

WHEN YOUR FEAR INTERRUPTS OBEDIENCE + + +

| SETH FLICK

Good morning, King of Kings! Hey, I got a question for you, and I'm going to do it nice and slow because the way that you address this question is going to process then through the rest of the message. And it might actually hit a little, it might actually hurt a little, but the whole idea is to embrace and walk into the things that hurt us so we're not afraid of them anymore. That takes and deflates that fear and removes it. How has fear interrupted your life? I'll restate it just slightly different. How has fear interrupted your life?

Alright, so you had a couple seconds to think about that. And I want to bring to you a study that shows how pervasive but also how powerful fear has become as it controls every single one of us to a higher or even sometimes lesser degree. This is a study that is from 2024, and it's from Sweden, and it has to do about fear. Now, I want to tell you one thing. If I came from a country whose most well-known, cherished figure was a chef who said, Erski-berksi-ber, I wouldn't be afraid of anything, and I'd be really fat and I'd be happy about that.

Here's what the study actually showed. The study actually showed that when fear controls someone's life, all-cause mortality grows. All-cause mortality. So, let me break it down for some of the parameters of this study. Large sample size. None of these people had a diagnosed illness yet. Nobody had a terminal illness yet. And yet, the fear of getting that illness caused all-cause mortality to rise.

Now, here are the two areas where mortality rose in this study and during this study: Respiratory illnesses, which, you know, take or leave, and suicide. So, that meant that it wasn't death that was causing their fear or their response. It was merely the fear that death may come at some point that they don't even know about. But that very fear was so uncomfortable that people would rather not live anymore and choose to die rather than in the fear that they might die. That's how powerful fear can be.

And think about the way that it affects your body. Once you get afraid of something, all you get is tunnel vision. And the only thing that you can see—you've ever had that before where somebody's coming at you and not even to fight you with their knuckles, but maybe to provide some critique, and you know it's coming, and that's the only thing you can see is them. And there's 800 other things going on over here, but all you see is that person coming your way. You're locked in tunnel vision.

Have you ever gotten sick? Like, your stomach hurts because you're afraid of something? There's nothing for real out there, but you're afraid of something, and so physically it's affected you. And what happens? Like, you double over, right? Or, when it comes to body positions and fear overtaking, what is the most well-known body position in fear? It's ultimately folded over and in fetal position, right? Now, how far are you going to move forward if you're in the fetal position? You're not.

And that's one of the biggest problems in Christianity today, is that so much of us are controlled by fear that we're not moving forward in the fight in faith that we're all called to. Amen, church?

Alright. Well, maybe it's time to stop living in a fear-filled state. Maybe it's good to get, like, an example of someone who had the Lord work in their life in such a real and practical way that they could overcome fear and continue to fight in faith. And for that, I'm going to bring you one of my favorite stories from World War II.

So you probably are thinking, like, so far, he's only used sports analogies. Well, we could still do that. Think about halftime. That's what's needed for all athletes, like in football, to get to quarters three and four to finish strong. But I love World War II history, and so now you're going to get a World War II history story to connect to what's going on with fear and faith.

And maybe you know this gentleman. He goes by the name of Major Dick Winters. Raise your hand here if you know. Alright, if you're in, like, Fremont. If you're in Northwest, raise your hand if you know who Major Dick Winters is. Okay. Now, if you don't, yes, that's right. The book by Stephen Ambrose, Band of Brothers, is based off of Major Dick Winters' exploits in World War II.

He was one of the people who landed on Normandy, on D-Day. Everyone that was above him in terms of rank, gone. And so Major Dick Winters, despite all the bullets flying past him, despite having no infrastructure above him, was still called to lead and continue to fight. But do you know what he contributes as the number one deciding factor in moving him forward in faith in the fight rather than folding in fear? It's prayer and worship of Jesus.

You might not see it as much in Band of Brothers, the TV series. There's some. But the book actually goes out of its way to tell you that that was the key piece of Major Winters' life that allowed him to endure what he endured the day before. And rather than folding in fear and not moving forward in the fight the next day, he could continue to go on because of worship. Because he could take, like, a half time to move forward.

