

Romans010700-021212
Bridge of Hope
February 12, 2012

“Why Faith?”

Introduction: Good morning! It is great to have you with us for worship today.

We have been looking at what Paul said in **Romans 1:17** (NIV) *For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is **by faith from first to last**, just as it is written: “**The righteous will live by faith.**”* Living by faith is something we are going to be doing for as long as we live in this world.

One of the great interrupters of faith is fear. It just seems like fear constantly creates problems with faith. Likewise, we also find that faith is a dispeller of fear. You could say that faith puts out fear like water puts out a fire. Jesus establishes the relationship between faith and fear as we see it in the Gospel of Mark. We read in . . . **Mark 4:35–41** (NIV) *That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”*

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

*He said to his disciples, “**Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?**”*

They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Jesus expected His disciples to not be afraid and sites faith as the answer to their fear. As I thought about this I found myself wondering why Jesus implied that their faith would stop fear. **WHY DO YOU THINK JESUS IMPLIED THAT FAITH SHOULD STOP FEAR?** (Discussion)

Thinking about this question brought me an interesting conclusion. The reason that we are going to live by faith from first to last and faith is the dispeller of fear is because faith is tied to love. The Bible says in **1 John 4:18** (ESV) *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.* Such a short statement that is so full of truth about fear and faith. It struck me once again how important it is that we understand that our faith in Jesus is really about loving Him because He has shown us such perfect love. His perfect love drives out fear in our lives. The way to deal with fear is through love and one expression of that love working in our lives is to live by faith in Jesus.

In a practical sense this is about living in the promises He provides for us. He has given them freely by His love and we can take Him at His word. What I am saying is that He promises to forgive you for the evil you have committed against Him and others. Loving Jesus is about walking in that forgiveness by faith. We don’t understand how it works or why He would give it to us, but He does and we receive it by faith. In doing that we are really just loving Jesus back through the love He has given us.

As we continue to answer the question of “Why Faith?” love once again rises to the top as that which explains why faith works to overcome fear. The time is now for us to be a people of faith who love Jesus by living a life of faith as we overcome the fear that tries so hard to impede our walk with Christ.

We have already discussed 3 points in this battle between faith and fear.

“WHY FAITH?”

- **BECAUSE FAITH TAKES ON THE FEAR TO TRUST GOD.**
- **BECAUSE FAITH TAKES ON THE FEAR TO HOPE IN CHRIST.**
- **BECAUSE FAITH TAKES ON THE FEAR TO SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH OTHERS.**

Let’s get started our thought for today as we discover the answer for . . .

- **WHY FAITH? BECAUSE FAITH TAKES ON THE FEAR TO LOVE AND BE LOVED.**
 1. Paul gives us this glimpse of real love in **1 Corinthians 13:4–8 (NIV)** *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*
 - Such a wonderful idea of what it means to love.
 - You would think that everyone would run to such an experience.
 - This led me to another question that we need to ask and think about.
 2. **WHAT IS IT ABOUT LOVING RELATIONSHIPS THAT CAUSE PEOPLE TO HOLD BACK AND BE AFRAID?**
(Discussion)
 3. The problem is that so many have been used or abused under the banner of love that their hurt and disappointment leaves them afraid of love.
 - It isn’t that they are not attracted to the idea of love because they are.
 - The issue is that they don’t believe anyone will love them with a genuine and real love.
 - Their fear is real and the defense mechanism is to avoid opening themselves to love.
 4. Another problem is that many people in our world today have not observed healthy life giving relationships where love abounds.
 - What this means is that they haven’t really learned how to love.
 - The examples they lean upon for loving others are flawed and often self-centered.
 - It isn’t that they can’t or won’t love, they just don’t know how.
 - Their lack of understanding has them repeating the same errors over and over again from one generation to another.
 5. **Whether we recognize it or not, we all need to both give and receive love.**
 - This is crucial to our health and growth as a person.
 - We cannot give what we have never received or experienced.
 - We cannot model what has never been modeled to us.
 - We need to remove fear so we can discover what it means to let others into our lives.
 - It is not easy to do, but the ramifications are astounding.
 - We need to learn to let people really love us.
 6. So . . . **WHAT IS THE REMEDY FOR THE FEAR TO LOVE AND BE LOVED? And . . . HOW DO WE OVERCOME OUR LACK OF LOVE TO BECOME A PEOPLE WHO LOVE?**
 7. The Bible is a great source for us to learn how loving without the limitations of fear looks like, it should look something like this . . .

