

The Rev. Michael J. Bridge  
Sermon- Romans 8:35-39  
Sunday, August 6, 2017

### Paralyzed by fear

1. There are a lot of things that I want to do in life that I am probably never going to do, and the reason I am not going to do them is fear. I struggle with anxiety, so it can be hard for me to tell what is a healthy fear and what is an irrational fear. I am pretty sure that my fear of spiders is completely healthy and sane. It probably isn't sane that I would rather lose money than stand in the return line at Wal Mart just because returning things gives me anxiety.
2. What I wonder is how many of us miss out on God's blessings because we are afraid to be obedient- or maybe even afraid to ask what he wants from us, just in case he happens to want something difficult. I know that I terribly dislike public speaking, so when God called me to be a pastor, I was honest and up front with God about it. I told him that he was going to have to supply me with what I needed in order for me to be successful.
  - a. Of course, I didn't realize at the time, that no matter how gifted or afraid or whatever else we are, we can only succeed in God's work if he supplies us with what we need.
3. Talking about fear in serving God, many people are afraid of going overseas on mission trips because they fear the unexpected. What if we get taken prisoner by Muslims while we are there? What if the government is overthrown? What if they target Americans or Christians specifically?
4. We also have fear in talking to our friends and family about the faith. We are afraid of being ridiculed, ostracized, or rejected because of our faith and beliefs. This fear is increasing as the world around us gets more hostile to Christianity.
5. Perhaps we fear asking God what he wants from us because we are afraid he will call us to give away our possessions, leave our job, move to a different place, take a larger (or perhaps even an ordained) role in the ministry. There are so many things of we are afraid.
  - a. The enemy has succeeded in paralyzing us with fear.

### Secure in Christ

1. What do we have to fear? Really? If we are in Christ, what can we really lose? We can lose earthly things. We can lose money and friends. We can lose relationships. We can even lose our lives. But we cannot, under any circumstances, lose our sonship in Christ. Once we are his own, we are his forever.
2. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."  
<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."
3. Paul quotes a scripture about being killed for God's sake. He is quoting that, in large part, because that was a potential reality that Christians in his day (and in many places and times throughout history) had to face. And yet he is encouraging them not to fear, because even death can't separate Christians from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

4. We fear, but Paul says that in Christ we are conquerors, and more than conquerors. He has already defeated the enemies that matter. Yes, we have fights and struggles in this world as we live for Christ; but the outcome for us is assured. We have been adopted as sons and daughters and we *will* receive a share of Christ's inheritance, even if the world opposes us, hates us, and kills us.
5. Paul says that nothing in all of creation can separate a true Christian from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Nothing. Not the devil, not the world, not communism, terrorism, or statism; not your enemies, nor your friends, nor even your own will. Once you are his, you are his. Nothing, *nothing*, can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### Being freed from fear

1. So, the question is, why do we fear? Should we live in fear? Does fear even make sense for the Christian? Instead of living in fear, we should live with the freedom we have in Christ, which is a freedom to serve him and serve the world in his name. John Piper calls this idea Christian Hedonism.
  - a. Hedonism is indulging in the finer things of life- usually satisfying lust for the flesh, food, and drink.
  - b. Christian Hedonism is indulging in the finest blessings of God- love, mercy, righteousness, service, humility, etc. Christian Hedonism is indulging in the fruits of the Spirit because there is no way that we could live in excess of godliness.
2. In order to adopt a lifestyle of Christian Hedonism, and to free ourselves from the fears that hold us back from serving God as we ought, or asking him what he wants from us, we need to hold onto the truth of Romans 8:35-39. We don't need to live in fear, because we are conquerors, victors, sons and daughters. We are loved by God. We are saved by Christ. We are secure. So, don't let fear of the world stand in the way of living fully and fearlessly for God.
3. What if you accepted the truth of your eternal security in Christ to the point that you lived unashamedly, uninhibitedly, unrestrainedly, and fearlessly in Christian Hedonism? How would things be different if you were freed from fear of serving and obeying God as fully as you know you should? How would your life be different? How would our church be different? How would the world be different?
4. Remember, we are victors, conquerors. We have nothing to fear, because Christ has already won. We know the ending. Even if we lose things in this life, our reward is great in the next. So let's cast off our fears and stand firmly on the triumph of Christ.