So he says this, I didn't forget to get on my knees and thank God for helping me to live through this day and ask for his help on D-Day plus one. And oftentimes when his soldiers couldn't find him, do you know where they would end up finding him? The closest stable surrounded by horses and cows as he would worship the Lord because he knew that the only way forward in all of this fear was in faith, was to take a little half time with the Lord.

And so as we progress through this sermon series, I want you to be interrupted. I want your fears to be interrupted by faith in Jesus Christ. Let this be your half time. And we're going to learn, again, an outer story interrupting an inner story so that Jesus can show you how fear can be removed and faith in its place. So you continue to the fight.

And as we walk through the text, we're going to learn it in three ways. We're going to learn that faith fights. We're going to learn that fear folds. And we're going to learn that followers finish. And I want you to repeat that because I want you to take it with you after this. Faith. Fear. Followers. Exactly.

And so what are our stories for today in our pardon this interruption sermon series? The first story, the outer story, is Jesus commissioning his disciples. He's going to send them out two by two to heal

sicknesses, to cast out demons and proclaim that the kingdom of God is near. And that's going to be interrupted with what might be considered the worst case scenario for these people going out. It's the story of the beheading of John the Baptist.

So let's start our outer story. And I want you to interpret me. I'm sorry, interrupt me. So you can start learning what's happening with these disciples as they go out and fight in faith. So Mark chapter seven verses, sorry, six, seven through nine begin this way. And he called the 12 and began to send them out two by two. And he gave them authority over unclean spirits.

He charged them to take nothing for their journey except the staff, no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and they healed them.

These disciples were set out on a mission. And the Lord was removing as much fear as possible. He was removing as many excuses as possible. Did you notice that there were two kinds of things that he's saying here? Some that you shouldn't bring with you, some that you should bring with you.

Let's review the things you shouldn't bring. No bread, no bag, no extra money, no two tunics. No bread. They are being sent out for an indefinite amount of time. On whom are they called to trust to provide for them all of the sustenance and all the provision they're going to need? God. And if they take extra bread, their fear is larger than their faith.

They're also told not to bring an extra bag. Because what do you carry in your bag but everything that you're not going to trust the Lord for? You're going to put all of your fears into that bag. Oh, I can't bring extra money because if I put extra money in there, then I'm going to be able to buy the bread and the yogurts and the cheeses that you can actually get back in that day. And I can put it in my bag. I can't bring two tunics. I might need them because I'm fighting demons. I might need new britches, but I can't bring my bag. Because if I bring all of these things with me, I'm bringing my fears with me.

You notice in this text that the Lord is teaching his disciples not to carry their fear with them into calls of faith. But what does he tell them to bring? A staff and sandals. So why is that? The extra bag with all the fears are going to keep them in place, fold them over in fear, and they're not going anywhere. The staff and the shoes are going to be what makes them go forward and respond to this call of great faith and actually move forward in the fight.

And this is going to hurt a little bit, church. Because whatever you answered to the question at the beginning of this message about how has fear controlled your life or how has fear interrupted your life, that's what you've got in your bag right now. You have brought a bag and you filled it with stuff. The Lord has called you to move forward, but your bag is so full of things you're not going to step forward.

You forgot your shoes. You forgot your staff. But you got eight apologetics classes that you finished. And now you're just saying, just one more, Lord. If I take one more class on defending of the faith, then I'll go forward. Just one more heartfelt worship service, Lord. After I get just that one more, then I can go forward. I won't be afraid anymore. And is that the case, church? No.

Barna, a research group that's very well trusted in Christianity, did a study. And this is a 2024 study. So this isn't dated material. It says that the majority of Christians in the last year have shared their faith two or less times. That's how they quantified it so it wasn't like there was a zero. It was zero to two.

So what does that mean about the church? It means that we're so full of these big old bags of fear that we're carrying around that we're not actually spreading the gospel message like these disciples were called to. There's demons out there that need to be slayed. And where are we? Stuck with a big old bag of fear.

There are people that are waiting on miracles. And where are we? Stuck with this big old bag of fear dragging next to us. There are people that need to be called to repent. That we should love enough to be able to talk to them and give them the words of Jesus so they can be restored. And yet, where are we? Zero to two times in the last year? Church, we never showed up. Because we've been afraid. And fear folds.