- **Proverbs 10:12** (NIV) *Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.*
 - **1 Peter 4:8** (NIV) *Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*
 - **James 5:16** (NIV) *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*
 - **Ephesians 4:15–16** (NIV) *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*
 - **Romans 15:7** (NIV) *Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*
 - **Colossians 3:12–14** (NIV) *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*
 - **Ephesians 5:21** (NIV) *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*
 - **Hebrews 3:13** (NIV) *But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*
 - **John 13:34–35** (NIV) *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*
 - **1 John 3:16–18** (NIV) *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.*
8. You would think that Christians who have experienced Christ's love would be able to love freely other people; that they would be able to both love and be loved.
- **WHY DO YOU THINK THAT FOR SO MANY CHRISTIANS LOVING OR BEING LOVED IS SO HARD?**
 - There are a lot of reasons for why we struggle so much with love and the reality is that many of them are really good reasons that no one would fault them at all.
9. The thing is that as long as we let fear rule in our lives we never experience the healing that allows love to really work.
- In reality, we waste far too much energy protecting ourselves because of past abuses of our love.
 - Unfortunately, such time spent only leaves us as dysfunctional and unhealthy as when we started.
 - Protecting ourselves may prevent us from being hurt by love but it also prevents us from being healed by love as well.
 - There is no way to be healed and experience the love of God without stepping out in faith.
 - To love is to take a chance on being hurt.
 - You have to trust someone in order to be loved and to give love.
 - Are you catching this? Faith, which is really about loving Jesus, is at the root of this whole thing.
 - We overcome our fear by enacting our faith.

10. Jesus told us that when we walk in such love it speaks to a world all around us that He is real; our love for one another validates the message of His love.

- Every time we demonstrate love towards each other we are saying to a world watching us that this story of Jesus Christ is true.
- When we refuse to live in love as Jesus told us to do it keeps the best testimony that can be witnessed from taking place.
- Our love for one another shows the world that there is hope for real love.
- It tells them that faith in Christ can heal your life and allow you to experience what has eluded you before.
- As you learn to trust Jesus you can also learn to trust others. This opens the way for love to go to work in our lives.
- We need to love and be loved so we proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: Our faith battles with fear as we strive to overcome the pain of abuses in love to experience the genuine authentic love of Jesus Christ. The problem for many is that there is very little grace involved in loving as we demand perfection from those who proclaim to be Christians. What I am saying is that part of the problem is the demands we place on others as we expect them to do something that we ourselves do not do well. We expect them to give perfect love, but to understand our imperfections in loving.

What is the easy answer? It is to not love or allow yourself to be loved. If I allow you to love me then I am obligated to love you back. And that is a recipe for disaster for many people. The easy solution is to allow fear to rule in our lives and protect ourselves from any further damage. The problem is that as long as we live this way we never experience the full healing that Jesus wants to give us and in the end find ourselves as hurt by the fear as any abuse we have ever experienced.

The time is now to open ourselves to real love and to begin to walk the path of loving other people. In doing this we can experience the love of Christ working through us and give the greatest testimony that can be given through our lives. Today is the day for it to start.

Let's walk in **Ephesians 5:1-2** (NIV) *Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

WHERE CAN YOU TAKE ON THE FEAR TO LOVE AND/OR BE LOVED SO THAT FAITH RULES AND LOVE HEALS?