

Be Not Afraid

How would you live if you were not afraid? Fear is used by politicians to gain our votes, by the media to get our attention, by advertising firms to sell us what we don't need, and by TV evangelists to get our donations. What fears are used against us? One is scarcity, the fear that we won't have enough or won't get our share. Our false belief that having more money and "stuff" will save us binds us as slaves. In many cases, having less can free us to live by faith.

The writer of Hebrews 11:1 states, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Normally, we read forward from this verse, but the word "Now" is a clue that we should look back. Hebrews 10:39 says, "But we are not among those who shrink back and so are lost, but among those who have faith and so are saved." Who shrinks back? Those who are afraid. Who are saved? By implication, those who do not shrink back and are not afraid. So fear is not only a faith issue but an issue of our salvation. And is that not what we would expect? What more do we need to be saved from than our worst fears? What good is a savior who does not help us confront our fears? As noted above, our fears are the handles that marketers, politicians, and supervisors often use to control us and bend us to their plans and desires.

But like the pain that warns us of injury and nausea that tells us we are becoming ill, our fear has a positive use: it lets us know our vulnerability, and it tells us what we truly value and truly trust. "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). The powers and principalities promise us what we can see. Where do we put our true faith and trust?

