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## **A SPIRIT OF ANXIETY IS A SPIRIT OF FEAR**

Our world today is filled with stress and anxiety and fear. We have lived through two years of the fear of getting infected with Covid . Now at the end of 2021 some countries in Europe are reimposing total lockdowns. And many people around the world still have great anxieties because of the Covid pandemic.

We also have communities that fear major riots if juries in certain trials don't deliver the verdicts that the mobs demand. And then we have anxieties over what other people may think of us. We have had people who committed suicide because of things that other people had said about them on social media platforms. And on top of it all people are buying guns in record numbers because they fear being attacked.

Psychiatrists see people all the time who have anxiety attacks, and who are stressed out with the pressures of their regular lives. Many millions of people regularly take prescription drugs to help them cope with their lives.

Fears and anxieties of one kind or another are a common part of life for very many people. So the question is:

How do we deal with high levels of anxiety and fear? For that matter, do we personally, as the people of God, have fears, anxieties and insecurities in our lives?

### **A BASIC PREMISE**

Let's have a look at what the Bible tells us about this subject.

**For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)**

This is the most basic principle that God's people always need to keep in mind regarding fears and anxiety. God does not give any person a spirit of fear (I am excluding certain Old Testament war situations where God put fear into Israel's enemies). A spirit of fear is not something that emanates from God! What emanates from God is actually the opposite of a spirit of fear. We should first of all recognize that "a spirit of fear" (call it "an anxiety attack" if you wish) is **not** a spirit of **power**, and it is **not** a spirit of **love**, and it is **not** a spirit of **a sound logical mind**.

There is nothing good or logical about a spirit of fear. A spirit of fear is bad through and through. We might note that the Greek word translated as "fear" in this verse is "deilia", and it means: cowardice, timidity. **A timid spirit is not from God!** All those "timid souls" out there in the various congregations of God's Church need to understand this ... that their timid spirit has not come from God, and neither is a timid spirit accepted by God, as we'll see later when we look at Revelation 21:8. Don't mistake timidity for meekness, because they are not the same at all.

A spirit of fear, timidity, insecurity and cowardice comes from Satan. **Satan rules through fear**. Satan is the one who instills a spirit of fear in the people he seeks to control. And the most common fear Satan has installed in virtually all human beings is **the fear of death**. Satan readily acknowledged this fact to God in Old Testament times.

In speaking to God about the man Job, Satan revealed how he seeks to influence human beings. Satan **assumes** that all human beings will do anything to save their lives, including cursing God.

And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yes, **all that a man has will he give for his life**. But put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and **he will curse You to Your face**. (Job 2:4-5)

**Is Satan's statement true for you and for me? Has Satan got us figured out correctly? Are we also prepared to give anything and everything to save our mortal lives? Would we pay a kidnapper's ransom to save our lives or the lives of our children? Do we fear those who threaten our lives with guns and knives? Can we be coerced into doing things by people who threaten our lives, or our physical well-being, or our jobs?**

Would we fear those who threaten us in some way, or would we call on God to curse those who threaten our lives? Should a woman who is about to be raped fear her attacker, or should she call on God to let her attacker drop dead on the spot?

Whenever people are willing to pay a ransom, that is evidence that they have a spirit of fear. They are willing to pay a ransom **because they fear** what would happen if they don't pay that ransom.

Now if for us the answer to these types of situations is that we will comply with the people who threaten us with violence, then we are still in slavery to Satan. So do Satan's statements in Job 2:4-5 apply to you and to me? Or have we been released from that slavery?

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver **them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to slavery**. (Hebrews 2:14-15)

The fear of death is a powerful form of slavery. Satan actually counts on us to be willing to do anything, just to save our lives. That is the premise on which all his attacks on us are based. So in this regard can Satan count on us or not?

When it says in verse 14 that Satan "had the power of death" this can create a wrong impression. Satan **does not** have the power over life and death! And that's not what Paul meant.

What Satan has power over is instilling **the fear of death** into every human being's mind, as Paul also spelled out in the next verse. That's all Satan can do ... influence our minds to be motivated by **the fear** of death. But the actual power over life and death is always, without exception, in the hands of Almighty God.

