

# Fear Factor

by John McGregor

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*God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love, and we can overcome fear by knowing the touch of God and receiving Christ.*

**Duration:** 32:07

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 25:24-25, Matthew 26:69-75, Luke 12:4-7, Romans 8:9, Romans 8:15, 2 Timothy 1:7

**Topics:** "Fear"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of fear and its consequences in our lives. He references Bible verses such as James 4:14 and Ecclesiastes to emphasize the fleeting nature of life and the vanity of worldly pursuits. The speaker also highlights the importance of having a spirit of love rather than fear, as God has given us the spirit of love. He uses the example of a painting depicting a young woman facing martyrdom without fear, symbolizing the power of love in overcoming fear. The sermon also mentions Timothy, a pastor who is struggling and feeling disconnected from God, reminding listeners that even in times of doubt, God's love is always available to us.

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## Transcript

We're going to speak this morning from the subject, The Fear Factor, and our text is from 2 Timothy chapter 1. And we're just going to read those first 12 verses from that chapter and walk through them together for a few moments. 2 Timothy chapter 1, verse 1 says, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus. To Timothy, a beloved son, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I thank God whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day. Greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy. When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.

Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death

and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

For this reason I also suffer these things. Nevertheless I'm not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I'm persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him until that day. Would you join me in prayer? Father, as we come to your word this morning, we thank you that we can depend upon you.

We thank you for the truth of that song that Rachel just shared with us, and we thank you, Father, that you care so deeply about us. And this morning as a congregation, we lift our hearts to you in prayer. We ask that you would touch those lives that need a physical touch for healing.

Touch those hearts that need a touch emotionally from you, spiritually as well. And Father, we acknowledge we are indeed a needy people. And as we come to you, we continue just to ask, Father, that you would encounter us.

And as we look together in your word, that you would speak to our hearts and shut us in with yourself. Because as we have already been reminded, better those moments in the presence of God than all of the rest of the time. So, Father, take this time and make it your very own in our hearts and in our lives.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. The fear factor.

That's a TV show, right? But I think the Bible had that in there long before we ever had the TV show. And so, as I title these thoughts, The Fear Factor, I just want us to think about this thing that we call fear. It is one of the strongest human emotions.

Psychologists tell us it is the quickest thing that develops in a child when it is born and so on. Fear. Do you know that there are 366 times in the Bible that it says, from God to people, fear not.

Now, that I don't think is an accident, because even in the leap year, that means I have a fear not for every single day. And I think so often large parts of life can be governed by fear. In fact, I would say in the last decade we have seen this so plainly, have we not, where after the attacks in 9-11, fear became so strong that it has actually changed society and how we do things and how we think about things and all the rest.

So, as we think about this thing, this fear factor, I want to just zero in for a moment on Timothy, the man to whom this letter was written. And Timothy is a pastor. He's a Christian.

He's a leader. But Timothy is failing. And you know, there are times when we feel like that, aren't there? Times when we don't feel as if we are really getting through to God or God to us.

Times when we feel separated from him. Times when things are just not as close as we would long for them to be. And Timothy is struggling, as we see Paul writing to him here in verse 6 and 7 in particular, to stir up the gift that is in him because God has not given us the spirit of fear.

I'm just slipping over in my Bible to 1 Corinthians chapter 16, and let me just read verse 10. And you see this is something that Timothy struggled with, because here again the apostle Paul is writing, and he says, "...and if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear, for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do." Without fear. It's a part and parcel of life, isn't it? And so just this morning let's think about--I guess it's high afternoon--let's think about what causes this thing that is called a spirit of fear in Timothy.

Where do we first find any mention of fear in the Scriptures? And we'll have a little bit of a workout this morning in our Bibles, but I'm just going to Genesis chapter 3 and looking at verses 8 through 10 for a moment. Genesis 3, 8 through 10, "...they heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, where are you? And he said, I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself." You see, here's the first mention of it.

