

“Perfect love drives out fear.” 1 John chapter 4 verse 18

One of the best films I have ever seen is “Hacksaw Ridge”, the harrowing but inspiring true story of Desmond Doss, an American conscientious objector in World War II who joined the army as a medic and went into battle but refused to carry a gun. During the battle of Okinawa, he evacuated 75 wounded during one night, driving himself on with the plea “Just let me get one more, Lord.” The following day, when he refused to join the second offensive because it was the sabbath day, the rest of the attack force refused to go into battle without him.

Love for God and people drove his courage. It wasn't that he had no fear, but his desire to serve the God he loved and to save life enabled him to overcome it. Love can cause us to do remarkable things, despite overwhelming dangers.

But the fear John is talking about is actually the fear of judgment. “God is love”, he says, and if we remain in love we remain in him and love is made complete in us so that we may have confidence on the day of judgment. If we do not know the love of God then we are left with the prospect of his judgment and so we live in fear. But if we know God through faith in Jesus Christ, then we know that God's attitude towards us is rooted in his love for us and his desire for our best good in all things.

When we respond to God's love for us demonstrated in the death and resurrection of Jesus, then we receive from him forgiveness for our sin, the prospect and assurance of eternal life, reconciliation to relationship with him and all the material and spiritual resources we need to live abundant and fruitful lives in this world.

That is a far cry from living under the fear of God's judgment. The Bible is crystal clear that, if we know and love God in this way, then there is no condemnation for us because we no longer live under the law of sin and death but under the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

If we still live in fear that we are going to suffer God's disapproval and censure because we do not live up to his standards, then we are trying to serve a god who is different to the one the Bible presents to us, and not the true God, who has satisfied all the requirements of his justice in Jesus so that we can live free from the fear of judgment in his love.

Prayer

Father, thank you that I can live free of the fear of judgment in your love because of Jesus. I acknowledge that I do fall far short of perfection in so many ways, and I often bemoan my failings. But in my heart I know that you see me as forgiven, complete, accepted and loved in Jesus. Please help me to live a life of abundance and fruitfulness, characterised by that truth. In Jesus' name, amen.

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