

How Fear Resists Faith

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In a world filled with uncertainty where pressures mount and questions about tomorrow seem endless, every one of us has felt the quiet pull of fear. It whispers in moments of weakness, magnifies our doubts, and tries to convince us that we are not enough for what lies ahead. Yet at the very heart of our calling is a powerful truth, one that rises above anxiety, above uncertainty, and above every fear of the unknown.

We are not left to face life alone. Though challenges may surround us and the future may seem unclear, God has not designed us to live in fear, but to walk forward with confidence and strength and purpose. Even in our most uncertain moments, a great certainty is at work within us, one that replaces fear with faith, weakness with power, and confusion with clarity.

This message explains how fear resists faith. It is about learning how to stand firm when everything around us feels unstable, how to move forward when fear tries to hold us back, and how to live with boldness knowing that what God has placed within us is far greater than anything we will ever face.

It is natural for us to have at least some fear of the unknown, especially when failure is looming on the horizon. There is almost no way to tell when things might take a turn for the worse.

Now God designed into human life the possibility, even the probability, that we will face trying times. There are over 200 instances in which a biblical figure is described as fearful or afraid or is told not to fear. Here is a notable list of examples:

Adam, right after disobeying God; Sarah, when she is caught eavesdropping by the divine visitor; Lot and his daughters, fearful of remaining in Zoar; Jacob, following his dream of the ladder; Moses, after killing the Egyptian and at the burning bush; Aaron and the Israelites, when Moses' face shone;

Gideon, destroying a Baal altar at night; the young Samuel after the vision about Eli's sons; David, when captured by Achish and during moving of the Ark; Elijah, when Jezebel vowed to kill him; the sailors, when God sent a storm because of Jonah's flight; the disciples were caught in a storm on the lake, and when Jesus walked on water; the woman at the empty tomb; the shepherds at Jesus' birth, when the angel appeared; and the disciples at the Transfiguration.

It is quite a list and only just the more well-known ones.

Please turn with me to II Timothy 1, verse 5. It is hard, if not impossible for faith and fear to coexist because fear paralyzes faith—unless it is fear of God. The apostle Paul encourages Timothy by commending his faith and then emphasizing that Timothy must not let down or slack off. He must make use of God's Spirit. We are going to read verses 5 through 7.

II Timothy 1:5-7 when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also [speaking to Timothy]. Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

So let us consider those who are suffering during these difficult periods because they fear the unknown. People fear many things. They fear the dark, the unknown, heights, other people, failure, not making it into God's Kingdom, persecution, and far more things.

Our minds and bodies cannot rest when fear releases adrenaline into our systems, signaling us to fight or flee.

Often fears originate from spiritual issues. We hesitate to approach God in prayer when we have sinned against Him. We are afraid because we have not done what we know we should have done.

Fear of high pressure situations is common, and it is remarkable to see how the enemy often creates the same basic condition in people through seemingly opposite methods, either by instilling fear of the known or of the unknown. Satan is so clever he can use anything.

And when people accurately understand their past, they often begin thinking about the future, which frequently leads to feeling depressed in the present. Even if they are certain that their past sins, including any exceptional ones, are forgiven, and they realize they wasted earlier years, they begin to focus on fears about what the future might bring because of the foundation they have already built.

There is a lot of teaching about this in the Scriptures, but one of the clearest examples of this specific condition is with Timothy, to whom Paul wrote this epistle, along with the previous one. It was without a doubt his personal problem, and Paul wrote him about that out of concern. Timothy was highly reliant on Paul because of his fears about future challenges and dangers, and the main purpose of both epistles is to reassure Timothy, and us, as he faces what lies ahead.

I do not want to focus on Timothy very long here at this point, but I mention him as an example of a faithful minister who became weakened and uneasy because of his fear of the unknown, of what he was to face.

Now why do people experience fear of the unknown? What causes this condition?

Aside from sin in general, the main cause is temperament. A temperament refers to a person's unique makeup, the constitution of a person regarding the mixture or balance of their qualities. A synonym for temperament is disposition, which means a person's prevailing dominant tendency, mood, or inclination.

