

# The Courage of Love Against Fear

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## 1 John 4:16-19

<sup>16</sup> So we have come to **know** and to **trust** the love that God has for/in us.

**God is love**, and whoever abides in that love abides in God, and God abides in him.

<sup>17</sup> By this process that **love has been perfected with us**, so that we may have **boldness** for the day of **crisis/judgment**, because as **he is so also are we** in this world.

<sup>18</sup> 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**.

<sup>19</sup> **We love because he first loved us.**

## John 20:19

<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for **fear of the Jewish authorities**, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "**Peace be with you.**"

## John 5:24-27

<sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever **hears my word and believes** him who sent me **has eternal life**. He does not come into judgment, but **has passed from death to life**. <sup>25</sup> "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and **those who hear will live**. <sup>26</sup> For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have **life in himself**. <sup>27</sup> And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

## 2 Corinthians 1:8-9

<sup>8</sup> For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we **despaired of life itself**. <sup>9</sup> Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us **rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead**.

## Matthew 6:31-33

<sup>31</sup> "Therefore **do not be anxious**, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and **your heavenly Father knows** that you need them all. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

## Matthew 8:25-26

<sup>25</sup> And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." <sup>26</sup> And he said to them, "**Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?**" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

## Matthew 10:26-30

<sup>26</sup> "So **have no fear** of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. <sup>27</sup> What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. <sup>28</sup> And **do not fear those who kill the body** but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup> Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup> But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> **Fear not**, therefore; **you are of more value than many sparrows.**"

## Everyday Fears that Plague our Lives

Nobody thinks living in fear is a good thing, but most all of us live with fears big and small.

We tell stories/make movies about courageous people facing danger and standing strong.

We want stories of what we wish we were but fear we are not. We don't want to be vulnerable, but know we are. We learn early the need to fit in, be liked, belong.

We fear being alone, being chosen last, looking stupid, losing some race, appearing weak, committing to the wrong relationship, not having enough, getting old, etc. We fear losing face, identity, connection. We feel shame when someone sees us as flawed, bad, unworthy of belonging, unlovable. We learn perfectionism, masking, withdrawing, etc. Fears become vicious circles that push out in new forms. Ultimately, we fear death.

The most common command in the Bible is "Don't be afraid." But that's impossible isn't it?

Jesus says, "Don't be anxious about your life..." But that only makes us more anxious. We use self-help methods to think positively, improve relationships, etc. But we still fear.

## Learning to Trust a Love that Throws Fear Out

The gospel treats fear seriously because it's based in reality. We do mess up our own lives and we are vulnerable in a dangerous world. On our own we have never escaped our own brokenness and ultimate death. The gospel goes to our real vulnerability, embraces that reality, opens a door of real hope. It gives true identity / belonging now and life forever.

The core is the Love God has invested in us. The whole story focused in Jesus – becoming one of us; taking on our suffering, sin, violence, brokenness; creating resurrection life.

We come to know and trust that love (agape), which is God's very nature. We live/abide in it. God lives in us. God's love comes to new perfection by his drawing us into it. We matter to God. We get real boldness/courage for everyday crises and for the ultimate judgment. God holds all reality, our hopes, resurrection life in himself. There is no room for bad outcomes. Fear is thrown out. God's love abides in us. Boldness, courage, patience arise.

It's a lot to learn. Paul was still learning. It's learning to see ourselves on a greater scale than we are used to. The gospel shows that overcoming fear is not just better self-talk, it is realizing the reality in which we live. We see ourselves tiny and distorted through fear.

Jesus says no, you are a center of God's abiding life. Nothing is stronger. Don't be afraid.

## Everyday Courage

Out of God's love flows our love. Love of neighbor, love of life, love of service. We still live in a dangerous, tempting, deceiving world; we're still very human. It is important that we know and embrace that vulnerability in ourselves and in others. Courage is that embrace.

Courage comes up everywhere. In every choice to risk ourselves in serving/helping someone.

In every decision to be honest when a lie seems much easier. C.S.Lewis: "Courage is ... the form of every virtue at the testing point...the point of highest reality." (Screwtape Letters).

Courage is also in empathy for others, in creating space and safety for all of us to be honest about our struggles and fears. Actively choosing to identify with the experience of another, to help and heal. Empathy is at the very heart of God's love for us in Jesus. He becomes one of us: "as he is so are we in this world." We can love courageously because he has loved and loves us vulnerably, courageously – through the Garden, to the Cross, into Life.