

Fear or Pride? What's Holding You Back?

After keeping God's Sabbaths and Holy Days for nearly 9 years now, when the fall Holy Days come to a close, I've come to feel a bit empty. But with growth I've come to learn there is no time to remain idle. The stretch between the fall Holy Days and Passover is a time for study, reflection and preparation for the renewal of God's Covenant.

We have to pass through all of the man-made traditional holidays (Satan's counterfeits) and I don't miss them at all. Granted, I used to enjoy celebrating with family and friends, Halloween, Christmas and the New Year. Yep, I celebrated them all as I'm sure most of you did. The trick or treating all through childhood and the costume parties at bars as an adult (even won prizes a few times), and then the Christmas and New Year's parties as well. Complete with plenty of alcohol. The very same holidays I used to long for have been replaced by the feelings I now have for God's Holy Days. What happened to make me change my view, my thoughts and traditions towards something totally contrary to all I had known my entire life? It definitely did not happen overnight. And quite honestly it wasn't until about 8 ½ years ago that the lights finally went on all the way.

Undoubtedly, seeking and finding out God's truth is foundational and plays a major part in it but I wouldn't say that is the total reason for the change. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon him in truth." – **Psalm 145:18**. He knew me before I was born and had His plans for me in place and it is His calling that brought me forth to His way of life (**John 6:44**-"**No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me, draws him; and I will raise him up the last day.**").

Keeping His Sabbaths and Holy Days, reading and studying His Word is when His Holy Spirit really begins to go to work within our hearts. But we still have that free moral agency we've discussed on numerous gatherings, that right to make our own choices (**Proverbs 1:29**-"**because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of The Lord**").

So why is it so difficult to make a choice, a commitment to buckle down and do it God's way? Especially when the truth, THE REAL TRUTH, has been revealed to us? Not the "cut and paste Christianity" of Sunday churches, nor the "sinner's prayer, go to heaven" stuff we had to unlearn but the true Gospel and plan of God as told and revealed in God's Word by His Prophets and Our Lord and Savior

Jesus Christ, a plan that's clearly revealed in God's Bible. Once we learn the true plan of God, following the false teachings is as destructive as dragging our feet on making a choice.

Commitment for most men is a tough word and I'm sure some ladies will chuckle at this. But guys we're not alone. Commitment isn't privy to just one sex. As I just mentioned, unlearning something is extremely tough especially when we've been taught it all our lives by those we love most. How could they lie to us? Well, like us, they never proved for themselves either what was actually in God's Word (**1 Thes. 5:21**). They weren't lying, they just didn't know any better either **Hosea 4:6**-**"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"**. **Matt.15:14**-**"And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the pit"**). They too depended on the guy standing behind the box at the front of the church, giving a few lines of scripture every Sunday morning with a heartwarming story, singing a few hymns, throw a buck into the plate and off to brunch. They too followed the traditions of their parents and so on (**Mark 7:9**-**"The He said to them, full well do you reject the Commandment of God, so you may observe your own tradition"**).

But for those who have received the call, opened the invitation, know the Word of God and still walk with one foot nailed to the floor, why do you still procrastinate? It may be simply God is not truly calling them at this point in time or now I am not a psychologist, but I think there are two emotional elements that are at the root of many reasons why so many people fail to make a commitment in their walk with God (**Lev. 18:4**-**"You shall do My judgments and keep my ordinances and walk in them, I am the Lord your God."**).

Fear and pride. At least for me, I know they were the anchors that held me in the world. Making the choice to live God's Way of life is not something to be taken lightly. By confessing your sins, repenting, baptism and receiving of Christ as your savior, you have made a commitment to Following God's Commandments, ALL OF THEM. We cannot pick and choose, especially Keeping God's Sabbaths and Holy Days. Not one of them has been done away with or "nailed to the cross."

