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THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

1 John 4:15-21
Lesson #17
Agape and anxiety
04/24/2022

**At what point does christian
faith change one's life?**

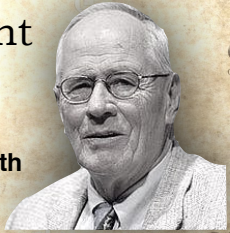
**when assurance of God's
love triumphs over our**

1

“Courage is not the
absence of fear, but
rather the judgment
that something else
is more important
than fear.”

James Neil Hollingworth
(writer)



2



1 John 4

“15 Whoever **confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God** abides in him, and he in God. 16 And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”

- The Word of the Cross -

Our reception of the crucified Jesus as the Son of God is vital to our experience of God’s love for us.

- The Way of the Cross -

Our expression of that love is vital to our witness of God’s love to others.

Gnosticism’s heresy -

The human dilemma is not moral but material.

Salvation is not through “the Cross” but “knowledge”.

“Confessing Jesus as the Son of God” come in the flesh distinguished orthodoxy from Gnosticism.

1 John 4

“2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ **has come in the flesh** is from God;”

1 John 4

“17 By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have **confidence** in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. 18 There is **no fear** in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves **punishment**, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.”

LOVE kills spiritual anxiety.

The Old Covenant amplified our fear of separation from God.

The New Covenant assured our fellowship with God.

Two signs of a love starved Christianity:

1. Old Covenant fears persist.

Galatians 5

“1 **It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.** 2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. 4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Are we fearing God in the right way?

Restless anxiety

Reverential awe



Old Covenant punishment

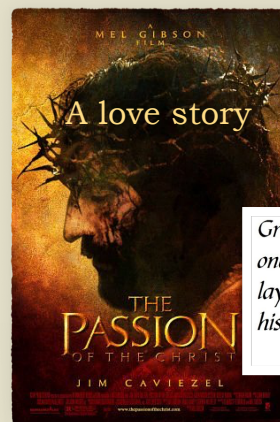
New Covenant propitiation

The focus is on what we do.

The focus is on what Christ did.



The Gospel ~ Love that is greater than fear



Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

i always thought love was shaped like a



but it's actually like a

Freedom from the Law's condemnation was **through the Cross for those "in Christ"**.

Romans 8

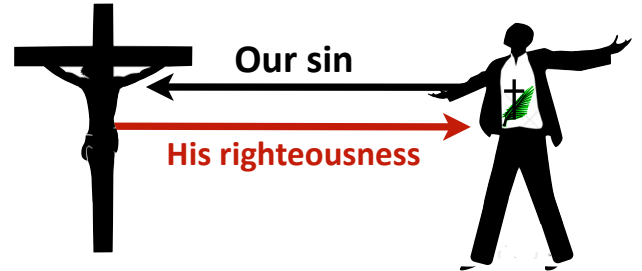
"1 There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.** 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 **in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us**, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

10

The great exchange

2 Corinthians 5:21

"He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him."



11

"So when the devil throws your sins in your face and declares that you deserve death and hell, tell him this: 'I admit that I deserve death and hell, what of it? For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, Son of God, and where He is there I shall be also!'"

Martin Luther



12

Two signs of a love starved Christianity:

1. Old Covenant fears persist.
2. **Legalistic anxieties control.**

- Legalism is a **preoccupation with the LAW** as the path to spiritual and social peace.
- Legalism stems from a **FEAR** of losing control, which is wrongly seen as the key to being accepted.
- Legalism is a futile hope to fill the void of a **LOVELESS** life.

13

1 John 4

"19 **We love, because He first loved us.** 20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also."

LOVE kills social anxiety.

"In the end, it is never between us and them, but rather between us and God."

Mother Teresa

14

Do I have a FEAR problem?

- ✓ **Need to control** - minimize the unknowns
- ✓ **Need for closure** - get it settled ASAP
- ✓ **Black and white** - gray areas are unsettling
- ✓ **Resisting change** - low risk tolerance
- ✓ **Worry / whine** - things will or have gone bad
- ✓ **Conspiracies** - organized doom
- ✓ **Low creativity** - avoid risk of failure
- ✓ **Cup is half full** - bad things will happen
- ✓ **Sleep disorders** - poor quality or quantity
- ✓ **Social withdrawal** - depression, illness

15

Profile of an unhealthy "Christian" community

The ministers minister, the congregation congregates to show up, shut up, and cough up while acting busy, looking holy, staying happy and feeling excited.

Warning signs of a fear based culture

- ✓ "Strongman" - leadership profile
- ✓ "Grace" & "love" are preached - but not felt
- ✓ Fear driven - rather than love drawn
- ✓ Major on minors - low tolerance of differences

16

"Nothing is more despicable than respect based on fear."

Nothing is more delightful than respect based on love.

Alber Comus

17

Our defensive strategies

- don't remove our fears
- but further isolate us from God & others.

Genesis 3

"¹¹ And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate.""

18

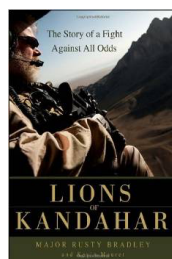
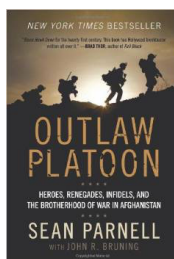
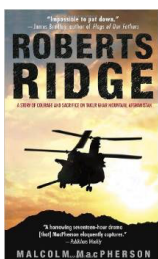
Depression is the **exhaustion of defensive strategies** to manage fears.

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What do these books have in common?

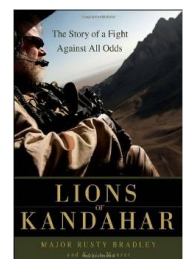
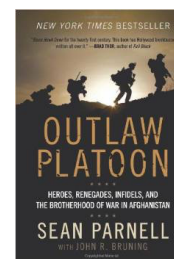
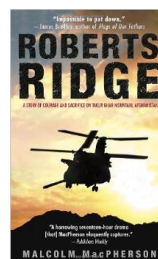
Stories of love that is greater than

FEAR




20

We are driven not by fear of the enemy before us so much as by love for those beside and behind us.



21


“We’re tired of the national conversation centering on “What should we fear?” and “Who should we blame?”.”



Brene Brown

22

“Many Christians have embraced the worst aspects of our culture and our politics. When the Christian faith is politicized, churches become repositories not of grace but of grievances, places where tribal identities are reinforced, where fears are nurtured, and where aggression and nastiness are sacralized. The result is not only wounding the nation; it’s having a devastating impact on the Christian faith.”




Peter Wehner
(contributing editor of *The Atlantic*)

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Matthew 6

“²² The lamp of the body is the eye; ***if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.*** ²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

We feed love when we discipline our eyes to see beyond our fears.



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Take home

- ✓ See the Cross and beyond.
- ✓ See life’s circumstances as opportunities to:
 - take your baptism seriously.
 - turn stumbling blocks into stepping stones.
- ✓ See anger and anxiety as a challenge to renew your mind and reveal your spiritual ID.

25

1 John

Next week
5:1-4

Aliens, Disciples, Overcomers



26



APT TOTEACH
A bishop then must be ... apt to teach 1 Timothy 3:2

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