And it's hard to move forward when you're in a fetal position. Weighted down by everything that you think could happen. So, maybe we get interrupted now by the outer story. And maybe we're going to start learning what happens when fear folds us. And what the effect is. Because it's not just to us.

I will promise you this. The fear does not just affect me. The fear is going to affect so many other things in our lives. And you are going to see that in the text that we're going to start. So, here's the inner story. A story of characters controlled by fear rather than faith.

And you would think that by looking at their positions in life, that certain characters should have no fear and lots of faith. Or at least a lot of adventure moving forward. And certain characters should not. But you're going to learn about them as we read about them in Mark chapter 6, verses 17 through 20. And again, you're going to be called out to actually put a finger on the word fear in this next text.

So, it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias. Now, his brother Philip's wife. That's Herod's wife. It's kind of a messed up, jacked up family line here. Because Herod married his brother's wife. And John the Baptist had been saying to Herod, it's not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to the death. But she couldn't because Herod feared John.

Now, knowing that he was a righteous and a holy man, Herod kept John safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed. Like he was confused. But he heard him gladly.

Now, let's dive deeper into this text. This is really interesting. Let's compare and contrast these characters. Herod. Ruler. Should rulers be afraid of much? No. John the Baptist. Ruling nothing. Out in the desert. Kind of a vagabond, itinerant minister.

Herod. Has access to the best banquets and the best food in all of Judea. John the Baptist. Snacking on locusts.

Herod. Has some of the finest tailors in all of Israel at his disposal. Can wear garments that feel real nice and silky smooth on his chest. John the Baptist. Wonderful garments made of camel hair.

Who should be afraid of whom here? You would think that it would be the king. That should hold such authority over John the Baptist that John the Baptist should be in fear. But because John the Baptist was always about that faith. That deep level of faith. That no bag kind of faith. That fighting forward always kind of faith. That Herod knew something was different about this man. He never folded. He always went forward. He was always talking about the kingdom of God. He always knew what was true and right. And that's why Herod feared John. Because Herod was so afraid of everything else. That Herod was more likely to fold than he was to fight.

So what does that look like for you as you're like thinking through your relationship with fear? Do you in most of your life tend to be the John the Baptist frontline battlefield? No bag. Always believing in the Lord. Always talking about the kingdom. Are you trailing behind this big old bag folded over in fear? Sharing faith zero to two times a year?

And here's where I bring back our text. As it concludes the inner story. Because you're going to see that when we live a life trailing that big old bag of fear behind us. That it doesn't just affect me and you. It affects all the generations that are underneath us as well.

And I want you to interrupt me again. Because we're going to see how this interrupts and controls in fear so many characters. So in Mark 6, 21 through 26. An opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders. And for all the leading men of Galilee. When Herodias' daughter came in and she danced.

I'm not going to do that for you by the way. We've all seen the campus directors dance. It was atrocious. We're not going to do that. But Herodias' daughter pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, Ask me whatever you wish. And I'll give it to you. And he vowed to her. Whatever you ask me, I'll give it to you. Up to half of my kingdom.

And she went out and said to her mother, What should I ask for? And she said, The mom. The head of John the Baptist. She came in immediately. That is the daughter with haste to the king. That is Herod. And asked saying, I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.

And the king was exceedingly sorry. But because of his oaths and his guests. He did not want to break his word to her.

Now. Like as a king who's leading. I understand the whole not wanting to break the oath thing. A king is only as good as his word. If he vows to do something. He has got to follow through. But that's only 50% of what motivated Herod. To ask for the murder of someone. That had actually said he was glad to speak with earlier.

That other half. Was he was sorry because of his guests. He was sorry because of what other people would think about him.

Think about that. This daughter. Was given an opportunity of a lifetime. Ask for anything that you want. Anything. Anything you want. And I'll give it to you. Up to half of my kingdom.

Now. Here's the wonderful thing about reading the word of the Lord. Is that there are echoes of stories all throughout the scriptures. And this exact same offer is made in the Old Testament. I was reading

through my devotions. I was preparing for this message a few weeks ago. And I stumbled upon by means of the spirit. This formula.

And then it hit me. Why this formula works out in the book of Esther. But it doesn't work out here. In here. The parents. Are controlled by fear of what everybody else is going to think about him. And Esther. The parent figure is filled with faith.

