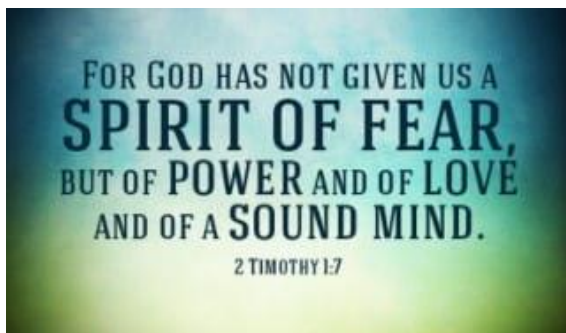


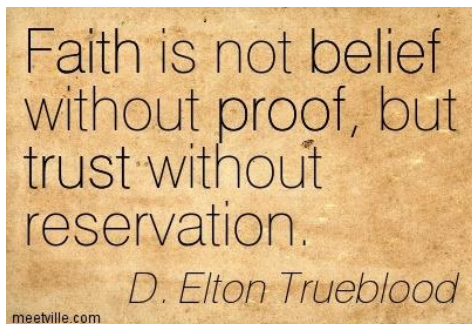
COVID-19 FEAR - PART 3 - May 3, 2020

"Fear takes us over the cliff, but Faith takes us to the rock".



For the last 2-3 weeks I've spoken over and over about the fact that there is no room for fear in the heart of the believer. Together we have claimed the promises of God concerning fear. Probably my favorite is 1 Timothy 1:7 "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love, power, and a sound mind. And, of course that beautiful line out of Psalm 23, "Yeh though I walk through the valley of death I will fear no evil for thou art with me."

Worry, which accompanies fear, is the opposite of faith and trust. Faith says, "God is able". Fear says, "God is not able." Worry says, "I cannot trust God to take care of this." Faith says, "I can trust God with any and everything that might come against me." While fear cowers, faith stands. While fear frets, faith prays. While fear looks within at one's own strength, faith looks to Jesus the author and creator of all things. So what really is faith?



Faith is being certain of what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1) It is the absolute belief that God is in charge of what goes on in every area of my life and your life. This holds true, even when we may not be able to see the tangible proof of such care and concern. Faith says, "Lord, I believe that you are the Lord of my life." At its core, fear is weak belief or unbelief. When we do not believe the promises of

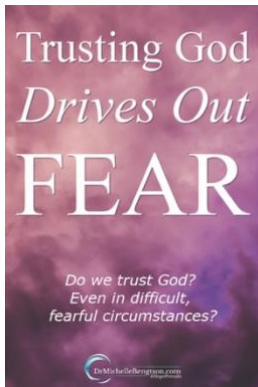
God, fear grips us and takes control of our emotions. As we've been able to practice throughout this pandemic, faith is was frees us from fear. But, how can I increase my faith?

Recently, I taught a sermon that reminded each of us that faith comes by being exposed to and absorbing the Word of God. Scripture tells us, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10:17) This means that faith increases as our understanding of God's promises increases. Curiously, faith is not something we can somehow muster up on our own. Faith is a gift from God and it is not of any works we ourselves can do. (Ephesians 2:8-9) Faith comes forth as fruit in our lives as we are yielded to the Holy Spirit of God. Paul describes it as a "fruit of the Spirit". (Galatians 5:22-23)

Faith is a believer's confident assurance in God. It is a BEDROCK belief that God loves you, God cares for you, and God desires that His children prosper. Many Christians ask me why they don't prosper when that is what God promises us. I will say that most of our financial, emotional, and life hardships are created by our own decisions. We fail to plan or we fail to put our time, talents, and treasure into the things that God wants us to concentrate on. We spend a lot of our resources pursuing things that really God doesn't even intend for us.

Many of us who claim to have no faith or to be consumed by fear and anxiety really never really pour ourselves into God's Word. We see the Bible and its instruction as a last resort.... something to turn to when we've exhausted our own efforts. One thing we've learned in this pandemic is that there are still many things that mankind cannot control. God is in control whether men acknowledge that or not.

