

Faith & Fear

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Paul told Timothy, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). The word used in this passage translated “fear” actually means cowardice. All men are to fear God. The writer of Ecclesiastes said that this is a most basic responsibility of man. He stated, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). This fear is reverential fear or respect and not cowardice. Paul’s point to Timothy is that Christians are not to be cowards in the work God has set before them. For this reason the “fearful” are placed in a list of those who will have part in the second death. The apostle John declared, “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).

Faith and love are in direct opposition to the spirit of cowardice. In his first letter, the apostle John said, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18). Moses “by faith forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king” (Hebrews 11:27). Without fear, David as a boy was able to battle the Philistine giant, Goliath (1 Samuel 17). And Paul as he writes to Timothy faces death’s door without fear and with courage. Why were these men and others like them able to face enemies and death without fear? It is because these men had faith, and their faith removed their fear! Faith that God would not forsake them, and would carry through with His promises.

We, too, must not face each day’s challenge with “a spirit of fear,” but we must face them with the three kinds of spirits which God has given to us. The “spirit” the apostle speaks of in this passage is one’s moral character. First, God has given to us a spirit “of power” which is courage and endurance. Our word dynamite comes from this word in the Greek. Notice that the power is not within us, but God has given us this dynamite power of faith through His word (Romans 10:17). Second, God has given to us a spirit “of love” which is the motivation for the spirit of power. It is this spirit of love that offers direction for the power given to us by God. Without the proper direction, the power is of little benefit. Consider the miraculous gifts of tongues, of prophecy, and our gifts to others of 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. If these are not done in love (the proper direction and motivation), they have little or

no benefit to the recipient nor to ourselves. Third, God has given to us a spirit “of a sound mind” which is the good sense guiding our power and applying our love. It carries with it the idea of discipline or self-control. It is to be of a right mind which is always in control.

Notice each one of these three spirits which God has given to His children are in connection with the word of God. Concerning the gospel, Paul proclaimed, “it is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). Jesus taught love and obedience go hand in hand together (John 15:14). To have a sound mind is directly the result of understanding the will of God and growing to maturity (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

We can face the challenges that lie ahead with confidence and faith. If we are doing the Lord’s will, the Lord will be with us. Faith is the victory (1 John 5:4)! Fear is defeat. If we meet those challenges with faith “we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:6).