

FIGHTING FEAR - April 5, 2020

PASTOR: Okay. We're happy that we can continue to reach out to not only our church but to those that are watching and listening. We miss everyone. We are thankful, though, for what God is providing for us: His mercy and his grace.

And so let's have a word of prayer as we begin this morning. Heavenly Father, we rejoice in Jesus Christ today. We're so thankful today that Jesus Christ went to the cross of Calvary, died on that cross for sinners, and we're so thankful that not only did He die and pay the penalty for our sins on that cross but He rose again victorious from that grave, and we're thankful for everyone that knows Jesus Christ as their Savior and we pray that even through video messaging like this perhaps there will be some ears that will be open to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We pray for people today that are anxious, that are stressed, that are hurting, that are lonely, that are even perhaps afraid today, afraid to venture out, afraid that they might get this COVID-19, afraid of death. Mortality seems to be certainly on our hearts and our minds. So we pray this morning, oh

Lord, that your word will bring comfort, that the spirit of God will take his word and use it in that particular manner. Thank you for your grace again, Lord, for your goodness to us. We pray for your continued watch and care over us, for your will to be done, and we thank you this morning that we can open your word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

For the past couple of weeks, we have tried to, the first week, to answer some questions about the why, the where, and the what of the virus and put it in a biblical perspective. The second week, we realize that change has been very difficult and surprising, and we shared with you a little bit from the word of God about what change can do or perhaps even there may be some positives out of that change that may strike our spiritual lives.

Today we want to talk about fear. There certainly happens to be a certain amount of people that are afraid. They're afraid that they're not going to survive; they're afraid they're going to get the sickness; they're afraid their supplies are going to run out; they're afraid about their financial condition. There's a lot of fears that are floating out there, and we trust that we can, through the word of God, perhaps quiet some of the fears that some

people have and find our solutions again not only in the word but in the person of Jesus Christ.

I wrote a blog early this week, and I was reminded of -- perhaps you missed the blog, and it kind of touched my heart because I know people have lost heart and have dismay over their particular situation at this point. I was reading a book several years ago and it popped in my mind, and it was a book that was written by a man by the name of Dennis Linn and it was called Sleeping With Bread. And in the book Sleeping With Bread he was talking about children who became orphaned because of the bombing raids that happened in England, and in the midst of these bombing raids during World War II, Linn told that the result of those bombing raids that hundreds of these children were not only orphaned but that they were starving and felt disenfranchised by the fact that their parents were gone and their homes were gone and they were hurting. And so they struggled not only with the fact that they didn't have food and parents but they were afraid and they were deathly afraid, and so as people tried to care for them, they opened up these refugee camps that these children might receive the necessities of life, food and proper care and people that even cared about

them and, perhaps, put them in homes.

But as this was going on, they tried to quiet the fears of these children and they were very frightened and they couldn't sleep at night was the big problem. All of these children that they put up were just so frightened and insecure that they could not sleep at night. So they tried all kinds of different things, and you that are parents know how it can be if a child feels frightened and insecure. So they had all these children without parents and they had been starving and without food and so one particular person decided to try something. They gave each of the children a loaf of bread.

You say, a loaf of bread, is that supposed to act like a teddy bear or something of that nature? Well, they were so frightened that they would wake up hungry that they couldn't go to sleep and so they gave them each a loaf of bread to help them with their fears, and after that, the children slept. They needed something or someone to hang on to, and when it comes to fear, the biggest solution is who we hang on to.

And we always want to lead people to Jesus Christ, but there's a lot of uncertainty right now in this world, and because of the uncertainty in this

world, we try to direct people to the word of God. And we entitled the sermon this morning fighting fear, and we're going to direct your attention to the book of Deuteronomy 31.

In Deuteronomy 31, we're going to look at the first few verses and the first fear is uncertainty, and I think that's getting a lot of people right now. People are watching the news and trying to stay in touch and listening to all these medical experts and our governor and our president and seeing what's next, and of course the uncertainty of going to the store, of getting the virus itself, the uncertainty of so many people dying from the virus and how contagious it is, and so there's a lot of uncertainty right now and the further uncertainty that people have of am I going to somehow be able to make it financially, will this create a problem within the context of my home? And so people are frightened about the uncertainty of today and tomorrow and the days to come, what's going to happen next?

In Deuteronomy 31, there's a very interesting situation that has developed. Moses cannot go into the Promised Land with the children of Israel. They're about ready to go into this land of

milk and honey and here the leader they have had for 40 years, a leader for 40 years through thick and thin -- and there was a lot of problems, as you know, and the first generation died out all except, as we find out, of Moses not going in, but here Caleb will go in -- he's one exception -- and their leader will be Joshua who has been an aide to Moses along the journey and so now he's about ready to take over.

