

No Fear

1 John 4:7-21

Introduction

Over the first two sermons in this series, I have described a “ripple effect” present in the Epistle of 1 John, as seen in the author’s use of the word:

NO!

John presents a key teaching and follows it up with a “NO” statement. So we began this series with the teaching in...

- God is light, so in Him there is NO DARKNESS (1 John 1:5). God sees everything clearly. Last week we talked about how since ...
- Jesus died for all our sins, so therefore there is NO CONDEMNATION for those who put their trust in Him (1 John 3:16). Our debt has been paid in full.

In part three of this series, we look at the truth “God is love,” as recorded in 1 John 4:8:

God is love. (1 John 4:8)

Three simple words, which lead us to another “NO” statement just 10 verses later:

There is NO FEAR in love. But perfect love drives out fear... (1 John 4:18)

Note that is FIRST JOHN, the epistle, not JOHN the Gospel. First John is near the end of the New Testament; the Gospel of John is near the beginning.

- People often confuse the two books.

There is an old preacher story about a young couple, very much in love, who were getting married in the church where he was pastor. The bride was very nervous about the big occasion and so the pastor chose one verse of Scripture as the text for his message, a verse that he felt would be a great encouragement to them. He chose 1 John 4:18 (*There is NO FEAR in love. But perfect love drives out fear.*)

The pastor told the lector for the ceremony to read that one verse prior to his message. Rather than print the text for the lector as we do here, the pastor simply asked the lector to read it straight from the Bible. 1 John 4:18.

The lector, however, confused the epistle with the Gospel. So right before the pastor’s message, the lector stepped up and announced to the congregation that the pastor had chosen this single verse specifically for the nervous bride. He then read John 4:18, not 1 John 4:18, which reads:

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. (John 4:18)

1 John 4:18 is our starting text:

There is NO FEAR in love. But perfect love drives out fear... (1 John 4:18)

Here's the truth taught in today's passage:

Because of God's perfect love for you, you can live out your faith with NO FEAR.

No fear. None. Not even one speck.

Why is that so? The text unpacks that truth by pointing us in three directions:

DIRECTION #1: TOWARD THE PAST

Look at verse 16:

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. (1 John 4:16)

Isn't that a great verse? This is a verse of Scripture that I don't remember from my past readings of 1 John. I love it when God shows me something new, don't you? I immediately thought of the little chorus we sing:

Jesus loves me this I KNOW!

Not only do we KNOW IT, we RELY ON IT. All throughout my life, one thing has been a constant: God loves me, and I can count on that.

- It's the same for you: God loves you.
- You may not have always loved God, but God loves you.
- The Scriptures teach us that even before the beginning of time, God loved us.

That's a constant on which we can rely. We know and rely on the love God has for us.

One of the great stories Jesus told during His earthly ministry was about a boy who decided to run away from home. Things were boring at home! So he went to his dad, collected his share of the family estate, and took off. And boy, oh boy, did he have fun! Until the money ran out.

This young man did anything he could to survive, even living and eating with the pigs – a mighty fall for a good Jewish boy! He had messed up and he knew it! Leaving home was the biggest mistake of his life! He wanted to go home, but he wasn't sure he could.

“When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, the father ran out, embraced his son, and kissed him. (Luke 15:20, The Message)

The boy learned a lesson that day. His father loved him. No matter what he had done, his father loved him. He could know and rely on the truth that his father loved him.

- This love was not based on what the boy had done or not done.

He was loved because of WHO he was, not because of WHAT he was.

Now, of course, the story Jesus told is about the Heavenly Father – God – and His love for us. Even when we find ourselves deep in pig doo-doo, God loves us.

- God's love is not conditional. You don't have to smell good, look good or be good to receive it.
- That's why we have a hard time understanding it and accepting it.
- It is unlike any love we experience in any other place. It's perfect, complete.
- We have a hard time believing a love like that exists.

Think for a moment about the sense of safety and security that is present in that kind of love.

God loves you. You can count on that.

That points us in the second direction.

DIRECTION #2: TOWARD THE PRESENT

Look at verse 19:

We love because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

One commentator said:

This one electrifying sentence is a classic one-line summary of the historical Christian ethic, when combined with the eschatological basis of the previous few verses. (Earl Palmer)

Got it? Every once in a while, I have to throw a quote in like this so you know I read really smart stuff when I'm preparing a sermon. I read it, but I don't necessarily understand it.

The verse wants you to understand the flow of God's love. Do you see it? God loves you. Now you can truly love someone else. Hear me! TRULY LOVE. Not love, but truly love.

We are surrounded by expressions of love. EVERYBODY loves EVERYBODY ... as long as they look like us, act like us, believe like us, vote like us. That kind of conditional love can be found anywhere you look:

I love you if you _____

That's not the love in this passage. It's not the love of God that is expressed toward us. Thank you, Jesus! God doesn't make you earn His love. He says:

I love you even if you don't _____

That unconditional love is expressed to us by God, and because we have experienced from Him we can express it to others. The verse might be better translated:

We now can love each other because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

You and I both know that much of what is called "love" in modern society bears no resemblance or relationship to the holy, spiritual love of God ... despite what is written on the placards at the parades and festivals.

- It is temporary, conditional, fueled by passions and emotions.
- The love of God that flows from Him through us is a special kind of love. It is spiritual and holy because He is the source of it.

The same commentator that wrote the hard-to-understand quote earlier, also wrote this much-easier-to-understand challenge:

Love, therefore, is a valid test of true Christian faith. Since God is love, and we have claimed a personal relationship with God, we must of necessity reveal His love in how we live. Since "God is love," Christians ought to love one another. The logic is unanswerable! (Earl Palmer)

Which brings us to the third direction...

DIRECTION #3: TOWARD THE FUTURE

Look at these verses. After repeating the teaching about the first two directions:

Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. (1 John 4:16)

The writer tells us the impact:

This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear... (1 John 4:17-18)

Fear is not part of God's plan for our lives. Do you remember when fear first appeared in the Scriptures?

- Since the day they were created, Adam and Eve spent their afternoons strolling in the Garden of Eden with God. You can read that in Genesis 2.
 - Face to face with God. Confident in their relationship with Him. And absolutely no fear.
- When Adam was naming all those animals, he had no fear. The elephants, the lions – not even the snakes caused him any level of fear.
- But then he and Eve ate that apple. And everything changed. Here's how the text reads:

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid ... (Genesis 3:8-10)

The moment they began to wonder if God would still love them, fear settled in. Every fear we have has its roots in that same question.

Does God love me? Will He take care of me?

That's why the Psalmist wrote:

When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. (Psalm 56:3)

God loves me. I can rely on that. And I don't have to be afraid.

APPLICATION

The term "fear not" is stated in the Bible 365 times, which, ironically, is how many days are in a year.

(Post image of 1 John 4:18)

I want to conclude by reading a couple of the many verses of Scripture that speak to those who are afraid, and as I do, please reflect on 1 John 4:18.

Isaiah 41:10: Do 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.

John 14:27: Peace 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.

Psalm 27:1: The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?

1 Peter 5:7: Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Amen.