

It Is Written

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Faith and Fear

By Bob Deister

Matthew 10:28 says, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

A few days ago, I was thinking about the COVID years and how many people were so afraid of catching that disease that they would not go anywhere without a mask and up-to-date COVID shots. The news media seems to thrive on giving us a lot of things to fear — war, crime, loss of monetary support, global warming, and disease — to name just a few. The question each of us should ask is, "What am I afraid of, and why?"

The Lord repeatedly told His people not to be afraid. Phrases such as "do not fear," "have no fear," "fear not," "you shall not fear," "fear no evil," "fear no more," "fear them not," "speak the word without fear," and "do not be afraid" occur more than 125 times. God does not want us to be afraid of what might happen when we are obedient to Him.

For example, Psalm 27:1, 3 says, The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? ... Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war may rise against me, In this I will be confident." Psalm 49:5 records, "Why should I fear in the days of evil, When the iniquity at my heels surrounds me?" Proverbs 29:25 adds, "The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe." And Hebrews 13:6 declares, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

Finally, Peter wrote, "And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil" (1 Peter 3:13-17).

There are many such passages, and it is interesting to see in them that even some of the "heroes" of the Bible experienced fear from time to time. However, through their obedient faith in God, they overcame their fear and succeeded in the end. People with weak faith did not overcome, and bad things happened. The word "fear" occurs in the NKJV 367 times. Many of those verses describe the bad things that happened when the people did not have the faith to overcome their fear.

As in Bible times, those of us who remain faithfully obedient to God should never be frozen in fear by anything that might happen to us. For obediently faithful Christians these situations are win-win. If the bad thing does not happen, we win. If the bad thing does happen, we still win, because Heaven is on the other side. Therefore, "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

Note that those without the faith and courage to overcome their fear will not see Heaven. Revelation 21:8 says, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

All of us experience fear at various times during our lives, but we must not let fear control our lives. What are you afraid of? Is it disease, pain, surgery, death, war, crime, fire, bad weather, talking to others about Jesus, or whatever? Refer back to Matthew 10:28 to see who we must really fear. Fearing God includes not only what He will do if we are not faithfully obedient to Him, but it is also having a great respect

for who He is and what He has done for us.

So, the next question is, how do we actually overcome our fear of bad things happening? Like many people in the Bible, such as those described in Hebrews 11, we can draw on our faith in God. Bad things may still happen, but as God's children, we know that we have a better place prepared for us. While we wait for that place, let's take advantage of the blessings that are available when we meet with the other saints in the church. We have brothers and sisters who can help us to strengthen our faith and to overcome our fear. But if we choose not to be present in our assemblies, I cannot encourage you, and you cannot encourage me. But the exhortation stands: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:23-25).

Are You Too Busy?

By Roger Shouse

We live in busy times. Most of us with children at home find ourselves coming and going all the time. The calendar is full of activities. There is very little downtime or quiet time. Our busy schedules often keep some of us from helping out in the kingdom of God. For instance, the elders may ask a man to consider serving as a deacon. Without even thinking about the great service that he could render, the person declines by saying, "I can't right now, I'm just too busy." Or, someone is asked to teach a Bible class. The opportunity is turned down because the person is too busy. Being "too busy" can be an easy excuse for simply not stepping up and doing what we should. Saying "I'm too busy" sounds so much better than saying, "No, I just don't want to." Being busy is assumed to be the banner of a successful parent. Being busy means you are not lazy, bored, or dull. We are just busy people.

But have you ever considered that Moses was busy tending his flock when God called him to service? Gideon was busy threshing wheat when God called him to service. David was busy caring for his father's sheep when God appointed him king. Nehemiah was busy serving the king when he decided to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Peter and John were busy fishing when Jesus called them to follow Him. We do not find God using the lazy or idle. He goes to those who are already at work and busy. Consider Saul of Tarsus.

Take note, brethren. It takes time to teach a class or open your home to hospitality or write a card of encouragement or have a home Bible study or serve as an elder or deacon. Those who are busy doing those things have families, jobs, hobbies, and commitments just like everyone else. In fact, you will find those that are very busy in the Kingdom of God have to fight time commitments, juggle their schedules, and sometimes miss activities they like to go to just like everyone else. There are times they feel pulled in more than one direction. But they have found some things that others fail to see. They have found that being busy in the Kingdom of God is worth the sacrifice they must make. They are making a difference and what they are doing is a good work. They have found that making time for the Kingdom teaches their children a valuable lesson. You don't do everything you want to do first and then if you have any extra time, find something to do for God. You make time for God. You work your schedule to include God. You make time for the work of the Lord. The Lord found time to die on the cross for us. The Lord finds time to bless us and answer our prayers.

There are many busy folks in the Kingdom. You are making a difference and we are thankful for that. Being busy is not an excuse for not doing what God wants of us.