

FACING FEAR

by Robert Hatfield

A fellow college student recently met his girlfriend's parents. Explaining his anxiety and fear he said, "These aren't ordinary parents; they are similar to mine!" My friend feared the first impression. From childish nightmares to adult worries, life is filled with anxiety and fear. Sometimes that fear is understandable (such the fear of losing a job), but other times fear simply over dramatizes an event or thing that is not so bad. For example, all of my friend's worry was unnecessary because his date's parents thought he was great!

God's Word provides insight concerning a fear that is much more impacting than a first impression with a date's parents. Revelation 21:8 lists several sinful actions and condemns participants of such sin to "their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." Interestingly enough, the sinful group mentioned *first* is "the fearful." The greek word behind "fearful" comes from a word which means dread; literally it refers to those who are faithless.

The fear referred to by John in Revelation 21:8 can be a major obstruction to a Christian's reward. Could fear keep one from evangelizing the lost? It can — and does! Could it cause people to give into peer pressure because "everyone else is doing it?" Fear often plagues young people from this perspective!

When Christians fall into this state of being fearful, they indicate about themselves a lack of study and prayer, a lack of confidence and conviction, and an unguarded faith. Christians need not be faithless because God has given assurance throughout scripture. God told Abram, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1). The angel assured the virgin Mary, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God" (Luke 1:30). Those who are righteous in God's sight need not fear! Jesus admonished us not to fear those who can physically kill us, but rather we are to fear those with the power to destroy our eternal souls (Mat. 10:28).

A faithless, fearful attitude is not of God, for He has given unto man a spirit of "power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7-8). Persecution may be great and faith may be weak, but Jesus gives hope to the faithful: "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1:17-18).

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