So we are all born unique and no two of us are exactly alike. We each have our own specific traits, our virtues, our failures, our weaknesses, and our blemishes. Each person is very delicate and finely balanced. And essentially, we share the same general characteristics but the proportions vary widely, so

our temperaments differ. It is very important that we keep this in mind—that each and every one of us is uniquely different.

Our temperament remains mostly unchanged because our becoming a Christian does not mean we stop living with ourselves. We must live with ourselves if we are even alive. And your self is your self and not somebody else's self. All I am saying is you are an individual, you are responsible for your own self.

Paul remained essentially the same physical man after his calling and baptism as he was before. He did not become someone else, although he was renamed from Saul to Paul by God. So I guess that does count.

Although his old carnal way of thinking was replaced by a new spiritual way of thinking, his temperament did not immediately change, there was a shift in his perspective and his outlook. Now Peter was still Peter, John was still John in temperament and in essential traits, and the variety in creation is evident in the differences of temperament among individual human beings.

Besides, people admire flowers, and no two flowers are the same. And no two human beings are exactly the same either. It is in the variety within the fundamental unity that God displays the wonders of His ways, and it is the same in the church. We are all different with unique temperaments and we are all ourselves.

God gives us gifts through the Holy Spirit in various ways, even though our essential temperament remains the same as it was before our conversion. By temperament, I mean the unique way we do things or approach things. We do the same things but we do them differently after answering God's call, of course.

Please turn with me to I Corinthians 2, verse 1. Now think of God's ministers and teachers preaching and teaching the same truth and living the same Christian life, yet our methods of presentation are different and intended to be different. And God uses these differences to spread the gospel. He can use one person to make the message appeal to a specific group, while another

person might not be used in that way. Different presentations appeal to different people, and rightly so, and God makes use of everything and all of that.

So let us further examine temperament. Some people are naturally anxious, naturally nervous for whatever reason, or apprehensive or even frightened. Paul himself sometimes seemed to be one of these along with other members of the church there in Corinth, and he and they were nervous and lacked self-confidence in the natural sense.

We think of Paul as being very powerful and very assertive and all of that, especially before he came into the church, and then after coming into the church that was turned to supporting God's work. But there were times where he was unnerved, I guess is the best way to put it. Here in I Corinthians 2, we are going to read verses 1 through 5.

I Corinthians 2:1-5 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

So let me repeat what I said just a few minutes ago. It is hard if not impossible for faith and fear to coexist because fear paralyzes faith unless it is fear of God.

Now turn over to II Corinthians 7, verse 5. Here, Paul described being overwhelmed by distress, unrest, and anxiety on every side. He faced constant external opposition from pagans and Jews and false brethren while carrying the heavy burden of concern for God's people in very troubling times.

At the same time, he was inwardly troubled, fearing how the Corinthian church would respond to his letter and whether discipline, division, or false teachers might prevail. And with Titus delayed and no news about this,

Paul's uncertainty deepened, leaving him in an emotionally strained state. Paul writes,

II Corinthians 7:5 For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears.

Different temperaments are noticeable early in childhood and sometimes even in infancy. Some people are self-confident and self-assured. They seem unafraid and willing to tackle anything. They will stand up anywhere. They do not know the meaning of nerves. And it is interesting what I found out recently. I think many of you know this, that there is a gene that some of these SEAL teams have and other elite groups in the military have that causes them not to be afraid of anything, and so they are able to go into battle or to save somebody without a second thought because of this gene that they found. I always wondered how they did that and God has provided that strength in them or in some people and not in others. It is very interesting how God has specifically fine-tuned our DNA structure.

These two types of people may both be Christians, that is, ones that are strong and confident or the ones that are weak and fearful. The confident ones can be fearful as well. So these two types of people may both be Christians, but they differ significantly and fundamentally. Some Christians can be convinced to speak in public, while others are the exact opposite.

Now this question of temperament is therefore an important factor in our analysis of the causes of this specific form of fear of the unknown that leads to stress and anxiety.

