

GOD'S ANSWER TO FEAR

By

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The news media, including newspapers, television and radio, have become fear mongers, majoring in tragedy, and keeping the threat of disaster, disease and dark forebodings before us continuously. Add to this the agenda of international financial leaders who present a real threat of global control with the loss of personal freedom, and fears are compounded.

There are few people these days who are not terrified at the possibility of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, stroke, old age, financial insecurity, or death. Man's knowledge and modern technology are often used to generate fear rather than to produce courage and joy.

Fear is like a deadly disease, paralyzing the mind and destroying the body, while turning one's capabilities to negative results. Millions of people are surrendering to tranquilizers or to the faith destroying influence of Freudian psychiatry, in order to cope with their fears.

Jesus did not teach us to live in fear. In the very worst of circumstances His words were, "Fear not." Paul wrote, "For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

God gives such a mind, where fear is absent, only to those who believe Him. God relates to those created in his image through a mind-to-mind relationship. God reveals His mind, and man believes. This we call faith. There can be no value for man in God's revelation and purpose if man does not believe Him.

So here, in six steps, is God's formula for living without fear.

1. Deny self. The first requirement Jesus made of His disciples is this: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt:16:24). Self-centeredness often lies at the core of our fears. We live in a success oriented society, and one of the basic fears is the fear of failure. The sense of failure and rejection lies at the root of the despair of millions of young people, often being the cause of suicide.

Jesus nips this problem in the bud. To deny self is to forget about worldly success. Jesus does not accept us on the basis of success, but on the basis of commitment to Him. "Success" and "failure" belong in the world's vocabulary. What God seeks in us is faithfulness.

Abandon all the world's advice, esteem and measure of success, set your mind on God, His purpose and the ultimate achievement – eternal life. The goal is not gained by one's

ability or power, but by God's power for those who belong to Him. Such denial is expressed in Paul's statement, "I count all things to be loss that I might gain the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord..." (Phil. 3:8).

2. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Millions of people are playing church on Sunday, but filled with fear on Monday. They may be faithful to the traditions that distinguish their particular sect, traditions which have little relevance to their relationship to God, while retaining a loyalty to the world of Caesar. Jesus challenged the kingdom of Caesar, offering a kingdom so radical to the worldview that they killed him out of fear that His kingdom would turn man's allegiance away from their worldly kingdom.

The same fears are entertained by world rulers today. That's one reason it is "politically correct" to deny that Jesus is the only way to God to remove Christian symbols wherever possible. To remove any mention of Christ in public addresses, and make His Kingdom something only for the future. The world fears the victory of King Jesus, and does all in its power to keep Christians from claiming that victory. Jesus said, "Fear not little flock; for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). In His kingdom there is peace and protection and no cause for fear.

3. Consider any suffering or hardship as progress along the walk to God's image. Where there is no suffering there can be no great living. To live in fear of pain and suffering is to live in fear of life. One who has never experienced a broken heart has never known the touch of the Master's healing hand. Didn't Jesus call us to suffer? What else could He mean by: "let him take up his cross and follow me"? (Mar. 16:24; Scripture says that we will be glorified with Him if we suffer with Him. (Rom. 8:17).

Jesus promises us no short cuts or exemptions from the rivers of trouble. Rather He simply said, "Lo, I am with you." Pain and sickness can be used by God as instruments for shaping us into more noble and useful servants. Rather than being terrified at the prospect of suffering, we are to see it as God's opportunity to develop our faith and patience, and to mold us into His own image. Following Christ is not the mere confessing of our faith, reading the Bible, and praying. It is living according to His words, suffering after His example and glorifying the Father through it all. When one surrenders his will to God, desiring only His will, as did Jesus, fear finds no foothold.

4. Hold nothing as a permanent possession. The danger of the loss of financial security keeps many in a state of fear and frustration. Many hoard their wealth, refusing to share it or even to enjoy it themselves, for fear that they will lose it. But what if one loses material possessions? Things we may call our own are pitifully small compared to the immensity of the Creator's store of riches. God can provide all that one needs. The promise is: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things (He's talking about food, clothing and shelter) will be added unto you" (Matt. 6:34).

What Jesus was saying is that we are not to live for that which is only temporal, but for God's Kingdom and His righteousness, which are eternal. I must give up the prized

temporal possession in order to obtain that which my Master prizes, and He has promised that I will not be in need of the essential things. As we said in the beginning, it is a matter of faith. Do we really believe He meant it when He said that the things we need will be provided when we seek God first? Here is where we have the choice: faith or fear.

5. Take your mind off of yourself. “God help me!” we pray. “Give me peace, relieve my pain, heal me, etc.” Of course, we are to ask in order to receive, but then we are to leave it with God, with faith that He will answer according to His will. Then we can pray for others who have greater needs.

“If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth” (Col. 3:1-2). Turn your mind from self to God, His majesty, His mercy, His grace, His goodness, His compassion, His holiness, His power, His truth and His love. The very thought of God draws one out of the feverish tumult of the world to the obtaining of “Joy and peace in believing” (Rom. 15:13).

6. Remember that you are never alone. God does not exempt us from suffering, but He is with us in it. “Fear not, for I have redeemed thee... When thou pass through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee...Fear not, for I am with thee” (Isa.43:1, 2, 5).

In the pain of sickness, in the face of hostile foes, in the crunch of pressing responsibilities and under burdens that seem too heavy to bear, God is there, bearing you up, supplying strength, and even joy – to the world’s amazement and surprise. And when the dark river of death must be crossed He will be there with the bright hope of resurrection and the assurance of life and immortality in His glorious image.

Where is there room for fear? *Happy New Year!*

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