

# LIFE: Two Paths

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**Bible Text:** 2 Timothy 1:7

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## **Crossroad Ministries**

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Welcome to *Thrive* with Dr. Jeff Meyers, senior pastor at First Baptist Church of Conyers.

Change of Voice:

I want to encourage you to turn to 2 Timothy chapter one verse seven, a very short verse, but a very powerfully practical verse.

It says:

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”<sup>1</sup>

The Lord says there in that one simple verse there is two ways you can go. You can either live this thing called life according to the Spirit of fear or you can live it with power, love and a sound mind. And I would venture to say that every one of us would choose the latter, but most of us are experiencing the former. Every one of us is crying out to say, “God, I need... I desperately want power, love and a sound mind,” but reality is that we live most of our life in dreaded fear of something someone or some situation. And so today I want to diagnose this simple verse. What is this thing called fear. How are we supposed to respond to it and how are we supposed to do this thing called life?

The first thing that I want to address is the perception of fear. Now when we talk about fear, you know, we can kind of laugh about this and joke that, you know, I will be honest with you. I will be completely transparent. When it comes to this physical body that I live in, I have a fear of snakes. I think the only good snake is a dead one, just going to be honest with you, all right?

We talk about, oh, I am fearful of snakes or, you know, I am fearful of spiders or I am fearful of this or of that. Let’s get a little more serious. How many of you have experienced I am fearful my job may not be there next month. I am fearful this

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy 1:7.

relationship is coming to an end. I am fearful I may not be able to pay the bills. I am fearful that my hopes and dreams aren't going to be what I hoped and dreamed they would be.

And when we put that word fear whether it be in insects or whether it be a relationship or somewhere in between, typically when we think about fear we think of an emotion. We think of a response. We think of an attitude. We think of a consequence. Is there a situation or a circumstance in life that produces this in our life?

I want you to notice what the first phrase of verse seven says. We have not been given the spirit of fear. Your Bible does not say attitude of fear. It does not say response of fear. It does not say the consequence of fear. It says, "We have not been given the spirit of fear." And one perception that I want to hopefully abolish today is that true fear is not an attitude or are response, it is, according to the Word of God, it is a spirit that we unfortunately tend to heed and listen to. In the book of Ephesians chapter six it talks about the fact of what we know as the armor of God, this thing called spiritual warfare.

By the way, just as an aside. Every passage of Scripture in the New Testament about spiritual warfare, every one of them is addressed to believers in Jesus Christ who are now struggling with the temptations and the trials of the devil. In Ephesians chapter six it says that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but the wiles of the devil, principalities and powers, rulers of darkness and spirits in high places. There is no mention of attitude. There is no mention of consequence. There is no mention of responses, reaction. It says that the war that we wage, the battle that we fight every day is a spiritual fight.

You know, the apostle Paul who gives us the wisdom inspired by the Holy Spirit in 2 Timothy had a moment, had an experience in his life in the book of 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and he had this moment where he got really excited about the Lord and this experience happened that everything was going great. It was on, in our terminology, he was cloud nine when it came to his faith. But, you know, every time you are on cloud nine there is the eventual day after or week after or month after or year after. And in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 verse seven he says that a messenger of Satan was assigned to buffet me.

Now the reason I want to bring that up is this. We can laugh about being fearful of snakes or spiders or whatever, or maybe the team that we are fearful of playing, whatever that may be. But according to the biblical record, when true fear enters our life, it is somehow, somehow the voice of the enemy, the voice of Satan, the voice of the devil who we listen to rather than listening to the voice of God. We have not been given the spirit of fear. On the other side of the equation, on the other said of the desk or the coin, Jesus knew that you and I, as his followers, we would experience this. And in John chapter 14 he is on his way to the cross. He is about to give his life for the sins of the world. He says, "Guys, I am going to die. I am going to raise three days later. And then I am going to ascend to the right hand of the Father and you will no longer see me in the flesh."

You kind of get the attitude that the disciples began to panic. Whoa. Time out. We are having a hard time living this thing called life with you hear. We don't... I don't think we can do it if you are there. And he says, "Oh, no, this is actually a good thing. When I leave I am going to send you the Holy Spirit. I am going to send you a comforter." Listen to what it says in John 14. He says, "I will send you the Spirit of truth." In other words, the Holy Spirit will speak to you that which is true in your life, that which is true in your relationship, that which is true with your finances, that which is true in any decision and every decision you need to make.

Listen. Here is a perception of fear. There is only two voices that we can listen to in life, the voice of fear which comes from the father of lies or the voice of truth which comes from the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit. Listen to what it says in 2 Timothy one. "You have not been given the spirit of fear."

