

## The Antidote to Fear

Fear. “An unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger.”<sup>[1]</sup> Fear elicits a universal bio-chemical response (e.g. pupils dilate, heart-rates increase, blood pressures rise and breathing quickens), and also an individual emotional response. Fear either paralyzes or propels us forward. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, fear has become a dominant emotion worldwide, gripping hearts in every community. Herd immunity and effective clinical treatments may yet be on the horizon, so how do we respond to this epidemic of fear? What is the antidote to fear?

Praise. In times of fear, we turn to God in praise. Praise brings us an awareness of the presence of God – it doesn't bring us into the presence of God, as He is always present (Ps. 139). Ps. 100.4 invites us to enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Praise and thanksgiving are not the same. In thanksgiving, we thank God for what He does. In praise, we praise God for who He is.

The most common OT word (*sachah*) and NT word (*proskuneo*) for praise reveal that praise is a mental awe of God with a corresponding physical response. Scripture connects many physical actions directly with worship: singing; dancing; uplifted hands and heads; kneeling; standing; bowing; prostrating; clapping of hands; bringing offerings; playing instruments. Clearly, praise involves our whole being – mind, body and spirit! Fear may paralyze every aspect of our being, but praise is the all-powerful antidote! Hallelujah!

Praise dispels fear, making us aware of God's loving presence in our lives, and allowing Him to fill our hearts once again. Perhaps most importantly, when we pray, we are still in the midst of our situation, and we often recite our problems, but when we choose to praise, we are lifted beyond our immediate situation. We are transported from a world of worry to a world of wonder. The classic example in Scripture is Paul and Silas in Acts 16, praising God while jail. We praise God when we are in the midst of despair, for this reassures us that there is Someone bigger than us who is in control, who loves us and who has all authority in heaven and earth. Praise leads to trust, which turns the paralysis of fear into strength. “In quietness and in trust shall be your strength” (Isa. 30.15, NRSV).

The hearts of men and women today may be failing them for fear (Lk. 21.26), but as we choose to praise God in the midst of the storm, we discover the LORD of the storm, who has full authority over the storm, and who journeys through the storm with us. And hope replaces fear.

What next? Why not reflect on the last time you experienced God's grace. Not when you heard about His grace, or read about His grace, but were personally overwhelmed by God's unmerited favor to you. Take time to personally praise God. Sing a song, whisper a prayer, compose a poem, kneel in adoration, stand in silent wonder, lift your hands. Let your mind, body and spirit be joined in a sympathetic symphony of praise to the One who saved you, who loves you, who walks with you, and who is coming again for you. Make praise a major part of your private devotional life....and you will experience for yourself the wonderful truth that perfect love casteth out fear! (1 John 4.18).

Have a blessed Sabbath!

Conrad.

---

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fear>, 9/2/2020.