

Perfect Love

For many years, whenever I would begin to be overcome with fear, I would pray something like this. "Lord, Your Word says that 'Perfect love casts out fear.' Right now I'm really afraid. I pray, Lord, that you would show me your perfect love ; so that I might no longer fear. Cast out my fear, Lord, with your perfect love." Then I would go into some form of warfare of binding this or casting down that until I pumped myself into believing that whatever was causing me to fear had left. Does any of this sound familiar?

The Lord recently showed Me how foolish and ineffective my spiritual gymnastics really were; and how unbiblical, or at least how my lack of real understanding and application of the Word left me helpless. Let's get into this.

Webster's definition of fear is, "an unpleasant, often strong emotion caused by the anticipation of danger." The Bible has many possibilities in defining fear; but for this writing, let's simply state that fear would be the lack of God's perfect love, whether that be a lack of a real understanding of His perfect love towards us, or the absence of His perfect love in us.

The Webster definition is really very familiar and self-explanatory. The lack of understanding God's perfect love towards us is somewhat less simple, but could be summarized by saying we simply don't realize how much God loves us or we would have nothing to fear. The portion of these definitions that I would like to address, so that we might be healed and walk in the truth of God's Word, is the third possibility. We fear because we are absent of the perfect love of God in us.

First of all, what is God's kind of love? I Cor. 13:4-8 describes this love. "*Love endures long and is patient and kind; love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy, is not boastful or vainglorious, does not display itself haughtily. It is not conceited (arrogant and inflated with pride); it is not rude (unmannerly) and does not act unbecomingly. Love (God's love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; it is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it takes no account of the evil done to it [it pays no attention to a suffered wrong]. It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail. Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances, and it endures everything [without weakening]. Love never fails [never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end].*" (Ampl.)

The end of verse two states that, "*If I have [sufficient] faith so that I can move mountains, but have not love (God's love in me), I am nothing (a useless nobody).*" As I understand what the Lord is teaching me, and put it in words as applied to this text; I could safely say, "I am fearful because I do not have enough of God's perfect love in me to eliminate all the threat of fear." Let's carry that thought a little further. "I succumb to the worldly emotion of fear (possible harm to myself) because I am not selfless." Let's put it another way. "If I really had God's kind of selfless love in me – a love that thought nothing of my own rights or well-being, but really saw only God's eternal purposes in anyone or anything threatening me or my security- the worldly responses to fear would not be able to touch me." In other words, when I succumb to fear, I have taken the position of caring more for my well-being than in the fulfillment of God's purposes in any given circumstance.

I John 2:6 states: "*Whoever says he abides in Him ought [as a personal debt] to walk and conduct himself in the same way in which He walked and conducted Himself.*" (Ampl.) Jesus was perfect love. The impact of His purposes had no hold on Him in a fleshly way. His life – more clearly the preservation of His rights, belongings, status or physical well-being – meant nothing. He willingly laid even His glory in heaven aside so others (you, me and those who hated Him) might reap the benefit of His perfect love. He cared only that the eternal purposes of His Father be formed in mankind for man's benefit. While hanging on the cross, He prayed for His Father to forgive those who had bloodied Him, mocked Him, and drove the nails into His hands.

Go back to God's definition of love (I Cor. 13.) That's what Jesus lived (exhibited) before the apostles, the people, Pilate, the cursing Roman soldiers and the laughing crowd as He hung on the cross. He lived it. Now expects us to do the same before people. He was fearless because of perfect love, and we can be fearless, too; but it will cost us what we love most – our own well-being; possibly our life.

What do we do when people, laws or another way of living threatens our lifestyle? Our leaders declare a holy war, rather than encouraging us to walk and conduct ourselves as Jesus did. What we really don't understand is that if we don't walk in the love of Jesus, our fleshly fights will breed fleshly results because we have allowed Satan the choice of battlefields.

Job 36:17 says: "*But if you [Job] are filled with the judgment of the wicked, judgment and justice will keep hold on you.*" (Ampl) Any time we hold on to any of our own life, we will lose that life. What we hang onto can be taken. What can't be taken are those things we willingly give. There is no fear of loss if our perfect love freely gives everything away. There is no fear of ridicule if perfect love holds all others in higher esteem than ourselves. There is no fear of death if perfect love cares for others as Jesus did.

What fear has a hold on you so that you can't be the example of the life of Jesus before others so that they might be saved? The enemy of our soul would want you to fight the war of rights, issues and protections, so that the perfect love of Jesus is not evident. Real freedom has been accomplished by Jesus for us on Calvary. Real freedom is absent of any fear of anyone or anything. Real freedom from fear is found in loving perfectly – God's way. When we, as representatives of Jesus, are free; others who see His kind of life lived before them have the opportunity to accept real freedom also, and that's what this is all about, isn't it?

Desiring God's Kind of love

Jim Corbett