Then there are other issues that arise when people fear the future. We find that they are constantly concerned about the type of job they will have if they live God's way of life and all of the pressures they find trying to keep a job, and so they become fearful and lacking faith.

So we find that being a Christian is not just about conversion and it is not smooth sailing the rest of our lives. Realistically, we see it as a higher calling, a fight of faith, and dedication to follow Christ's example. So we read our Bibles and we see ourselves as intelligent, we recognize the

greatness of the work and calling but that in turn tends to discourage us because we are equally aware of our smallness and vulnerabilities.

In other words, we often fear failure. We are afraid of letting down God's work. We know we must live Christian lives, but we understand our own weaknesses, we recognize the greatness of God's work, and we are painfully aware of our faults and our needs, which can sometimes discourage us.

And maybe it is just a general fear of the unknown, even when we cannot identify anything specific. What are we afraid of? Often no clear reason comes to mind and we just do not know what is wrong sometimes. We just cannot figure it out. But we know we are afraid of something or frozen in place as far as moving ahead on many things.

But there is still this common fear, this apprehension about the uncertainty of what might happen or of things we might be called to endure. And we read about people in the past and present who were persecuted for Christ's sake and we try to imagine ourselves in that situation. Or we try not to imagine ourselves in that situation. It depends on, I guess, our mood.

The remarkable thing is that such things can so strongly affect us that they completely paralyze us in the moment. These people are often in danger of being consumed and overwhelmed by their fears, which can make them ineffective, and that was the core of Timothy's problem and the reason why Paul had to explain to him. He praised him for his faithfulness in that scripture and then he explained to him why he could not let fear freeze him in place.

Please turn with me to II Timothy 1, verse 8. Paul was in prison and Timothy began to wonder what would happen to him. What if Paul were to be executed? How would he, Timothy, face alone the challenges emerging in the church and the persecution that was starting to appear in which Timothy himself might be involved? So Paul had to be quite firm with him, and he tells him what he must do and must not do.

II Timothy 1:8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God.

He was telling him there to rely on God's Spirit to strengthen him and to be able to face possible sufferings in the future. Fear of the unknown was at the heart of Timothy's problem at that moment, and understandably.

Please turn over to Matthew 6, verse 34. The question for us is, how are we to handle the fear? The first step is to identify and clearly distinguish between two things: legitimate forethought, meaning vision and preparation, and paralyzing forethought, meaning anxiety and fear.

Legitimate forethought and paralyzing forethought. We should consider the future. It is very unwise to ignore it or not consider it at all, but what Scripture warns us about is being worried about tomorrow, as you are very familiar with.

Matthew 6:34 "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Planning for tomorrow is time well spent. Worrying about tomorrow is time wasted. Sometimes it is hard to tell the difference.

Careful planning means thinking ahead about goals and steps and schedules and trusting in God's guidance. When well done, planning can ease worry. By contrast, the worrier is consumed by fear and struggles to trust God. The worrier lets his plans interfere with his relationship with God. Do not let worries about tomorrow affect your relationship with God today.

This means do not be guilty of anxious care about tomorrow. It does not mean you have no thought at all about it, otherwise the farmer would not plow and till and sow. He does think about and plan for tomorrow. Proverbs 21:5 says, "The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty surely to poverty."

And I think when we are fearful we make hasty decisions. Normally the farmer is looking to the future, but he does not spend all his time wondering and worrying about the end results of his work. He knows if he plants correctly and gets enough water, things will grow.

Instead, he reasonably considers the results and then lets them go. And he has a human faith that the environment's normal processes will yield a crop. Now if he is a Christian, he does not have to worry about that because he knows God is the one who determines all of that.

The whole question is where to draw the line. Where do you draw the line between fruitful planning and fruitless worrying? Thinking is the right thing to do up to a point, but if you go beyond that point, it becomes worry and anxiety and it paralyzes and cripples.

In other words, although it is wise to plan, it is foolish to be completely controlled by planning. What is that saying? Man plans and God laughs, or something like that. I think it is the way it goes.

