

Thoughts on Fear, Faith and Death 3-15-20

Is fear a proper motivator? Should we be willing to face death without fear? As we are in the midst of a crisis we are seeing different congregations make choices to limit or altogether cancel the assembly times. As we have discussed, there are times that one simply cannot be present in the assembly, and this is not forsaking the assembly. If the decency and order of an assembly cannot be maintained, then it is not appropriate to assemble.

Some have suggested that those who choose not to assemble are giving into fear. They (rightly) remind that we are to trust in the Lord, and that we are only to fear the Lord. Is it the case that those who choose not to assemble for a valid concern have failed to trust in God?

The story of Ezra and Nehemiah are parallel lives in the time of the restoration. They both were exiles in Babylon who sought to restore the city of Jerusalem and the temple. In Ezra 8:22 it says that Ezra saw it as a matter of faith that he trust God and not ask for guards for protection on that journey. But in Nehemiah 2:9 we read that Nehemiah made his journey to Jerusalem with a troop of cavalry. Which one acted by faith if they did opposite things? The obvious answer of Scripture is: both of them. They were both men of faith, and they both acted in faith towards God.

The point is this: We need to understand that when someone chooses not to accept a risk, it is not something we are permitted to judge. Paul says in Romans 14:3 *Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. 4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand..... 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.*

Remember when Paul desired to enter the arena in Ephesus to speak to the people in Acts 19:30? He saw an opportunity to speak to a crowd, but there was a great danger in doing so. Paul was restrained by the Saints because of this. Even though he was unafraid, he was willing to submit to the concerns of others. We might consider that even when we personally are unafraid of death, the loss of a saint to the body of Christ hurts others (Acts 9:39). Both congregations and brethren need to be mindful of the balance of being unafraid, but being good stewards of their lives and those around them.

Choices churches are making right now are some extremely hard ones. We need to be delicate in our observations on these things. We have no authority to judge others in how they respond to danger.