It is at the time of the fall into sin. It is the time first that we come across this word, I was afraid, fear. And what I want us to see this morning is just how this thing of fear so often is attached to our failures, certainly in the spiritual life.

This is where the first failure takes place and unhappiness in life ensues, ever after that whole sense of sin separates us from God, and there is that distance between Him and humanity. So as we think about the causes of a spirit of fear, it goes all the way back to the garden, to Genesis. And as we think about it, also there's that sense of insecurity, isn't there? That causes us to fear as well when we're not secure.

There's a sense of fear that comes upon us. And again, I'll just slip back to Genesis, and this time I'm looking at chapter 15, and just the first couple of verses there. It says, After these things the word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision, saying, Do not be afraid, Abraham.

I am your shield and your exceeding great reward. But Abraham said, Lord God, what will you give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eleazar of Damascus? You see, he's insecure. That's why God is saying to him, Don't be afraid.

There's an insecurity. He's looking down the road and saying, What's going to happen, Lord? I have all this, but where's it going? What are you going to give me? There's no one to inherit it. And so, insecurity brings on fear, doesn't it? And there are a lot of things that cause us insecurity, especially when you think about the future.

Yeah. We had a record month for starting jobs apparently in Canada in June. Woo-hoo! But the problem these days is even when you have one, it's no guarantee that you get to keep it, is it? Things change and go so quickly and so fast, and we sometimes would look and say, Well, how secure am I? And all the investments and stuff that we can make, and our government's so good to us, now we can have a tax-exempt savings plan and all those things.

But the Bible says riches have wings, and you know what's here is so often just gone. The future makes us insecure, doesn't it? That's why oftentimes when we do evangelistic meetings, we preach on the second coming of Christ because that addresses a great need for security in the heart to know what is going to happen. And that's why we need to be in Christ Jesus, because one day He is coming again.

So, that can make us insecure. Illness can make us feel insecure. All kinds of things that can come along and threaten us.

Anything that threatens that sense of security causes us to fear. And I think you know about that finiteness of being human. In Psalm 8 and verse 4, the psalmist says, What is man that you think upon him? You know, somebody lately told me life is like this, and eternity is like this.

It just goes on. Now, you know in a little bit I celebrate a birthday with a zero in it, and I still feel like 18 on the inside, but there are little twinges that remind me from time to time that I'm not. The finiteness of our being human.

Our lives are short. James 4.14 says life is like a vapor, and insignificance leads us to fear as well. Just like in Ecclesiastes, and you read chapter 1, verses 2 to 4, Solomon, that wise man, is saying, Vanity of vanities.

Life is like a bubble that bursts. It comes, and it goes, and whoa! It's just gone. These are things that cause us to know that spirit of fear.

And you know there are consequences to that. So, what are the consequences of a spirit of fear? Because everything has consequences, you know. So, let's just think upon it for a moment or two.

What effects can fear have upon us? Fear can be paralyzing. It just can grip us so deeply, paralyze us. Frozen by fear--isn't that an expression that we hear from time to time? So afraid of doing the wrong thing that we do nothing.

Fear can paralyze. You remember King Saul, the fellow whose head and shoulders above everyone else in Israel, and in the Valley of Elah, when the giant comes out and threatens Israel? Where is Israel's champion? Now come on church, I know you've read that passage in 1 Samuel 17. Where is he? He's in the tent, looking out, knocking knees, frozen.

Look over there. Isn't it interesting how David comes on the scene there, and God provides his own champion, someone to take on the cause. You think about in the New Testament, the ten story of the talents, ten talents to one, and he doubles it, and five to another, and he doubles it, and one talent to one.

What does he do with it? He buries it. What does he say to the master when he has to give an account of it? I knew that you always reap where you don't sow, and so on, and so I wasn't taking any chances. I hid it.