But if you have a Bible and you're at home and you are worshipping this morning and you want to follow along with us, it says this: Then Moses went, in 31:1, and spoke these words to all Israel. We see a "then."

In chapter 30, if you want the context, you will find out that there was a great warning in chapter 30. If you do not obey the Lord, if you do not follow the Lord, you will continue to struggle and have problems, and they said, oh, no, Moses, we will do exactly what God wants.

So Moses spoke these words to all Israel. And he said to them, he says: "I am 120 years old today. I can no longer go out and come in."

The idea of going out and coming in has the idea of he can't do what he used to do. He still had a lot of strength but he can't do what he used to do.

He no longer has the physical capabilities of a younger man.

So he said, "I can no longer go out and come in, and the Lord also has said to me, 'You shall not cross over this Jordan.'"

So we'll pretend just for a moment that you are one of the children of Israel. You say, I've been counting on Moses ever since I was a young boy. Perhaps you were born sometime early on in -- after the exodus. You're that second generation and you have looked up for the better part of 40 years or 30 years or however long it had been and now Moses is no longer going to be our leader. We've gone through thick and thin. We saw Mom and Dad die and, perhaps, grandparents, and they all died in the wilderness.

In fact, Moses said in verses 19-20, he says, "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live."

Sometimes it sounds a little familiar nowadays with people telling you take all these precautions. Choose life, you know. You better obey us, the government, they're telling us. If you go out and you do all of these things and you don't pay

attention, then you might choose death.

Well, in the case of Israel, God had been chastening them. In fact, we find later on that there was an uncertainty of what they would face in this new land as well.

And so let's look a little further here. It says, the Lord God himself crosses before you. Moses isn't going. There's problem with the heart of Israel itself. Will they fail again? That's kind of what they're being instructed in 30:19-20. Are you going to fail again? Are you going to disobey God? Are you not going to trust him? Are you going to follow your own inclinations? And so in chapter 31 here's uncertainty.

You're that person for a moment and you think to yourself here these people are getting ready to finally go and cross the Jordan and go into this land of milk and honey. Moses is not coming with us. Oh, no. Uncertainty. What? You just told us that if we disobey bad things may happen. It may be life or death, or perhaps we've got to face battles. We've got a new land that only Caleb and Joshua really has been in. What's going to happen? It's always that uncertainty, and uncertainty kind of weighs over our minds and our hearts right now with



this virus.

And so the instruction that we find that Moses is given to him from God may have some value to us, I think. It may help us if you have fear today. I think if we have fear today, I think Moses gives us some wonderful advice, and I understand the uncertainty. I think we all face it in some respect. I think there's a lot of things that's hanging over people's heads, you know. You say, well, this is a good time for our family, but it's just like I was reading the other day. This particular family of this famous blogger, he said, I live in a small home. My son was sent home from college. I have a couple of other children who are not doing the things they used to and my home is small and my backyard is small and we're told that we have to stay in. He lives in Canada, and they said that we are not allowed to do a whole lot and walk around the block and occasionally go out to the store.

And I realize we have heard from some of our own missionaries on how sometimes it gets a little difficult if you live in a small home or an apartment and the uncertainty of all these ministries that they have as well, and I think that hangs over us.

You know, we, as a church -- you that are listening that are part of our church or you that are a part of other churches -- you may say, what will our church be like when we come back? Will it be better? Will people be discouraged and not want to come back out?

I think we need to listen to what Moses is telling the children of Israel. I understand there is fear of sickness and death, and I think that happened to them as well. The first generation that came out of Egypt is gone. What happened? They all died. Only these, only two of hundreds of thousands entered the Promised Land. This meant that this generation knew what had happened in the past.

I was thinking about that. I was trying to remember some of the events that happened that took out so many thousands of the Israelites back during the wilderness wanderings, and back in Numbers 16:41 we're told this after Korah and his group sinned and they were judged. We are told, On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the Lord."

It seems that it's easy sometimes to complain and be upset with God or those that serve

the Lord as well and say judgment may happen, how dare somebody say judgment may happen, but we find here it says that they actually were blaming Moses and Aaron saying you killed the people in their complaining.

Now it happened, when the congregation had gathered against Moses and Aaron, that they turned toward the tabernacle of meeting; and suddenly the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. Then Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of meeting.

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment."

You notice the importance of continued intercession? You notice Aaron and Moses, they fell on their faces.

I think one of the things that I continue to want to remind people to do that know Jesus Christ is we need to keep praying. We need to not only intercede and intervene for your families and your church but also for our country that God might have mercy, and that's what basically Moses and Aaron are crying out to God for: Have mercy on them.

So they, in verse 46, began to look for

intercession and they were making atonement for them by their sacrifice and with the censer and fire, and it said the wrath had gone out from the Lord. The plague has begun. I notice it was a plague. And then Aaron took it as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and already the plague had begun among the people.