The difficulty with people who are prey to these fears is that they are wringing their hands, doing nothing, and are depressed by them. It just shuts them down. It makes them ineffective. In fact, they are completely governed and mastered by the unknown, and that is always wrong. Thinking about it is right, but being controlled by the unknown is all wrong. Even people in the world have discovered this through experience.

There is the old adage, "Don't cross your bridges until you get to them." Many scriptural statements about this have become proverbial. For example, "Do not worry about tomorrow," and "Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." Scripture elevates that concept and presents it in its spiritual form and it is sound, common sense.

Now at the opposite end of the spectrum, it is a waste of time to dwell on the past we cannot change. But it is equally wrong to worry about the future, which is now obscure and hard to understand. So we must live in the present to the fullest and not let our worry of the future determine our present.

Let us go back to what Paul says in II Timothy 1:7, you do not have to turn back there. But again, he says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and a sound mind." So he addresses the negative aspect of the spirit of fear and he counters it with three positive aspects.

Now he raises the reasoning to a higher level and gives us a specific teaching of a two-fold lesson in verse 7: first, it is a reprimand, and second, it is a reminder, and both are vital to get the point across. So the first thing Paul does is to reprimand Timothy. And he points to him and says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear," and that is a reprimand. Timothy was now gripped by fear, and so Paul reprimanded him.

The spirit or the principle here is that our essential trouble, if we suffer from this specific manifestation of fear, anxiety, and spiritual depression, is our failure to recognize God's gift of the Holy Spirit and to acknowledge that He continues to give it to us through thick and thin.

And that was really the trouble with Timothy, as it is with all fearful Christians. It is a failure to recognize what God has done for us and what God is still doing in us. So in fact, we can use the very words that Jesus Christ once used in a different context.

Please turn to Luke 9, verse 51. When answering James and John, who wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume some of the Samaritans, Christ had to rebuke their attitudes.

Luke 9:51-55 Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face [or determined] to go to Jerusalem, and He sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" [It has always seemed very dramatic to me, very "shoot from the hip." That is an emotional statement.] But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of."

So in Luke 9:55, the rebuke is negative, but in II Timothy 1:6, the reprimand is positive, and Paul has to tell Timothy to stir up the gift of God.

Please turn and flip back to II Timothy 1, verse 6. Now Paul, facing certain death as a prisoner in Rome, wrote to Timothy an exhortation that applies to each of us. Paul's words are encouraging to anyone who fears the unknown, and Timothy did not need any new spiritual ingredients to overcome his fear. All he had to do was stir up what he already had.

You remember Paul called him a very faithful person, as was his grandmother and his mother.

II Timothy 1:6-7 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

So our fears stem from our failure to stir up, our failure to think, our failure to get a grip on ourselves. We find ourselves looking to the future, imagining things, and we say, "I wonder what's going to happen?" And then our imagination runs away with us and we are gripped by this thing; and we do not stop reminding ourselves of who we are and what we are, and this thing overwhelms us. And down we go into despair when we already have the answer or the power within us that we must stir up to counter these discouraging attitudes.

The first thing we must do is to ask God to help us to get a grip on ourselves, pull ourselves up, and stir ourselves to action. The apostle Paul puts it this way, "remind yourselves of certain things."

In effect, he says to Timothy, "Timothy, you seem to be thinking about yourself and about your life and all you must do, as if you were still an ordinary worldly person. But Timothy, you are born from above and the Spirit of God is in you, but you are facing all these things as if you are still what you once were, a worldly person."

And that is the trouble sometimes with all of us in this condition. Even though we are true Christians, we believe the truth, we are born from above, and we are children of God, we lapse into a condition in which we again begin to think as if none of these spiritual things had happened to us at all.

Like the worldly person, we allow the unknown to control us and we compare our own weakness and lack of strength with the greatness of our calling and the tremendous responsibility before us, and down we go as if we were still our natural worldly selves.

Paul says to Timothy that the thing to do is to remind yourself that you have been given the gift of God's Spirit and to realize that because of this, your whole outlook on life and the unknown future must be different from what you were before conversion and different from what you thought before conversion.