For example:

When Pontius Pilate said to Christ "I have power to crucify You, and I have power to release You", Jesus Christ replied "you could have no power at all against Me, except it were given to you from above ..." (see John 19:10-11). In other words, the power over life and death is always in the hands of God. God said very plainly in Ezekiel 18:4 that "all souls are Mine".

So don't get the impression that Satan somehow has "power over death", because that is simply not the case. The power over "the fear of death" is not at all the same as the power over "death".

Satan rules over humanity by threatening us with death if we refuse his ways of conducting our lives. Satan can threaten our lives, but he can't take our lives.

So **the premise** that we need to understand very clearly is this:

**Satan seeks to control our lives and to manipulate our lives, by instilling anxieties and fears and insecurities in our minds. Satan threatens our lives and our well-being. That is the spirit of fear that God requires us to resist, to prove to God that our minds no longer think and reason the way Satan thinks and reasons.**

Let me make this clear:

We must obey all of God's laws, yes. But obeying all of God's laws is not enough. **We must also overcome the fear of death** which Satan has instilled in virtually all of humanity. So if we keep all of God's laws, but we also still have a spirit of fear, then that is not acceptable to God. Without overcoming the fear of death first, physical obedience to all of God's laws has very little value.

Let me repeat that, because this is something many people do not understand correctly.

**As far as salvation is concerned, without overcoming the fear of death first, physical obedience to all of God's laws has very little value!**

That's what Jesus Christ was speaking about in Matthew 16.

For **whosoever will save his life shall lose it**: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. (Matthew 16:25)

"Seeking to save our lives" is a reference to the fear of death. And being prepared to "lose our lives" is a reference to having overcome the fear of death. Let's realize that being prepared to "lose our lives for Christ's sake" is not limited to being willing to die rather than breaking God's Sabbaths or God's Holy Days.

Being prepared to lose our lives "for the sake of Jesus Christ" refers to **overcoming the fear of death in every area of our lives** where Satan may try to threaten our lives. It doesn't work if we say: I'm willing to die for God's Sabbath, but I still have anxiety and fears in these other areas of my life. We need to realize that fears never achieve anything positive. And therefore we must eliminate them from our lives.

**Overcoming the spirit of fear is a complete package! It applies to every area of our lives. It is not a restricted thing, which only applies to certain specific aspects of our lives. No, overcoming Satan's spirit of fear applies to our whole lives.**

Consider what the Apostle Paul tells us.

**The last enemy *that shall be destroyed is death.* (1 Corinthians 15:26)**

So do we fear that "last enemy"? Do we fear death? God expects us to overcome the enemy. God expects us to overcome the fear of death. In the message to Smyrna Jesus Christ specifically told us not to fear this particular enemy.

**Fear none of those things which you shall suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days: be you faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life. (Revelation 2:10)**

What if we don't overcome that fear; what if we are not "faithful unto death" ... will we also receive "a crown of life"? I don't think so. **Death is the enemy which we are not to fear.**

It wouldn't really be fair if God required the people of the Smyrna era to overcome the fear of death, but we today can "get by" without ever having to confront that fear of death head-on.

For many years I have tried to explain what the word "repent" means. I have explained that it means that we must change the way we think, change the way we use our minds. Some of you have heard me say that many times, right? Okay, so now let me be more specific.

By saying "repent means that we must change the way we use our minds" I mean:

**We must stop thinking from the foundation of fear. We must put that spirit of fear out of our minds. It is only when we put that spirit of fear out of our minds, that we are then in a position to change the way our minds work. As long as our minds still harbor that spirit of fear, so long it will be impossible for us to change the way our minds work.**

Let's contrast the unconverted mind with the converted mind.

**The unconverted mind thinks and reasons from the foundation of a spirit of fear. The unconverted mind will give all that the person has in an effort to save his life. Satan can correctly predict how the unconverted mind will think and reason, because Satan's spirit of fear dwells in that unconverted mind. Whether or not that unconverted mind tries to keep the Sabbath and God's Feasts is totally irrelevant. With that spirit of fear as a foundation the thought processes of that mind are always predictable to Satan, and those thought processes are not acceptable before God.**