I know fear always played a part in my faith from the very beginning. Fear is defined as: **"Fear** is an emotion induced by a threat perceived by living entities, which causes a change in brain and organ function and ultimately a change in behavior, such as running away, hiding or freezing from traumatic events."

As early as I can remember, my grandma used to tell me "always be a good boy or the bad man will get you." I constantly imagined a shadowy figure lurking around who would drag me straight to hell when I died if I wasn't a "good boy." Fear. If

you're bad you will go to hell when you die. It's engrained in us from the beginning. We are even taught to fear God (**Deut. 6:13**-**"You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall swear by His name."**). Knowing now, this is a reverent fear and the many scriptures supporting this would fill the rest of this page (**Psalm 19:9, Psalm 22:23, Psalm 25:14, Psalm 33:18, Psalm 115:13, Psalm 128:1, Prov. 1:7, Prov. 10:27, Isa. 2:10, Isa. 33:6, Jer. 5:24**). In overcoming this and understanding that God isn't the bad guy and the devil isn't going to get me, I know God loves me and His Love is always greater than the initial fear my grandma planted (**Romans 8:38-39**-**"nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."**).

When I was 13, I went up for an altar call at a church youth group event. I remember going forward out of fear more than desire. Fear of being left out of the group, fear of being judged, "what would my friends think", "why didn't you go up?" In any case, I remember the strange feeling inside when I did and said the so-called sinner's prayer and confessed my sins (**Matt. 10:32**). There was no baptism offered as most events of this type are for a "head count" for lack of a better term but I believe God heard my prayers, knew my heart and it was part of His plan in His will for my life. Sad but I've seen some of these types of events actually boast on how many people were "saved." I knew no more about the Bible than the book on the coffee table or the one on the podium at church. Of course, I had one but only read it at Sunday School, when I went, or the occasional church service at Christmas or Easter.

Fear was not anything of importance during the elementary years outside of grandma's warnings. Not until the adolescent years and peer pressure entered the scene. This is the limiting type of fear I'm referring too came in to play. That apprehension that stops us from doing something for fear of being judged or made fun of, you know the juvenile stuff. It apparently carries over into adulthood as well.

I remember those days as a single young man (still living at home and also between marriages) my mom telling me, "son, you need The Lord." (**Proverbs 6:20**-**"My son, keep your father's commandments and do not forsake the instruction of your mother."**, **Proverbs 9:6**-**"Forsake the foolish and live; and go the way of understanding."**).

Deep down I knew she was right but it was still too early to pay attention to the alarm clocks and I was having too much fun doing things my own way. I think that not knowing the truth, maybe afraid of what I'd find out, or what will I have to

give up is another way that the fear can play into holding us back. God is very patient and He has all the time there is. We don't. We make the assumption "I don't need to make the decision today, I'm only 18, or 25 or 60." The choice will always be ours. It's up to us whether we want another 1000 years added to our nap time and roll the dice on that 100-year second chance. I think I'll pass and set the alarm for the first trumpet.

Over the 30 years in law enforcement I've certainly learned to deal with fear. Fear can be at times quite motivating. With God's help, I've learned to deal with fear, real and imagined, the good and the bad. God has always been there He's brought me through it (**Psalm 27:1-7**).

Through adolescence and on into adulthood, for me, fear turned into something far worse, the original sin of pride.

I'm not talking about Adam and Eve's original sin in the Garden of Eden; I'm talking about Satan getting booted out of Heaven for elevating himself above God (**Isa. 14:13**). The self-elevating kind. Pride is defined as: Pride is a feeling or deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements, the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired.

Through the teen years and out of the youth group, it wasn't cool any more to be a Christian. At least not outwardly. Certainly, not in the circles I was moving in at the time. The party crowds. You can't hit the bars and church too. My pride, my image and ego were by far too important. How I was viewed by my peers outweighed my need for God or at least religion at the time (**Psalm 10:4**—"Through the pride of his countenance the wicked will not seek God, in all his thoughts there is no place for God."). I never totally abandoned God, I still prayed occasionally, usually when I needed something or there was a bad situation I created for myself and "boy could I use God's intervention." Even though I forgot Him, He never forgot me (**Deut. 31:8**—"And the Lord is He Who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not fail you nor forsake you, do not fear nor be dismayed." **Psalm 27:9, Psalm 37:25**).