Verse 49: Now those who died in the plague were 14,700, besides those who died in the Korah incident. The plague had stopped by the time you get to the end of the chapter.

We see that disobedience was such a major part of all of this. Why was -- you know, their fear of sickness and death and uncertainty, yes, but I think we have fear of sickness and death as well, and I notice that godly people, one of the most important things people do is they try to have access with God. They try to cry out to God.

I noticed it again in Numbers 21. I keep thinking to myself, you know, here are these people that are ready to enter into the land but there's fear of sickness and death because that is -- there's a history of that in Israel. So in 21:4-6 it says: Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul

of the people became very discouraged on the way.

And the people -- you notice there's sort of a repetitious deal here. The people kept being angry against God, against the biblical leaders at the time, Moses and Aaron, and it certainly didn't help. So they spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." This wasn't worthless bread. This was manna from heaven, by the way.

So the Lord sent fiery serpents. Can you imagine? These were these horrible snakes. It says there were fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people. If you're afraid of snakes, they were all over the place biting people and they were poisonous and they were very unique in that sense of how terrible they were. It says many of the people of Israel died. So I just share that with you, the concerns that they had of death. They understood that the same could happen unless they followed the Lord.

Well, I'm reminded during times of sickness and death that -- does the 23rd Psalm ever occur to you? It does to me. I'm reminded of the Lord being

the good shepherd, and you remember that very, very classic and very pointed part of the 23rd Psalm where the Psalmist says, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, and it tells us why. For thou art with me. Because you're with me, Lord, and I'm reminded of that during times like this. Even though there seems to be a valley of the shadow of death and people are frightened, it is time when people need to turn to the Lord. We have a good shepherd who goes with us every step of the journey.

I confess to you that maybe this is a positive fear during this time. I think there's a positive fear for those without Christ.

I'm reminded, as we go back to our passage in Deuteronomy 31, this is a part where we really begin to see the victory. There was also this uncertainty. There's fear of sickness and death. And then in verse 3 all of a sudden we start seeing the brightness; we see the light at the end of the tunnel; we see our hope; we see our victory; we see how God can help us through all of these difficulties.

So Moses says, I can't go with you. Yeah, I know you have uncertainties, I know there's a

change of leadership, I know that you have this history of problems, but he said this in verse 3 of Deuteronomy 31: The Lord your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you.

Are you worried about battles? Are you worried about losing? Are you worried about dying in wars? He's going to destroy these nations from before you and you shall dispossess them. You're going to take over. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the Lord has said. Listen to what God says: And the Lord will do to them as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and their land, when He destroyed them.

So often in scripture we see a reference to Sihon and Og, the king of the Amorites, because they obviously were imposing, and so he refers to them frequently. He says, I gave you a taste that we could be victorious.

And then he says this in verse 5: The Lord will give them over to you, He will give them over to you, that you may do -- follow those verbs -- He will give, He will do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you. Then he says, "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor

be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

And then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it."

You're Joshua and you've been depending on Moses, too, and all of a sudden Joshua takes leadership and Joshua is saying, oh man, oh man. He says, you don't be afraid either. The Lord is going with you.

Then verse 8: And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. It's almost like a summary. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.

It sounds like how firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord. Do you remember the old hymn? I will not fear. I will not be dismayed. The Lord cries out, I will be your God. He'll take care of us.

So I've been thinking about people that are unsaved. How about you? Every day it's terrible news he's put in our face, you know, we see nowadays



in our face. Well, it's in our face all right. How many people have died in our state, nationally, around the world? How many people are sick? Do you have any concern right now about people you perhaps know and even people you don't know who, apparently by the thousands, are dying? And I'm sure many are going to hell because they do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. So I've been thinking about that.

I was thinking about the passage in Jude 23 where it says, but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire. The passage pulling them out of the fire, I remember Spurgeon speaking about that we need to leap over the fires themselves in order to see people get saved.

And so I think one of the advantages of perhaps being on the Internet is maybe people that we can't normally reach out to will hear the gospel, that people will understand that we are all sinners and we desperately need Jesus Christ. We've come short of the glory of God. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. We want to share with you, we want you to know, and those that may be listening and without Jesus Christ as their Savior, that because of our sin we have angered a holy God --

every one of us -- because God is holy and He is of purer eyes than to look upon evil, scripture says.

And because God is so pure and holy, we need to understand why Jesus Christ came into this world. He came into this world to seek and to save that which was lost, and so we invite people who do not know Jesus Christ to repent of their sin, to seek forgiveness, to confess their sin before the Lord, and to realize that Jesus Christ is the only provision. He is the way, He is the truth and the life. No man can come unto the Father but by him. He is the only way. There is no other way except Christ, and He went to the cross and paid the penalty for our sins on the cross of Calvary.