So when you and I as believers in Jesus Christ, if we find ourselves listening to the voice of the enemy, we find ourselves in the position that we were never meant to be in life. You were not designed to live in fear. You were not designed to listen to the voice of the enemy. You were designed to have power and love and a sound mind.

So how does that all work out? That is the second point today. What is the process of understanding this spirit of fear? And what it boils down to is you and I can make decisions. We can go places. We can render verdicts in our life based on one of two things: either our flesh or our faith. Those are your two options. The spirit of fear will lead to actions in the flesh. The spirit of truth will lead to actions of faith.

You know, the book of Romans chapter seven there is this passage of Scripture that, once again, the apostle Paul has given us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit where he talks about this struggle in life. He says, "You know, the things I wake up every morning. I really want to live for Jesus Christ. I really want to do these things I tend not to do. And the things that I say with this day I am not going there, I tend to go there." And he talks about this battle in life and the things he wants to be he is not and the things he doesn't want to be he is. And all this big struggle. Does that sound like life on the every day for you? Yes.

And then he gets to chapter eight verse one. He says, "Therefore, in light of this, because I have communicated this battle that happens, which path do I take, fear or faith?" He says, "Therefore there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Seven verses later in verse eight he says, "Those that are in the flesh cannot please God."

What he is trying to communicate to us so clearly is this. That when we render a decision, when we live this thing called life according to our abilities, our endeavors, our creativity, our schemes, our plans, it always leads us down the wrong path. And it cannot, according to Romans 8:8, it cannot please God.

Later on in 2 Corinthians chapter 10 he speaks of the spiritual warfare again. He speaks of this battle that rages within us and he talks about every one of us walks around in body of flesh. Every one of us walks around in this thing of life known as humanity. And speaking to believers in Jesus Christ he makes this statement that though we walk around in a body, the weapons of our warfare—remember this spiritual warfare thing—the weapons are not carnal. They are not flesh. But they are spirit to the pulling down of strongholds and taking captive every thought to the purpose of Jesus Christ.

What happens there is what is shown to us in the biblical record that when we listen to the spirit of fear, when we listen to the enemy, when we shut out the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, when we don't listen to our faith and we listen to fear, we end up getting in the flesh. And when we end up getting in the flesh, we end up making decisions based on our ability, based on our background or based on what might be or what used to be or what could have been, but not based on faith. How many times in the New Testament in particular.... for by grace through faith? We are those of the household of faith. Do not forsake the fellowship of believers, those of faith. Over and over Hebrews chapter 11. By faith Abel, by faith Abraham, by faith Rahab, by faith everybody. Nowhere in Hebrews 11, the heroes of the faith does it say by fear Moses went to Pharaoh. By faith.

I want to give you a biblical example of how this works out, real practical here. Two key Old Testament figures. Saul and David. Now, not the Saul who would become Paul as we will read it in 2 Timothy, but the first King of Israel, a man by the name of Saul.

In 1 Samuel chapter nine we have the first recordings of the people of Israel, the Jewish people receiving a king.

Now let me give you a little background here. The Jewish people, the Israelites in the Old Testament had been rebelling against God. They had not been doing what God told them to do. But they continued to say, "But, God, please bless our mess." And they came to a point—if this isn't flesh, I don't know what is—they said, "God, we don't want to do it your way. We want to look like the other nations. We want to look like... we want a king like they have a king. We want a ruler like they have a ruler. We want taxes like they have taxes. We want a military like they have a military. We are tired of living by faith. We want to live by sight. Give us a king."

The Lord says, "You know, this is not a good idea. For if I give you a king, he will take your money. He will take your children. He will take your stuff. He will take everything." And they said, "So be it. We want to be just like everybody else."

So the Lord says, "Fine." And the first king is a man by the name of Saul. Now if you don't know, Saul in the Bible looked very similar to me. The Bible said that when he was in a crown he stood head and shoulders above everybody else, huge giant, tall man. He really was tall. I am just making sure you are awake.

So this guy named Saul, huge giant man, a man who when the Lord said, “This is your king,” the people said, “Man, this is the guy. We couldn’t do any better than this.”

The problem with Saul is every decision he made was based on his abilities, his strength or his natural fleshly giftedness.

We are introduced to Saul in 1 Samuel chapter nine. And his dad, a man by the name of Kish, who of the tribe of Benjamin has lost some cattle. He has lost some livestock. Basically the fences have been cut. The livestock has gotten out and he says, “Saul, I need your help. Go and get the cattle.”

