

Overcoming Fear

January 2010

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Very affectionate greetings to you all.

Here we are in the month of January again! How fast time goes by. As the earth turns on its axis, we keep turning the pages of our Bibles. Through our reading of the Scriptures we are made aware of our moments of unfaithfulness, disobedience or quarrel. We are also taught how to become reconciled with one another and with our Creator so that we may be confident and comforted while we live the time which we are given by God. Yet we do not enjoy our comfortable and happy lives with abominable selfishness; we are sensitive to the misery of mankind, we are saddened by the tragic circumstances of many. Brethren, God hears us! God sees the suffering of human beings. Let us pray, "Thy Kingdom come."

God made us capable of emotions so that we would have interesting and meaningful lives. So our emotions can be wonderful attributes, but they also can be some of the most harmful influences which one may experience. One of them is fear. Are we afraid of what might happen to us? Are we frightened by what we might experience or by what is happening all around us? Or, are we able to control such fears so that they will not create bewilderment and panic in our lives?

It is quite human for joy to give place to sadness or for confidence to give place to anxiety. But those emotions must be well-controlled, otherwise they can become a very heavy and oppressive burden which will hinder us from doing the right thing and overcoming the problems which we encounter in this life. A well-controlled fear can help us to foresee danger and avoid it. But an overwhelming fear becomes a most harmful emotion, because it will fill our lives with anxiety and worry, and it will prevent us from reacting acceptably, wisely to certain circumstances.

We have an example of that in the parable of the pounds. One of the servants said, "For I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man . . ." (Luke 19:21, *Revised Standard Version*). Such fear drove him to behave in a totally illogical way. What he had received could have filled his life with joy and satisfaction. And by making his gift productive, he could have entered into the joy of his Master, like the other two servants.

Sometimes we meet people who are so afraid, so terrified that they cannot do anything. And why are they like that? Because they do not succeed in controlling that emotion which is fear. We read, "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25). So an unhealthy fear of human beings or of events happening around us can be a dangerous trap. Or further, if we become fearful when we are going through a refining process to which God has deemed it good to subject us—so that His work will be made perfect for the day of Jesus Christ—if we let ourselves be overcome by fear, we can fall into a snare, that is into a situation which is going to deteriorate rather than improve. Faced with certain circumstances, how many—called of God—are afraid to live His way fully! They fear the risks, they fear the unforeseen events. And yet the promise of God stands, ". . . whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25).

It is certainly quite normal to jump when someone comes behind you and surprises you. It is a natural reaction which every human being has to some extent or another. That is not to be compared to someone whose life is continually plagued with worry, who feels anxious day after day, who is not able to overcome his apprehension of what may happen. Such fear is extremely destructive to one's life, for it can drive him to almost constant discouragement.

How then and by what means are we going to master that fear? Let us see of what the Apostle Paul reminded Timothy, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:6–7). So it is not God's Holy Spirit which encourages us to be afraid, to live in fear. God gives us a Spirit of power or strength: the ability to submit ourselves to God and resist the influences of Satan who sows terror. God gives us a Spirit of love: the will to sacrifice the self out of consideration for someone else. God gives us a Spirit of a sound mind: the wisdom which urges us to self-discipline, drawing closer to God and putting our trust in Him. Thus, when the Holy Spirit rules in our lives, it gives us attributes which are contrary to fear and the ability to fight against it. "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16, *RSV*). When we ask God to help us or grant us His protection, we must be confident that we can rely on Him. ". . . for he has said, 'I will never fail you nor forsake you.' Hence we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid'" (Hebrews 13:5–6, *RSV*). How can we overcome fear? Let us do what God requires of us so that we can have the assurance and confidence of receiving His Spirit of strength and wisdom in order to master all the anxieties and fears which poison our lives.

God lets us experience various circumstances because He wants us to learn to trust Him. That is what Jesus Christ did with His disciples when they boarded the boat to cross to the other side of the lake and a great tempest arose. Jesus Christ said to them, ". . . Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew 8:26). Why were the disciples so frightened while

Christ Himself was beside them? Because they had not yet developed in their lives that kind of faith in the promises and the interventions of God.

Another example is when Jesus Christ, walking on the sea, joined His disciples. They screamed, for they thought it was a ghost. But Jesus said to them, "...Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" (Matthew 14:27). It is interesting to notice that when Peter wanted to go to Christ with confidence, he walked on the water. But as soon as he became aware of an element—which was the wind in that case—and was afraid, he began to sink.

Therefore, not only must we remain faithful to the instructions of God, but when faced with certain elements which arouse fright in us, we must also trust our God implicitly. The just shall live by faith! Not by sight of all that can scare us. How often could Jesus Christ say to us, ". . . Why are ye so fearful?" (Mark 4:40). In Proverbs 28:1 we read, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion." So if we do what is pleasing to God, we need not be afraid. But when our confidence is in tangible things rather than in God, we worry; we are afraid even if there is no cause for fear.

But if there is good reason for fear, then of what should we be fearful? "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest [for fear that] I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver" (Psalm 50:22). If there is good reason for fear, it is the profound fear of sinning willfully. Jesus Christ warns us, ". . . sin no more, lest [for fear that] a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14). Do not practice sin deliberately for fear that something worse happen to you. That is what should make us afraid. It is a fear which is a manifestation of awe toward our God and His way of life. Then we can have the confidence that God will not fail us nor forsake us; He is our Helper and we need not be frightened.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold,
thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost
parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall
hold me" (Psalm 139:7–10).

Let us not yield to disobedience; let us not succumb to rebellion. But let us remain courageous, strong in the faith, steadfast in the call of God and let us be His children, until the day when we will be sons and daughters in His glorious Family. Although times are becoming more and more trying because of what is happening in our world, God says to His people, "Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; be not afraid of him, saith the Lord: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand" (Jeremiah 42:11). Nothing on this earth or in heaven can exceed the power of God. Therefore, let us act courageously according to the will of God, trusting Him, knowing that He loves us and will make perfect—for the day of Jesus Christ—the work which He has undertaken in our lives.

So let us root out the fear which seizes our minds sometimes and hinders us from acting wisely before God. ". . . If God be for us, who can be against us? . . . Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Romans 8:31, 33).

With all my respectful affection for you all,
Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Aviolat', written in a cursive style.

Jean Aviolat