**The converted mind, by contrast, has rejected Satan's spirit of fear. In so doing it has rejected Satan's way of thinking. That makes the converted mind's way of thinking unpredictable to Satan. And without the spirit of fear having any influence at all, it opens the way for the converted mind to think and reason from a completely different perspective. That's what I have referred to as "changing the way our minds work", thinking without the fear of death being a consideration. That's what Jesus Christ meant when in His statement to Smyrna He said: be you faithful unto death. In other words, the fear of death must not be a consideration in your thinking. The same also applies to you and to me.**

Rejecting the spirit of fear is also what David spoke about when he said:

Yes, **though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:** for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)

To be able to say this, we have to first put the fear of death out of our lives. What's the point in us singing this verse, if the statement we sing isn't yet true in our own lives? Verse 4 has to be true for you and for me. It is, after all, an expression of **the rejection of the fear of death.**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH**

We all know Hebrews 11:6.

But **without faith *it is impossible to please Him***: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. (Heb 11:6)

Real faith is the greatest evidence that we have rejected Satan's spirit of fear. People who don't have faith are still controlled by the spirit of the fear of death. When we in our lives exercise real faith, we are showing God that we have rejected Satan's trademark spirit of fear. **It is the exercise of real faith that reveals that our minds have indeed accepted a new way of thinking and functioning.** The fear of death is no longer the foundation for how we think and reason.

In simple terms: the old way of thinking is not based on faith, and the new way of thinking is based on faith in God.

Appearing boldly on our knees before God, when we are looking for God's help in our lives, is likewise an expression of faith.

Let us therefore come **boldly** unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help **in time of need.** (Hebrews 4:16)

"Boldly" here refers to "confidently". It is not just a case of: do we pray? It is really a case of: **do we pray confidently?** Are we confident that our prayers are in agreement with God's will? Are we confident that God will hear us and answer our requests for help? If so, then that represents a new way of using our minds.

Someone who still has a spirit of fear can pray, but that person will not be praying confidently. When we repented and rejected Satan's spirit of fear, and changed over to a new way of thinking from a totally different foundation, God said to us: "**I will never leave you nor forsake you**" (see Hebrews 13:5).

That's a clear statement. It is not vague or ambiguous. It is clear. So the next verse says:

So that we may **boldly** say, The Lord *is* my helper, and **I will not fear what man shall do unto me.** (Hebrews 13:6)

It's fine to read this statement. But is it actually true for us? Do we in our own lives say "I will not fear what man shall do unto me"? Or is this just an inspiring verse we can read now and then?

What is this verse talking about? It is talking about casting out the spirit of fear. So consider this:

**It is the presence or absence of the spirit of fear that is the deciding factor regarding how a human mind will think and function.**

If the human mind still has that spirit of fear, then that mind has obviously not been changed, which is another way of saying that it has not been "converted" to a different way of thinking. But if **upon repentance** we cast the spirit of fear out of our minds, then we have indeed been converted, and all our thought processes develop from a totally different foundation. And if we have rejected the spirit of fear, then God will give us His holy spirit, which will further empower our thought processes, which processes now proceed from a totally different foundation.

A mind that still has a spirit of fear has not been converted.

**Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of**

**refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; (Acts 3:19)**

**Repent means: we have to change the way we use our minds by casting out the spirit of fear.**

**Be converted means: God then gives us His holy spirit, and we thereby become a changed person, whose thought processes have a new and different foundation.**

Another verse that makes the same point is Psalm 118:6. This is the verse Paul quoted in Hebrews 13:8.

The LORD *is* on my side; **I will not fear: what can man do unto me?** (Psalm 118:6)

**The most significant part of repentance is casting that spirit of fear out of our minds. If we don't do that, then we cannot change the way we think. But this is something we need to learn. It takes experience and testing to learn to cast out that spirit of fear. So are we actually learning to cast out the spirit of fear?**

Let me summarize the repentance and conversion process.

