

Faith is God's Antidote for Fear

by
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This article is a portion of a message I delivered on *Shabbat* several weeks ago but, because the substance of it is so relevant for us in this season and so very important in our overall walk as believers, I have decided to re-present it in this shortened written form.

2 Timothy 1:7 tells us:

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

We live at a time when threats to our safety and our well-being surround us, and where tragedy and catastrophe occur with regularity. Some of these threats are economic, with our government and economists seemingly unable to agree on what is best to do for the country. Some of these threats are climatic – degrading air quality, diminishing clean water, and dilemmas of how to continue using fuel without making things worse. Some of these are natural disasters like floods, hurricanes, tornados and earthquakes, and some of these are the result of imperfect technology and human error such as airplane disasters. All of these impact us negatively, and some even cause death. Besides these, there are those that are the result of evil in the world, and those for which we have no explanation at all.

Sometimes catastrophic happenings are distant from us and we can avoid thinking much about them – perhaps they are in another city, another country, another community, another family. But sometimes these occurrences come home to us, as has the recent tragic loss of our three friends, and our natural response to all of these is to be afraid.

But John 4:32 reminds us that we, who believe, have resources that the world does not know about, and once again, 2 Timothy 1:7 tells us:

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

There are two kinds of fear that are the good kind and that Scripture is not talking about. The first is the kind that causes us to jump back and defend ourselves or run away when something startles us or attacks us. That is a hormonal physical defense mechanism that God has built into our bodies for our preservation in dangerous situations where there is no time to think or pray. Physiologists call it the response of “fright, fight, or flight.” This kind of fear can persist for awhile, for the duration of the danger, but it is normal and it is helpful. The second kind of fear that the Scripture is not talking about is a proper fear of God – the kind alluded to in Ecclesiastes 12:13, and 1 Peter 2:17.

No, the kind of fear that 2 Timothy 1:7 is talking about is the kind that is the opposite of faith in God. It is the kind that persists and becomes chronic – the kind that does not trust God with our possessions, our futures, our lives, or the lives of our loved ones. It's the kind of fear that demands to understand why a bad thing has happened so that we can console ourselves in our understanding and seek to control our destinies. Some of us have read the Bible many times through without it occurring to us that the Bible is full of bad things that have happened to

innocent people. The stories often don't pierce us because they are accounts of things that happened many years ago and very far away. But let's put ourselves in Job's place for a minute. The Book of Job begins by telling us:

“There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.” (Job 1:1)

When we speak of innocent, how much more innocent can a man be than that? Yet, for His own reasons, God removed His protection from Job and allowed Satan to wreak havoc on his life. Job lost his entire family and all his possessions, yet Scripture says of him:

“Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. and he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.” (Job 1:20-22)

Then we are told that Job was struck with painful infections all over his body, and Job's wife entreated him to commit suicide by cursing God so that God would kill him; and what was Job's response to his wife? In the book that carries Job's name, chapter 2, verse 10, we read:

“But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”

Wow! Who among us is accepting of such adversity? If the word “adversity” doesn't register, I'll say it another way. Who among us is willing to accept terrible things happening to us while believing that God is in control? If the Book of Job stands for anything at all, it stands for the principle that, while we readily pray for and accept God's blessings, we must also be ready and willing to endure pain and suffering, should it come our way. We certainly ought not to like it, but we need to be willing to endure it without accusing God or walking away from Him.

Job is a model of sorts, but he was not perfect, for as we see, he fell into despair and questioned God. He recounted his various virtuous acts and essentially complained: “Why do I deserve this? Why has this happened to me?”

Elihu, Job's friend, attempted to defend God by trying to explain things to Job, and he did a credible job of it, but it was unauthorized because God had no intention of justifying Himself to Job or anyone else. God did finally answer Job, but with questions – not with explanations.

The real lesson of this book to me is that God never does answer Job's questions because He doesn't owe him explanations, and He doesn't owe us explanations either. Nor does Job continue to question God and, instead, puts himself back under God's care.

Years ago I, like Job, wanted answers from God for things that happened, but one day what I just shared with you hit me between the eyes and, after that, I never questioned God again. It is His

will, not mine, and He owes me no explanations. Since I came to peace with that, I have been able to accept losses and disappointments in my life that previously I had not.

Fear seems like such a natural thing, and it is for short periods of time, and when it is in response to real danger. But when it dominates or diminishes the quality of life, it is not natural and it is not God's will for us; it is the spirit of fear we are warned about, and we need to cast it out of us aggressively, using the biblical tools of love and faith. Consider these Scriptures:

1 John 4:18 "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love."

Mark 4:40 "But He said to them, 'Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?'"

Psalms 56:3-4 "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God (I will praise His word), In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?"

In times of loss, I am comforted by Romans 8:28 that says:

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

It's hard to see how God will turn some things for good, but He will. Psalms 27:1 reminds us:

"The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

And Luke 12:4 admonishes us:

"And I say to you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do."

However, in order for that Scripture to give us comfort, we have to have faith in Scripture's teaching about our eternal afterlife that comes from releasing ourselves in faith to Yeshua. We all need to examine ourselves about it because, if we trust God's Word, we will not fear, and "all will be well with our souls."

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