So we must learn to say that what matters in any of these situations, conditions, or positions is what is true of God the Father and the Son. They are deeply committed to Their promises for us. Now we may be weak by nature, the enemy powerful, and the responsibility great, but we should not think of ourselves as alone or view the situation in terms of our own strength. God gives us His Spirit of power.

So we are not alone. We cannot dwell on our own weaknesses to solve problems. We should think of God's power, and when we do that, we see things much more clearly.

Now, as I mentioned before, all our temperaments are different, and they should not affect our responsibility or duty. So here is part of the miracle of redemption. We are given temperaments by God and all our temperaments are different, and that too is of God. But we must never be controlled by our temperaments. The Spirit of God must control us. And really, in a word, we are to overcome. We are to overcome what we once were, but there are certain personality traits and things like that that remain the same.

Here are powers and capacities, and here is your individual temperament that uses them. But the vital point is that, as Christians, we should be controlled by the Holy Spirit—by the mind of God rather than human reasoning. And that is what gets us into trouble. That is what gets us into fear—human reasoning.

It is an incredibly sad state when a Christian is controlled by his temperament. The natural human is always controlled by his temperament and he cannot help himself.

But the difference regeneration makes is that there is now a higher control even over our temperament, that points our temperament in the right direction and enables us to use it correctly. The power of the Holy Spirit enables us to function in our own particular way according to our temperament, and the process of conversion is the practice of learning to control our temperament and desires. Temperament remains, but it no longer controls us, and the Holy Spirit is the controlling power.

So let us clarify what we know. God has not given us a spirit of fear. What, then, is the spirit He has given us? Again, notice in II Timothy 1:7, "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power," and that power is what Paul puts first in his list there of the three. We have a task and we know our own weakness.

It is God's Spirit that enables us to serve God properly, and by its power, we can overcome fear and weakness. The word fear in verse 7 means timidity, cowardice, and the Holy Spirit gives us the power to fulfill our responsibility to God with boldness.

Please turn over to Philippians 2, verse 12. Now here is a power even the weak possess, and it means power in the most comprehensive sense conceivable. Paul explained to the Philippians that we must work out our own salvation.

Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; . . .

And of course that fear and trembling is fear of disappointing God, fear of disobeying God. And we should tremble at the thought of disobeying God. If we tremble beforehand, it will help us not to disobey.

Philippians 2:13 . . . for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

So the fear and trembling remain, and that is partly our temperament, but we are enabled to work by the power that works in us to will and to do. So we do not become a person who is unafraid and no longer subject to fear. We still must work out our own salvation with that power and that spiritual power enables us to work this out in godly fear and reverent trembling.

Please turn over to Acts 4, verse 5. So imagine that it means the most timid and nervous person can be given power over all things, even over death, and we see this in the example of the apostles, including Peter, who feared death so much so that he denied his Lord. He denied Him not once, not twice, but three times. That is what happens when fear drives us. But look at him afterward in the Acts of the Apostles. The spirit of power had entered him and he was ready to die. He faced the authorities, persecution, and death. Here in Acts 4, we are going to read verses 5 through 14.

Acts 4:5-14 And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them [that is, Peter and John] in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

The spirit of power is one of the most miraculous things in the long annals of the church's history, and it is still happening. And throughout church history, there are stories of the martyrdom of Christians and those who stood faithful even unto death. The surprising thing is that you will not only find physically strong, courageous men, you will also find physically weak women and girls who are dying for Christ's sake. They could not endure such severe persecution on their own, but they were given the Spirit of power.

So we should not talk like carnal, natural people. We should not talk as if we as individuals with our own power must face it all, but God has given us the spirit of power, and we must move forward on faith, and God will be with us.

Even if it means facing death, you will rejoice that you have been counted worthy to suffer shame and even death for His glorious name's sake. So the God-given spirit of power will strengthen you and enable you to endure anything with patience. So why do we fear?

We fear because we have human nature, and that is what human nature does naturally. And those following human nature have a problem with faith. What you and I must do as we are tempted to be depressed by the things that are against us in these times of increasing stress is to say, "I have the Holy Spirit and it is the spirit of power and God is always with me."

