

I am Afraid!



I am afraid. I suppose that as a Christian, a child of God who has walked with the Master for many years, I should not confess to being afraid. At least that is what I am told. But if I said that I was not afraid, would that be true? Would that be genuine? Would that be real?

As I reflect on past years, I begin to wonder what has happened to my faith. Where is that confident girl who despite living in one of the most volatile areas of Jamaica was not fearful of going about her usual business? During those years, there were times when I felt as if I was living in the midst of world war III or Armageddon. People's houses were being bombed, there were areas that were 'no go territories' depending on which side of the community you lived. I arrived one evening from prayer meeting to see the body of a woman in the street and another day there was the body of young boy, aged no more than thirteen, killed because they were deemed to be an informer. Of course, there were many men who were killed on a regular basis whether by the so called 'enemy' or the police. I was often told that I did not belong and that I should move out and 'go live a Beverley Hills'. Yet despite all of this I was never afraid. Cautious, yes but never afraid.

I remember quite vividly one Sunday morning the apartment block in which I lived was rocked with the news of threats being made by gunmen from the other side of the community. They were planning to bomb the apartment block. Why? This was where the men in 'my side' of the community congregated to talk, gamble and have their fun. I was perturbed at the threat and so I called on my friends and we gathered at another friend's house to pray and seek the face of the Almighty. Psalms 46 was used to comfort and assure me of God's protection and his power to sustain. We fellowshiped, prayed and then went home (yes it was late) confident in the knowledge that I was safely covered and hidden in the refuge of God, notwithstanding all of this, I was not afraid.

Fast forward to this present time. I am 'shook' (frightened) as the children would say. I asked myself isn't it the same God that kept me years ago in the virulent, volatile and toxic community in which I lived? What has changed? What is it that has eroded my confidence and cause me to be consumed with fear?

In the very beginning of this crisis I felt the need to be armed with information. I needed to know what was happening, what caused it, how to identify if you have it and how to combat it. This desire for knowledge was like a greedy monster wanting to devour every byte of information that was out there. It was fed daily with the constant bombardment of conspiracy theories, the barrage of negative news and the outpouring of gloom and doom of those professing to hear from God. The more I read and heard, the more it slowly began to affect my psyche and eroded my confidence.

I guess also the knowledge that I have underlining health issues, which make my ability to recover from this enemy seems almost negligible, also contributed to my fear. I used to say that I did not understand how people could stay in their houses for weeks and months unending without leaving it. Yes, I have been known to spend a week or so during the school holidays locked in the house just focusing on completing whatever project I might be working on. Once that project was finished, I would be out, doing my shopping, going to visit friends or family or just going out to do what 'normal people' would do. It was only a few days ago when I needed groceries that I realised that I was slowly developing a case of agoraphobia. I had to challenge myself, face my fears and after a sleepless night went out to do my shopping shaking and quivering in my shoes.

I realised that this is the season for people to develop mental health issues. This virus - Covid 19 will not only affect us physically but also emotionally, mentally and financially. Having friends who check on me regularly, cutting off the regular diet of Covid 19 news alert, making plans with my husband for the future and meditating on the Words of God have gone some way to help me heal. Psalms 46 -once again became my starting point, as I began to spend time talking to my Heavenly Father, I anchor into his presence and there find a soothing balm for my troubled mind.

I know that I must be wise and take every precaution to protect myself, this includes my emotional well-being. Even though there is still some sense of lingering fear I am taking comfort in knowing that God is my refuge and strength and a very present help in trouble.

I keep speaking to myself, telling myself that I will not fear even though the earth is being moved by this pestilence. I will be still, knowing that my God is an awesome God who reigns with wisdom, power and love.

Yes! Today - I tell myself I am not afraid.

