



SERIES: July Series “OFF ROADING”

SPEAKER: DAN COKE

Monday, July 12, 2021

Scripture: 1 John 4:18

TITLE: Fear

[Pastor Dan Coke fills in for Pastor Nat today with a look at the Bible’s remedy for fear.]

There are over one hundred Bible verses that command us not to be afraid. And there are countless others that command us to rejoice, praise the Lord and to place our trust in Him. Yet, fear is all around us. We fear failure, rejection, getting hurt, dying. Heck, we even have people who fear clowns. Sometimes I struggle with a fear of dressing like a clown. Maybe that’s less of a fear and more of a reflection of social ineptitude. By the way, this is me attempting to sprinkle some humor into these teachings.

Anyway, what are we to do with all these fears? Fear of failure, rejection, dying, of the future, etc. What are we to do? We know that God doesn’t want us to live in fear of everything, but what do we do?

1 John 4:18 (ESV) says, *“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”*

It almost seems foreign to us that the Bible would contrast fear with love. Why not say, “Perfect courage casts out fear”? Or, “Success casts out fear”? No. It doesn’t say those things, it prescribes love as the antidote to a soul bound in fear. And the text says fear has to do with punishment. We fear failure as punishment, because we think we deserve punishment. Or, we worry that God may not be pleased with us. So, we give in to fear. We allow fear to project what our future reality will look like.

Living under the torture of fear is exhausting. Fear is a harsh taskmaster. It won’t let us rest. It always has new things for us to fear. Again, back to 1 John. He says perfect love casts out or expels fear. Perfect love displaces fear. Now, that sounds wonderful, but if it were up to you and I to have to muster up a “perfect love,” then I don’t think the passage would be of any help to us. There’s no way that you and I could ever love anything outside of ourselves, perfectly. We are not perfect beings. So the passage isn’t speaking about our ability to love perfectly. Clearly, the “perfect love” being referenced in the passage is “God’s love.”

God loves perfectly and His perfect love is able to cast out our fear. And He accomplishes this through a process, the process of being “perfected” by God’s perfect love. Our part in the process is learning to abide in God’s love.

When my children were babies, I enjoyed getting into the pool with each of them. As little babies, they couldn't swim and the water always felt cold to their little bodies. So they would cling to me and I would take pride in holding them in my arms. In the same way my once little babies clung to me, we are to abide in Christ's love for us. This is the process whereby God perfects us in love. In nearness to God, clinging to Him, we find the grace to let go of our fears.

Beloved, when God says, "Do not fear," it's because He has committed to loving you with a perfect love. Abiding in His love is how we overcome fear.