I like to think of living by faith as living a "faith resting" kind of life. I had a pastor once that referred to it as living a "faith rest" kind of life. Faith rest living is what God desires to produce in each of us. It begins with "hearing the Word" and then meditating on the Word. I've made a point to share many verses with you all this past month on what God promises to do with the things that bring us worry and anxiety if we will let Him do so.



It's through the hearing the Word or reading it, and then meditating on what it is really saying that we grow more and more confident to live a life that is full of God's power and a kind of life that gives no quarter or no space in our hearts for fear. If you remember one thing I've said when I am gone, I want you to remember that there is **NO ROOM FOR FEAR IN THE HEART OF A BELIEVER**. There is no room for fear **ONLY** when we allow God to fill our hearts with so much faith and understanding of Who He is and what He wants to do for each of us. It just pushes fear out of the way.

Hopefully you've spent some of this time of isolation praying, and listening to what God desires for you in the days to come. I am so glad we made our way into all of this by studying Psalm 23. Isn't that just **ABSOLUTELY AMAZING**. I can't think of any piece of scripture more perfectly suited for understanding His love and care for us as a Shepherd through **ANYTHING!**



Over and over in the Psalms we see David trusting in the Lord and having **FAITH** that pushes fear out of the picture.... it pushes it out of the way. David assures us from 3,000 years ago when he says, "When I am afraid, I will trust in you." (Psalm 56:3) David shows us what relationship with the Lord is all about. We will see in Psalm 119 that David treasured God's Word, "I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands" (verse 10); "I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways" (verse 15); "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (verse 11).

These are the words of empowerment that carry us through Covid-19 and anything else that will come our way, and we can be certain that other things will come our way.

I talked last week about whether or not it was a sin for us to worry. I told you I think that it probably isn't a sin, but it isn't the way that God wants for us to live. God is kind and understanding toward our weaknesses and lapses of faith. Part of our growth comes in trials, and that is what we've all been through over the last couple of months. Hardship and adversity is God's way of letting us grow. We hear the Word. We experience the hardships of the human experience. Then, in applying God's Word to

our hearts and lives, we can begin to live lives that are not ruled by errant emotions. Emotions such as fear take us over the cliff, but faith takes us to the ROCK.

¹ Hear my cry, O God;
listen to my prayer.

² From the ends of the earth I call to you,
I call as my heart grows faint;
lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

³ For you have been my refuge,
a strong tower against the foe. (Psalm 61)



The different trials we go through strengthen our spiritual muscles and enable us to go through greater trials and troubles. Remember when Kelton reminded us of the various trials that David went through (a bear and a lion) that strengthened him for his great day of battle with Goliath. When David volunteered to engage Goliath, he said, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear

will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine". (1 Samuel 17:37) David knew that God had proven faithful and He would prove faithful once again. The same thing applies to us.

God's Word has promises for us that are applicable to anything and everything we are going to come against in our lives. Even with Covid-19 on the decline we will find ourselves in other battles. There will be problems with finances. There will be problems with our health. There will be problems with our emotions. Each and every one of these is covered in that precious promise Paul related to the church in Philippi. "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19). If you call on the Lord my friends, He will show you the way. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not to your own understanding. In all of your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths." That's not just a nice thought. THAT IS A PROMISE OF GOD.

When we do find ourselves beat down In sickness or uncontrollable suffering, we can remember that scripture tells us, "Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

We live in a broken world and we will continue on some level to experience the fallout of living in that brokenness. We will go through other trials that if left to our emotions will take us into the realm of fear instead of faith. The answer at that time will be the same as it's been through what we've all just experienced. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus". (Philippians 4:7) Church, that is a promise. It is time to take hold of the promises of God. Believe God is Who He says He is and that He will do what He says He will do.

I am so proud of each of you. I have not heard of a bunch of fearfulness in our ranks. It has been important to remember and truly realize that the church is not the place in the grove. The church is in each of us who are believers and followers of Christ.

Having said ALL of that - I'll see you next Sunday at the Grove !

Pastor Faber