

Overcoming the Spirit of Fear

“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

—II Timothy 1:7

IN THIS SCRIPTURE, PAUL explains that the Holy Spirit is the spirit ‘of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.’ These gifts are closely related because they are outgrowths of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. They are also evidences that the Spirit is operating in our hearts and minds.

Paul spoke of fear which emanates from Satan, who is the great instigator of fear. The roaring of a lion seeking out its prey instills fear in the very being of the unfortunate creature that is being hunted down. This fear virtually paralyzes the prey so that it is incapable either of escaping or of putting up resistance.

Fear will also have the same affect on the followers of our Lord, if we allow it to take possession of our hearts. The Apostle Peter admonishes, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may

devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”—I Pet. 5:8,9

Steadfastness in the faith means to have a firm confidence in the outworking of the divine will in our lives, and believing that Satan cannot harm us as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. If Satan’s roar at times emphasizes the weaknesses of our flesh, we are to trust that God has not deserted us.

SEEKING GOD’S WILL

Regardless of the origin or object of our fears, we must realize that they never come from God. To keep this always in mind will enable us, under all circumstances, to proceed in the narrow way, and do those things which we believe the Scriptures indicate to be God’s will for us. We know that the Lord will take care of us, not always from a physical standpoint, but as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. We read, “The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” (I Pet. 3:12,13) ‘That which is good’ is the Lord’s will, and Peter assures us that no harm can come to any of Jesus’ followers as long as they seek God’s will. This does not mean that we will not have difficult experiences to overcome, but “If ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.”—vs. 14

LEARNING OBEDIENCE

Jesus suffered for righteousness sake. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things

which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” (Heb. 5:8,9) Ignominy was heaped upon him at the end of his ministry on earth. “The high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?”—Matt. 26:65-68

So it has been with all of the Master’s true followers throughout this present Gospel Age, even in the face of difficulties, from whatever source they may arise. We are not to be afraid of the terror that might rise against us, because we know that it has come from Satan in his effort to turn the members of the Christ aside from their course of faithfulness in the narrow way. “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31) “I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”—Rev. 12:10,11

PARTAKER OF SUFFERING

Paul gives an account of some of his sufferings and wrote, “Blessed be God, even the Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.”—II Cor. 1:3-10

A PRISONER AT ROME

When Paul wrote his second epistle to his beloved Timothy, he was being held prisoner at Rome and no doubt certain that he would soon be executed. His words capture the very spirit of his innermost feelings and his complete dedication to the Heavenly Father. His extensive ministry, which he had been engaged in for many years, was coming to a close and he was resigned to accept the will of God for whatever experiences were to end his life.

He said, "Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me."—II Tim. 4:5-11

Earlier in his letter, he had written, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well."—II Tim. 1:15-18

It is evident that Paul was feeling very alone in prison. Some of his friends were ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, and had abandoned him. They may have feared placing themselves in a difficult and dangerous position by showing kindness to him.

Also, he had been training Timothy to carry on with the ministry after his own departure, and no

doubt felt that it would be a great blessing to talk matters over face to face with his spiritual son. Despite this, however, he invited Timothy to visit him, knowing that for him to do so could lead to problems with the Roman authorities.

Paul reminded Timothy that the ‘spirit of fear’ is not of the Lord. God gives strength and the spirit of power to his people. From the fleshly standpoint, journeying to Rome to visit Paul, who had already been condemned to death, would not be an easy task. Paul knew, however, that the Lord would give Timothy the necessary strength to do this. Being a follower of the Master is not an easy path, and requires courage and strength beyond our own.

HE GIVES POWER TO THE FAINT

One way he does this is through his promises. Just to know that God has promised to help us in every time of need is, in itself, a great source of strength. Isaiah wrote, “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”—Isa. 40:28-31

Strength is given to the Lord’s people by the providence with which he surrounds them. We know that God is shaping our experiences for our

spiritual growth as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. He may also imbue his people with strength to help them through difficult experiences, in which, in their own strength, they would falter and fall.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERING

“What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”—Phil. 3:7-11

We put our confidence in God’s ability to care for his people, and his desire to do so. However, we need to exercise faith in his wonderful promises. Satan will endeavor to instill doubts and fears into our hearts on the ground that we are not worthy of God’s continued love and care. God is not dealing with us according to the flesh but according to our heart intentions, and our fleshly imperfections are covered by the robe of Christ’s righteousness. “The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.”—II Chron. 16:9

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