

Facing Our Fears

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I love Halloween. It is one of my favorite holidays, and I look forward to it all year round. This one time of the year we let our imaginations run wild with thoughts of terrifying creatures, foreboding locations, and fear in general. And we do quite possibly the healthiest thing we can do with such thoughts - we laugh at them! People decorate their houses with cobwebs and ghosts, dress up as witches and vampires, watch scary movies, and of course hand out candy to children masquerading as all manner of things. We bring the darkest entities from literature and legend to the forefront, and implicitly highlight the irrationality of such fears as we have fun with the whole silly affair.

I only wish we were so dismissive of all our unnecessary fears. We aren't afraid of things like werewolves, but each of us probably carries the burden of fears just as needless and irrational. As Christians, we really should not be afraid of very much. The Bible contains many passages telling us why we should not be afraid and telling us to take heart. Some of the often cited are Psalms 27:1-14, Psalms 56:1-13, Matthew 6:25-34, and Hebrews 6:25-34, but there are a great many others. The problem with fear is that it is often doubt in disguise, and keeps us from fulfilling our God-given potential. This might be a good time to face down the fears we needlessly carry.

What do you fear? Are you afraid of financial problems? Or that you will fail in school, or at your career? Do you fear rejection, or loneliness, or worry about finding (or keeping) a romantic interest? Perhaps you are afraid of illness. Contemplation is one thing of course, but we shouldn't allow ourselves to actually be afraid of life's challenges. In fact, in view of our

faith, such fears are a bit silly. We believe in an all-powerful God who loves each of us and has our best interests at heart. If we trust Him, why should we be afraid? Consider Matthew 6:25-34 for example. It is undeniable that sometimes events don't play out according to our plans. But then again, our plans are flawed; His are not. Whenever I doubt God's judgment in preference to my own, I think of my two young children. Sometimes I give them what they want; sometimes not. In the latter case they often cannot comprehend my reasons and think I am just being mean. Ah, childhood! But of course I do what I do for their good, even if they do not understand. I imagine that our Heavenly Father view us, His children, in much the same way.

Maybe you have different fears. Perhaps you see the evil in the world, and fear that God isn't always watching, or sometimes doesn't care, or that maybe He isn't really in control after all. Are you afraid that God will let evil "win?" It certainly seems like evil triumphs sometimes. On the other hand, I remember my father teaching me chess as a child. After some instruction, I captured three of his pieces in rapid succession. I thought I was beating him soundly. My younger sister, who was watching, was impressed too. Dad just smiled. He knew he would checkmate me in five moves now, but I couldn't see it, nor could she.

This Halloween, in between costume parties and horror movies, you might take a few moments to consider what really scares you in life. Then contrast your fears with your faith. Is it logical for us to be fearful? Or are we just being silly? Happy Halloween!