

Fear

Fear has many meanings and many applications; and rather than generalize – with the strong possibility of missing the mark – forbear my limited, two-sided presentation.

There is fear of God which is a reverence or honor of God; and there is every other form of fear, which is not of God. More than any other, the subject of fear is described in the Bible in the form of instruction or encouragement. Depending on the translation, scripture instructs the reader “to not fear”, or “do not fear”, or “fear not...”; and time and time again, the reader is offered such instruction or advice.

To fear is a natural emotion and expression. An impulse of fear may occur when we sense danger or, more poignant, experience it straight-up. A sudden brake of the tires on the car, and we might flinch or grab something to brace ourselves – as an impulse of fear. Similar, unexpected or shocking instances will invoke a similar response – which seems to be the healthy, natural reaction.

Fear can be more than an impulse; it can be a phobia (or prevailing condition). There are many such fears: fear of heights; fear of snakes; fear of darkness and so on... When my brother was young, he had a fear of needles or shots; but then again, he had to take many shots for his asthma – which probably caused his fear.

Fear can also be the origin of anger – and even with an impulse (of fear), anger is the response or reaction. The condition or response of anger is called a secondary emotion – that results from the impulse, phobia or other forms of fear.

Not always, but sometimes, anger is the evidence of a particular type or area of fear; for example, I might have the fear of losing my contact lens or glasses – because without them – I cannot see very well and am somewhat handicapped, weakened or vulnerable. If my “eyewear” is lost or damaged – or is even a risk – I might get very upset...angry; because the consequence is the described handicap or a sense of not being in control...

Not being in control (or having control) is really the primary need or desire of my broken or lost eyewear; and in reaction or fear, I get angry. If I was able to overcome this primary need by way of placing my security in something or someone else, then I would not need to be in control (of the eyewear) – and would not fear or become angry over the risk or actual loss.

The scriptures tell us that “Love drives out fear...” (1 John 4:18); but what does that have to do with being in control (of anything)? If we accept the truth that we do not have ultimate control over anything – or anyone – then we can accept that God does. Accepting God’s sovereignty (by faith) enables us to receive his perfect love (in Christ); and alas, we can begin to surrender the false feeling of control, fear and anger of this kind.