

Fear Is the Mind-Killer

‘Jack is on trial for the murder of his wife, but the police were unable to find a corpse. Still there was plenty of evidence strongly suggesting that Jack had indeed murdered his wife. His defense attorney makes an impassioned appeal that Jack should be released and concludes his closing argument by saying, “Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I have a surprise for you. Within one minute, Jack’s wife will walk through the door of the courtroom”. The jury watch the door. And after a minute, the defense attorney says, “See, ladies and gentlemen, I made up that statement, but the fact you all watched the door for one minute just proves that there must be reasonable doubt. You are not sure that a crime has been committed, so I invite you to return the only verdict you are able, which is Not Guilty”. The jury retires to consider their verdict. Just ten minutes later, the jury is back in the court. After passing the verdict to the judge, the judge invites the foreman to read the verdict. “Guilty”, she says. The defense attorney cannot help himself. “This can’t be right; you were all watching the door”. The foreman looks at the defense attorney and says, “Yes, we were all looking, but your client wasn’t”.’

Well, without a body, a corpse, there will always be a little bit of “reasonable doubt”, I imagine. But in the case of Christ Jesus,

not only wasn't there a corpse, there was a Body, and it was alive! The disciples, gathered in their room, certainly weren't looking at the doors, for they had no expectation that anyone would walk through them. For fear of being arrested, or even killed, they had made sure that no one could get in, save with a battering ram, for they securely locked the doors. But an alive Body did indeed walk through the doors, well, actually, He walked straight through the doors without opening them, and walked through walls as if they weren't there. As easily as He had walked straight through the two-ton stone that sealed the entrance to His tomb, Christ Jesus came on in. But Thomas the Twin wasn't there that day. When the others told him about seeing the Lord, Thomas wouldn't believe unless he saw with his own eyes, and touched with his own hands. Just over a week later, the disciples were meeting again, still fearful, doors securely locked. But the Lord just waltzed right in, maybe more like a Star Trek beam in, without the light and sound effects. On seeing the Lord, Thomas' doubts vanished as quickly as the Lord had appeared in their midst. And because of Thomas' skepticism, Lord Jesus makes a statement that has blessed countless believers through the centuries: "Blessed are those who believe without seeing Me" (John 20:29).

The disciples were still afraid a week later. Even after several weeks passed, and the Lord had appeared and worked many miracles among them as John notes in 20:30, it wasn't until the Holy Spirit came upon them, when Holy Spirit *filled* them that they

lost their fear. So when hauled in before the Sanhedrin for the criminally spreading alleged rumors and lies about this convicted felon, the troublemaking blasphemer just recently crucified, Jesus, these new apostles could only be described as fear-less. Recall what Peter and the others said to those “supreme court justices” in Acts 5:29: “We must obey God rather than any human authority”. Wow! What a statement to say to the High Council. It must stung them like a slap in the face. Infuriated, no wonder they voted to kill them. Like people everywhere, when anyone rebels and ignores their laws, the lawmakers are enraged and want to stick it to those “lowlives”, those “deplorables” and make them suffer. And so they extend their lockdown orders, threaten to bulldoze their churches, and throw the whole lot of them in jail. Seems I got confused there a minute. These Jewish elders were planning even worse. They’d already imprisoned the apostles, but God had miraculously freed them from their jail. So now, if they couldn’t keep them quiet and behind bars, then they would just get rid of them permanently by killing them.

“Not so fast”, advised Gamaliel. This famous, prestigious master Ph.D. of Mosaic Law, the Apostle Paul’s teacher, this well-respected great intellect of immense gravitas, stood up and the room fell silent. He asserted that if Peter and the others were followers of a just another movement, then it would sooner or later fall apart, like all others before had. But if they were following God, then the council might find them opposing God Himself. So

in lieu of imprisoning them again, which hadn't worked before, this time they flogged the whole lot of them, and then released them.

Nothing particularly surprising so far, but the apostles' reaction is. Recall how Acts 5:41 describes them: "The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus". Now if I had just been flogged, scourged, I don't think "rejoicing" would be quite the word to best describe me. But then again, I, unlike them, had not just days earlier been filled with Holy Ghost and His dynamite, resurrecting power. If I had, then I would rejoice too. Here the apostles had come face to face with the very oppressive political power that Lord Jesus had faced, which could sentence to death, and come away from it rejoicing that they had been flogged. They were so happy that they were found worthy enough to suffer because of Jesus' name! In spite of the blood and gore their bodies suffered, the indescribable pain and agony they must have felt, it was all overshadowed by joy because they had suffered just a tiny fraction of what Lord Jesus had undergone.

Now how would you feel? If Lord Jesus calls you to suffer as a martyr for His name, would you welcome it? Or turn tail and run away? Another way of asking this is, are you filled with Holy Spirit, or not? If you're filled, you might not necessarily run headlong into certain persecution and pain, but neither will you run away if your circumstances force you to stand for His name. If you're not filled, you'll take the thousands of dollars reward money and re-

nounce His name, all the while concocting some rationalization in your mind of why it's all good. When the Holy Spirit is strong in you, you become fearless. No longer do you care what man, governments, anything can do to you. For you truly do have one foot in Heaven already, while the other still walks on the earth. If this doesn't yet describe you, then pray to be filled with Holy Spirit. And He will come, as soon as you're ready. You may not necessarily notice anything different, until push comes to shove. Then you will. You'll quite likely be shocked at what you're able to do and say. All for the glory of God.

The title of today's sermon is a well known quote from one of the greatest science fiction writers of the 20th century, Frank Herbert. His most famous work, *Dune*, written in 1965, frequently cited as the best-selling science fiction novel in history, "spawned" a huge media franchise consisting of eighteen more novels, six nonfiction books, nine short stories, four comics series, one card, one role play, two board, and five video games, two television series, and two movies, the second to be released later this year. In the first novel which set everything in motion, called *Dune*, after sand dunes, the main character recalls an ancient great monastic teaching, "Fear is the mind-killer". This quote became famous, because it is absolutely true. For fear really does kill the mind. When you're scared, many people are paralyzed. This is just one of myriad examples of how God uses even atheists and secular media to insert truth gems into this world of lies in which we live.

Maybe I should say, into this world of *fear* in which we live. What is the main message of everything we're fed by the mainstream media? Fear. The devil wants to keep us in a constant state of fear. Because then our minds are killed. And we won't be able to think for ourselves. We'll need to be told what to do. Just like a paralyzed hostage victim. We're supposed to do what we're told, without thinking, never planning escape and liberation. For all freedom comes by seeking God. We're supposed to fear climate change, record severe weather, the coronavirus, of whatever the next thing is. We're never to have peace, because, at peace, our minds are quiet enough to actually hear Holy Spirit, and study His Bible. And the devil can't have that, can he?

So what does God tell us in I Peter 1:13? "So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world". Verse 17: "live in reverent fear of [God] during your time here as 'temporary residents'". God has promised to keep us regardless of what the world throws at us. We may be mocked by the world, or worse, but we should never try to be liked by the world. Believers don't need the world's respect. All we need is God's grace and blessing. For we each play our part in bringing about the consummation of all things, the restoration of heaven on earth when our Lord returns and the New Jerusalem descends on the newly perfected earth and creation. This is your calling. No fear. Trust in God. "In God we trust". Make it so.