What was it that caused him to hide it? It was fear, wasn't it? Fear that caused him to just put it out of the way. Not to lose it, but not to use it either. Oh, I tell you, we have been given so many gifts and so many wonderful things from the Lord.

Let's never hide that thing that He has given to us, but use it for His glory. Fear leads on to selfishness. Now why would I say a thing like that? Well, think about Peter, for instance.

As Jesus is arrested, and they come and say to Peter, you were with him, and he says, why did he say no? Because he's afraid. He's afraid. And you and I would be too, wouldn't we? We'd be intimidated by that whole sense of pressure that goes on around it, but here it is.

It leads on to selfishness. Lost in fellowship with the Lord took him into a sense of misery, being far away from Jesus. Fear causes us to be irrational.

You say, John, how do you get that? Well, think about Genesis chapter 3 with me for a moment. We know, theologically at least, that God is omnipresent. Some of you theologians tell me, what does that word omnipresent mean? He's everywhere all the time.

Right? So what are Adam and Eve doing? They're hiding from someone who is ever-present and always there all the time. Don't you think that's a little irrational? I think that's irrational. Yeah.

And so we see fear causes us to be irrational, hiding from God. Fear also causes us to have a sense of self-depreciation or self-destruction sometimes. Think about Elijah.

Great prophet of God wins a victory, meets up with Jezebel. She says, I'm going to kill you. He takes off into the desert on his own.

He sits under a tree and says, Oh Lord, I want to die. You know, every time I read through that passage in 1 Kings 19, I just think to myself, Elijah, why didn't you just stay by Jezebel? She'd have been happy to help you on your way. But you see, fear has these kind of effects upon us.

Sometimes fear produces violence too. Cain and Abel both bring a sacrifice. One sacrifice is accepted and one is not, and yet what is the result? Cain kills Abel.

Afraid that he was a head under God, getting more than I have, pushing me out of the way. Fear. Fear leads us to escapism.

And you know, this is where I want to dwell for just a moment or two, because we live in a society that is so often geared to escapism. You ever stop to ask yourself, why is it that we're attracted to movies where some guy overcomes everything? It helps us escape for a little bit. It says there might be hope for me to get past my problem here too.

It says I can get out of this kind of thing, and it helps us escape for a bit. It's a bit like David and Bathsheba when there was sin between the two of them. You notice all the shenanigans that David does to try to escape.

We like to get away from reality, not wanting to face the reality of life. You know, during the Second World War, I find this incredibly interesting. If during a time when there was going to be an air raid in the evenings in London, where do you think were the greatest tribes of people to be found? In the cinema or the theater.

Why? Same thing. Lord, I want to get out of this. Let me look at something else.

This reality is just too harsh to work with. Fear. Thirdly and lastly, let me just come to some wonderful Scripture here.

Not only is there a cause for a spirit of fear and a consequence, but there's also a cure for the spirit of fear. And it's not to pull yourself together, because this we can't do. It is to know the touch of God, to receive Christ or return to Christ with a fresh sense of surrender to Him.

Turn over with me to Romans chapter 8 and verse 15 for just a second as we think about what Scripture says here. You did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, Abba, Father. And God has not given the spirit of fear, says 2 Timothy 1 and verse 7. The Lord didn't give it.

When you think about Him at work, He has given us His Spirit. Now, I want to get a volunteer to help me for just a second. Who should I pick? Who should I pick? Who should I pick? Any, any, any? Hey Ben, come and help me.

Would you hold that for me? Let me just demonstrate something to you. Ben's got my Bible. Glove, pick up that Bible for me.

They're laughing. What do you think they're laughing for, Ben? Come on, Glove, pick up the Bible. Yeah, take it closer to it.

Touch it. Come on, Glove. You know what it is? I'll bet you this Glove just needs a really good example of how to do it.

So I'll just take my other hand, and I'll take the book. Now see, Glove, that's all you have to do. You just wrap your fingers.

See, you got fingers, Glove? You just wrap them around the book like this, and it's yours. And I said, just hang on. Okay, Glove, your turn.