- 1) We learn some aspects of the truth of God.
- 2) We then realize that we have not lived by all of God's laws in the past.
- 3) So we make a commitment to change, to change our actions, where those actions transgressed God's laws; and also to change our thinking, to change the way we use our minds. And we accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to cover our guilty past.
- 4) That commitment we make takes place at some specific point in time. And then we are baptized, have hands laid on us, and then we receive God's holy spirit.
- 5) At that point the process of casting out the spirit of fear has very likely already started in our minds in a small way. But **from that point forward**, from when we received God's spirit, over a period of time, and through numerous tests and trials **we learn to cast the spirit of fear thoroughly out of our minds.**
- 6) Casting the spirit of fear out of our minds is usually not an instantaneous event. Rather, it is a process that over a period of time exposes us to trials, where our minds are challenged to fully reject that spirit of fear. We could compare that process to an apprenticeship, where at the end we have indeed completely eliminated Satan's spirit of the fear of death from our lives. **Think of all trials as tests that examine how much of the spirit of fear is still left in our lives.**
- 7) During that process the more we eliminate that spirit of fear, the more our faith in God will grow. And the more we eliminate the spirit of fear, the more all our thought processes will be based on a completely new foundation, when compared to how all unconverted people think and reason.

Okay, that's the basic process.

Let's also consider this from the perspective of people who have never been a part of any of the world's churches, people whose parents were already members of God's Church.

As far as people who have grown up in God's Church are concerned, who are "second generation Christians", the process of repentance doesn't necessarily involve making all that many changes in their actions and behavior. For this group of people repentance focuses directly on: are you prepared to cast Satan's spirit of fear out of your mind, so that then your mind can function from a totally new foundation,

one that totally rejects the spirit of fear? In other words, will you use your mind in a way that is not at all influenced by what your friends may say and think?

People in this group may not have to learn much about things like the Sabbath and the annual Feasts. But they are in exactly the same position as people who had no prior knowledge of God's truth are concerned, when it comes to **changing their way of thinking**.

They too have to confront that spirit of fear, and they too have to actively reject all thinking that is based on the foundation of fear, including the fear of death. **If they only keep all of God's laws, while retaining a spirit of fear in their lives, then they have not really repented**, i.e. then they have not really changed the way their minds work.

Here is something all of us need to understand:

If after receiving God's holy spirit we do not complete the process of casting the spirit of fear out of our minds, then we are "wicked servants". That sounds harsh, but it is true.

The Apostle Peter explained that God gives His holy spirit to those who obey God (see Acts 5:32). So when we receive God's spirit after baptism and the laying on of hands, it is taken as a given that at that point **we are already obeying all of God's laws** with which we are already familiar at that point in time. At baptism obedience is already a given.

So here is my point:

From baptism onwards **our most important responsibility** is to work towards completely **eliminating the spirit of fear from our lives**. That is what all our tests are focused on.

To a large degree that is what the Christian life is all about! For that matter, I suspect that if we are really able to cast that spirit of fear out of our lives, that will also make it easier to deal with other significant issues, like selfishness, etc.

Let's look at something Jesus Christ explained in the parable of the talents. This involves the man who had received only one talent.

Then he which had received **the one talent** came and said, Lord, I knew You that You are a hard man, reaping where You have not sown, and gathering where You have not strawed: And **I was afraid**, and went **and hid Your talent** in the earth: lo, *there* You have *that which is* Yours. His lord answered and said unto him, **you wicked and slothful servant**, you knew that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: (Matthew 25:24-26)

When this man said that he "hid God's talent", he is saying that he never at any time confronted the spirit of fear. He ignored it and pretended it wasn't there. And he never made any concerted effort to cast it out of his life. In other words, he never used God's spirit in any way.

In this parable "a talent" represents **a certain minimum measure of God's holy spirit**, which God gives to people upon genuine repentance. God may give some people more of the holy spirit when they repent, but never less than "one talent". So this servant had received God's spirit. Note also that this man was "a servant of God". But he had barely met the minimum requirement, and so he had only received "one talent".

Now this man didn't go out and break God's laws. There is no hint at any specific sins in this man's life. The major problem with this man is that **he never dealt with the spirit of fear** in his life. After

receiving God's spirit, this man did nothing at all to put the spirit of fear out of his life. So **at the end of his life he is still fearful**, he is "afraid" of God. This means that throughout his life **his way of using his mind had never changed**. At the end of his life he still thought and reasoned from a foundation of a spirit of fear, just like all the unconverted people in the world. And that spirit of fear had motivated his conduct throughout his life.

He had started out the right way, and therefore he had received "one talent" from God. But then as tests and trials came along, his way of thinking never changed, and so at the end of his life he is actually "unconverted", i.e. unchanged. Keep in mind also that having godly faith in our lives is conditional on us putting the spirit of fear out of our lives. Think of this as **an inverse relationship**: the more of the spirit of fear that remains in our lives, the less faith we are going to have; and the less of the spirit of fear that remains in our lives, the more faith we are going to have.

