

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXX

May 17, 2020

No. 20

To Fear, or Not to Fear

(Jerry Fite)

Shakespeare’s Hamlet offers the opening words of Prince Hamlet’s soliloquy: “*To be, or not to be...*”, which is a question worth pondering. God’s assertions of Truth in the New Testament cause us to similarly ask the question, “*To fear, or not to fear...*” as we live out our existence on earth. Peter clearly answers the question for the godly: “*And if ye call on Him as Father, who without respect for persons judgeth according to each man’s work pass the time of your sojourning in fear...*” (*I Peter 1:17*).

Presently, our existence is inundated with fear. Some are fearing the contagious and deadly Covid -19 virus. Where will you contact the invisible virus? Will it be the soup can or packaged meat you touched at the store? Will it be the asymptomatic friend who greeted you too closely at church? Will it be the cart you touched at Walmart or Home Depot? It may have been sanitized earlier, but not after the last person who shopped before you. Some are willing to avoid all places of gathering due to fear. Some refuse to allow fear to limit any restrictions on living. Some acknowledge reasonable fear but will take wise precautions to experience life. To fear, or not to fear the coronavirus

is the question we are pondering in the context of living.

Peter directs the receptive reader to consider fear in the context of “*passing the time of your sojourning.*” As Christians, we are passing through life as a “sojourner.” This world is not our home. As “pilgrims,” we journey as citizens of a kingdom in another sphere called heaven (*Philippians 3:20*). We abstain from fleshly lusts, which dominate this world, while acknowledging the spiritual warfare waging against our souls (*I Peter 2:11*).

As we sojourn to heaven, we do so in “fear.” Yes, God exhorts us to “fear” while we wait for the Lord to return, or when our life on earth ends. We are to “*...pass the time of our sojourning in fear, knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ*” (*I Peter 1:17-19*). If we call on God “as Father” and know we have been redeemed by the “precious blood of Christ,” why would God tell us to fear? Having a Father to call upon for help and knowing we have been redeemed by that which is more valuable than money, we could conclude the proper response is

boldness with sincere gratitude. But fear?

It is comforting knowing God cares for us as a father, but Peter also wants us to fathom this Father as judge. Will he give us a pass because a father can play favorites? We must ponder God righteously judging us according to each man’s work without partiality. Knowing the fear of the Lord, I should persuade men to come to Christ for salvation, before it is too late (*2 Corinthians 5:10-11*). Knowing I will receive God’s righteous judgement for what I have done in my own body over my accumulated days, I should live my days in reverential fear of the Father anticipating my manifestation before the judgement seat of Christ.

Imagine a call from your daughter or son, informing you he or she is being held for the ransom of a million dollars. You love your child more than money and you immediately liquidate all your assets to meet the ransom price. You follow the delivery instructions precisely. Then, you see your teenager drive off in the car with fellow culprits laughing at you with derision. As a Father, how would you feel? God’s ransom deserves better. We better “fear” meeting our Father as judge after He has paid our ransom from sin with the precious blood of His Son, if we return to serving Sin.