So Saul goes out with one of his servants. They go to the first place, no cattle. They go to the second place, no cattle. They go to the third place, no cattle. Finally Saul begins to think in his flesh and he listens to the spirit of fear. He says, “We have got one problem and we are about to have a second.” He is talking to his servant in 1 Samuel nine. He says, “Problem number one is we can’t find the cattle. We have lost the cattle. There is no hope for the cattle. Problem number two is my dad, who is old in age, is about to get fearful that we are not home and he is of the mind he will probably just take off looking for us and if we don’t fix the situation, the cattle is going to be dead, my dad is going to be dead and we are going to be in a royal mess.”

Now can you just be honest with me? In the flesh that sounds practical, right? We don’t want to lose the cattle, but we really don’t want to lose dad. His servant, his assistant speaks up and says, “Saul, have you not heard that in the town that we are in now there is a prophet of God named Samuel? Let’s go hear what God would say about this situation.”

Saul says, “Ok, what have we got to lose?”

They go in and they meet Samuel the prophet of God. Do you know what Samuel speaks over them? He says, “Not only in the morning will I tell you exactly where to find the cattle, I will promise you that your dad will not die in search of you.”

The servant had a more spiritual mindset than even Saul. A couple of chapters later we are introduced to a man who would one day be king in Saul’s stead. His name was David. We know David from the book of Psalms and so many stories in the Bible. But David was just a young man when he comes on the scene. And when he comes on the scene in the book of 1 Samuel his brothers are waging war, his brothers are in the army of King Saul. They are fighting a group of people known as the Philistines. In particular, they are fighting a man by the name of Goliath. He stood nine feet, nine inches tall. And, by the way, it really has no relevance to the message, but I have just got to share something with you. My son who is in fifth grade his Sunday school teacher came to me between services and said, “I have never seen your son so excited. He got to play Goliath and get his head chopped off in Sunday school today. I don’t know if I should be scared or excited, but nonetheless, he can’t wait to come back next week.”

So that being said, Goliath is nine feet, nine inches tall. His sword weighs 70 pounds and every morning he goes down to the valley. He threatens and he curses the Israelites. And guess who the men have been listening to? The enemy. The spirit of fear is rampant. Saul has been listening to the spirit of fear. No one will go and fight.

So here is David, this young man. And there is great debate on how old he really was, anything from a preteen to like a college freshman or a sophomore. And it really doesn't matter. What does matter is he was not yet in the military. He had not been through boot camp. He had not be formally trained in the art of war. He shows up and says, "Uh, hello? Why isn't anybody going down there to fight Goliath?"

And his brothers mock him and they make fun of him. They say, "Are you a fool? Have you not seen how big he is and how small you are? What is wrong with you?"

And so David finds himself in an audience with King Saul, the man who is head and shoulders above everybody else, the man who everybody loves. Why? Because he is big and he is strong. He says, "Saul, I will go and fight Goliath."

So what does Saul do? He operates in the flesh. He gives him his armor. Now that would be like me putting on the shoulder pads of an offensive lineman in the NFL. It is not going to be pretty, ok? It is going to be too big. It is not going to fit right. Can you imagine?

By the way I remember these days from when I played baseball. Every year I got issued a uniform I had to hem up the pants. They were too long. I mean, that is just my... I understand. Can you imagine being put in armor where the knee pads are hitting the feet, where the shoulder pads are drooping to your elbows. And David said, "You know what, Saul?" I appreciate the generosity. This isn't going to work."

He takes off the armor. Saul says, "Are you crazy?"

He says, "No, I just don't have any fear. I have got faith."

And he picks up a slingshot and five stones. And he goes down to the valley and Goliath says, "What is going on here? This is crazy. Who are you? Have they sent a dog to fight me?"

And David said, "You can cuss and you can scream and you can yell. I do not come to you in strength and I do not come to you in power, but I come to you in the name of the Lord."

And the last time I checked in 1 Samuel 17, David was dragging Goliath's big old nasty head back to camp. Why? Because he operated in faith and not in the flesh. There is not a thing in our own energy, in our education, in our wisdom, nothing about us says that that was a smart idea. But the Lord said, "If you believe in me, you have faith in me, fear can be cast away and removed."

So when we talk about how does this thing fear work? It operates, processes our life when we operate and begin to make all of our decisions, all of our things about life, when we do it according to our flesh and what we know, what we are comfortable with and what we deem would be successful according to the world's standards.

Faith, on the other hand, operates much differently. It is believing and trusting that God knows what he is doing even if we don't have a clue. So we can either listen to the spirit of fear or the Spirit of truth that manifests itself either in living according to the flesh or living according to faith.