A spirit of fear is the greatest evidence of a lack of faith!

Since the man in this parable was still afraid at the end, therefore he also had never had any significant measure of faith in God. You can hardly have faith in God, when you think of God as "a hard man" (verse 24). You are unlikely to fully and unconditionally trust someone who you believe is unfair.

Let's look again at Psalm 23:4.

Yes, **though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil**: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)

This refers to having no fears in the face of death. This is an expression of **trusting God** completely and unconditionally. It doesn't matter what will happen; we trust God, that God will take care of us. This is the ultimate rejection of the fear of death.

What was the issue for the martyr Stephen when he was stoned to death?

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And **he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice**, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:59-60)

This was Stephen **putting Psalm 23:4 into practice**. He had cast that spirit of fear totally and absolutely out of his mind. He kneeled down before God without fear of what his murderers would do to him. And he was brutally killed.

Recall the incident where Jesus Christ and His disciples were on a ship and a severe storm threatened to sink the ship. When the fearful disciples then woke Jesus Christ up, He said to them:

... **Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?** Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. (Matthew 8:26)

When someone is fearful, **it is obvious** that the person only has "little faith". It always comes back to expelling that spirit of the fear of death from our minds. Now the point we should keep in mind here is that **in our own eyes our fears** for our lives **are very legitimate**.

We believe that it is "perfectly normal" for us to fear for our lives in such circumstances. And our feelings here are correct ... it is indeed "perfectly normal" to fear for our lives in such dangerous circumstances. It is normal because **Satan's spirit of fear is "perfectly normal" for all human beings**.

Being "perfectly normal" is not the same as "being right". **A spirit of fear is never "right", even if to us it is "normal"**.

Let's look at another instruction from Jesus Christ. Christ had told His disciples to expect persecution. And once we are faced with persecution, Jesus Christ said:

**Fear them not (your persecutors) therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. (Matthew 10:26)**

Two verses later Christ repeated this instruction.

And **fear not them which kill the body**, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in the lake of fire. (Matthew 10:28)

This is what the Christian life is all about! Having at baptism accepted all of God's laws as binding on us, the remainder of our Christian lives is then about eliminating the fear of death and all other fears from our lives. This is a process that takes some time. We need to confront any fears we may have, and then put them out of our minds.

## **THE PROBLEM WITH A SPIRIT OF FEAR**

Let's consider some of the problems that people with a spirit of fear present.

For a start, fear is the evidence of **a lack of faith** in God. And here is something the Apostle John explained.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love **casts out fear**: because **fear has torment**. He that fears is not made perfect in love. (1 John 4:18)

This is a major key: a mind that has fear is **a mind that is tormented!** But there is more. The Greek word here translated "torment" is "kolasis", which is derived from the Greek verb "kolazo". This verb means "to punish", and the noun "kolasis" really means "**punishment**". "Torment" is typically a consequence of punishment.

So a major issue with a spirit of fear is that **fear is something God will punish!** That is what the Apostle John is telling us in this verse. And ultimately fear is going to be punished with the second death in the lake of fire.

But **the fearful**, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part **in the lake which burns with fire** and brimstone: which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)

Notice that it was God who said these words in this order in verse 8. And God listed "the fearful" first, ahead of murderers and idolaters. To have a spirit of fear at the end of our lives is before God just as bad as being a murderer or a whoremonger or an idolater. **Having a spirit of fear is really very bad!**

Let's consider the differences between all these categories of people in verse 8 who will be destroyed in the lake of fire. **All the other categories** of condemned people involve sins where **they did something wrong**, something evil. But "**the fearful**" will be destroyed because **they didn't do something!** The fearful didn't cast out Satan's spirit of fear. The other categories all sinned actively; the fearful sinned

passively, by not doing something. They didn't confront that spirit of fear and deal with it.

Not having been able to put the spirit of fear out of their minds means that the fearful are unreliable, and they cannot be depended on to always be faithful to God. They can't be trusted, because their fears will make them irrational. **Fearful people are irrational people.** They don't reason logically. Their fears will influence all their decisions. So fearful people **commonly make bad decisions**, which may involve education, marriage, jobs, finances, etc.