Then the next thing after power that Paul mentions to Timothy is love. In II Timothy 1:7 again, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love." So why would Paul place love at this point in the list? Why does he place the spirit of love second here? Why does a timid and nervous person need love during high pressure situations?

Paul shows great wisdom here because after all, is not fear the main cause? And the answer is self—self-love, self-concern, and self-protection, which is non-love for others or hate for others and putting ourselves above them. The essence of this trouble is that these fearful people are too self-absorbed. They are constantly turning to themselves, looking at themselves, concerned about themselves.

And it is here that the spirit of love comes in because there is only one way to get rid of self. There is only one cure for oneself. You can *never* deal with yourself. That was the fatal flaw among those poor men who became monks and among those damaged women who became nuns. They try to deal with things themselves and to get away from everyone else.

It is also the depressing downfall of those who were called but later chose to be independent Christians. A professing Christian who refuses to fellowship with other members of God's church may indicate a self-righteous and a presumptuous heart. Now, they could escape the world and other people, but they could not escape themselves. Your self is within you and you cannot get rid of it on your own.

It is amazing people leave the church because they say the church is not loving enough and they take all their problems with them to wherever they go, the world or another group, and they have the same problems. They just do not realize it is within them, their own selves. And that is where their focus is.

There is only one way to get rid of yourself, and that is to become so absorbed in doing good for someone that you have no time to think about yourself. Only God's Spirit makes this possible. God not only provides the spirit of power, but also the spirit of love, and this spirit of love means loving the great God who made us and provided the way of redemption for us, who deserved nothing.

He loves us with everlasting love. Think of that.

As you become absorbed in the love of God, you will forget yourself, and the spirit of love will free you from self-interest, from self-concern, and the anxiety and stress and depression that arise from them, and the spirit of love dispels self at every point.

So God the Father and His Son offered the ultimate sacrifice because of Their spirit of love. They have no self-concern, only concern for others, and

Christ died so that you and I might be reconciled to God. And then there is love of the brethren. Think of other people, their needs, their concerns, and their lives.

The apostle Paul seemed to have recognized in Timothy the human tendency to fear the unknown and death. So Paul tells him how to overcome those fears and his advice is: think of others, consider the sad shape of those who are perishing from their sins, and forget yourself.

Please turn to John 15, verse 13. Reflect on this yourself. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." And this is what Paul means by the spirit of power and the spirit of love. If we are consumed by the spirit of love, we will forget ourselves.

You are very familiar with this, you have it memorized.

John 15:13-14 "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."

John 15:17 "These things I command you, that you love one another."

So if we have true love for God's people and for those who do not understand God's ways, even for our enemies, we will not fear to endure suffering to accomplish the work of God. Selfishness is the opposite of genuine concern. It causes fear because it means we focus on ourselves, are interested only in what we will gain from serving and obeying God, and we fear losing our dignity, control, or money. True Christian love, energized by God's Spirit, enables us to sacrifice for others and not be afraid of losing our time and money in doing so.

And finally, Paul tells us in II Timothy 1:7 that God gives us the spirit of a sound mind. Not the spirit of fear, but the spirit of power and love and of a sound mind. A sound mind is the right antidote for the spirit of fear. A sound mind is a self-controlled, disciplined, balanced mind.

The term sound mind here and elsewhere is related to the words sober, sober-minded, and sobriety in many of Paul's letters. Self-discipline is also a good translation of sound mind. It describes people who are sensible and have their lives under control.

Now in II Timothy 1:7, the Amplified Bible reads a "calm and well-balanced mind and discipline and self-control." Those are the synonyms that they use for that word sound mind.

Though we may be timid and nervous by nature, the Spirit of God has given us this spirit of control, discipline, and good judgment. Jesus Christ had already said all this before Paul learned of it. Paul is simply repeating and expanding on Christ's teaching.

Let us turn to Matthew 10, verse 16. Now you remember what Jesus said to His disciples when He sent them out to teach. He warned them that they would be hated and persecuted and that a day might come when they would have to give up their lives or at the very least be put on trial for their lives. We are going to read verses 16 to 20.