Which leads me to the final point, the product. What does this look like to live these two different paths of life? There is two things that can be produced, one on one side and one on there other. If you decide to listen to the spirit of fear, if you decide to listen to the enemy, if you decide that you would rather hear the voice of the enemy rather than the voice of your creator and do everything in the flesh, I will guarantee what will happen in your life. It will produce exhaustion.

Now there is a difference between being tired and being exhausted. Every one of us gets tired. Jesus when he was in the flesh, he got tired. Tiredness happens and even though I don't practice it much, we do need to sleep. Tiredness happens. Exhaustion is when we are just flat worn out. When we live according to the flesh, when we scheme according to the flesh, when all of life is about how we can twist it and turn it to best do in our own strength and energy, we get exhausted spiritually, we get exhausted mentally, we get exhausted physically.

On the other side, when we live according to faith new concept here, we actually get excited and energized to live this thing called life.

Now let me ask you a question. I do not expect you to raise your hands. Do not nudge your spouse, your neighbor. Do not show any loud vocal signs of approval or disapproval. Your smiles will tell me everything I need to know. How many of you actually wake up every day, though you may be tired, how many of you wake up every day and say, "Wow, I just can't wait to see what God is going to do in my life today. I am thrilled that I am alive, can't wait to make it happen"? How many of you wake up and go, "Oh, great, Monday"?

Ok, let's do it again. Why? Because often times and most of the time even... remember, Timothy is a believer. Paul was a believer who understood this, that we get to listening to the wrong voice and we start operating in our abilities and we start operating in our strength and we start doing things according to what we have been physically blessed and gifted with and what happens is we end up getting exhausted and worn out, because fear produces flesh which is exhausting. But faith produces energy and life and excitement.

Now we have talked about Saul. We have talked about David. We talked about when this happened. So I thought today, though, even in light of those biblical truths, it would be

good for us to see this... I guess an example of this to where our eyes can tangibly see what I am talking about. And those of you who are first time guests, we don't normally have a piece of the sweet gum tree up here, but we do today. And so I have got a little demonstration that I want to give you and I have selected two volunteers that have ... I guess kind of reluctantly said that they would help me today. But I think every one of us recognizes the distinct advantage that this chain saw gives a handsaw.

In 90 seconds these two gentlemen exhausted themselves trying to get through a log that neither one of them could get through. Why? Because everything that in demonstration was in their own strength. Everything was in their own ability, their own power. Everything was in themselves. But yet when the chainsaw comes out we recognize that the power and the strength and the energy isn't coming from us it is coming from the chainsaw.

Folks, that is the distinct picture of fear verses faith. When we operate in fear we live life according to our ability, our strength, our decision making and even 90 seconds will flat wear you out. You do it for a couple of days, weeks, months of years and you will find yourself exactly like the book of Daniel says that the devil, the enemy desires to wear out the saints.

Yet when we live our life by faith we are trusting the Lord Jesus Christ to provide the strength. We are trusting him to provide the energy. We are trusting him to do the work that we cannot do in our own strength.

Back to 2 Timothy chapter one verse seven. We have been focusing on that first phrase.

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”<sup>2</sup>

And just in conclusion let me break down those words for you. Just so we give you some biblical example, the ability of power. You know, there is a story in John chapter 11. It is the story of Lazarus. It is a story of a brother of Mary and Martha who is dead. He is deceased. He has been buried. And for four days he has been dead. And Jesus comes to these sisters and he says, “I want you to roll away the stone and your brother will live again.”

And they say, “But, Lord, he stinketh. But, Lord, he is dead.”

Let me ask you a question. Is there any medical personnel, any doctor, any person on the planet who would have the ability in their strength to bring Lazarus up from the dead? Not a bit. They could exhaust themselves. They could wear themselves out. They could all kinds of thing. They could spend countless billions of dollars in medical procedures and still never get Lazarus up from the dead.

What does Jesus say?

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Timothy 1:7.



“Lazarus, come forth.”<sup>3</sup>

Not a dollar spent, not an ounce of energy expended, simply exercising faith over fear. The power to do that which in your flesh is impossible up against circumstances which you see no way out, up against scenarios which you see no conclusions. And listen. By doing fear you will wear yourself out trying to figure it out. But by faith he is able to call it out.

What is the second thing? Love. Any of you ever experienced a relationship that is just difficult? Have you ever experienced another individual or an entity that you cannot get along with, cannot seem to reconcile? This whole thing called relationships, these things are tough. It says we have not only been given the spirit of power, but we have been given the spirit of love.

You know, the apostle Paul is the we have been speaking of this fall. And in Acts chapter nine on his conversion he went to a man’s house. The Bible says that after he saw the light from above there were scales upon his eyes and the Lord came to a man by the name of Ananias and he said, “Ananias, I want you to go to this man’s house. I want you to touch Paul’s eyes and cause the scales to fall.”

