

It Is Written

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Who Do We Fear?

By Doy Moyer

Peter wrote to Christians who faced persecution. Along with persecution and threats come the fears and anxieties of what may happen. We face intimidation and are worried about the outcome. Peter knew what that felt like. He denied Christ three times when faced with intimidating circumstances. When he wrote this epistle then, it is likely that he felt the pangs of that situation and did not want others to follow that path. He knew what betraying the Lord in the face of potential dangers felt like.

Christians know that they need to trust God, no matter what else may happen. To that end, Peter wrote:

“Who then will harm you if you are devoted to what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed. Do not fear them or be intimidated, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Yet do this with gentleness and reverence, keeping a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil” (I Peter 3:13-17 CSB).

Notice the phrase, “Do not fear them or be intimidated, but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy.” This is a likely allusion to Isaiah 8:11-15, where Isaiah tells the people, “Do not call everything a conspiracy that these people say is a conspiracy. Do not fear what they fear; do not be terrified. You are to regard only the LORD of Armies as holy. Only he should be feared; only he should be held in awe.”

In both passages, God’s messengers talk about what the people fear. In both, God’s people are called upon to honor the Lord as holy. The implication is that if we are fearing “what they fear,” then we are not truly honoring God as holy; we are not sanctifying Christ in our hearts as holy. Instead, we have let the world’s concerns invade our hearts. Fearing what the world fears is a sign that we are more focused on the world than we are on the Lord.

What is it and who is it that we fear? We can choose to fear “what they fear” or we can choose to fear God and honor Him as holy. When we fear God, we can have a good conscience and know that “it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.” We need not fear suffering when Christ is honored as holy. Remember that the apostles rejoiced that they were “counted worthy to be treated shamefully on behalf of the Name” (Acts 5:42).

Peter is no stranger to Isaiah’s message. In the Isaiah 8 context, the Lord “will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling” over which many will stumble. In I Peter 2, Peter combines this passage from Isaiah 8 with Psalm 118:22 to make the point that many do indeed stumble over Christ. Notice the contrast Peter makes between I Peter 2:8-10 here:

“They stumble because they disobey the word; they were destined for this. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

“They stumble ... but you are chosen.” We are not the world. The world will act in fear. The world will stumble over the truth and falter. God’s people, on the other hand, are chosen and have a distinct purpose. We need to act as God’s chosen possession proclaiming His excellencies (I Peter 2:9). Next, Peter urges his readers “as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.” If we act as we ought, we become lights to the world. When the world seeks to destroy, God’s people seek to do good and God will be glorified.

Now let’s think back to I Peter 3:13-17. If we are God’s chosen people who are given a special purpose, then on what grounds should we ever be afraid of what the world will throw at us? The world will try to intimidate us as God’s people. Don’t buy into those kinds of tactics. There are the theories of the world that can grip us with fear,

and there are plenty who seek to bully and intimidate. We can be gripped by a fear that will cause us to stumble, or we can choose to fear God, honor Him as holy, and proclaim His glory.

Which Describes You?

By Dan Gatlin

There are two old sayings that can describe our attitude toward others when we are not in their presence: 1) "absence makes the heart grow fonder" and 2) "out of sight, out of mind." When we are away from those we truly love, our love and desire to be with them intensifies. The longer we are away, the more intense the desire. This is the meaning of the first statement. The second, obviously, carries the opposite meaning. When some people leave, we don't really miss or think about them. It might even be a relief.

For the last year or so, Christians have not been able to meet for worship and bible study as we once had. We haven't had the close interaction with our brethren that we used to. How are we handling that?

"Absence Makes The Heart Grow Fonder"

David wrote, "One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me; Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD." (Ps. 27:4-6). He wasn't always able to "dwell in the house of the Lord," to worship as he desired, but his longing to do so is seen in many of the Psalms he wrote. How about us? We should miss worship, spiritual fellowship, and Bible study. That's an indication that we are spiritually healthy, that we are growing to maturity. As with David, we should do whatever we can under difficult circumstances. It is possible for our faith in God to grow.

Opportunities to show empathy toward fellow Christians may also be limited. But, we can still, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15). There will no doubt be great rejoicing when the virus has passed and we can spend more quality time in each other's presence, and worship & study as we once had. This test from Satan can prove our love for God and one another.

"Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind"

It's also possible for Christians, tempted by Satan, to be drawn back into the world. Some may enjoy the extra hours they have during the week. They may think little about God, worship, or their brethren. The priests in Malachi's day declared, "Oh, what a weariness!" (Mal. 1:13) as they offered sacrifice. Amos described the attitude of the rich, "When will the New Moon be past, That we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, That we may trade wheat?" (Amos 8:5). The worship that God established wasn't practiced out of love and faith, but was seen as an inconvenience. The Christians at Ephesus lost their love for God and needed to repent and "do the first works" (Rev. 2:4-5). If we are not careful, this can happen to us.

Quarantining from a virus is understandable, but quarantining from God, our brethren, and worship will have eternal consequences. Which of these attitudes describes you?

"We Are All Witnesses Of These Things"

By Kyle Campbell

In Acts 10:39, Peter said, "And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; who they slew and hanged on a tree: ..." The apostles were eyewitnesses (1 Peter 5:1; 1 John 1:1-4). How do we know they told the truth? If they did not tell the truth, then the gospel would be a sham, and there would be no reason whatsoever to put one's faith in it.

But the testimony of miracles, signs, and wonders affirm that God's word is the truth. After seeing the miracle of her son being raised from the dead, the widow of Zarephath said to Elijah, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth" (1 Kings 17:26). Secular history, such as the history of Alexander the Great, could be accurate or it could be inaccurate, but the scriptures have a testimony which confirms it to all of us (Mark 16:17-20; Hebrews 2:1-4). The real question is, will you obey it and let it become a part of your life, to guide you in your decisions? Contact us if you would like further study.