

FAITH CAN FORM A SAFEGUARD AGAINST FEAR By Rick Boxx

Some friends of ours were in the midst of a fierce struggle to keep the doors of their business open. Their problems were serious enough that they were considering bankruptcy. After seeking counsel from various sources and weighing their options, they prayerfully chose instead to push forward.

Just as they were beginning to experience a measure of business success, consequences of the coronavirus pandemic devastated their industry and brought some future opportunities to an abrupt, unexpected end. Fear and panic overwhelmed them. Their training and experience had not prepared them for this new obstacle.

Maybe you or your organization have confronted similar challenges. For most of us, worldwide shutdowns and restrictions have inflicted hardships unlike we have ever known before. When 2020 began, who could have imagined how the year would unfold?

Even in normal times, without the impact of an unprecedented global pandemic, many small business owners live on the edge with very little margin. This is especially true for enterprises still in a startup stage. Profits might come in the future, but in the beginning, operations are strictly day-to-day. So when crises surface, it is easy – and not unusual – for leaders to become paralyzed with fear.

Questions most of us ask at such times include, “What do we do now? Is there anything we can do?” Faced with such gloomy circumstances, it can be very difficult to remain grounded in faith, continuing to trust that despite the adversity, God has a plan. Has He abandoned us?

It is at times like these that the genuineness of our faith is revealed. And there is no greater source of hope than to turn to the promises in the Scriptures. The apostle Peter was not writing about a pandemic, but offered these assurances to followers of Jesus Christ going through many adversities: “In this you greatly rejoice, though not for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine...” (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Then he wrote, “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed” (1 Peter 4:12-13).

The life of faith – including everyday pursuits in the business and professional world – is one of trusting in God, His direction and provision, even when common sense seems to say otherwise. Fear of the future, we are told, should be replaced with a healthy fear – the reverent awe of God, who ordained work and desires for us to serve as His ambassadors in the marketplace.

As Proverbs 19:23 teaches us, “The fear of the Lord leads to life, so that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.” When disaster looms, one fear – fear of God – is worth embracing. Many times throughout my career, submitting to God has brought me peace rather than panic. Because we have His assurance, “Call on Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things that you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3).

Finding ourselves at a loss for answers, having to trust in God alone, can be the very best place to be.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever reached a point in your career – or in your business – when you felt on the verge of giving up, but through prayer and wise counsel chose to persevere? If so, what was the situation like and what was the outcome?
2. Perhaps you are facing a circumstance right now, obstacles that seem insurmountable. How are you coping with them? Have you reached a point when God and His guidance are your only option?
3. How has the pandemic affected you and your work? What role, if any, has faith played in your ability to handle the great challenges of this time?
4. What do you think of the Bible passages quoted and the promises they give? Do other similar passages come to mind that have been meaningful for you?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages: Psalm 37:4-5; Proverbs 3:5-6, 16:3,9; Isaiah 40:31, 41:10; Jeremiah 29:11; Matthew 6:25-34