

Fear or Faith

From the overall context of persecution, 1Peter 3:6,14, prompts a question, “How do we live *fearless* lives?” Our world, and even our country, is changing before our eyes. Every day seems to bring a new *terror*. So...

There are many things that can cause us to be *afraid* today:

- **Persecution-** A few years ago, churches were being robbed, vandalized, and burned. More recently, church-goers have been murdered during bible studies. Christians are being prosecuted and penalized for conscientiously exercising their faith. Primary tenets of faith are being challenged and outlawed by an overly offended and zealously politically correct society that thinks it knows more than its Creator about what is right and wrong. What is this world coming to, and what will Christians do when it gets there?
- **Financial Ruin-** While there are still many survivors of the Great Depression present, a plethora of modern examples of financial ruin also abound. Countries are going bankrupt, and entire continents appear to be on the edge of complete financial collapse. Individually, we seem to make more while having less. How will we continue to make ends meet?
- **Healthcare-** Medical costs and insurance premiums skyrocket while benefits diminish drastically. Though we live nominally longer (and healthier), it seems the cost of doing so climbs astronomically. As we develop pills and procedures to “cure” (or at least “treat”) more ailments, diseases and maladies seem to multiply exponentially. Aging baby boomers are falling apart physically! Will we bankrupt a distressed system?
- **Education-** We spend more and more to build and staff primary schools, but seem to produce less and less educated graduates. We’ve emphasized the importance of secondary education, but can’t seem to afford it. College and university graduates commence with few jobs available in their career fields, and student load debts that hang as financial albatrosses around their necks for years if not decades. How long can this continue?
- **Religion-** There seems to be more and more church choices and fewer and fewer congregants to attend them. Churches of every stripe seem to be struggling to maintain memberships, let alone grow them. Metropolitan mega-churches incorporate while Main Street churches close and are demolished. Even the “believers” that do still exist believe and practice less Bible. What will become of religion in this country? Will we follow European nations into a “godless” abyss?

Feel better now? Are you “uplifted” and “encouraged” by any of this? Surely, our systems of *health, education, and financial and spiritual welfare* ALL appear to be collapsing before us. There sure seems to be much of which to be **fearful** from without and within! It is, indeed, a dark and gloomy and terrifying picture... if we continue to look at and focus on it. Simple question: Have you ever been to a “horror” picture in the daytime? When you exited the dark theater into the bright sunshine, were you still afraid? “But these things are the *realities* of the world we live in- not some theatrical production!” Are they really? Or, are we making them **our** reality because we refuse to *walk in(to) the light*, cf. 1John 1:5-7.

Consider briefly just one passage from God’s revealed wisdom regarding each of the avenues of fear listed above:

- **Persecution, 1Pet.1:3-10**

- **Financial Ruin, Matt.6:24-34**
- **Healthcare, Phil.1:21-26**
- **Education, 1Cor.1:18-31**
- **Religion, Jas.1:18-27**

“But it’s not that easy- you can’t just read a passage and expect to no longer be afraid in that area!” Can’t you? Why not? Rom.10:17. Do we **really** believe and trust (have *faith in*) God?

Think about it seriously- in whom would you rather (or do you) place your trust...

God or the government to protect you?

God or stock market to sustain you?

God or the healthcare system to care for you?

God or the education system to prepare you?

God or modern religion to save you?

It really **is** that simple, depending upon where you look and in whom you place your faith/trust.

This doesn’t mean that:

- You fail to call 911 in times of trouble- it does mean you trust God to save your soul more than the government or guns to save your life, Matt.16:25-26;
- You fail to utilize God’s financial blessings as wise stewards- it does mean you trust God more than Mammon, and recognize material possessions for what they are, Luke 12:15; 1Tim.6:6-8;
- You fail to seek medical treatment when needed- it does mean that your hope is not in *physical* life, Heb.2:14-15 2Cor.4:16 – 5:9;
- You fail to educate yourself and your family- it does mean that you understand the limitations of secular education in comparison to *spiritual* education, 1Cor.3:18-21a.
- You fail to be a member of Christ’s church, it does mean that we understand the church as the *product* of salvation rather than the *cause* of it, and that we are saved or lost *individually* rather than *collectively*, Rom.1:16; Eph.1:7; 2Cor.5:10.

We can choose to be *fearful* by looking to and trusting *ourselves* and/or *earthly solutions* to face the challenges of life, **or** we can *courageously* look to and trust God, and choose to *be not afraid* of anything or anyone in this life, Luke 12:32; Heb.13:5-6.

Remember, Peter only became *fearful* and began to sink while walking on the water when he looked at the *wind* and the *waves* instead of Jesus Christ!

Practical Suggestions:

- Turn off the news and go study with or minister to someone.
- Turn away from devices and to people- have face to face conversations with those near you, and save the virtual ones for those who aren’t.
- Read Phil.4:4-8. Understand Phil.4:4-8. Practice Phil.4:4-8.
- **Then, stop being *afraid*, 1Pet.3:13-16; John 14:27!**