

Revelation 21:8 (ESV) says:

“But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

This sobering verse gives a list of people who will not inherit eternal life. Among them are “the cowardly”—a group we don’t often think of in this context. So what does it mean to be “cowardly” in a spiritual sense, and why is it serious enough to cost someone eternal life?

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1. The Root of Fear: Lack of Faith

Fear, at its core, stems from uncertainty and lack of trust in God. A person who lives in fear is often uncertain about their future—what they will eat, where they’ll go after death, or whether they’ll survive the storms of life.

The Bible teaches that true peace and assurance can only be

found in Jesus Christ. Without Him, people are spiritually insecure, and that insecurity breeds fear.

Hebrews 2:15 (ESV) tells us that Jesus came

“to deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”

Without Christ, fear of death becomes a kind of spiritual bondage. But in Christ, that fear is broken.

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2. The Connection Between Fear and Faith

Fear and faith are opposites. When we trust God, fear loses its grip. But when faith is absent, fear takes over—and that can lead people away from God and into sin.

1 John 4:18 (ESV) says:

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”

This means that someone who is filled with fear may not have fully embraced the love of God through Jesus Christ. That person still lives under the shadow of judgment and uncertainty, rather than the light of grace and assurance.

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3. Fear as a Sign of Being Outside Christ

Living in fear of death, of evil forces, or of life's uncertainties can be a sign that someone is not truly rooted in Christ. That kind of fear reflects a spiritual condition, not just an emotion. It reveals a heart that has not been anchored in the promises of God.

Paul writes in

2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV):

“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love

and self-control.”

A life led by God’s Spirit is marked by courage, love, and sound judgment—not paralyzing fear.

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4. Fear Often Leads to Sin

People who live in fear tend to cling to what they can control. This can lead to sin—idolatry, lying, sexual immorality, or even the worship of money or security. When people don’t trust God to provide or protect, they often turn to worldly solutions that lead them further from Him.

Fear, then, is not just emotional—it is spiritual rebellion when it replaces trust in God. That’s why “the cowardly” are grouped with murderers and idolaters in Revelation 21:8. Their fear led them away from faith, and their lives showed it.

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5. Jesus Calms Both Storms and Souls

In Mark 4:39–40 (ESV), Jesus rebukes a storm and then asks His

disciples:

“Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”

The disciples were afraid because they didn’t yet fully trust who Jesus was. But once they understood His authority, even over nature, they were filled with awe.

Likewise, if we truly believe that Jesus is Lord—over life, death, and eternity—we will not live in fear. We will have peace in the storm, even if our circumstances don’t change.

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6. Eternal Security Through Faith

In contrast to the fearful, Revelation 21:7 (ESV) says:

“The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.”

To “conquer” in this context means to remain faithful to Christ, even through hardship and persecution. It is to live by faith, not fear.

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Final Reflection

Ask yourself honestly:

- Do I fear death?
- Am I anxious about my future?
- Do I doubt where I'll go when I die?
- Do I fear the spiritual forces of darkness, like witchcraft or curses?

If so, those fears may be pointing to a deeper issue: a need for genuine faith in Jesus Christ.

The good news is that Jesus invites you to come to Him, trust Him fully, and live in the peace and power of His Spirit.

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John 14:27 (ESV) –

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

Today, let go of fear and take hold of faith in Christ. Eternal life begins not when we die—but when we trust.

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