This was that season. This is Palm Sunday this weekend, next weekend is Easter Sunday, and we think about the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, how he went to that cross and suffered and died on that cross and took our sins as a substitute on the cross of Calvary. And we want you to understand why he did that. He did that for sinners and we're all sinners and we need to believe. Scripture says for by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves, not of works, lest any man should boast. It's the gift of God. And so we invite people to

repent and trust in Jesus Christ alone for your soul salvation.

Next Sunday so many of us will be proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He's not a dead Savior. He rose again from the dead victorious, and so we rejoice and we're so thankful and we need people to understand. This is scripture. This is the word of God. This is a loving gospel. It is good news. And so I'm trusting this fear might stir Christians to give the gospel. Tell people. Tell people.

Finally, I want to give you some keys to victory over fear that we see that Moses gave, and I think it's still practical even now and it all points at God's help. It's not about you pulling yourself up by your bootstraps or how tough you are and strong you are and about you flexing your muscles. This is about God enabling us to get through these things, and it's a good time to turn to the Lord.

Number one, I want you to see this back here in Deuteronomy 31:3. The Lord goes before you. I think that's a great plan. It's not like God doesn't know what's going to happen next. I need God to go with me the rest of today and tomorrow or whatever time He gives us. We need the Lord to go

before us. Help me as we go on this journey, Lord. Go before me. Pave the way. Help me. That's what we cry out.

Verse 3, it says: The Lord your God Himself crosses over before you. He gives victory. We talk about we know how everything is going to end because we read the last page of the Bible. Yeah, we know how it's going to end. It's because the Lord went before us; right? It's not like He's going to be surprised. And so we need the God of the word, the eternal God to go before us in his power and his glory and his might and the fact that our God misses nothing. He goes before us.

And we're told this again and again here in verse 6. He is the one who goes with you. That's the second thing. He is the one who goes with you. And He is the one who goes with you every step of your journey. Sometimes you feel lonely, sometimes you think that nobody is with you -- where are you, God? -- but He goes before you, He goes with you, He goes through every step of this journey. I'm glad He holds my hand. You say, that's not very masculine, Cuenin. Boy, am I glad He holds my hand. That's one of the most masculine things I can do because I know He's there for me and I can do it because God is with

me. He's with me.

You see, He's always in action. Our Lord, He's always in action. Verse 4-5, He will do. He will do it. He will do it because that's our God. My God will do it. That's my God. He will do these things.

For instance, today if you don't know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and you cry out and call out to him and say, yes, I'm a sinner and I know Jesus Christ and his work on the cross of Calvary is my provision and I trust him alone, He will do it and He will give you salvation and He will take away all of your sin and He will give you a heavenly home. He will do and He will give, that is our God.

And I understand, too, sometimes -- fear has been our emphasis this morning. But you know what fear does sometimes to people? Sometimes people panic. Sometimes people just go all out of sorts and they say, you know, what am I going to do, what am I going to do, and they forget what God can do for them. And then there's people that get paralyzed, they can't do anything, and they kind of curl up in a corner or they pull the covers over their head and they say, I'm paralyzed; I don't know what to do.

But I'm reminded twofold here, that, number

one, God tells Moses to tell the people something that you need to do because God will provide. He will enable you. In verse 6-7 he says: Be strong and of good courage. Why should I be strong and of good courage? Because God can enable us. He can be someone that can surprisingly give you strength beyond the scope that you could ever imagine. I like that. Be strong and of good courage. Do not fear nor be afraid of them. Why? For the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. You're not alone. He holds your hand. He's the good shepherd. He surrounds you. He's the mother hen that gathers his chicks. He is the God that provides. He is the God who is there. That's our God.

You see, He will never leave you. He will never forsake you. That's what it says here. He will never leave you nor forsake you. We're told that again in the New Testament in the book of Hebrews. You think it's just for Israel? You say, oh Pastor, it's just for Israel. No. How much more do we cling to that as his children? He will never leave you nor forsake you. You say I have no strength; I'm so weak. He will never leave you nor forsake you. He will go with you. Be not dismayed. Do not fear. That is the cry.

I'm always reminded of if God says something more than once it's significant. Verse 8: And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.

Take it to heart today, folks. Even in the darkest valley, He is the God who goes with us. May God quiet the hearts of all those who fear today. May we be reminded of the greatness of our God, the presence of our Lord, how wonderful.

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for your word this morning. Thank you for the example of Moses. Thank you for the beauty and the glory of our God, his strength, that even though we are not sufficient our sufficiency is in you, Lord. And though we can't be capable of doing all of these good things, we trust you today and so we're going to hang on to you, Lord, and we're going to cling to you during this time of difficulty and we're going to take into account what you have provided for us. And we'll thank you now in the precious name of Jesus. Amen and amen.