

Rising Fear

The fear level is high in our community, True?

Seasons come where fear feeds on fear and like a bushfire reaching the canopy of a eucalypt forest it develops a life of its own.

It is also true that humanity actually lives in fear continually

The power of death is the enslavement to fear of death

The fear of death is the fear of God's presence as judge

Terrorism, airplanes disappearing, cyclones, climate change, ebola etc

Often when these flash onto the screens of our mind fear begins to get a life of its own.

We wonder how we can escape.

We wonder how it would be if...

We move from tolerance to isolationism

From thoughtfulness about the big picture to a defensive self-protectionism

Running into self-protectionism is the root response to fear (root of word is to run)

"I don't watch the news anymore" may actually hide a bunch of fear driven questions about my own safety

My own 'lordship' (my fragile yet vehemently held belief that I am my own I am

My own ministry about the presence of God

My own assurance concerning God's proclaimed presence

So fear to do with God's character and his presence or absence a major part of the focus of our life

Fear about what God is doing (Presence)

Fear about what he is not doing (Absence)

Fear about what is happening (Presence)

Fear about what is not happening (Absence)

Fear about what God is thinking of me (Presence or absence)

Fear that God is not thinking anything about me (Absence)

These fears surround and attack our experience and trust in the presence of God proclaimed in His Gospel.

We may resort to running and hiding, or shouting the facts of the Gospel louder

What then does God speak into our fears through Jesus and indeed the whole biblical revelation?

But here's the thing

On the one hand some texts contains an unambiguous casting out of all fear whilst on the other fear is taught as part of the Gospel experience and teaching.

You have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear

Work out your salvation in fear and trembling

When the man Jesus of Nazareth came demonstrating that he was a human being comprehending and loving the presence of his Father at all times the God presented is not comfortable to be with.

Gerasene's healing precipitated fear of his presence they cried for him to go

Peter falls about in the bottom of a boat full of fish in total disarray and fear

So our incessant passion to have a god with whom we can be comfortable, free from any fear is simply not delivered by the Scriptures or the Gospel.

Are we actually structured for an absence of all fear?

Or are we created for a kind of fear we have never actually known because of our terror?

For this study want to consider the two main words used for fear in Scriptures, fear/afraid and anxiety.

Both seem to involve some kind of continuum, a line down which the same word is used in a variety of ways and intensity both negative and positive.

Fear

God told Noah on exiting the ark that the animals would all fear him

cf

Then when God spoke of his Messiah he said the spirit of fear of Lord will rest on him

or

John heard a voice from heaven speak about the people of God, Give praise to our God you bondservants, you who fear him.

Anxiety

Be anxious for nothing

or

Keep yourself in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life

It is clear in the Scriptures that there is a difference between fear and anxiety

Fear

Fear is used widely: Root meaning to 'run away'

A good gift of terror which propels us away from a dangerous force

But not good if for whatever reason we attempt to run from God (Garden)

Fear in Gospel sense

An overwhelming sense of awe which delivers our heart to deep and true worship

Anxiety

Anxiety is more often than not seen as a negative thing.

It involves the ability think ahead, to anticipate a certain threat or danger

So it assumes some bad or evil outcome on the basis of our understanding of God, the world we are in, our perceived standing in that world, our conscience.

Nowhere do we find the sentiment, "Anxiety is the beginning of wisdom."

Anxiety can become free floating, living with a sense of dread seemingly not based upon anything rational.

We may attempt to deaden this dread by all manner of things; drugs alcohol, compulsive sociability, isolation, money etc

Human anxiety is greatly amplified by our ability to imagine the future, and our place in it.

So the great polluter of fear and anxiety is sin, guilt and its fruit

Fear of God becomes a dread, the fear of an enemy and so his presence becomes something to be avoided, dreaded.

Anxiety becomes polluted by the imagined terror of meeting God.

All our future exchanges with him are projected as terrible

His absence seems the only respite.

Yet all the time we are structured for his presence not his absence
So where do we go?

So apart from the resolution of my terror about God's presence or absence I cannot escape my fears.

My heart is divided by fear at every turn

My heart melts at my anxious driven future where God is absent or God is present as my terrible Judge

O Unite my heart that I might fear your name

The fear of the Lord is clean

Then the fear of the Lord will be my treasure

I want to run from the tomb in fear and great joy not fear and great anxiety

My fear will only give way to something greater than my fear.

If the fear of the Lord is our curse not our treasure,

If the fear not the Lord is not clean and has divided our hearts

We need that fear removed

It is not a matter of balancing the bad fear with good fear

It is not a matter of relegating all fear of God to the OT

It is not a matter of mantras that God is sovereign I'm OK

The world of fear must be exorcised of the dread of meeting God as the enemy.

Exorcised of every moment looking for God as the doer of nasty things.

The world of anxiety must be exorcised of the dread of what is to come when we meet our Judge who is our enemy.

The hanging Judge must be ousted for us to see the Faithful Father

We must be delivered into a world where the paramount fear we have is the unexplainability of being a child of grace,

Of being in the presence of the high and holy one and cherished as his only son,
Of being given eternal gifts beyond our wildest capabilities and comprehension

Of wanting to run into them with shivers up our spine not away from them into a bottle or our job or some other hideous presence.

So

There is fear that we have always known must be cast out

There is fear that we have never known that must be restored

The fear we have always known that has us running from God must be cast out
The fear that brings us trembling in adoration must flood our beings

All about us and the Judge

If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth 1 Peter 1:17

Our mind-pictures of terror and dread can only be cast aside by the love which could hold us in that moment without any dread of the Judge.

So we come to our text which speaks into all this

By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love We love, because He first loved us.

So what does John put on the table in these verses

The Judge and judgement

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The casting out of fear that is torment

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The perfecting of the greater power of God's love greater than the presence of fears and anxieties

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But confidence in the day of judgement may seem unrelated to the present

It may seem unrelated to facing terror and dread in our daily walk

One phrase in this passage shows us that the confidence given is a present blessing as well as a future boldness

It relates to Jesus and our union with him

But in particular it relates to how Jesus is now

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So this confidence is directly linked to how Jesus is now AS HE IS, and our connection with Him now AS HE IS

Our present confidence now is the confidence Jesus has now

Our present confidence is assured on the same grounds that the present confidence of Jesus is based

He has it in the presence of the Father we have it **in this world**

This must include every aspect of **the now world**

Terrorism, affluent disregard and isolationism, cyclones, disappearing jets.

How is Jesus now?

As a man is there any fear of God?

Any rising dread that one day God is going to read the riot act to him for any of your sin,

Any moments when the absolute anxiety of, "MY God My God why have you forsaken me!" returns to stalk his heart.

A human being can't have fear as torment (Vs 18) and enjoy and feel at home in the presence of the one who seems to be causing the torment

His Judge is now seen fully as his reconciled Father

That's were God says his love has brought you

That was the **goal of his love**

His love delivers us from fear as dread into fear as unfathomable delight and worship

Trembling that comes from the awareness of how effective and free Father's love is as the consuming fire that has swallowed up our dread