So when Esther had a son knows that something is coming. That's going to be really bad for people. And that she could actually go to the king. And maybe just maybe. Be killed. Or maybe just maybe. Help a group of people. All of her people. She walks in faith.

Because her parent figure Mordecai. Had always been filling her with faith. And not fear. Faith. Faith. Faith in Yahweh. Faith in the Lord to move forward. Despite difficulty. Despite fears.

And so when she gets the chance. Generation two Esther. Knows that she can go into that room. Despite facing death. She can touch the scepter of the king. And the king says to her, I will grant to you. Anything you wish. Up to half of my kingdom. If you just ask for it.

And because she's so filled with faith. By her parental figure. She asked for the sparing of her entire people.

How beautiful is that? That's not a folded over life. That's a life lived in faith. That's moving the fight forward. This is good. This is right. Noble and true. When a godly parent. Illustrates faith to their children.

But let's contrast that with this part of the story. You have Herod. Who's afraid of the people that are behind him. He's got this big old bag of fear.

What are they going to say? What are they going to do? If I hear what she has to say. Like the death of this person. And if I actually don't do that. What are they going to say? What respect will I lose?

And then you have Herodias. Knowing that she is not in a good and righteous relationship with Herod. And she's afraid of what everyone will think of her.

And so you've got two parents now. Who are being asked. At least one adult is being asked. Mom, give me some advice. I've got a great opportunity ahead of me. The king has said, Choose anything you want. And I'll give it to you up to half of my kingdom.

And does she choose something that is beautiful and compassionate and kind and righteous? No.

The fear of her parents. Gets pushed into her. And she then asks for something unrighteous as well.

And this is where parents. I want you to lean in to this interrupted inner story.

There is a reason why this generation, the youngest generation right now, of students and below, is called the anxious generation. And it is not because they don't have enough comfort. This generation

has the most amount of their needs covered in our culture. They have the most of their wants covered in their culture.

So the real fears that we have about our kids are only fears, and they're not reality. And they're called the anxious generation not because of something actually bad is necessarily happening to them. It's because something bad is happening to them in their parents being so filled with fear that we've pushed that fear down a generation into our kids. And we wonder why they're so nervous. They're so afraid. They're doubled over in the fetal position. Sometimes literally. Many times metaphorically.

It's because we as parents have done this. And if you don't have kids, we're doing the same thing in the workplace. We're taking the fears that we have of potentially losing our job or losing our place or losing respect rather than actually doing the right thing. And we're pushing it down into this lower level of workers that are coming up. And we wonder why they're not working as well as we once were.

Why? We took our big old bag of fear and plopped it on them. So not only do they have their fears, but now they've got to carry our fears. And it's no wonder why they and we are not moving the kingdom forward because we are so busy carrying our big bags of anxiety.

So maybe it's time that we will get interrupted. Maybe we need something that's going to allow us to change those habits of fear.

Because I tell you what, that fear living in a life interrupted is just going to get worse if it doesn't get addressed.

Look what happened with Herodias. She was so afraid of John the Baptist that she was willing to have her daughter have him murdered. Because of her fear. And Herod was tacitly allowing it all to go down under his nose.

And maybe you need some encouragement because you don't want your kiddos to kind of end up in a similar way. But you've tried everything. You've tried parenting classes. You've tried forms of therapy, which some are very good and helpful. But you've tried everything. And it doesn't seem to be working.

But maybe it's time for you and for me. Maybe it's time for all of us to have halftime. A time where the Lord is going to speak into us so that we can do better in the fight of faith. That's the very thing that actually happens.

As we resolve the inner story to the outer story. In the end of our reading. Mark 6, 30-32.

The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all they have done and taught.

And you get to interrupt here. He said to them, Go away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while. For many were coming and going and they didn't even have leisure to eat.

So they went away into a boat, or in the boat, to a desolate place by themselves.

That's what you and I need. We need the resurrection to come to us today.

We need the Lord's presence in, with, and under, mysteriously by faith to be coming into your heart today. Why? To sever that bag that you've been carrying around for so long that's taken you away from the Lord and moving forward in the fight.

Because there is no more room for fear in your life.

