**What Are You Afraid Of?**

Fear is a natural, useful human emotion with which we have been created. Fear acts as a defense mechanism that prompts us to protect ourselves from very real dangers that we encounter on occasion. However, inappropriate or irrational fears can paralyze us or drive us to behaviors that are not in our best interests.

Some fears are irrational because they are based on a distorted view of reality. Jeremiah warned the Israelites of his day not to emulate the fears of their neighbors rooted in astrology and idolatry because those pagans were delusional (Jeremiah 10:2-5). I am reminded of some of the superstitions that some people still believe, and their fears are unfounded and self-inflicted.

The Scriptures indicate that sharing the Divine perspective will allow the Christian to lead a courageous life regardless of his or her circumstances. There are some types of fears that are unacceptable in the sight of God.

**Fear that reveals a lack of faith.** God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants that He would give them the land of Canaan as an inheritance. When Moses led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage, they balked at their God-ordained conquest of the land because of the size and strength of the current inhabitants. Their fear took precedence over their faith in God’s promises and they were condemned for it.

God has revealed to me that He is in control (Acts 17), that He will provide for my needs (Matthew 6) and that He will cause all things to work together for good for those who love Him (Romans 8). If I truly believe and trust Him, I will take appropriate precautions for the very real dangers in life, pray to Him about my concerns, then trust that He will act in the best interest of those who love Him. If my life is controlled by fear, there is something wrong with my faith.

**Paralyzing fear.** Being a disciple of Jesus Christ means striving to live according to His teachings, confessing Him before men and sharing His saving gospel with others. Jesus told His disciples in no uncertain terms that evil men would treat them the same way those men had treated Jesus Himself, but that His disciples were expected to be courageous in the face of the very real threats. He said, “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 hell” (Matthew 10:28). If I refuse to acknowledge Christ out of fear of men who only can kill me, and lose my soul in the process, I have behaved foolishly.

**Perfect love casts out fear** (1 John 4:18). A person may come to God for redemption out of fear of judgment, but as he matures, he finds himself serving God out of love and gratitude, not the threat of punishment. The child of God with complete faith in His love, grace and providence can face whatever life brings with courage and confidence. God tells His people, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!” (Isaiah 43:1)

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