

Article of the Month  
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***FEAR!***

We live in a time when fear is more common than ever and when it seems to be increasing. The reasons for fear vary depending on localities, economics, paranoias, social insecurities, politics — and a whole host of events and conditions beyond listing.

We are living in the time which Jesus described in Luke 21:26 — “Men fainting from fear and from the expectations of the things which are coming upon the world.” This is not to say that fears haven’t plagued mankind from the beginning; but there are, as now, certain times in history when there seem to be more reasons for fear.

The Bible uses “fear” in many applications — including GOOD FEAR. For instance, it proclaims that “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (Proverbs 9:10) But by this statement it doesn’t mean “fright.” We have probably all had instances in our lives when we have so greatly respected someone that we have had an inner apprehension about offending that person. That is the kind of fear — a reverential fear — that is meant by the Proverbs text. We have that inner strong desire — a desire that becomes a sincere apprehension — that we do nothing whatsoever against the person for whom we have such great respect. That is a “good fear.”

There are other “good fears” in Scripture. For instance, in Philippians 2:12, the Apostle Paul admonishes that we “work out our salvation with fear and trembling.” Paul is NOT admonishing *fright*. He is admonishing *deep seriousness*. That, too, is a “good fear.” It is closely allied to the Proverbs 9:10 text. Paul even says so. His next words (Philippians 2:13) are, “for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” Thus the very same reverential fear we have for God can be aimed toward ourselves, knowing that our “new creatures” (things of great and wondrous value) are worthy of all reverence and seriousness.

But the topic this month is about fear in its bad sense — something that is paralyzing and frightening. It is, of course, quite normal that our flesh has reactions to things that will hurt it. It sends out chemical and physical responses when faced with such situations. None of us should worry that this happens. It is built into us. But Scripture is dealing, rather, with how our “new minds” (our sanctified thought processes) deal with those things which cause fear. According to the Bible, our maturing Christian mind must be able to trust the Lord to the point where fear will not paralyze us or make us react in ways not in harmony with the characters of our Father and Jesus. Our responses to “normal fears” will NOT be “normal” — they will be sanctified, thus throwing away fear in the **trust** of the Lord.

Even in the Old Testament, before servants of the Lord had the begetting of the holy Spirit — before they were “new creatures in Christ Jesus” — even at that time, the

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TRUST IN THE LORD was to be so complete that the fears of the flesh would be overcome by the faith of the mind. We all recall when David approached Goliath — a mismatch so obvious to all that no one expected it to turn out well. But David, WITHOUT FEAR, approached the giant proclaiming that Goliath was coming with an army and swords, but that David was coming in the name of the Lord. David's lack of fear proved to be justifiable.

In Isaiah 41:10, God admonished Israel to have the same courage — the same lack of apprehension — BECAUSE God was with them. “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you. Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

When we come to the New Testament and find texts on the subject related to Jesus' disciples — to “new creatures” (new minds with new ways of thinking based on faith in Jesus and his promises) — we find that fear (in the sense of apprehension) *has no place in our thinking*. We must learn to fight it off with the strength of faith. Here are a few of those texts:

**Matthew 10:28.** This text has troubled many who do not comprehend the nature of man and the plan of God.

“And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.”

It is MAN who can kill us (temporarily) simply by a fatal attack on our flesh. Jesus says that we have NO fear of this because, if it is permitted, it is only temporary — until resurrection.

It is GOD who can terminate our existence (our “souls”) in “Gehenna.” Gehenna was the garbage dump of Jerusalem. (Most translations translate it “hell” — a translation which is culpably erroneous.) It symbolizes the “second death” (Rev. 20:6) — a death from which there is *no resurrection*. Hence Gehenna represents extinction forever. We **should** fear God who can do this — but NOT as an apprehension or trembling, but rather as a seriousness and respect for His marvelous character. When we have that respect or reverence (translated “fear”), we WILL HAVE NO FEAR (worry or apprehension) about our futures.

It should probably here be clarified that the common application of Matthew 10:28 supposes that we have a destructive body, but an immortal soul. This is INCORRECT. In fact, “immortal soul” appears *nowhere* in the Bible! Consider that this very text *proves* that the “soul” is not immortal. The text says that God can DESTROY IT in Gehenna! It is, therefore, NOT immortal.

The “formula” for man is found in Genesis 2:7. “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and **man became a living soul.**” It is the union of body and “the breath of life” that produces “a soul.” To put it simply, we ARE souls; we don't HAVE souls.

Thus, in Matthew 10:28, we are not to fear those who can, by destruction of our bodies, take away our lives *temporarily*. But those who do this *cannot* destroy our BEINGS (our “souls”) because God can and will bring them back into existence. But God, on the other hand CAN destroy us *temporarily* — as he did with those in Sodom and Gomorrah. He destroyed their bodies. But, in the time of the resurrection, He will restore them because He did not destroy their ultimate BEINGS — their “souls.” He WILL, however, destroy the BEINGS, *including* the bodies, of those who at that time will refuse to hear and respond to the great Mediator of the kingdom. See Acts 3:23.

**Philippians 1:14.** “Most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.”

This is a wonderful text in that it SHOWS the possible results of faithfulness to the Lord — *imprisonment*. Yet, the Apostle says that imprisonment created TRUST in the Lord! In other words, the “normal” fear disappeared, giving way to a trust “in the Lord.” This allowed them to carry on their Christian work “without fear.” Their *minds* superseded their flesh and its concerns.

**I Peter 3:14.** This text is virtually the same as Philippians. Peter says, “Even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. ‘And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled.’” Thus Peter, like Paul, admonishes *no fear* even if it brings results not desirable to the flesh.

**I John 4:18.** The Apostle John summarizes the matter well:

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment (torment), and the one who fears is not perfected in love.”

What a high standard! John is telling us that as our “new creatures” in Christ mature, the Divine concepts and standards of love will make fear an impossibility. Remember that the natural responses of the body are not what is meant here. What IS meant is that we will never be paralyzed or influenced in decision by fear. We will carry on, doing the Lord’s will without hesitation and without regard for consequences. Fear will never be a decision maker; it will not motivate our responses.

John continues to tell us that fear PARALYZES. He uses the words that “fear involves punishment (or torment).” In other words fear punishes or torments us with reactions that we know we do not want. If we are motivated by fears, we have not comprehended nor developed the love that is like God’s.

**Revelation 2:10.** In the Bible’s final book, Jesus re-enforces what we have learned.

“Do not fear what you are about to suffer...be faithful unto death.” Jesus warns this most-persecuted of church periods of its terrible sufferings to be endured at the hands of the Roman empire. But even though the text *promises* sufferings, it admonishes sufferings *without fear*. It seems like a tall order.

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But that is the point. As the whole world is “fainting from fear and from expectations,” we who know and have faith in God and His promises can live as fearless examples in the midst of the current chaos. Help is just around the corner. The promised kingdom is incoming. All will soon be blessed. Who could fear with faith in a promise like that?

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