Matthew 10:16-20 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you."

So although this was instruction directly to the apostles and the ministers being sent out, the principles here are directly for us as well as laymen, and so we are to keep this principle in mind that God will provide whatever we need to say, if we are ever questioned having to do with our faith. Some faithful members of God's church may be taken to court and put on trial for their religious beliefs.

The authorities will do everything possible to accuse us of hate speech and to catch us in our words and actions. But no worries, God is in control and it is God's will that will be done. If I remember correctly, I read something a week or so ago that the Canadian government has put through a bill to make the Bible hate speech and that you can be arrested for it. And that is just Canada, above our border there.

And some of these things do not always get approved the first time, but they keep trying until they do. And so they have already arrested ministers in Canada here and there for hate speech, so it is coming because this is the direction that the world in general is heading. So, this is not too far-fetched for us, but we should pray that God will give us peace and safety.

Nothing can happen to us unless God allows it, and even then, He will give us great power, love, and a perfectly sound mind to endure distress.

Now we do not have to be afraid. It is a choice. We will not lose our nerve. We will not be so distressed that we will not know what to say. A sound mind will be given to us when we need it, the spirit of wisdom and a sound mind.

Now continuing on in Matthew 10, we are going to read verses 21 through 23 and then 26.

Matthew 10:21-23 "Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and the children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

Matthew 10:26 "Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be made known."

Christ encouraged His faithful disciples by assuring them that God would protect them, and their truth and innocence would eventually be vindicated. And He assured them that their innocence, principles, and integrity, though not acknowledged by the world, would be revealed in due time.

So God's saints must be willing to be unknown, despised, and persecuted for the time being, with the assurance from Christ that their true character will be understood and their sufferings appreciated and rewarded at the right time, at the appropriate time. So we are not rewarded by the world for our faithfulness to God and our obedience to Him now, but that reward is coming.

The apostle Paul reassured the Philippian brethren about God's faithfulness when he said in Philippians 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Please turn over to I Corinthians 1, verse 7. God will not carelessly drop us at any time. He continues His work in us until the day of Christ's coming and beyond. Let us continue with the same thought in Paul's letter to the Corinthian brethren.

I Corinthians 1:7-9 So that you come short in no gift, waiting eagerly for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

That is quite a fellowship. It is quite a club, it is quite a membership. Nothing equals it.

So the two scriptures from Paul confirm that both the Father and the Son are fully and irrevocably committed to bringing every member of His church to Christ's return. Now, does God guarantee His Kingdom only to those who make minor mistakes, or has God committed Himself to help us through weak times and hard times, even when we have sinned seriously and the door to God's grace seems forever closed?

Granted, all sins are serious, but what about great sins? If all sins are serious, how bad are great sins compared to others? Now King David's life story is a living witness to the answer. The prophet Nathan passed on an important message from God to David. II Samuel 7:9 says, "I have been with you wherever you have gone," God speaking through Nathan, "and have cut off all your enemies from before you." Now Psalm 25, verse 11. David says,

Psalm 25:11 For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.

So God was with him wherever he had gone and He is with us wherever we go. And David there was asking for pardon of his iniquity because it was a great sin that he committed. Now David allowed himself to go to many places that God would never have led him. David committed adultery with Bathsheba, committed murder, numbered the people for military purposes in defiance of God's command, and shed much human blood in battle.

So he had some serious, what we might call great sins, and he knew that God would forgive him for those and he asked God for them. But he was in quite a bit of fear of God, and rightly so. But God never abandoned him, even in his worst predicaments.

After sinning, David cried out to God in,

Psalm 31:22 For I said in my haste, "I am cut off from Your eyes" [Because it was not true, he said it in his haste and it was not true, but that is what he stated.]; nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried out to You.

David knew that God agonized with him when he reaped the inevitable consequences of sin. But the God who was completely loyal and faithful stayed with him because David always repented. So God is not a respecter of persons.

He desires the work of His hands, and that is us. Psalm 138:8 says, this is David speaking,

How Fear Resists Faith by Martin G. Collins (<https://www.cgg.org>)

Psalm 138:8 The Lord will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever; do not forsake the works of Your hands.

