

Do Not Fear

Do Not Fear

Posted by [Nathaniel Francis](#)
05 Nov 2018 08:22 PM

Fear, Fear Everywhere

One of the things that's been heightened in my awareness lately is how much people are driven by fear. It's an odd thing to observe because I don't look for it nor do I necessarily want to see it. It doesn't bother me on a personal level, it's just more pervasive than I thought. It rears it's nasty head in places I do not expect to see it.

I decided to write a response to this in a general sense.

Night Terrors

To be fair and not throw stones at my fellow man, I have had a vibrant history with fear in my own life. As a child, my parents told me that I suffered from night terrors. Some of my earliest memories about dreams are very dark, aggressive nightmares. They came and went well into my teen years when something truly life changing happened inside of me. I was in the middle of an iconic "some personal, monstrous, shapeless thing is chasing me" type dream and I was nearing the point where the predator would inevitably catch up to me and I'd wake in the aftermath of certain doom. During this particular dream, something completely new happened. Instead of accepting my fate, I decided that I had enough running, hiding and failing against what was obviously a competent foe. I chose in that moment to turn and face my enemy with all the anger and frustration I had bottled up from being prey for so long. I turned and attacked the monster with all the strength and force I could muster (remember that this was a dream). And I won. I completely destroyed my enemy to death. I remember distinctly, as if i were reliving it right now, that as the monster lay in its death throws that the whole dream world seemed to turn its gaze on me. Every monster in that dream turned & fled as if they had become prey and I had become the predator. I woke up in a peace like I had never known. It was so peaceful, it was almost unsettling in its contrast from the fear I had been accustomed to. For a long time I didn't really know how to wrap my head around it.

I've never had another nightmare. I'm not joking. I've had intense dreams; dreams with dangerous or precarious situations. But never have I feared as I have slept. To dream, for me, is to relax, enjoy - even play in the ocean of my subconscious, traversing the dimensions of my imagination. So,

since my teen years I have not dreamed in a state of fear. But I have encountered it while awake, I have had to face helplessness and hopelessness that threatened to choke me out.

The One Who Taunts

The most notable waking fear that I have experienced was in a work situation. One of the jobs I held while starting to raise my family I was rather good at. I not only became proficient at the base skills for the job, but also the logistical elements, allowing me to rise in both rank and responsibility. I was also blessed to be part of a synergetic group of coworkers. This helped the days pass well and made the hard jobs go smoother. This was very rewarding, being successful at what I was doing while having the privilege of enjoying it while I did it. Into this scene was injected a real life enemy. This enemy chose to wreck this pleasant setup using explicitly division political techniques. Using short cut methods, it gathered listening ears from key areas of management and injected pure destruction. Without cause my cohorts and I were accused, threatened, some of us disciplined, and all of us separated into different teams & working situations. it was swift, decisive, and miserable. In its victory it taunted me.

This was no dream, this was the professional dimension of my life torn from the heights of success & enjoyment into an oppressive state by the sinister actions of what could only be considered a personal enemy. I had many other things in my life that I was giving attention to at that time, so it took me a while to gather my bearings and face it. During that while, I accepted the lie that this was just business and that this enemy was merely looking out for itself, causing trouble without motivation. But that was most definitely a lie. The truth was in the taunt. Only an enemy taunts his foe as only a predator stalks his prey. Once I realized that truth, that my companions and I had been personally attacked under the guise of selfish business practices, I knew that this was at least partially my battle to fight - and to win. I would accept nothing but total victory.

Over the course of the next few weeks, I was able to reverse the damage, unravel the conspiracy, and bring light to the truth. In the end, there was only victory - complete and total victory. It was only after this battle had been won that God changed my professional context. In terms of fear, the internal portion of this battle, I can only say that it felt as if something was tearing both my right and my ability to provide for my family. I felt deep inside myself that if I would let this happen to me once, it would always have the right to do so to my life, in the area of productivity & professional success. I would be like a house with no doors that the enemy could come and rob me as it pleased. And much like my dream, something awoke in me to not just resist, but to destroy the enemy absolutely, to not only stop the heist, but completely annihilate the perpetrator so that it could not harm anyone else in this way ever again.

I know this sounds aggressive, and it is. But an enemy is not something that can be appeased. It does not come to terms at the table of negotiation. Like a predator it will either feast or die. I chose to not give it the chance, but to force its demise so that no one else could be its prey. This, I later learned, is the heart of a defender: to destroy an enemy for the safety and benefit of others.

Mangy Lion vs Resurrecting Power

Not ironically, the enemy I encountered in real life was very similar to how Peter describes the devil. "(he) prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour"(1 Peter 5:8). Predatory, destructive, personal. To the unsaved, this is a terrifying picture. Saved people, God's children, have the power of Holy Spirit - the same power that resurrected Jesus Christ from the dead to guard against this enemy. James said to "resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7) meaning that even with all his might the devil can't overcome the believer. Quite the opposite. The believer can overcome the devil. Nothing is more powerful than the resurrecting power of God. That power, residing in a Christian is more than enough to overcome the devil. The unbeliever has no such protection, like the door-less house, his life is laid open to thieves and robbers. This predatory lion can enter anytime he wishes. No one can live in true peace in this state. Too many try to appease the enemy, pointing him to other's houses or offering morsels to try to satiate the beast. But all this is to no avail because this mangy man-eating lion is also the serpent that eats the same dust we are composed of. Nothing will satisfy this enemy except to destroy you and I. Only the resurrecting power of God defeats this enemy totally because he cannot consume that which cannot die. Because of this, there is nothing to fear in this life or in the one to come for those of us who live as a habitation of the resurrecting power of God.

