**Opening Scripture**

*Jeremiah 17:7-8 AMP*

*“Blessed [with spiritual security] is the man who believes and trusts in and relies on the LORD And whose hope and confident expectation is the LORD. [8] “For he will be [nourished] like a tree planted by the waters, That spreads out its roots by the river; And will not fear the heat when it comes; But its leaves will be green and moist. And it will not be anxious and concerned in a year of drought Nor stop bearing fruit.*

**Protection From The Spirit of Fear**

Intro: Worry, Anxiety, Fear, and Panic are words many of us are familiar with, both by definition and by experience. Even though these conditions are considered normal for people, our Lord has commanded His people many times in His word to not Fear. Therefore, it is in our best interests to follow our Lord’s commands and not allow fear to find a place in our minds and hearts. Fear can spread just like a contagious disease to affect our emotions, our overall attitude, and our decision making. Our Lord does not want anything to have that level of control over us, but Him. We are going to explore within the Scriptures tonight how to Protect Our Hearts From Spiritual Heart Disease.

Step One is to Identify the Condition of our Environment (or in other words recognizing the time and season we are in):

*Matthew 24:1-14 NASB*

*Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. [2] And He said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.”*

*[3] As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” [4] And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. [5] For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many. [6] You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars.* ***See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end****. [7] For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. [8] But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. [9] “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. [10] At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. [11] Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. [12] Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. [13] But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. [14] This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

(Highlight verse 6 where Jesus is telling us to not be frightened, assuring the disciples that the baby is coming but is not yet here, thus the signs He is identifying are signs that will signify that His 2nd Coming is approaching.).

*Luke 21:25-26 KJV*

*And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; [26] Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.*

(Note that Jesus told the disciples what would happen to men’s hearts as we approached the time of the end)

In the scriptures, we hear Jesus giving us a picture of what mankind will look like as we get closer to his return. So the temptation to live in fear will be great. Just like our physical hearts can be stressed and damaged by overworking, abusing our bodies, or living in a constant state of worry.

So it is with our souls. Fear is a weapon that is used to paralyze the people of God. In God’s word the term heart is used to describe: Our Mind (Thinking-Intellect), Will (Determination & Decision Making) , & Emotions.

**Keys To Guarding Your Heart from The Spirit of Fear**

**Proverbs 4:20-27 NLT**

*My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words. [21] Don’t lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart,*

**Key Number One: Setting our intention to Honor, Follow, Focus, and Commit to God’s Word**

**(Expound on what it means to Honor God’s Word - Paying Attention To It & Giving It more weight than anyone else’s word and giving it more weight than what my circumstances look like)**

**(Expound on what it means to Follow & Focus on God’s Word- If you are trying to ride somewhere, especially somewhere you have never been before, how important is for you to keep your eyes open for street signs, landmarks, and to listen to the GPS as it guides you to your destination)**

**(Expound on what it means to commit to God’s Word- Give example of a person who commits to a vision, career goal, invention idea, etc. that is sold out to that vision and does not have a plan B, versus the person who has a vision, but has a plan B or C, if it does not work out. When pressure comes against that vision, who do you think is going to be still standing after adversity hits- The sold out person or the person who has exit strategies already in mind, if the vision does not work out?**

**Give the example of Houston Oilers vs. Buffalo Bills comeback victory in Jan. 3, 1993 came back from a 32 point deficit (expound on how difficult this was and contrast it to how men can commit to a ball game in such a way, how can we not as believers not commit to the cause of Christ)**

*[22] for they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body.*

**Key Number Two: Acknowledging The Reality of God’s Love, The Integrity of God’s Word, and Depth of God’s Promises**

**In order for me to believe what someone says to me when they make a promise, I have to trust that they mean what they say.**

**In order for me to be open to receive guidance, instruction, and correction I have to believe that the person doing the guiding, instructing, and correcting has my best interests at heart.**

**I have heard it said that “The person that can influence you the most is not the person you believe, but the One that believes in you”. Expound on the father’s belief in and love for His people as evidenced by the gift of His Son and His Holy Spirit to those who believe.**

*[23] Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life. [24] Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech.*

**Key Number Three: Recognizing How Important it is to Guard Your Heart**

**Expound on how important it is to understand what can influence our hearts and being intentional about how we spend our time and whom we spend it with. While also being intentional about what we see, hear, and say.**

*1 Peter 3:10-12 NKJV*

*For “He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. [11] Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. [12] For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”*

*[25] Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. [26] Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. [27] Don’t get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil.*

**Key Number Four: Avoid Distractions**

**(Expound on how distractions can come in different shapes, sizes, and seasons, but the key to rejecting the distractions is to keep your eyes on the prize)**

*Philippians 3:12-14 NLT*

*I don’t mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. [13] No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, [14] I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*