So God cannot lie, and He will complete the work of His hands that He has begun in us.

Please turn to Hebrews 13, verse 5. Now the road ahead may be rough and times of stress may be intense, but God will not give up on us unless we rebel and quit. He will bring us into His Kingdom.

Hebrews 13:5-6 For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

So the power of God's Spirit enables us to boldly say, I will not fear.

Deuteronomy 31:6 "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the one who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

Please turn to I Chronicles 28, verse 20. Now David advised Solomon not to be frightened by the size of his task as king and builder of the Temple. Fear can immobilize us. The size of a job, the risks, and the pressure of the situation can cause us to freeze and do nothing.

I Chronicles 28:20 And David said to his son Solomon, "Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord God—my God—will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord."

We can broaden that principle and realize that what God is saying to us with that is He will not leave us nor forsake us until He has finished with us in whatever He has in mind for us to do His work. And so it is the same principle there as we have as a guarantee ourselves.

You are not going to die until God is finished with you doing His work. And even if you are just, I should not say just, but even if you are, let us say, a widow with not much ability to do very much, whatever you are doing, God is using you and will use you and determine when you are finished doing His work. And I know a lot of widows send out cards, you know, where they call people and that type of thing.

So whatever we can do, no matter who we are, there is always something we can do and we should be doing that until God determines that we are finished. All who revere and obey God are given this promise, God will never leave you nor forsake you.

One remedy for fear is found here, do not focus on the fear. Instead, get to work. Getting started is often the most difficult and frightening part of the job.

Even the most uneducated and the most nervous in the church of God are given a sound mind and sound wisdom to be true witnesses. And when we face stressful times, God will give us what to say and what to do. For some temperaments, God will give more self-control and restraint than for others.

And we should be sure to ask for it. We must not think of ourselves as ordinary worldly people. We are God's people. God's people are neither natural nor carnal-minded. We are born from above by the indwelling of God's Spirit and the Spirit is the spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind.

For those especially prone to anxiety and depression because of a timid fear of uncertainty, stir up the gift of God that God has given you. Ask God to remind you of the truth about your miraculous status in the church.

For a final Scripture, please turn to I John 4, verse 18. As long as we keep striving to overcome, God's Spirit does not leave us when we stumble or fall short of God's will. Christ promised, "If you love Me, keep My commandments, and I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever." But God will not fill us with His Spirit, empowering us with courage and love and using us if we neglect our spiritual lives. That is why prayer and Bible study are so

important. They stir us up and fuel us to do God's work. So the apostle John was inspired to write in,

I John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

Before letting fear of the unknown grip you, remind yourself of who you are and of God's Spirit within you. May God remind you of the character of the Spirit and enable you to move steadily forward, unafraid, living in the present and ready for the future with only one desire to glorify God who has given you all.

Now we can be confident of what lies ahead if in this life we have determined to be more like Jesus Christ.

As we look ahead, we might not know exactly what tomorrow holds. There may be challenges and trials and there may be moments that test us. There probably will be moments to test us. But we do know this. We do not walk into tomorrow uncertain of everything. We walk forward certain of who goes with us. Fear may come knocking and doubt may try to creep in. Circumstances may press in on every side, but that is not who we are anymore because God has given us something far greater.

He has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, power to endure and to stand and to overcome. He has given us a spirit of love to lift our eyes off ourselves, to care, to serve, to trust Him more than we fear anything else. And He has given us a sound mind, a steady mind, a disciplined mind, a mind that is not shaken by the unknown.

So when fear rises, answer it with truth, and when anxiety presses in, remind yourself what God has already given you. And when the road ahead seems unclear, just take the next step in faith. You do not need to see the whole path. You just need to trust the One who does. You are not alone. You are not without strength, and you are not unprepared.

The God who called you will sustain you, and the God who began the work will finish it. So walk forward, stand firm, and be strong; be unafraid and

face the unknown not with fear, but with faith. Because your life, your calling, and your future are all in the hands of God.