

What are you afraid of? Most things that people fear can be generalized into some type of pain, suffering, or even simply discomfort. Or we fear things like the unknown, loss, rejection, or failure. In fact, maybe all **our fears can be categorized as some level and type of discomfort...** But we all have fears. Fear in itself is not good or bad. There are certainly some fears that are good to have – fear of injury will cause us to slow our steps when we come upon some slippery terrain. And there are fears that are not so good to have – fear of rejection may prevent us from asking for something that would enhance our life.

There are many Hebrew words (I counted about 30) and several Greek words (I counted about 7) that are translated into English as “fear.” That word study could easily fill these couple of pages, but one thing that I want to highlight is the distinction between two Greek words that have been frequently translated as “fear.” The first is *deiliaō* which is a fear in the manner of timidity or nervousness. I want to call that “mind fear.” This type of fear is almost an intellectual fear, a **fear that we spend time thinking about, considering, analyzing.** I also want to associate this “*deiliaō*” with worry; this type of fear can overtake our thoughts. Here is an example:

*"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. (John 14:27)*

Messiah is saying, in other words, “don’t worry.” The other word is probably what most of us think of first when we hear or read the word “fear.” That is “*phobeō*.” You likely recognize this because of our frequent use of “phobia” in English. When the Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament, was first translated into Greek, this was the **word of choice for most of the instances that make a reference to the “Fear of God.”** That Hebrew word is some form of “*ya-re*” or “*yir-ah*” and is exemplified here:

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)*

*I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him. (Ecclesiastes 3:14)*

Unlike *deiliaō*, or “mind fear,” I like to think of this fear (*phobeō*) as a “gut fear.” This is the type of fear that we feel in our gut, or in our physical body. This is the visceral **fear that moves us, that gets our adrenaline flowing and our heart pumping.** In Hebrew, this “*ya-re*,” this “Fear” of God, has a “morally reverent” connotation. Think of standing close to the edge of a train platform and watching a train approach. Usually there’s a wide yellow stripe painted along the edge, indicating a space that you need to be aware of – a space where children are commonly instructed to not stand in. But I have stood in that space while a train engine passed. The enormous bulk of the engine and its **immense power, rumbling such that the whole ground shakes,** is a source for this reverent fear. Maybe it is not “morally” reverent, but it commands a fear of and a respect for something much greater and much more powerful than I. With my knowledge – my faith – that the engine will not enter this space marked by the stripe on the platform, I can safely stand there, inches from this potentially deadly power. I experience a fear and awe of this power; I experience “*phobos*.” Here we can see Moses, standing on that yellow stripe:

*But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. "Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen." (Exodus 33:20-23)*

Many of life’s fears that we experience do not have a yellow stripe that clearly marks out the safe zone. Many times, we find ourselves full of fear and **we don’t know where to stand to avoid injury or calamity.** This type of fear can cause us to sin if we react to it in a way that excludes God from our solution. We might choose actions like drinking too much or getting angry or making false accusations. Fear can cause us to forget important things, like what God is capable of, what He has done for us in the past, and what He has promised.

Here is the first example of “gut fear” that we have in the Bible. Adam was experiencing “ya-re” after eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and he chose to hide (from an all seeing God):

*Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." (Genesis 3:9-10)*

When we allow ourselves to forget those important things because of our fears, **we can become irrational and demanding**. Here is a story that pulls together 3 accounts from scripture: Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, and Luke 8:22-25. In my own words, the story goes like this:

One day after healing some people and delivering a bunch of parables and teaching large crowds, Jesus and some of His disciples got into a boat to travel across the sea. It was late in the day and Jesus went to sleep below deck. A fierce storm came and threatened the survival of the boat. Jesus did not wake up. The disciples were frantic and woke Him, saying things like “We’re all going to die!” and **demanding** that He save them. They even (**irrationally**) accused Him of not caring about them (Mark 4:38). Jesus woke up and in no particular order, He saved them by calming the wind and waves, He asked them why they were afraid, and pointed out their lack of faith. The following scripture found at the end of one of these accounts has both types of fear in it. The first is “deilos” (mind fear) and the second is “phobeō” (gut fear.)

*And He said to them, "Why are you <deilos>? Do you still have no faith?" They became very much <phobeō> and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (Mark 4:40-41)*

He asked them “Why are you worried about that? Why do you think I don’t care?” (deiliaō) These disciples had just that same day, if not, very recently, **witnessed with their own eyes**, their Teacher healing the sick with His words. They had seen Him casting our demons with His words. Their fear of the storm caused them to forget what He was capable of and what He had been promising them all along. And then they were awestruck (phobeō) as they realized His power. The disciples, most likely quite relieved at being rescued, were frightened and amazed by the calm, yet awesome power that Jesus had. Since He was not worried about the storm, through faith, they should have followed His example and also not been so worried. This storm that Jesus calmed so easily was a fearful trial for the disciples. **Our lives have been and will be filled with storms like this**. In fact, we are told that we should expect tribulation.

*"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation but take courage; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)*

Yes, we will have troubles, but we are not to fear them. “Take courage” He said... Fear not.

*"I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him! (Luke 12:4-5)*

When we see the storm swirling around us, ready to swallow everything, we are called to **climb down below deck, curl up with our Savior and Rest with Him**. Trust Him, and you will find that there really is nothing to fear.

*Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:2)*

Peace to you and glory to God!

-Nate

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