I was too proud to commit to God's Way of life, there was too much to give up. Besides, once committed there is NO turning back. THIS IS ANOTHER MAJOR FEAR FACTOR (**Heb. 6:6**—"If they have fallen away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing that they are crucifying the Son of God for themselves, and are publicly holding Him in contempt."). This in itself may be what holds someone back from stepping through the door. "I'll keep dancing around the

threshold and jump through at the last minute”, much like a subway with the doors closing...squeeze in at the last minute. Nice try. There’s a few scriptures God gives us to remind us about that. To paraphrase **Matthew 25:1-13**, “Keep your lamps trimmed.”

I used to use a line in Special Ops presentations, “preparation is not paranoia.” If you know and believe something is coming and you do nothing to prepare for it, you have no one to blame for your plight when the catastrophe hits. Like looting a TV set when a hurricane is headed your way...God gives us ample warnings and, in His Word, He will keep us from harm **IF** we do what He says to do (**Proverbs 4:6, Isa.42:16, Matt. 13:42**). He also makes it clear what will happen if we don’t (**Judges 10:13, Proverbs 15:10**—“**There is grievous correction for him who forsakes the way; he who hates reproof shall die.**”, **Isa. 1:28**).

We are provided with the knowledge of how the story ends (**Rev. 22:14**). Still the pride is a hook that’s a tough one to break. Turning 60 the pride thing kind of wanes a bit. As I’ve said previously in sharing testimony, several alarms went off along the way but pride kept me hitting the snooze button.

For me the biggest step in snapping off that hook was making the choice. That was Sabbath keeping (**Exodus 20:8, Exodus 31:14**). That was a huge step for me but it was the beginning. Initially, it was like wearing lead shoes and the many “dead horse” cartoons I flashed at Chauncey and “do you see! (sorry, I thank God for those days as it has brought us here). Keeping it as God said to do in His Commandments began to get easier (**John 13:17**). I actually started looking forward to them but certainly not at first. Keeping the Holy Days was a whole new challenge and on a different level. Initially, I was thinking to myself, “I’m going off the deep end, getting like a Jehovah’s Witness.” But again, when you read the scriptures for yourself, see it with your own eyes and hear and speak it, you eliminate your own excuses. We can make them to ourselves but God won’t buy them (**Proverbs 10:8, John 14:15, 1 John 2:4**). I was setting aside the pride which was beginning to yield peace and even joy. In doing away with “me” and doing things my way, God was replacing worldly things with His. The things I thought I would miss or give up seem to fade and the desire for them is gone. I’ve learned to trust God (**Ruth 2:12, 2 Cor, 1:9**—“**For we had the sentence of death within ourselves, so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God Who raises from the dead.**”).

Finally, after 60 years of boxing with God I've realized my arms are too short. Granted I occasionally think I can still step into the ring but He's swift to remind me who He is and that I'll never hear the bell. Conquering fear and pride is something we cannot do alone. We need help (**Romans 8:37**-**"But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us."**). To get to that point we need to dump the pride and admit we need the help and we're not as tough in our mind as we think (**2 Chr. 30:8, Proverbs 29:23**). People probably don't really see us as we see ourselves anyway (especially if you're 60) and God's judgment is the **ONLY** one that matters anyway. Finding out God's Truth was certainly the catalyst in my transition but *yielding* to His way and *doing things* His way has been the true revelation.

In keeping His Commandments and Holy Days scripture has become even more alive and His presence is awesome. Don't let fear or pride hold you back. His peace abounds in life and it is for everyone who so chooses, **"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be courageous! I have overcome the world. - John 16:33.**

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