

Hartford Bible Students

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Abiding with God in Fearful Times

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.... He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust... His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”

Psalms 91:1, 2, 4

The Coronavirus has been intensifying global instability, which prophetically defines our time. This pandemic has created extreme anxiety worldwide, causing stock market volatility and an unpredictable economic future. The Coronavirus, along with the social unrest due to the unraveling of race relations and political divisiveness, can be added to the list of many frightening events happening in the world today.

Fear about our personal well-being and the safety of our loved ones is indeed challenging the faith of many. God's Word teaches that the faithful shall "...not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day..." (Psalm 91:5) But, how is it possible to not be afraid when the news is filled with terrifying end times events; and many predict even more fearful things to come?

Two primary aspects of the above theme text are key to overcoming fear: 1. Dwelling with and abiding in the tender care of the Almighty; and 2. Knowing His truth in the Scriptures and, through these, understanding His plans and purposes.

Dwelling in the Secret Place

To claim this promise found in Psalms 91, one must "dwell" in heart and mind with the Almighty — taking refuge in His Words. This means turning one's back on sin and selfishness and desiring to live in harmony with God's principles. "Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger." (Zephaniah 2:3)

Those who fully commit their hearts — their wills — to God discover a peace which passes all worldly understanding. (Psalm 50:5; Philippians 4:7) These

know that, come what may, God is in control of their lives and is not only all-loving, but all-wise and powerful. These trust that, even though physical harm may come to their home, family or person, there is an ultimate good purpose for everything that occurs in their lives. To them, "all things, [not just some things,] work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Abiding in God's Truth — The Shield and Buckler

Christians learn through their experiences to have the same attitude or mind found in Christ Jesus, "who for the joy set before him endured the cross." (Philippians 2:5; Hebrews 12:2) Christ our forerunner was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. At the age of 30, he committed his life to God — being baptized by John — giving up his right to live forever as a perfect man upon the earth. Every thought, every motive and every act of Jesus was in complete harmony with the will of his Father in Heaven.

What did Jesus, our great example, do immediately following his baptism? He went into the wilderness to pray and meditate upon God's Word. This is the second of the keys in overcoming fear in this time of great stress upon the world. The joy which allowed Jesus to endure even the heaviness of his cross — a cross which he bore for three and a half years — was the knowledge of God's loving plan for all mankind. Like Jesus, we must keep in mind the big picture of how God's plan is working out for the good of His entire creation, not just those who love Him now. This is what provided the joy that helped Jesus endure his cross. This is the same joy which will carry the Christian through every trial.

But are there not times when trials are so heavy that tears come and fear grips the heart? Yes, even Jesus wept at the death of his friend Lazarus. And Jesus feared in the Garden — a fear that he may not have fulfilled all that was expected of him before his crucifixion. "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had

offered up prayers... with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; 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..." (Hebrews 5:7-9) Note, Jesus was made perfect—implying a process of time to develop him as a sympathetic high priest and the author and perfecter of our faith. (Hebrews 4:15; 12:2) He sympathizes with our tears, and, not only Jesus, but our loving Heavenly Father understands when we are overwhelmed by our experiences. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear [reverence] Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." (Psalm 103:13, 14)

The Christian can rejoice, therefore, even though there are times of fear and sorrow, for they recognize that there is a purpose to the suffering. Like our Master, we too, are being developed to have sympathy for mankind and their sorrows. As the Psalmist said, "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4) Jehovah, our Great Shepherd guides His children by allowing experiences to teach and discipline them. "Now no chastening [disciplining experiences] for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Hebrews 12:11)

Peace in the Midst of Trouble

Knowing what God is doing in the earth in preparation for His Kingdom is critical in dispelling fear. A Christian's faith must be built upon a solid foundation of truth in order to survive the storms of life. The Scriptures are filled with prophecies which provide the necessary information a Christian needs to be prepared for the time in which he lives. But, God only provides the understanding of such prophecies as they become due. Jesus said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." (John 16:12) Truth unfolds as God sees that it will help His servants. For example, God said to Daniel, "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.." (Daniel 12:9) Daniel prayed for understanding of the end time prophecies given him,

but it was not time for God's people to know the interpretation. Now, however, we are living in the time of the end, and God's people have been given great insight and understanding of the very prophecies which Daniel was told to seal up.

Discovering how God will end this present corrupt world and set up His Kingdom is critical in abating our fears. Every part of society — political, financial, social and ecclesiastical — that has become corrupt, will be shaken and will collapse. Understanding that God must first tear down the old structure of society so that He might usher in the new, will help calm our fears as we see one element after another being removed. Just knowing that these things were prophesied should give us a solid foundation from which to build greater faith. God is working out His plan, and the end is promised to be glorious! "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come.... and I will fill this house with glory... in this place will I give peace." (Haggai 2:7, 9)

It behooves each Christian, therefore, to search the Scriptures — not just to know what God's plans are, but to understand the purpose behind these. Then we can see why God's plan is the best solution — a remedy in which every person has experienced the effects of sin, selfishness and every form of evil. Those learning the lessons from this experience will desire God's righteous, peaceable Kingdom.

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