

Choose Your Fear

I must confess that I sometimes struggle with feelings of fear as I consider our upcoming projects. The physical, mental and spiritual demands of preparing for a sequence of foreign projects sometimes feels overwhelming. I must do personal spiritual warfare against negative thoughts.

Then, last Sunday during the service of worship, we sang the prayer-song, “Rain Down.” I was impacted in a new and powerful way by these lines: “Give me strength to cross this water; Keep my heart upon Your altar . . . Keep my feet don’t let me falter.” Metaphorically this is talking about strength to make it through any circumstance or obstacle in life. But last Sunday I took it literally. In Costa Rica we may be hiking over very steep – even treacherous – mountain trails and fording rivers in the Costa Rican back country (i.e., jungle). So I earnestly pray, “Give my old body strength, Lord! And don’t let my feet falter!”

The same applies (metaphorically) to our upcoming trip to a country that is 90% Muslim.

You’re going to be afraid of *something*

In the Psalms we read things that sound like this: “When I am afraid I will not fear.” What’s that all about?

There is no switch to turn our emotions on and off. So the command to not be afraid is really about not being controlled by the negative feelings of fear. We get to *choose* a positive fear instead. We get to choose the fear of our loving and faithful God! By His Spirit, we may choose reverent, worshipful fear of Him – a “positive” fear that moves us into life-giving obedience.

I believe that Jesus modeled this choice for us in Gethsemane the night He was betrayed. When He sweated blood and prayed for a possible escape clause, I believe He was struggling with temptation. (He “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” [Heb. 4:15 NKJV] To be tempted to sin is not, itself, sin.) But Jesus submitted Himself to the will of the Father. In perfect obedience, He *chose* the fear of God over the fear of the awful things that were about to take place.

A reminder from Marilyn

Marilyn called Lynn as we were driving home from a Portland area Costco. She wanted to pray for us. For the next ten minutes this seasoned warrior prayed, even with tears, about many of the things that Lynn and I were facing – things we had not shared with her. The next day she came to our apartment because the Lord told her to bring us some “bread.” She gave us a loaf of homemade bread and some hard-earned “bread” (i.e., cash – what seemed a significant amount for her).

Most importantly, her prayers and her encouragement reminded us again (!) of the fact that God has His eye on us. He knows all our needs and He knows the end of things from the beginning. Wherever He sends us, even into places that threaten to make our feet falter, He will be with us, giving us everything we need. We can choose the fear of God. Even when we feel afraid.

Keep my eyes upon Your altar

Our altar – and yours – is all about the cross. And our hope is the resurrection. So the most important question for any of us is not, “What am I feeling about this?” No. The critical question is: “Is it God’s will that we do this?” We believe it is. So unless that changes, we pray for a focus on Jesus who sends us and for His strength to get the job done once we’re there.

We leave Jan. 31 for Costa Rica – the first of three back-to-back projects.

You can help us.

You may not be a prayer warrior like Marilyn. But you do have access to the throne of grace just as she does. You are not heard for your many words. You are not heard because of your emotion or lack thereof. You are heard simply because, in Christ’s name, you pray.

You can pray right now as you finish reading this. Will you? Thank you!



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