

Casting Out Fear (Part Two)

“Mature love drives out fear”

Reflection 11 in the series “The Last Great New Command”

If I would really find my way to mature love, I have to quit being afraid. We know that. We know that mature love drives out fear and we know that fear also drives out mature love. We know the silly inappropriate things we do when fear intrudes inside any relationship: how we torment and embarrass ourselves by our jealousies and anxieties, and how we make it so much more likely that the thing we fear will happen.

Think about it. As soon as we become anxious, love disappears. As soon as we become anxious, anxious about our lives or our security, or whether we’ll have enough money for our kids to go to college, or whether our lives will turn out the way we want them to, as soon as we become anxious and fearful people, love flies right out of our lives, out of our families, out of our churches, even out of our nation.

The truth is, you choose fear or you choose love. It’s a choice. Whichever you focus on destroys the other, so that when I get out of myself and my fears and simply love with no concern for whether I am loved, then love floods into my life.

So the world comes to us and cries, I want to know what love is. You remember the song:

Gotta take a little time
A little time to think things over
I better read between the lines
In case I need it when I’m older

This mountain I must climb
Feels like a world upon my shoulders
Through the clouds I see love shine
It keeps me warm as life grows colder

In my life, there’s been heartache and pain
I don’t know if I can face it again
Can’t stop now, I’ve traveled so far
To change this lonely life

I want to know what love is
I want you to show me
I want to feel what love is
I know you can show me.

In case I need it when I’m older.

But the one thing that's most important is this: Never, never give in to the fear. Ever. We have to trust. It really is faith from first to last, because if you would ever live a life of love, you can never, never give in to the fear.

Jesus will show you what love is. He'll show you the power that comes back into your life by your decision to seek only to love and not to be loved. He'll show you how by the power of your love you can resurrect what is loving and loveable in another. He'll show you what to do with others, with your wife, with your son, with the people at work, with anyone, how to get trust by trusting, how to get understanding by understanding, how to get support by supporting. But you can never give in to the fear.

It's John's point in 1 John 4. It's also Peter's point in 1 Peter 3:14-15 when he writes to beleaguered Christians trying to keep faith in a pagan society.

“Do not fear what they fear;
do not be frightened.
But in your hearts
set apart Christ as Lord.”

This then is the challenge to each of us in the days and weeks and months ahead:

Do not fear what they fear.

Do not fear ridicule or insult or rejection
Or even being misunderstood.
Do the right thing.
God will be with you.

Do not fear failure.
Success and failure are often only
Someone's notions of how things
Should have gone.
And you will learn a whole lot more from failure
Than success.
Do the right thing.
And do not fear what they fear.

Don't even be afraid of making mistakes.
Jump into life's thorniest situations.
Good people must get involved
Out on the edges where real life is lived
And the issues are complex
And the answers are not at first clear.
So out there mistakes can be made.
Do the best that you can,
And do not fear what they fear.

Do not be afraid of admitting you're wrong.
Chances are, everyone knows it anyway,
And the only way back is to admit it.

Do not fear slipping behind at work
Or in life.
Most of it is dust blowing in the wind.
Their scale is not yours,
Nor are their standards.
Work hard,
And do the right thing,
But do not fear what they fear.

Do not fear how you measure up to others,
Or how your stuff measures up to theirs.
God judges by your heart.

Do not fear changing times.
Or an uncertain future.
Things are always coming together
And falling apart
And coming together again
And falling apart again.
But often it's in their falling apart
That space opens up
For what is new and better.
Do the right thing.
God will see you through all needed change.

Do not fear being embarrassed.
Embarrassment too blows away in the wind.
Few dwell on it, unless you do.
Do the right thing.

And do not fear even disease
Or suffering or death.
"It is the soul afraid of dying
That never learns to live."
You have inside yourself
The promise of eternal life.
And God says,
One by one
I call each of you home anyway.
Do the right thing,
And do not fear what they fear.

But in your heart set apart Christ as Lord.
Talk to him:
Christ, you are my Lord.
This is about you, not me.
I do as you bid me.
I do what brings glory to you,
Not me,
What promotes your love on earth.
I answer your call.
May my gifts,
The gifts you have given me,
Be yours for the using.
Forgive me.
Cleanse me.
Heal me.
Fortify me,
So that it is your will that will be done,
And not the Evil One's.
May I hear your simple clear voice
Among so many others.
Make me your servant.
And that will be enough,
More than enough.

So we wrestle with fear.
We act out of fear,
Even the very best of us.
Don't.
If you act out of fear,
If you fear what others fear,
You will lose your way in life.
You will miss your true calling.
You will not see things as they are
But only as distorted by fear.
You will make compromises
You really are too good to make.
And you will lose
The gifts God has given you.

Fear will dictate your future,
The choices you will make,
Who you will become.
Fear will determine the limits and borders of
Your life.

Confront fear.
Be ruthlessly honest.
What are the things you most fear?
Put words to it.

Is it just what everyone fears?
Do not fear what they fear.
You are not just anyone.
You are Christian.

We are called then to take a little time, a little time to think it over, to read between the lines, in case you need it when you're older. Believe me, you will need it when you're older. See what fear does in your life: the strange and unloving places it takes you, the strange, unloving places it takes all of us.

Choose to trust God. And God will give you radiant life, animated by trust and energized by love.

– Dale Pauls