

It is so GOOD to be here and see you all again! As soon as I started praying about what God wanted me to tell you this morning I got so excited! He wanted me to tell you about my struggles with letting go of perfection.



A:

Many of you have read my column in the Hamilton County Reporter, "Not the Perfect Mom". So you may know I have had a fear of not being perfect for as long as I can remember. While I certainly don't expect perfection from others, I did expect it from myself. At one point in my journey I even got to the point where I was thinking, "Jesus was perfect the spotless lamb, and I have His Spirit in me, so I should be able to live perfectly."

Only I couldn't. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't live flawlessly. In fact, the harder I tried to be perfect, the worse I did! But then little by little God led me to a new place where perfection isn't even a goal in my life, it's the reality. And it started with a verse. If you have your Bibles, let's turn to 1 John 4:18.



B:

So we're going to unpack this beauty of a care package together today.



C:

There is no fear in love. Most people think that the opposite of love is hate, but it's not. According to this verse it's fear.

In the beginning there was darkness and light and God separated the two calling them night and day. These have become our examples for polar opposites. Two things that couldn't be more different.

If there is any light present it chases the dark away! It is impossible for the two to co-exist. And the same is true for love and fear. There is no fear in love just like there is no darkness in light. They simply can't co-exist, which makes them opposites. There is no fear in love.



D:

But perfect love drives out fear. Just like darkness by definition is the absence of light; fear is the absence of love it simply can't exist in the presence of light. Simple right? Almost. See, there's the possibility of a problem here.



If we take this text out of context



we're left with a con. If we're reading this verse out of context we may be inclined to think that it's OUR love for God that drives out the fear, but that's just a con.

This entire section of 1st John is on the importance of knowing that we love God because He first loved us. John defines love for us in chapter 4 verse 10 when He says,



"This is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

THAT'S the kind of love that drives out fear. The kind of sacrificial love that is PERFECT beyond compare.



H:

Because fear has to do with punishment. For this point those of you that have your Bibles I want you to hold a finger in 1st John and quickly flip to the front to Genesis 3.

In Genesis chapter 3 we read about Adam and Eve's interaction with the serpent and their sin, the first sin, the eating of the forbidden fruit.

Let's drop down and start at verse 7, the NIV reads:

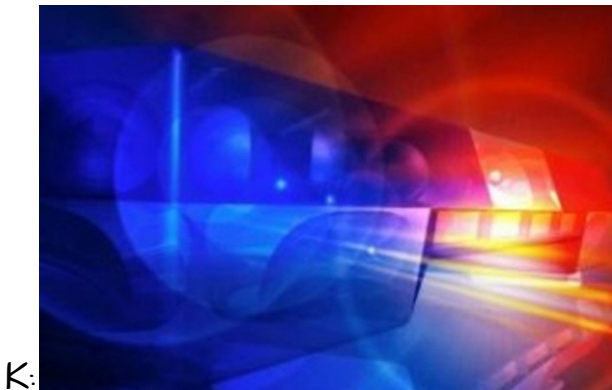


I:



This is the very 1st mention of fear in the Bible. They weren't afraid of the snake that talked. And they weren't afraid of getting their fingers pricked while sewing the fig leaves together. What they were afraid of was GOD! From the moment their teeth sunk into that fruit their eyes were opened and they realized just what they had done and they KNEW they were in trouble.

You know that feeling in the pit of your stomach that you get when you see a police officer sitting on the side of the road.



Does your foot immediately come off the gas like the pedal is on fire? Do you shoot a glance at the speedometer to see if you were actually speeding? Yeah, you know that I mean.

What's even worse is when you look and realize that you WERE speeding so you check your mirror to see if he's pulling out to follow you. AND HE IS!

So you pull over and slunk down in your seat because you're ashamed and afraid because you know that he's going to give you a ticket and you're going to have to pay for breaking the law.

Fear has to do with punishment. In the Garden of Eden they hid from the presence of God because they KNEW they were going to have to pay for what they had done. But that's just it, look what happened next. There was a lot of finger pointing and God handed out the tickets, and then God did something we can't miss today, let's read verse 21.



L:

God performed the very 1st sacrifice and covered their sin with blood. "Without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sins." And yet right there in the Garden of Eden with shredded fig leaves and forbidden fruit seeds all over the ground God forgave them. He shed innocent blood, covered them with it, and forgave them for what they had done.

And what was it they had done? They had killed HIM! Their actions pushed the snowball down the hill that killed the Only Begotten Son of the Creator of the Universe, and HE FORGAVE THEM!

...

Their actions pushed the snowball down the hill that killed the Only Begotten Son of the Creator of the Universe, and HE FORGAVE **THEM!**



Now I have to point something VERY important out here, because it's critical to the crux of the message.



God drove the man out. Now I want to show you something here, so let's get rid of everything else and focus on that one statement for a minute.



Alright. Now, Adam's sin caused him to fear, right? So let's replace the word "man" with the word "fear".



And the statement is still true right? When God drove the man out of the garden He was driving Fear out of the garden too right? OK. Now let's take that one step further. According to 1st John 4:8, God is love, so let's change "He" to "Love" and we get:



Which brings us back to 1st John 4:18 where He says that "perfect love drives out fear"! How AWESOME is that???

Alright, now if that isn't cool enough, let's tie a bow on this amazing gift of 1st John 4:18 shall we?



