

FEAR NO EVIL

By

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It has been with us always, ever since Adam and Eve despised God's council in the garden and believed the lie of Satan, "You shall not surely die," and partook of the forbidden tree. Their firstborn was slain by his brother Cain. John asks, "And why did he slay him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:12).

Sin brought suffering to Adam and his family, and eventually to the entire race. Sin brings disorder and grief. "For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now." (Rom. 8:22) The truth of Paul's words was never more obvious than they are today in the aftermath of the terrorist attack of September 11. As our officials prepare to "smoke out" the evildoers and bring them to justice, we are forced to consider the challenging question that is being put to us from other nations: "Americans, think: Why does the whole world hate you?" We need to examine our own record, including our constitutional military actions that were not in the national interest. But that is not the subject of this article, as you will see.

The Bible is a record of how evil has sought to overcome and destroy righteousness. Evil has many faces. From the lowly pickpocket to the spouse-abuser on up to those in "high places" evil can be found everywhere. It is especially manifest in the world's animosity toward God as seen in its hostility toward Jesus and his and his disciples. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take council together, Against Jehovah and against his anointed, saying Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Psa. 2:2-3). Throughout history there have been people of power who have raged against the decrees of God and the kingship of Jesus. With deep hatred they have determined to cast off all cords of restraint in order to commit all manner of abominations. The support and practice of homosexuality is an example.

Every effort to legitimize other religions or to support the idea of "equality among all religions" is another effort to break the bonds of God's order. Yahweh has declared that Jesus is His son, and the one to whom all authority is given. Jesus made it clear that there is no other way to have access to God except through him, but this is blatantly denied every day in our country, in the media, in entertainment, in public education, in government, and even in churches.

What happened in New York and at the Pentagon is clear evidence that the world is full of evil, and that it does, indeed, "groan and travail in pain" due to human sin, and all sin, while it may cause great suffering of other people, is first of all sin against God. It is to reject the image in which we are created and rebel against His order of things. Therefore all who sin are held accountable to God.

King David was one who knew from experience the remorse of sin as well as the threat of deadly enemies. He lived with awareness of his own failures and the vivid memory of things he had done to offend both man and God. There were those who hated him and would ruin his life if given the chance. Often he had faced powerful enemies, and walked in extreme danger within the easy reach of death. Still he could say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me" (Psa.23:4)

David was saying, "I can go anywhere and go through anything, as long as You, Lord, are with me." This was no psychological trick of positive thinking. He wasn't simply putting a smiley face on the tribulations and deadly dangers that he faced. He had committed his life to Yahweh, and had accepted His promises at face value. His belief was honest to the point that he actually trusted God with his very life. Whatever happened to him, it would be all right, for God would be there with him. It was the same confidence as that held by Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who faced the fiery furnace for their defiance of paganism. They determined to be faithful to God, whatever the consequences, and when they were cast into the furnace, God's presence went with them and saved them.

Here is security and the only answer to fear, to live with confidence that God is with you. David had repented of his sin and committed himself to obedience to God, and he knew that God was with him. When Jesus faced his bitter enemies, the Pharisees, as they sought some excuse to have him put to death, he said, "He that sent me is with me; he has not left me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to him" (John. 8:29). The purpose and goal of Jesus was to do the Father's will, and he knew that nothing, could thwart that purpose, not even death, because the Father was with him.

Jesus gives us the same assurance in the last words he suffered before leaving the earth. "Go, therefore," he said. "And make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." What a tall order for the humble Galileans, who had just witnessed the deadly furor of the nation against their master, and knew they might suffer the same treatment. But then the promise: "And lo, I am with you, even unto the end of the world" (Matt 28:19-20).

This is our shield against fear. Not that evil things won't happen. Jesus warned again and again that to follow him invites men's hatred and abuse, but the world's evil cannot take us out of The Father's hands nor defeat His purpose to give us eternal life in His image. "In the world you have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Many Christians are devastated at the prospect of material loss and any curtailment of their worldly pleasures. We are expressly told, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world...and the world passes away..." (1 John. 2:15, 17). If we have been baptized into Christ, "the world has been crucified" unto us, and we have been crucified unto the world (Gal.6:1a). Our concern is not that people find satisfaction in the world, but that they come to know Christ and find relief from the world and its fears.

Paul put it this way: “If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?” (1Rom. 8:31,32) Remember, dear friend, whose side you are on, and consider His immutable love. He gave His son to die for us, then raised him from the dead, and now “he is at the right hand of God,” and “makes intercession for us.” (Rom. 8:34) Not only is God with us, there is no power, outside of our own wills, that can take us out of His care. “Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (1Rom. 8:38,39)

A bomb shelter is a good place to be in an air raid, but it is no place to live. One who lives in Christ does not live in fear. “For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and self-control” (1 Tim. 1:7). If the Lord is my Shepherd, then I will let Him lead me where He wants me to be, and will depend upon His rod and His staff for my protection, and will fear no evil.

It is easy enough to go about life with faith and serenity when things are going well and nothing threatens our liberty and lifestyle. The real test of faith comes when things go awry, we suffer losses, or feel the sting of poison arrows of false accusations and hatred, or suffer health problems, or are victims of events over which we have no control. It is then we know what it means to be able to say to our Heavenly Father, “For you are with me.”

It is then that we have opportunity to glorify God by demonstrating that we trust our lives fully to Him, and have no fear of His enemies. The inspired writer of Hebrews, after listing the sufferings of saints down through the ages, tells us, in the same kind of world, to run with patience the race of life, “looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1-2). No Christian should take his eyes off Jesus and stand terrorized by the world that is under his power. When one believes in the promises of Jesus and seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, he is able to sing with the Psalmist:

“Jehovah is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
Jehovah is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
Though war should rise against me, even then will I be confident.”
(Psa.27:1, 3).

I will fear no evil.

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