Pick up the book. I mean to say, what's wrong? And you see that Glove is just like you and me. There's nothing in it to do the job.

It really needs something inside. See if I can get my hand inside my wife's white glove. And then, then with the power on the inside, the job can be done.

Thank you, sir. You're a scholar and a gentleman. You see, God has not given us a spirit of fear, but what has God given us? He's given us the spirit of love.

Love. Max Gablen painted a picture. The original is in the Louvre in Paris.

It's an interesting picture. I like to look at it. It's a picture of a young woman.

She's standing in the arena in Rome. The gate is being lifted, and the lions are coming out, and she's going to die a martyr's death. There's something interesting, fascinating about that picture.

There is one white rose lying at her feet, and there is in her face no fear. You get the idea looking at that picture that she is scanning the crowd that day for the one who threw that last tribute, the one who loves her, the one who threw that last flower. And it makes me think about God has given us the spirit of love, because in the love of God, all things become possible.

He gave us love. He gave us a sound mind, and He never changes, and He never fails. He's given us that thing of self-control and discipline in the power of God, just like that glove can't do anything without my hand.

You and I need the fullness of the Spirit of the living God to fill us. This is so often what happens. We live the Christian life instead of.

And I wonder this morning, just as we come to the end of our time in the Word, am I speaking to someone, and today there's that fear factor, there's that emptiness, there's that need in your heart. The Lord loves you so much that He died for you, and He died for me. How do we find the cure? Well, we begin by repenting from this spirit of fear by just saying it like it is.

Lord, I'm just like that glove. I need you to come and fill me and touch me. And in a few moments, we're going to give opportunity for prayer.

Good just to come to Him in that sense of repenting from thinking that we must give in to this tyrant called fear. We can admit our need and confess it to the Lord and know that He will touch us and change us. Can believe His promise.

Fear not. 366 times in Scripture. This morning, unlike that young lady who was martyred in the arena, you do not need to search the faces of the crime to see the one who loves you, who loves me.

You can simply look to the cross and you'll find Him there. Let us pause to pray together, and then we'll ask Matt to come back and lead us in a song and have our benediction and time of prayer. Father, as we come to you this morning, we thank you that you've not given us a spirit of fear, but of love and power and of a sound mind.

Father, you know our hearts this morning. You know the burdens. You know how often we're like that glove, feeling empty on the inside.

Lord, we know that the filling of your Spirit is not once for all, but we're leaky vessels and we need to come often under the faucet and be filled again by the Spirit of the living God. So Father, we're asking that you would touch each of us this morning in a fresh and a new way and fill us with your Spirit, your power and enabling. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Let's stand as Matthew and Sam lead us in a song. Thanks, Matt. Let me ask our elders just to come to the front, and maybe Pastor Tom and Rachel would come too.

If you have a need this morning, God's been speaking to you about some areas of life, some struggles that are going on. We want to encourage you after the benediction just to come and meet with one of these and pray together with them. Let's turn our hearts to the Lord in a closing prayer.

After the benediction, if you're not coming forward for prayer, I want to just encourage you to slip out into the foyer and we'll visit and fellowship there. We're grateful to see some visitors this morning and want to get a chance to say hello and be sure if you're a regular attender here to look for someone that you don't know and go make yourself known. Father, we're glad for your presence in this place, in this moment.

Grateful, Father, that you've not given a spirit of fear, but of love and power, and that just as Rachel sang, we can depend upon you. So, even in the Spirit of God, as you've been stirring our hearts, grant us the liberty to bring the burdens of our lives just to the foot of the cross, to have the opportunity to pray for one another and with one another. And now, Father, would you bless each one who is here and each home that is represented here with the blessing of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

And send us forth from this place, but not from your presence. Fill us with your love and power and enable us to live in this world, but not be of this world. For it is in Jesus' name that we ask it.

Amen.

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