

Love and Fear

Scripture Reading — 1 John 4

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear ...
1 John 4:18 —

Fear motivates much of what we do. Fear of the future, fear of consequences, fear of being ridiculed—the list goes on and on. John says clearly that fear of punishment is a powerful motivator. The prospect of punishment puts us in performance mode; it motivates us to be responsible—to get our assignments done and do what we say we're going to do.

Sometimes we think this posture of fear is what God desires of us. What's more, our sinful nature wants to take responsibility for our past and future. When that happens, our level of fear only soars higher. Though we're afraid of God's punishment, we still want to come up with our own answers. But cringing in fear is a terrible way to live.

John speaks here of a process in which the love of God in Christ replaces the fear in our hearts. The tension between love and fear is resolved as the snowplow of God's love pushes up against the cold snow drifts of our fear.

Fear is pushed aside as we embrace the warmth of God's love and see that love at work in us and in others.

It's not brash bravery that casts out fear; it's love. Are you fearful of life and its consequences? Don't merely ask for courage. Ask that the power of God's love may be unleashed on your fears.

Prayer

Loving Father, we may be afraid of your displeasure and of the last judgment. But push that fear away with a fresh awareness of your far greater love, for Jesus's sake. Amen.

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Printed on October 27, 2020