You might want to keep this in mind, when in the future you see someone making a bad decision. Some bad decisions are due to not having access to all the relevant facts. But when that is not the case, then bad decisions are frequently influenced by a spirit of fear.

## **ONE SYMPTOM OF A SPIRIT OF FEAR**

Now let's consider one specific symptom of a spirit of fear which is rather interesting.

One symptom of a spirit of fear is **the sudden unexpected development of a rapid pulse rate**, typically over 120 beats per minute, and at times even over 150 beats per minute. Now a rapid pulse rate can be triggered by many different things. And when there is a clear medical explanation for why someone has developed this sudden rapid pulse rate (e.g. as a response to certain drugs or other stimuli, etc.), then that's fine and not necessarily connected to a spirit of fear.

But I am talking about the unexpected rapid pulse rate **for which the doctors have no explanation.** That type of rapid pulse rate is quite commonly triggered by a spirit of fear. This type of situation is often seen as an anxiety attack.

It is well-known that a rapid pulse rate is the body's spontaneous response to extreme fear. It prepares us for "fight-or-flight". But **it is fear that triggers this rapid pulse rate.** However, when the individuals we are talking about very suddenly feel this rapid pulse rate coming on, they typically are not at all in some life-threatening situation. Typically there is no real threat in the immediate environment of such people, when this rapid pulse rate comes over them.

So how does that work ... when people unexpectedly develop this rapid pulse rate while they are in a peaceful and tranquil situation?

This is where **our conscience** comes into the picture. As long as we are doing things that we believe are good and proper and right, our consciences are basically dormant. At times like that we don't even know that our conscience is there.

But when we do something that we ourselves believe we should not do, then our conscience switches into high gear. Then our conscience will make us feel bad or guilty. That's how God created the human spirit and the human mind. God gave us a conscience so that it would be our integrity-checker.

For example, other people might not know that we are lying, but **our conscience knows** we are lying, and it will make us aware of this fact in no uncertain way. And that feeling is unpleasant and uncomfortable. In situations like that our conscience will convict us, it will reprove us.

And they which heard *it*, **being convicted by their own conscience**, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. (John 8:9)

God created us with a conscience, so that the conscience would confront us whenever we knowingly do something that is wrong.

Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, **their conscience also bearing witness**, and *their* thoughts the mean while either accusing or else excusing one another; (Romans 2:15)

Paul gave Timothy the following instruction:

Holding faith, and a **good conscience; which some having put away** concerning faith have made shipwreck; (1 Timothy 1:19)

We must always listen to our conscience! If we stop listening to and positively responding to our conscience, then we will miss out on salvation, then we have "made shipwreck".

When people refuse to listen to their conscience, when they regularly go against their own conscience, then they will kill their conscience. In biblical terms, they will sear or cauterize their conscience.

Speaking lies in hypocrisy; **having their conscience seared with a hot iron**; (1 Timothy 4:2)

The Greek verb "kauteriazō" (i.e. "kekauteriasmenon" in the text) here translated as "seared with a hot iron" is in fact the origin of our English verb "to cauterize". Paul is referring to the conscience being killed. Something that has been seared with a hot iron has become **totally unresponsive** to any input to which it is exposed.

As an aside, we should understand that **people who actively kill their own conscience** are heading for destruction in the lake of fire. Such people lack any vestige of integrity before God. People who deliberately and methodically kill their own conscience are actively showing their total rejection of God's whole way of life. There is no place for such people in the Family of God. Once a conscience has been killed, **it cannot be brought back to life**. And if such people were theoretically to come up in the second resurrection (which they will not), then they would still have a dead conscience ... and that wouldn't work. People who kill their own conscience will not be in the second resurrection.

Okay, so what does the conscience have to do with the sudden onset of a rapid pulse rate? Here is the point:

When we do something we know is not right, then our conscience will bother us right then. We feel uncomfortable about it, but we do what is wrong anyway. And we seemingly get away with it. Phew, that wasn't as bad as I thought, was it?

Well, not so fast.

The spirit of fear about the bad consequences we expected to receive didn't come upon us. That's partly because nobody else really knew the wrong we had done; it was our own personal secret. And we have seemingly gotten away with it.

