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Philippians 4:6-8

No Fear November

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Website: It seems like everyone is afraid this election year. In Philippians 4:6-8, an early Christian named Paul tells us we don't have to be afraid of anything. The ruler in his time was an emperor named Nero who murdered lots of people, but Paul was not afraid. Fear leads to two responses: 1) flight or 2) fight, neither of which is loving our neighbor as God intends. If you have a relationship with God, nothing can harm you, and you can respond a different way. You can flourish. All because God guards you and you're a citizen of his country. Now our minds are no longer set on fear, but peace and joy as we go forward into the voting season. *With Jesus, we're safe, free, and fearless.*

Many references are made to the kindle book: [The Voting Booth: A new vision for Christian engagement in a post-Christian culture](#) by Skye Jethani. Pastor Jonathan recommends you check it out.

*Sermon outline below

Pre-Introduction:

1. They say to never talk about religion or politics over dinner or with new friends.
2. So it's a good thing our "bring a friend day" is about religion and politics.
3. It doesn't matter if you're Democrat, Republican, Independent, Green, or Libertarian.
4. The purpose of this three-week series, No Fear November, is to give us a God-centered perspective.
5. I want you to be challenged and encouraged by God's Word and hopefully not offended by me.
6. I can't do that in my own power, so I'm going to ask God to help me; let's pray... (courage).

Introduction:

1. Play “Daisy” Attack Ad (1:07). **(Slide #1)**
2. Democrat Lyndon Johnson ran this ad against Republican Barry Goldwater in the 1964 Election.
3. As you can tell, it’s kind of terrifying... “If you vote for Barry, your children will die by nuclear war!”
4. It’s famous for being over-the-top and fear-based... fear is nothing new in politics.
5. We now vote against candidates more than we vote for candidates.
6. I want you to leave here knowing one thing... you don’t have to be afraid anymore.

(For this service, we’re reading a portion of a letter a man named Paul wrote to an early Christian church.)
(We’re just going to look at a small portion where Paul says, “Do not be anxious about anything...” (v. 6)

A. Paul had every right to be anxious about everything.

1. He’s not texting from his iPhone on a Cape Cod beach; he’s under house arrest (Acts 28:30-31).
2. His president isn’t elected by the people for the people, but is an evil emperor named Nero.
3. Nero is famous for burning half of Rome so that he could build a brand new palace.
4. Paul wrote the book of Philippians in 60-62 AD, and Nero burned Rome in 64 AD.¹
5. When the people blamed him, he blamed the Christians, and burned them alive.
6. Paul is writing, bound in chains, living in the shadow of one who will become an evil ruler.

(Instead, Paul rejoices, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"—2x in v. 4)
(So my question is... What does Paul know that I don't know?)

I. Fear leads to a flight or fight response. (Philippians 4:6) **(S2)**

(We’re reading Paul’s closing remarks in which he calls for two things: steadfastness and unity.)
(That means his audience, the people of Philippi, are tempted to run away or to fight each other.)
(Paul doesn’t say why this is, only that it’s not the best response... Let’s look at each.)

A. Response #1: Flight **(S3)**

1. Maybe you feel like denouncing your citizenship and moving to Canada this election.
2. In his book, The Voting Booth, Skye Jethani details this historic response by Christians.
3. A hundred years ago two views that rejected God were growing: darwinism and communism.
4. In 1925 a high-school teacher in TN was charged with teaching evolution (Scopes Monkey Trial).
5. Christians won the case, but lost our reputation, so we retreated and created our own sub-culture.
6. We created Christian colleges, publishers, movies, music, amusement parks, conferences, YGs.²
7. The ideas was simple... Christians are called to be good, so separate ourselves from bad (sin).

B. How are you taking flight this election year?

1. Maybe you’re throwing up your hands and saying, “I’m done with it!”
2. Maybe it’s secret... you’re avoiding those you disagree with or un-friending on Facebook.
3. The problem with this response is: 1) we lose the opportunity to love our neighbor's by sharing Jesus; and 2) it ignores that the bad doesn’t start on the outside, but on the inside in our hearts.

¹ This section was amended after giving the sermon. Although this persecution hadn’t happened yet, the Christians in general had been persecuted.

² Jethani, Skye (2016-05-26). *The Voting Booth: A new vision for Christian engagement in a post-Christian culture* (Kindle Locations 132-133). Skye Jethani. Kindle Edition.

4. The more we take flight, the more we disobey Jesus' command to love our neighbors.
5. Paul challenges his audience to "stand firm in the Lord" (4:1), not to run away.

(When we left culture, we got the 1960's sexual revolution... Woodstock, sex okay if love each other.)
(Then in 1973 Roe v. Wade happened and Christians saw the consequences of leaving... abortion.)

C. Response #2: Fight (S4)

1. Christians came back to wage war through elections, court decisions, and politics.
2. Amy Black, the Political Science professor at Wheaton says 3/4 of Christians vote Republican and 2/3rds of non-Christians vote Democrat.
3. This is where we get "the Religious Right, the Moral Majority, Focus on the Family..."³
4. But with all this fighting, has anything really improved? Christianity is less popular than ever.
5. If Paul didn't approve of fighting inside the church, why would he approve of it outside?
6. In v. 2 Paul pleads with two women to stop fighting—it hurts the church and our message.

