

Date: 5.22.2016

Walking Dusty

Teacher: Jonathan Parker

Thank you, JP, for your message on Sunday. We appreciate the vulnerability you showed in talking about some fears that were there in regard to that continuing education course and the obvious time you put into the message.

What did you write down, crumble up, and throw at the foot of the cross? The enemy is going to come after it over and over again. He's going to mess with our minds, planting seeds of doubt and that unhealthy fear JP talked about. There will be a continual battle. He is going to urge us to pick it up again; we're going to need to leave it there- at Jesus feet where it belongs. "Ephesians 6:16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."

There is a fear that I've been battling for years. It has manifested itself in various forms through various seasons of life. It's a fear that the enemy always has an angle to attack from. (His weapon of choice unfortunately, because he knows how my mind works, is Scripture, deep questions, and theological stuff). When I am not fighting it with faith, this fear ruins me, plagues my mind, and paralyzes me. You can be sure that in these times, it bears bad fruit in every area of my life. It has been behind many, many deep (and at times boring, for her) discussions with my wife, often bringing anxiety to her. On a positive note, it has been behind many heart wrenching appeals to God and compelled me to constantly dive deeper. On a negative note, it has been behind *much* leaning on my own understanding, insecurity, and skepticism. I've had to learn many lessons and will keep needing to learn until I learn to completely trust God with this thing.

When JP gave us that exercise of writing your fear on paper, crumpling it up, and throwing it at the foot of the cross, it was hard to sum it up on paper. I've become so accustomed to fighting to figure everything out that it was hard for me to just simply put down the phrase "letting Jesus down" and know that God already knows what the heck I'm talking about anyway even if my mind can't formulate it all.

Unlike that constructive, "beginning of wisdom," God-centered fear of the Lord, mine is often the other type- the paralyzing kind that will make one feel like a timid, insecure spiritual orphan. The kind that is breeding ground to doubt and puts a veil right over the heart. It's a fear that drives me to try and study/figure out as much about God as I can because "I have to be sure" (as if I could study my way to God...). It's a fear that prevents me from taking leaps of faith because I can't get it wrong. The enemy loves it because he knows that when I give into it, he has me right where he wants

me. He throws Scripture at me all day, every day to feed this thing and cloud my mind, just like he tried to do with Jesus in the wilderness. He loves to get in our heads and try to distort our views of God, and one of his favorite weapons is the Bible. He loves it when I cringe at passages of Scripture or doctrines and moments in church history that, to be honest, I just haven't received clarity on. The further I dig, the more he stretches me.

To keep it real with you guys, I am often afraid of letting Jesus down. I'm afraid that I really don't really know the real him, that I just fashion him in my own form for my own comfort and my own "peace." I am afraid that I don't truly value his words and truly desire to know him. I'm afraid that when it all comes down to it, he's standing there saying "Follow me" and I simply am not willing to do it. I'm afraid that he has given me the power through the Holy Spirit to climb higher and higher and higher, but I just simply don't want to. I know my flesh and it does not love Jesus or want anything to do with the way of the cross, and that's what makes me so timid sometimes. To make a long story short, when it all comes down to it, it's a lack of trust. Trying to keep myself instead of trusting God to keep me. Trying to figure everything out instead of trusting God to show me things. Trusting him to grow me. Trusting him to correct my interpretations of Scripture. Trusting him to discipline me when I'm disobedient. Trusting him to be my Daddy.

Fear is a selfish motive. At its core, fear is "I need to do X otherwise Y will happen." It doesn't take a Bible scholar to realize that fearing God is a good thing. If we aren't going to obey our Dad because we love him and trust that he knows what's best for us, then we should at least obey him because we respect his authority and don't want a whoopin'. It's better than disobeying, but the motives are still inferior! If we're consistently operating on that level, it's a sign that something is wrong and we have not been "made perfect in love" because that fear of the Lord is designed to lead us to the "perfect love that casts away fear." Love is the most pure (and mature) motive. Love was what kept Jesus on the cross when the others were challenging him to save himself and come down. It was God's love that led Stephen to say, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" as he was being stoned to death. If the foundation of our walk with Jesus is consistently that we're afraid of what will happen to us if we don't follow him or if we want something in return, then that is downright selfishness at its core. Jesus didn't come to feed our selfishness; he came to deliver us from selfishness into selflessness. When we are full of the love of God, we follow Jesus because we love him more than ourselves and love his ways more than sin. And that is why this struggle lives on... because there is much selfishness in my heart that needs to be purged with faith ☺. The more time goes on, the more God shows his faithfulness through these fears I have described to you. I

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hope that this helps those of you who are going through similar fears, or that God will use it in some way if it doesn't exactly relate.

Things to Consider

- Write down your fears so that you can look back and see God's faithfulness
- "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you"