



Fear Not Faith

by Pastor Doug Lutz

The followers went to him and woke him. They said, “Lord, save us! We will drown!” Jesus answered, “Why are you afraid?”—Matthew 8:25-26a

Fear is a powerful motivator. It can drive achievement, vengeance, retreat or despair. It's what moves a mom to risk a brave rescue of her child from a speeding car in middle of a busy street; or what keeps a person from putting his burned hand in the fire a second time; or gives “wings” to the feet of a gazelle in flight from a ravenous predator. Some call this form of fear survival instinct, others self-preservation. Whatever the name, this *good* kind of fear operates as an internal safety mechanism.

So what kind of internal mechanism could possibly make a good fear go bad?

A former extortionist retells a story that pictures several men frantically and fearfully bailing water out of a little wooden boat in the middle of a torrential storm. The outcome looks bleak—hopeless. But it's not until their fear turns to anger that Jesus who is asleep during the commotion wakes up, asks them why they are afraid and then calms the storm.

If you think about it, Jesus' “fear not” statement can't be referring to their instinctual fear of sinking. A lot of these guys were seamen who knew what deadly storm waters can do to tiny floating objects. Jesus knew too. No. He's addressing fear gone bad; namely, the pointed fingers and daggered eyes in His direction. The men—His disciples—assumed He didn't care since they knew what He was capable of. Fair or not, this seems like a reasonable conclusion: Blame the one who has the power and ability to do something good

or helpful but doesn't.

Jesus is untroubled by the implications of their misdirected fear. In spite of their accusation that He didn't care, Jesus simply challenges them to trust *Him*, not their fear of drowning.

Dear reader, you and I have been given the gift of instinctual fear—the gift of something we can do in the face of danger; like bail water out of a sinking boat. I know it sounds easy when often it's not. Fear is real and can mess with one's mind. But what if we viewed fear as an opportunity to exercise faith? Just as physical exercise makes us stronger, so fear provides resistance that can make our faith in God more resilient (or not).

Here, we have choices: We can choose to wait on God with a willingness to sink in a boat where He is present (that's an exercise in trust, for sure!). Or, we can make a judgmental jump into roiling waters where God is not present and risk losing the very life He sent His Son to save.

Fear not Faith.

Prayer resolve: Today I choose to trust that God sees me, cares for me and will use my fears to strengthen me.

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