

The Spirit of Intimidation, Part II

“For he did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”
II Timothy 1:7.

God did not give us the spirit of timidity. Other translations use the word fear. I had one person describe her feeling of fear to me. She said that when a particular thing happened in her life she felt this spiritual weight come upon her and literally flow through her nervous system. Been there? As we saw in our study last week the original language of the New Testament combines two words to form timidity: faithless dread. That is what fear does. It causes us to lose sight of hope because of a prominent problem or loss and our faith wavers. Life's journey is full of ups and downs, bends and bumps. The hurricane victims of Ike can attest to that! While we had a sunny day they were met with a wild and raging storm.

This word that Paul uses for fear is only used in two other places in the New Testament. One of them is in Matthew 8:23-27. This is the passage where a huge storm arises on the lake of Galilee and the disciples and Jesus are in a small fishing craft in the middle of the lake. Matthew, who was there writes, “Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake and waves swept over the boat.” Without warning! That is like life. Suddenly there is a looming problem. Matthew is writing this after the storm and probably looking back with a grin on his face as he goes on to write, “But Jesus was sleeping.” Gotta chuckle too. Jesus, in contrast to this furious storm, is having a peaceful nap. How can he do it? How can he sleep at a time like this! I'm sure the disciples were thinking the same thing because they came to him and woke him up and said, “Lord save us! We're going to drown!” That's what I would have done and that is what I do in time of need. “Jesus, if you don't do something I'm going to lose everything! Help, quick!” Been there?

Jesus does two things. We'll look at one today. First he rebukes his disciples, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” That word there, “afraid,” is our word timidity. Put yourself in the disciple's soggy shoes. What a question as they try to balance themselves to keep from going overboard! They are soaked and wet and believe me, they are scared to death. Why are you so afraid? Who in their right mind would blame them for being petrified? But Jesus was of a different mind and that is what he demonstrated for them in the middle of a natural disaster. Peace. That is the spirit that you and I need to live in. Faith in God brings peace. Do you trust in the Lord? Do you? Do you trust him when you see no solution? Do you trust him when you lose your job? Do you trust him when you learn that you have an incurable disease? Do you trust him when your savings go out the window because of the corruption on Wall Street? Do you trust him when your boat is sinking? Can you hear Jesus saying, “You of little faith.”

We will look some more at this story in our next devotional but as we close here I want to challenge you. That is exactly what Jesus is doing to his disciples. He challenges them to replace their fear with faith. It is a very hard thing to do while looking at looming storms. You have to change your mind. You have to change your outlook. One of my favorite quotes comes from missionary and pioneer Hudson Taylor, “Your panic is directly proportionate to your faith.” As we close out this time together just turn in your bible to Psalm 46 and read it through slowly and let the true Spirit of faith minister to your mind and soul.