1 John says that perfect love casts out fear. And that's what you and I need.

The perfect love of the resurrected Jesus to cast off the fear, remove those big old bags of anxiety that we're pushing on our kids and ourselves.

And I just want you to know that these amazing followers of the Lord that we're using as an example, they needed a half time as well.

In John 20 some of these same people that went out and slayed demons and healed people, they were afraid because of the crucifixion of Jesus.

And so on the evening of that day, Sunday, the first day of the week, the doors were locked where the disciples were because they were in fear.

So Jesus came. He called a half time. And he said to them, Peace be with you.

Look. Faith fights. Fear folds. But followers finish.

Each and every person in this room has been called to finish, to do more than zero to two times of speaking the faith in Jesus, and to keep fighting.

So I'm going to give you one more sports analogy. A half time analogy.

It has to do with fighting. It has to do with the fighting Irish.

It was a game back in 1928. They were getting absolutely clobbered. It was looking terrible. All of the team were sitting on the bench. The coach folded over. Head in hand. Not knowing what was coming next.

But the coach comes in for the greatest pep talk, the best half time talk of all of history in football.

When Newt Rockne comes in there and tells the story of a player that once played for the fighting Irish who died an early death and just said hey if the boys ever need it, if they ever need to be inspired, and so many things left undone, remind them of me.

That I would give anything to be out there with them that they could win one for the Gipper.

Memorialized in sports lore and in movies and TV.

And they went on to victory, to win 12 to 6 because they had an effective half time rally speech.

Because a good half time speech, a good break, a good rest in Jesus can remove the fears and supplant it with a rock solid faith so that as your faith is fighting you don't have to fold to fear so that followers like you and I can finish.

So I just want to speak a couple of words today to folks in different quarters of their lives.

You might be a youth. You might be a student. And you might have carried so much fear to this point. But you need Jesus to come into your life. Come into your life even today and say peace be with you.

And you need to hear the word say things like, I did not give you a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power. And that is power in the spirit. Power in the gospel.

This is your half time. Leave the bag back here. It's your mom's bag. It's your dad's bag. Some of it's your bag. But it's gone. Your power's finished.

Hey if you're at half time right now. My big lifers. You're like me. You get up to go to the bathroom several times that night. You drive a minivan. Maybe two. You've got a famborghini. That's what we've got.

But you need to know that that was half time. Like everything that came past is done. And you're being called into something else.

You can repent of those times where you led your children and yourself and your families in fear. You can leave that bag behind. And move forward in faith.

There's a beautiful book out right now by Bob Buford. It's literally called Half Time. And listen to what he has to say. Because this is a call for you too.

Half time is not about having more time. It's about having more purpose. It's about moving from a life of success to a life of significance.

Look your fears may have caused some success for you. But you feel kind of small in relationship to the world and what God is calling you to do.

It's time to move that success into the different quarters of life. Leave them behind.

Half time pep talk. Jesus' peace is for you. Now move forward as you lead your family, as you teach them to fight in faith.

Third and fourth quarter people. Look you may have some kind of illness where you know that the end of the game is coming soon.

You may, I don't know, just be a little bit older. And you know that so far things have gone okay.

But the Lord is calling you into something far, far greater.

You are called to shepherd all of us midlifers and all of those students beneath us to remind us to leave the fear behind.

And what life looked like for you when you followed the promptings of the spirit and Jesus.

To inspire every other generation that's behind you in legacy so that we can actually see the kingdom of God moving forward.

I think you feel it right now. That something different is happening in the state of the world. That God's people are being called to a greater calling.

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To a greater calling.

To a greater calling. It was the fourth quarter for those same apostles who were in fear.

And yet, in the peace of Jesus in his presence.

In the midst of his resurrection.

They had victory in the rest of their lives.

So what do you do when fear interrupts your obedience?

Well faith does what? Fights.

Fear is not going to fold you anymore.

But followers finish.

May you lace up your sandals, the gospel shoes of truth according to the armor of God.

Grab your walking stick and get out there and fight for the faith.

Until we're called to our finish and the game of life is over.

Let's pray.

Gracious Jesus we thank you for your word. We thank you for interrupting all of our fears with such great faith that we can have your peace and resurrection in our lives as we move forward.

For the sake of your kingdom, we ask for this blessing in your name Jesus. And all God's people said. Amen.