D. I am guilty of both a flight and fight response.

1. **Flight:** I grew up homeschooled because my parents didn't want me to be learn evolution.
2. Because of that, I felt superior to public schoolers and didn't have any non-Christian friends.
3. **Apologize:** If you're here, and you've been looked down upon by Christians like me, I'm sorry.
4. **Fight:** When I went to community college, I was ready to battle the liberals.
5. I wrote a paper and gave a speech on illegal immigration.
6. I wrote a paper justifying the use of interment camps during WWII for Japanese Americans.
7. I cussed at a girl for criticizing the war and told a Lesbian homosexuality causes aids.
8. **Apologize:** If you're here today, and you've been wounded by Christians like me, I'm sorry.

(Fear leads to a flight or fight response... both of which wound others instead of loving them.)
(How can I experience joy instead of fear? What's Paul's secret? Deep understanding...)

II. With God, we're safe, free, and fearless. (Philippians 4:7-8) (S5)

A. With God, we're safe.

1. What's Paul's solution to fear? Prayer. Prayer is talking to God.
2. I've measured my heart rate before/after prayer w/ my Fitbit, and it has dropped from 113 to 50.
3. What happens when we pray? Paul says "the peace of God... will guard your hearts..." (v. 7)
4. Remember where Paul is? He's imprisoned by very real guards under an evil emperor.
5. But he's saying, "If you ask God to help you, God will guard your heart like a sentry."
6. I want you to think of the toughest, baddest, most protective warrior you know... your mom.
7. Moms go to amazing lengths to protect us... my mom got a refund from a pawn shop.
8. God protects us like a momma bear, like a warrior soldier, he can give us true peace.

B. With God, we're free.

1. Earlier in Philippians, Paul tells the believers "...our citizenship is in heaven..." (3:20).
2. If you know God, you are not primarily a citizen of the USA, but of the Kingdom of God.
3. Here the laws are perfectly fair and just and v.8 describes its king who is true, noble, and pure.

³ Jethani, Skye (Kindle Location 345).

4. Fear and anxiety are like addictive drugs that cripple and paralyze you, but God can set you free.
5. If you're afraid, pray for God to give you the peace that "transcends all understanding".
6. So when you watch the news, read the paper, or Facebook, you can be informed, but unafraid.
7. Ask God to clear your mind so that you don't see those who vote the other way as enemies.
8. When we're set free of fear and worry, we're set free to love others as they need to be loved.

C. **Response #3: Flourish (S6)**

1. Jethani calls this the "flourish" response—this approach puts the needs of others first.
2. I don't mean a "I know what's best for you" approach— but a "I really care about you" approach.
3. In Philippians, Paul tells us about Timothy—a man safe and free enough to put others first. **(S7)**
4. **Phil 2:20** I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. (NIV®)
5. The problem with a flight or fight response, is it always ultimately puts my welfare first.
6. Instead of voting from a fear-based motivation, how would it look to vote out of love for others?
7. You'd be able to vote objectively, not feel bound to a party line, and genuinely care for others.
8. "The most important thing is not what you decide inside the voting booth, but how you love your neighbors once you leave it."⁴ - Skye Jethani, *The Voter Booth* **(S8)**

(With God, we're safe, free, and fearless.)

(We're safe b/c God guards us... we're free b/c we're citizens of his land... but why are we fearless?)

(We're fearless because of Jesus... he takes your worst fear and faces it. Death.)

D. With Jesus, we're safe, free, and **fearless. (S9)**

1. Paul says our God guards "your hearts and your minds in *Christ Jesus*". (v. 7)
2. This is because Jesus has experienced the worst terror imaginable.
3. Jesus lived an innocent life, never sinning, never doing wrong.
4. Then people like you and me nailed him to a cross and he died.
5. Three days later he rose from the grave defeating sin and death.
6. We could never defeat fear in our own power, so Jesus had to do it for us.
7. If you know Jesus, you're perfectly holy like him and can live without fear.
8. In Jesus, v. 8 also describes you—you're true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable...
9. Now we can love our neighbors because we want them to experience what we have.
10. If you don't know Jesus, I invite you to lay down your fears and trust him.

(With Jesus, we're safe, free, and fearless.)

Conclusion:

1. Jethani finishes his book by telling a story about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Early in the civil rights movement, King's home in Montgomery, Alabama, was firebombed. A large, angry mob of African-Americans gathered around the house with weapons preparing to riot in response to the attack. Dr. King spoke to them from the porch of his burning house. He told them to put away their weapons and to love their enemies, "And let them know that you love them," he said. Many white lives were spared that night because he led with love rather than fear.⁵

⁴ Jethani, Skye (Kindle Locations 849-850).

⁵ Jethani, Skye (Kindle Locations 711-714).

2. Dr. King didn't just believe in freedom for African Americans, but for all Americans, white people too.
3. He knew segregation kept the black man down and enslaved the soul of the white man.
4. Did you know that three nights before this, Dr. King was drinking coffee and praying to God.
5. He sensed God's presence telling him to not be scared and that he'd always be with him.⁶
6. I want what Dr. King had and what Timothy had... a genuine concern for the welfare of others.
7. I don't want to be motivated out of fear, but out of love, so that all might flourish.
8. With Jesus, we're safe, free, and fearless.

Preview: Come back next week to learn more about the kingdom of Jesus.

Numbers 6:24-26

The Lord bless you
and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you
and give you peace. (ESV)

⁶ Jethani, Skye (Kindle Locations 724-725).