

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble, Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.” - Psalm 46:1-2 NIV

I seldom make New Year's resolutions. Mainly because they are things that I should do anyway and as with most resolutions they seldom last very long. The ones that seem to last longer are ones that are made in a group setting where members of the group hold one another accountable for their decisions and resolutions. That is why Weight Watchers and others groups are successful. However, this year I am making one. My New Year's resolution: **I will not use fear in any way in the coming year. Nor will I let fear influence my decisions.**

I came to this conclusion following 2014 when most the political ads, etc. used “fear” as the main reason why one should be elected over the year. We seem to be living in a time when decisions are based mainly on fear. The recent episode with Sony pictures and their canceling what was probably a bad movie that should not have been made in the first place is a good example. They have canceled the film's release out of fear of what might happen. Fear is a terrible thing. It can influence us to make wrong decisions. It can change our lives, not usually for the good. Living in fear is debilitating at best.

We had a member of one of our churches who lived in fear of leaving her home. The only place she would go other than home was to their camp on a local lake just a few miles from their home. She would not attend worship, go shopping, etc. Doctors appointments created such a great anxiety situation that a doctor was found who would make house calls rather than have her go through the trauma of leaving her home. Yes, this is an extreme but... it seems like this is how many are now living their lives. We fear others, those who are not like us. We fear change, we have always done it this way. We fear what might happen if... And the if's are many. Far to many to begin naming here. We stay home. Lock our doors. Close our shades. We fear. Children no longer play alone or play at all with friends outside. We organize team after team so they are not alone. Our streets seem unsafe. Fear has won.

Why? Do we not believe as the Psalmist, that **“God is our refuge and strength...therefore, we will not fear?”** I looked in one of my concordances the words “fear not” (or, “Do not be afraid” in the NIV). It began with God calling Abram to a new land and ended with words to John in Revelation, “Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last” (Rev. 1:17). In between were the same instructions to the Israelites as they traveled down to Egypt (Gen. 46:30; Moses words to Israel at Sinai (Ex. 20:20); It was Boaz's words to Ruth (Ruth 3:11); It was the angels words to Zechariah, Mary and Joseph (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:13, 30). It was the the word given to Paul during the storm as he was being transported to Rome (Acts. 27:24). And, this is just a small gleaning.

Thus, I give up fear. I will not fear making mistakes. At least I will have tried. I will not fear speaking the truth in love even those many may not agree with me. I will not fear standing with those God calls me to stand with even if it goes against the popular mis-theology of the day. I will not fear, fear. Nor, will I let my decisions be based on the fears of others.

I think of two colleagues in ministry, both are ABC missionaries. One is Dr. Bill Clemmer who has responded to ebola outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo and other African countries since the first outbreaks years ago. He has responded with the love of Christ in very “fearful” situations before most of the world even knew about ebola. The other is Kristy Engel whose story is on the back the calendar in this Weaver. Both of these know the dangers and take the precautions to protect themselves. But, they also know that we are called to be God's hands, feet, eyes and ears in a world so in need of the message of the Gospel in the face of fear.

“Fear not.” Words we need to heed in 2015 - Our God is still with us.