But **that spirit of fear in our mind is keeping track**. And then, days, weeks or months later, out of the blue our hearts suddenly start racing like a jet engine. And we have no idea about what has come over us. We don't associate our rapid heart rate with anything we could have done to cause this rapid heart rate. And **then it is scary for us**. We seek medical advice, but the doctors can't find anything wrong with us. There is no physical reason why we should have this rapid pulse rate.

What has happened is that **our conscience is trying to give us one more chance** to come clean with

what we had done at an earlier time. That's God's way of trying to get us to face up to the wrong past actions we are desperately trying to remove from our memory.

Back in the late 1970s I pastored a small congregation. And in that congregation within two weeks of each other two different members of the Church totally unexpectedly signed themselves into the local hospital for electroshock therapy. They wanted the electric currents in that therapy to destroy those cells in their brains that harbored the memory of certain things they had done before coming into God's Church, things that were not known to other people. [That's not how they expressed their decisions to me when I visited them, but that was in essence what both of them wanted.] And the hospital obliged and destroyed some of the cells in their brains through the use of electric currents. Afterwards they both claimed to feel better.

The problem was that **their conscience bothered them**. And that made them fearful. And that feeling was very stressful. But they were not willing to face up to the past conduct on which their conscience was focused. They ignored the cause for their conscience problems and opted for shock therapy instead.

Here is the point:

When we have defiled our conscience in some way, and then we try to bury those past wrong actions as though they had never happened, then **God will often give us one more warning** to confess our wrong to God, and to ask God for forgiveness, and in that way get those past wrong actions off our conscience. In the above two incidents the minds of both men were from one day to the next confused and not able to think clearly about driving a car and operating familiar machinery, etc.. And so both, independently of each other, signed themselves into shock therapy.

That is the way God worked with people who were already bothered by their conscience, but who stubbornly refused to deal the right way with their guilty past.

But when people have succeeded in putting some guilty past conduct out of their minds, when their conscience is not bothering them at all, even though they have some unresolved guilt in their past, then God sometimes uses another approach. And that approach is to give these people **unexpected periods of very rapid pulse rates**, to the point that these people become scared.

Except when such rapid pulse rates have a physical explanation (which at times is the case), it is commonly the expression of a spirit of fear. Typically such people become very scared when their hearts run like racehorses. Now when such a period of a rapid pulse rate comes on them, they can do one of two things:

1) They can examine themselves and ask themselves: **what have I done wrong?** Why am I experiencing this rapid heart rate? And then they need to search their own lives starting with the present and going back through their life's journey. They need to examine their conscience, to look for any unresolved issues in their Christian lives. They need to be prepared to acknowledge any guilt to God, if any form of guilt for the past or the present comes to their minds. That rapid pulse rate is God's way of getting the person's attention, and saying: **wake up!** Look at yourself! This option is the painful one, because we may end up being confronted by some unresolved guilt, and then we will be forced to in some way deal with that guilt. But this option is the only one that leads to the problem being resolved.

2) Alternatively, people can refuse to focus on their own conduct and behavior and decisions. Instead, **they expect** some medical doctor to give them **a physical explanation** for what they are experiencing. And many times the doctor doesn't have a physical explanation, because doctors don't deal with guilty consciences. This option is the less painful one, because we can keep our unresolved guilt buried under the surface. But this option does not offer a solution for the problem. If this opportunity to deal with the

unresolved guilt is not accepted by the person, it will be one more step towards killing one's own conscience.

Here in the USA the product that achieves the highest sales figures year-in year-out is called "**peace of mind**". Dozens of different products offer to sell us "peace of mind". But there is a problem with this claim. And the problem is that **peace of mind cannot be bought with money!**

Consider a principle which Solomon presented in Proverbs.

**The wicked flee when no man pursues: but the righteous are bold as a lion. (Proverbs 28:1)**

"The wicked" are those who have a guilty conscience. And **those who have a guilty conscience have a spirit of fear**. And so those with a guilty conscience will not uncommonly develop imaginary fears. "The righteous" are those with a clear conscience before God. And they are confident and bold.

Again, the point in this proverb is that those people with a guilty conscience will have emotional stress and anxiety and fears and rapid pulse rates, etc.. The key to living a stress-free and anxiety-free life is to be "righteous", i.e. to live with a clear conscience before God. But to do so we also have to actively reject the spirit of fear that Satan has installed in all human minds.