Paul wrote to Timothy that God gave us a spirit of power, of love and self-control, not fear (2 timothy 7:1). This is the essence of the spirit that lives within us. It is a powerful, loving, self-regulating force; not a timid, appeasing worm of a spirit. In light of this, I would expect to not see fear in Christian policy & practice. There's no place, no context for that. In place of fear, I expect conviction, certainty, optimism, and an adventurous spirit.

A Policy of Fear

But considering what we find instead. Take orthodoxy for instance, a philosophy of Christian practice with an impeccable marketing campaign to "do it right". This promises to be such a helpful, simple, short track approach to effective Christian worship ministry & practice. But it does not deliver in the least bit. Instead of clear practices & guidelines to follow we get an awkward manifestation of tyrannical legalism, the very thing God's grace saved us from. And the goading tool of the orthodox tyrant is fear. Fear of doing something the wrong way or "less optimal" way. The fear of missing the high mark of perfect Christian expression which, instead of being painted clearly, is the corollary of the individual not doing the host of imperfect things that he or she could possibly do. It is the exposition of the multitude of imperfect things that the yoke of burdensome anxiety is revealed.

Orthodoxy is harmful in many ways but for the sake of this topic, it is marinated in fear that is nurtured into the individual, emanating from the tyrannical legalism that serves as its modus

operandi. As you can see, I am not orthodox in my spiritual approach. I would love to believe that we are indeed doing Christianity right, but I will certainly not do so by submitting to a fear saturated paradigm, to be frank. That would be akin to spiritual suicide. And indeed, so many that have submitted to this farce appear to be dreadfully lifeless.

Old & New Covenant Bondage

As another example, let's consider the partner in crime to orthodoxy, the easily recognizable, yet somewhat vaguely understood world of legalism. The Christian walk inherited its legalistic dimension from its Jewish ancestors, in lieu of adhering to the existing structure of faith & practice that God had ordained for them, the Jews - as characteristically seen through the Pharisaical tradition, produced an act of non-faith by expanding and overly complicating the Jewish walk with unnecessary legislation. To put it simply, they restricted the free lives of God-fearing people by binding them under laws that God neither wrote nor condoned (as made evident by Jesus' many refutations and corrections of their make-believe laws).

Puppies in God's Backyard

To visualize this, imagine a walled in yard as the domain that God considers acceptable life & practice for the believer. This would be God's design for the Jewish faith before the earthly ministry of Jesus and likewise the Christian faith since Jesus fulfilled the Jewish faith and established a new way of living in right relationship with God. These two are not technically the same, but the metaphor applies to each in their own time. Now imagine that you and I are puppies in this walled in yard. We are free to roam, frolic & play as we see fit. This is as God, the master, intended. Now imagine that one of us is on a leash that allows us to play in roughly half the yard. This leash is tight enough to keep its puppy far from the wall on any side of the yard. On the one hand, the puppy is sure to not breach the wall. On the other hand, it's only playing in roughly half the yard.

That leash is legalism. Without just cause, it limits the attainable scope of God's intended domain for us. And for what? The Pharisaical tradition considered legalism as an effective assistant to God's acceptable domain for living. A tighter leash on life would prevent the puppy from going over or through the wall - analogous to breaking God's law. In their system (the Jewish religion), sinning was not merely a mortal thing, but also an economic one. Once a person had violated God's law, they were responsible to atone for that via sacrificing the appropriate resource on God's altar. So, a good Jew would be spiritually "taxed" less if he/she lived within God's acceptable domain for life. Those that would venture outside the fence would be penalized in accordance with their violation. Think of this system like an invisible electric fence & the puppy is wearing a shock collar. An adventurous, wandering puppy would be zapped in accordance with its violation of the life fenced area. The obedient puppy would experience no such shock. (some people have to learn by experiencing the fence, but that's another topic). Back to the Jewish system: wayward Jews

would be hit both morally & economically (a practical penalty) by their transgression. Faithful Jews would not. That's strange in our 21st century context to conceive of, but it was a reality of daily living for the Jewish community. So you can imagine how staying farther in from the fence could be rationalized into practical merit from the standpoint of religious penalties. The trade off for these was sacrificing a portion of one's freedom - hence my using a leash on a puppy that's already inside the fenced yard.

Not Again...

But here again we find the common theme of fear. In this context, fear of accruing penalties & having to pay for them. What an odd thing to trade ones freedom for. How much of the proverbial yard of life is sacrificed for this assurance? Anything beyond what God prepared for us is too much in my opinion. This was true in the Jewish religion - as Jesus rightly condemned the Pharisees for doing so. And it certainly is true today when we have the blood of Jesus to cleanse us from all our sins. The penalty for our sins no longer lies in physical sacrifices as it did for the Jews. Jesus paid it all. So, to a certain extent, I find it doubly odd that there are Christian legalists who distort God's law so as to fashion a leash for those who succumb to their influence. They are leash makers in God's backyard, limiting people's freedom out of a misguided sense of religious piety and of the wrestle against sin.

The Freest People the World Has Ever Known

Now, I feel my beef is with the tyrannical religious spirit that finds so much pleasure in putting leashes on free people, but I certainly have no intention of being gentle with the people that agree with its strangling agenda. God's people are a free people. They are the freest people the world has ever known. Because of the resurrection of the Lamb of God & the indwelling of the Spirit that raised him from the dead, we have nothing to fear. We have absolutely nothing to fear.

Tags: [spirituality](#), [theology](#), [victory](#)
[0 Comments](#)