S:

The one who fears is not made perfect in love. OK, I had some MAJOR problems with this part of the verse because I'm afraid a LOT more than I like to be. And according to this verse that means that I have not been made perfect in love. And I've got to admit I had issues with that. You know, because I wanted to be PERFECT.

But then God had me look up the original text for that word "perfect". It's the Greek word tel-ay-o which means to make perfect, complete, to add what is yet wanting in order to render a thing full. In my Greek class the professor illustrated it for us this way:



T:

It's the point where something is filled to the maximum amount juuuust before spilling over. If ONE drop more were added, the cup would overflow. Tel-ay-o.

So after looking that up and then looking at the verse again,



U:

He gave me an illustration of what this sentence really means. Picture a ping pong ball in the bottom of an empty glass. That's FEAR. Now tel-ay-o, or perfect, that glass to the brim and the point of near overflow with water. What would happen to the ping pong ball? Is it still in the glass anymore, or is it outside the glass floating on the water? If that glass is your heart, and God's perfect love for you has come in and filled it up is there any more room for fear? NOPE!

It's time to put the fear down.

It's time to let it go.

As Christians today, all too often we focus on what we should or shouldn't do, and we end up forgetting what's already been done. We fail to remember that "it's not about me". It's not about what I've done or not done, what I've said or not said, it's about what JESUS did and what JESUS said.

You're all familiar with Romans 3:23 right? "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God," Question, have you ever read it in context for yourself?



V:

Yes. We have all sinned and fallen oh so short of the glory of God, COMMA, AND ARE JUSTIFIED by His grace as a gift.

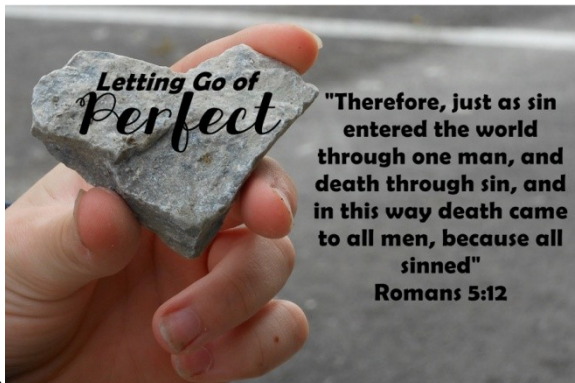
In Matthew 26:28 Jesus says,



W:

Remember, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Yet He who knew no sin was MADE sin so that we might become the righteousness of God!

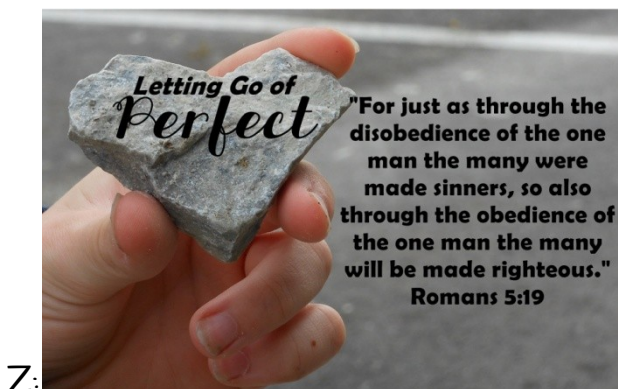
Romans 5:12 says,



X:



Y:



You see! It's NOT about YOU! It's not about what you've done or what you've said, it's all about JESUS! It's about His perfection, not ours. It's about His love for us, not our love for Him.

Hebrews 10:12 says,



Jesus sat down at the right hand of God because He was finished with His work. He has made, past tense, as in it's already been done, He has made perfect - tel-ay-o - forever, those who are being made holy - YOU.

Through the sin of one man we were *made* sinners.

Through the sacrifice of one man we were *made* righteous.

Although the sin of Adam condemns you, the sacrifice of Jesus justifies you! His hold on you is STRONG and He will NEVER let you go! He has promised,



ZB:

It's time to put the fear down.

It's time to let it go.

-Sing "Let it Go".

The snow glows white on the mountain tonight
Not a footprint to be seen
A kingdom of isolation,
And it looks like I'm the queen.

The wind is howling like this swirling storm inside
Couldn't keep it in, heaven knows I tried!

Don't let them in, don't let them see
Be the good girl you always have to be
Conceal, don't feel, don't let them know
Well, now they know!

Let it go, let it go
Can't hold it back anymore
Let it go, let it go
Turn away and slam the door!

I don't care
What they're going to say
Let the storm rage on,
The cold never bothered me anyway!

It's funny how some distance
Makes everything seem small
And the fears that once controlled me
Can't get to me at all!

It's time to see what I can do
To test the limits and break through
No right, no wrong, no rules for me I'm free!

Let it go, let it go
I am one with the wind and sky
Let it go, let it go
You'll never see me cry!

Here I stand
And here I'll stay
Let the storm rage on!

My power flurries through the air into the ground
My soul is spiraling in frozen fractals all around
And one thought crystallizes like an icy blast
I'm never going back,
The past is in the past!

Let it go, let it go
And I'll rise like the break of dawn
Let it go, let it go
That perfect girl is gone!

Here I stand
In the light of day
Let the storm rage on,
The cold never bothered me anyway!