For **you have not received the spirit of slavery** again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (Romans 8:15)

Notice the word "again" in this verse. Paul is saying that **originally**, from early childhood onwards, we had received "the spirit of slavery". That's another name for the spirit of fear. Paul implies that we then, at repentance, put that spirit of fear out of our lives. And then we received another spirit. We then received God's holy spirit, which makes it possible for us to eventually become born sons of God.

Let's summarize the information we have discussed.

## **IN SUMMARY**

- 1) A large number of people in our world today have great anxieties, insecurities and fears in their lives. Covid has compounded that situation. But even without Covid, fears are a part of the daily lives for very many people.
- 2) Those are all different manifestations of the spirit of fear with which Satan has enslaved humanity. The ultimate fear is the fear of death, which affects almost all human beings.
- 3) Satan's reasoning is that we human beings will do whatever it takes to preserve our lives, including rejecting God's truth and God's whole way of life.
- 4) So if our lives are threatened, are we prepared to do "whatever it takes" to save our lives? Or are we prepared to lose our lives for Jesus Christ's sake?
- 5) Repentance means that we do two things. We stop breaking the laws of God and begin to live by all of God's laws. And then we set about actively changing the way our minds work, changing the way we think and reason.
- 6) To change the way we think requires us to understand the foundation for the way we human beings

"normally" think. To be able to change requires us to know where we are starting from. Without that understanding we won't be able to make a change. For all unconverted human beings all thinking and reasoning is based on the foundation of a spirit of fear, with the fear of death being the ultimate fear. So in order to change the way we think and reason, we must reject and cast out the spirit of fear, every vestige of it.

7) In simple terms, repentance means that we cast the spirit of fear out of our minds. When we do that, then we will be able to use our minds in a different way. The fear of death and all other fears (e.g. the fear of the loss of health, money, a job, popularity, a position of power, etc.) are no longer a consideration in our thought processes and in the decisions we make. And that is emphatically a different way of thinking from the way all other people think and reason.

8) Time and time and time again **the Bible tells us not to fear people!** That's what true Christianity is all about ... casting the spirit of fear out of our lives. When we do that, we destroy Satan's power over our lives, because we no longer think the way Satan thinks. Keep in mind that Satan's only form of power over human beings is based on influencing us human beings to use our minds in a very specific way. That "specific way" is to make the fear of death the foundation for all our thought processes.

9) And that is the real focus of all the trials we experience: have we cast the spirit of fear out of our minds? As long as we are still motivated by a spirit of fear, we are still thinking like Satan wants us to think. And that will block our minds from understanding the way God thinks.

10) There is an inverse relationship between faith and fear. More faith means less fear, and less faith means more fear.

11) Eliminating the spirit of fear is a process that takes time. In this process we may lose specific battles here or there; but in the end we must win the war. That's the lesson from God's servants in Old Testament times: they sometimes lost some battles along the way, but they ultimately won the war.

12) Because it represents the way Satan thinks and reasons, therefore if we still have the spirit of fear at the end of our lives, then that spirit of fear will incur punishment from God. The ultimate punishment for the fearful is destruction in the lake of fire.

13) We need to recognize that fearful people are irrational people who cannot see their own irrationality. And when fully informed people make bad decisions, then that is very often due to those people thinking from the foundation of a spirit of fear. Put another way, what may seem logical to someone thinking from the foundation of a spirit of fear, will at times seem quite illogical to someone whose thinking has fully rejected that spirit of fear.

14) Unexplained episodes of a very rapid heart beat, where doctors cannot establish any medical reason for the rapid heart beat, are one way God sometimes uses to have us confront unresolved issues of guilt in our past lives. Those episodes are connected to a spirit of fear. In such situations God uses the guilty conscience of the person to give them one more opportunity to confront an unresolved guilt issue.

15) Those people who actively kill their own conscience will be destroyed in the lake of fire. A dead conscience cannot be revived. People who in this life methodically kill their own conscience cannot come up in the second resurrection. A dead conscience cannot appear in a resurrection to life; it can only appear in a resurrection to death in the lake of fire.

In conclusion, **we must overcome and reject the spirit of fear**, which Satan has installed in the minds of all human beings. That is ultimately the main task in our Christian lives.

