

Volume 11 Issue 22

May 29, 2016

FEAR ITSELF

There is a page on the Internet which lists several hundred different phobias – irrational fears of anything you can imagine, including sourness, riding in a car, slime and bogeymen (Bogyphobia is the fear of bogeymen, but in my opinion that one is not so irrational).

Naturally, fear is a major biblical topic since it is a major human emotion. The more common fears in life relate to pain, disappointment, injury and, most of all, death. According to the Book of Lists, public speaking rates as even more terrifying than any of those, however. In his first of many inaugural addresses, President Franklin Roosevelt admonished Americans that “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.”

And yet as we read through the New Testament, we can see fear in the faces of so many beloved characters. And as much as we might want to dismiss their fears as unreasonable and something we would never own, the fact is that we are all susceptible to the power of fear. So many times, it is the devil who schemes to intimidate us from taking that stand or speaking out. And too often, he succeeds.

When Jesus commissioned the twelve, he warned them that they would face similar maltreatment to what they had witnessed regarding him. Matthew 10:25-31: “If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they call those of his household! 26 Therefore do

not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. 27 "Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. 28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."

These were indeed courageous men – including Judas Iscariot, at least for a while. They were persecuted and dismissed by the religious establishment in Judea, but they stood fast until that fateful day when Judas turned on them and the Lord found himself facing hundreds of enemies. "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled" (Matthew 26:56). We find Peter warming his hands in the courtyard, denying that even he knew the esteemed prisoner right up

until he heard the cock crow. The twelve were not at all alone. Nicodemus visited the Rabbi by night to avoid detection (John 3:1-2) and "even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43). For his part, Pontius Pilate lacked the political courage to insist that Jesus be released alive even though he knew full well that the Lord was delivered because of envy (Matthew 27:18).

Because of fear, the Holy Spirit warns that men will resort to teaching error (Galatians 6:12) or practicing it (2:11-12). Paul complained, "At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them" (2 Timothy 4:16). And he urged Timothy, "Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8).

The fact is that until you

face your fears, you will always be enslaved to them. You will always lack some necessary element of maturity and preparation. You will always be susceptible to the devil's whispers. Your discipleship will always have a breach, however small and infrequently exploited. Part of maturing is facing things like public speaking (gasp!), death, bullies and persecutors and learning that "Cowards die many times before their deaths; The valiant never taste of death but once"

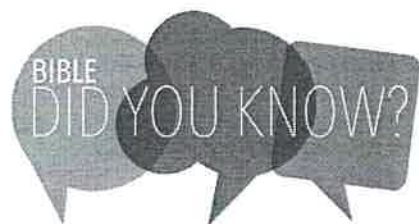
(Shakespeare, Julius Caesar). All this takes on added significance when harmonized with some of the last words of Christ in the book of Revelation: "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly ... shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 22:8-9).

Perhaps it is not so much that cowardice is a sin of itself, but that it opens the door to so many compromises and so much dereliction. When the Lord says, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the

crown of life," (Revelation 2:10), it presupposes the potential for intimidation, persecution and even certain exaggerated fears that cause "him who knows to do good" not to do it (James 4:17).

The time comes to face your fears and to be a disciple of courage and conviction, "able to withstand in the evil day" (Ephesians 6:13). "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

- J. S. Smith



What does "testament" mean? Testament means "covenant" or "contract."

Which single author contributed the most books to the New Testament? The Apostle Paul, who wrote 14 books (over half) of the New Testament.

Fifth Sunday Photos

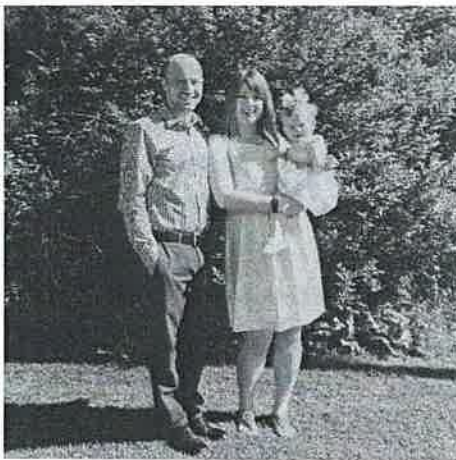
Every fifth Sunday of the month, we try to highlight some of great things happening around our congregation that were captured through photography. If you happen to get a good picture of one of those great things, please feel free to post it on our Facebook page, tag us on Instagram (@wellsburgchurch), tweet us at @wellsburgchurch, or e-mail us at minister@wellsburgchurchofchrist.com with a little description of what is happening in the picture.



Brother Jarred finished his work here at Wellsburg this month, and we wish him, Jessica, and Vivianna the best as they begin their new adventure in Kentucky.



Our Gospel Meeting with Brother Jason Hardin was this month, and it was a success! Thanks to everyone for all of their hard work in making it so.



A lovely family photo of the Shay's after Sunday Morning worship services!



Ken Prager proving that even babies have more hair than him...