm outside.** Hugo tells the story to illustrate how anxiety can affect people. The burdens within are more destructive to us than the storms without.

It is necessary to know where the fear resides! The word **fear** comes from an old English word, meaning **sudden danger**. It refers to **fright when fright is justified** and when danger is real. In such cases, fear is appropriate, and sometimes useful. However, such fear is the least of our problems. In our every day lives we are more likely to be haunted by **anxiety**, the fear that stays with us even when there is no real danger of any kind. It is the fear of the uncertain. Anxiety comes **not from without but from within**.

**Fear, when it manifests itself within us ~ as anxiety, worry or dread is a spirit.** It is something we carry around with us on the **inside**. We have it long before we encounter anything actually worth fearing. **It is a condition of the mind, the heart, and the soul.** Thus, the only cure is re-orientation from within, a new sense of identity - a sense of knowing who we are. That is why Paul writes, **“You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption.”**

Those of us stricken by the spirit of fear need a **faith-lift**. We need to know that we can lean back on the everlasting arms. We need to know that we have a Divine Friend who will never forget or forsake us. **“Anxiety increases, in direct ratio and proportion as a person departs from God.”** The historical remedy for our fear is a sense of our son-ship or daughter-ship referred to as a “spirit of adoption” by Paul.

What does this mean in practical terms? What are some practical steps each of us can take to conquer the spirit of fear? **Focus on today-- not tomorrow or yesterday!** Mistakes of the past often cripple us! We lie awake at night reliving past humiliations, anticipating the consequences of past misdeeds, regretting the tragedy of missed opportunities. No teaching is clearer in Scripture than this one. People who have chosen Christ can rest assured that the past is gone. **“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”** Paul advises us in Philippians 3:13 to “forget those things that are past.” Of course, one way of **preventing future worries** is to be careful about what we say and do everyday. We cannot do anything about **yes-**

terday, but we can do something about today.

Forget the things that are yet to come. Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount; "Do not be anxious about tomorrow - each day has trouble enough of its own." Concentrate on today. Who knows what tomorrow may bring? We can only be certain about today. **Focus on your faith and not your fear.**

The Nazis brutally treated Betsy ten Boom in Ravensbruck concentration camp during World War II. Before dying there, she said to her older sister, Corrie, "If ever you get out of this place, go and tell the world that no matter how deep the pit, Our God is deeper still."

Sidney Lanier was a brilliant young poet who lived about a hundred years ago. When Lanier was in his thirties, he developed tuberculosis. He knew he would not live long, for few survived that disease in those days. He went down to the Coast of Glynn County, Georgia. Sitting one day, looking across the marshes, he wrote one of his finest poems, "The Marshes of Glynn." In that poem is this immortal couplet: "As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery sod, Behold, I will build me a nest on the greatness of God."

"You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption." Do not be enslaved to your fears any longer. Faith will help you break those chains with a **new spirit of trust, of hope, of joy, of love.** Rejoice in your new identity - a son or a daughter adopted and loved by God.

**AMEN**