Can you imagine that type of relationship? Here is a man who spent all of his energy trying to not only put you in jail, but kill you and now you are going to actually get in the same room with and touch his eyes. Do you realize there is nothing in the flesh that says there is a good idea there? There is nothing but fear that creeps in and says, “This is a plan destined to not work.”

But we have been given the spirit of love. Relationships that every counselor in the world says there is no way they will be rectified. The Lord says, “Go touch their eyes.” Situations where people say, “There is no way that this can work out.” The Lord says, “Go down to that place, touch the eyes and this will happen.”

In other words, what fear says can’t happen, faith says give the Lord the opportunity and allow him to drive the situation.

And here is the last one, sound mind. Do you think we live in a world today where people don’t make sound decisions? Think we live in a world today where people have different competing ideas? In fact, the Bible says a double minded man is unstable in all their ways.

You know, we don’t just live in a world with double minded people. We live in a world with like triple minded people and like quadruple minded people. And really there is a minded flavor of today. Whatever is coming down the pike, whatever is fast, whatever is popular, they just grasp a hold of and they start living what I call cafeteria life. They just grab whatever is next in the line. Why? Because they are fearful that if they don’t get the next thing they will miss out on the last thing and life won’t be what they planned it to be.

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<sup>3</sup> John 11:43.

Do you know how exhausting it is to live life grabbing just the next thing that comes? Yet in the book of Mark chapter five there is a man who had exhausted all of that. We call him the demoniac. In fact the Bible says he had demons in him, numerous thousands called legions. They could not hold him in chains. He was cutting his body. The whole community was scared of this person. Why? Because nobody could control him.

Let me share with you something about the demoniac. He had gone to see every therapist and every counselor and he had tried every experimental medication known to man. He tried it all. But when Jesus enters the picture he touches the young man and says, "Spirit, come out."

Do you notice the common denominator in those stories? Lazarus, come forth. Go touch his eyes. Spirit, come out. No amount of human strength, no amount of energy produced and yet in every scenario death came to life, persecution came into being a preacher and unsound mind he is left in Mark five seated and clothed in his, quote, right mind.

Unfortunately, most believers in Jesus Christ have adopted the fear mentality. Listen to the world. Listen to the latest theory. Listen to whatever is coming down the pike, because if we do it that way, surely it will work better than the last way.

Can I ask you an honest question? Aren't you exhausted enough to say, you know, "Maybe this spirit thing isn't the great motivator Maybe we need to operate by faith"?

In just a moment we are going to have our time of invitation. {?} is going to come up and lead us and we are going to stand up and sing and it is going to be an opportunity where you have the privilege of stepping out and stepping forward. There is some of you today you say, "I have been listening to fear my whole life. I need faith in Jesus Christ." There is some of you have been listening to fear about this. You need to exercise faith in this. But today I want to speak specifically to the one area of life that I see so many people fall victim to when it comes to fear versus faith. And it is in the area of taking our faith into our homes. It is the area of taking our faith into those that we care about the most.

You know, if you are a first time guest or visitor with us every week this fall we are going to offer a challenge. We call it an application. We gave you a card last week. It is mentioned in the worship guide this week. Last week's challenge was to play a game to be as consistent in our faith life playing a game as we are at church. This week the challenge, the application is to go into your home, whatever your home looks like as a single person, as a family, mixed generation, whatever it may be, and whoever you are and whatever your family looks like to spend time this week around the Word of God. We call it a devotional time in your home. In other words, so many people are so fearful to exercise their faith at home that they never actually do it. And we want to encourage you not just to experience your faith on this campus, not just experience among other believers, but to actually exercise and initiate your faith in whatever your home environment looks like.

We have provided you with some materials in the worship guide. If you have none, there is a slew of materials out there. But I have learned through the years that one of the most fearful things that people come across is taking their faith and putting it in their home and not just leaving it at the church.

Change of Voice:

The message you heard today originated in the pulpit of the First Baptist Church of Conyers where Dr. Jeff Meyers serves as senior pastor. First Baptist Conyers is located at 2100 Highway 138 NE in Conyers, Georgia. For more resources from Dr. Meyers and First Baptist Conyers, check us out online at [www.FirstConyers.com](http://www.FirstConyers.com). That is F I R S T C O N Y E R S dot com. Or call 770 483 8700.

If you don't have a church home and you live in the east metro Atlanta area, we hope that you will drop by one Sunday morning at 9:30 or 11 AM for one of our two dynamic worship services.