

## **Fear or Pride? What's Holding You Back?**

Now that all of the Holy Days are over for this year, I must admit I feel kind of empty. We've got a long stretch between now and spring but they'll be filled with all of the man-made counterfeit holidays. Granted the ones 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 The very same holidays I used to long for have been replaced by the feelings I now have for God's Holy Days.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 4 years ago that the lights finally went on all the way.

Undoubtedly, 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**. His calling *getting* louder and clearer, most assuredly is another catalyst. But we still have that free moral agency we discussed all through The Feast of Tabernacles. That right to make our own choices (**Proverbs 1:29, Isa. 7:15**). 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. Not the "sinner's prayer, go to heaven" stuff we had to unlearn but the true Gospel and plan of God as told and revealed by Our Savior Jesus Christ, a plan 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. They weren't lying, they just didn't know any better either (**Matt.15:14**). They too depended on the guy at the front of the church giving a few lines of scripture every Sunday morning with a heartwarming story, sing a few hymns and off to brunch.

They too follow the traditions of their parents and so on (**Mark 7:9**). 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? Now I am not a psychologist, but I think there are two core elements are at the root of many reasons why so many people fail to make a commitment in their walk with God (**Lev. 18:4**). Fear and pride. At least for me, I know they were the anchors that held me in the world. Much like the change that comes about in the confessing of your sins, repenting, baptism and receiving of Christ as your savior, you must make a choice. A difficult choice. Following God's Commandments, ALL OF THEM, is an even bigger one. Not always easy to make or at least an easy one to keep after committing to do them. There's that word commitment again. But we know this is the difference between called and chosen.

I know fear always played a part in my faith from the very beginning. 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**). Now knowing, 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**). Overcoming this and understanding that God isn't the bad guy and the devil isn't going to get me, I knew God loved me and His Love was always greater than the initial fear my grandma planted (**Romans 8:38-39**).

When I was 13, I went up for an altar call at 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 prayer. 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 to 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, Proverbs 9:6**). 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 (**Psalms 27:1-7**). Through time and growing old, age again just like last week, fear yields to something far worse. Probably the original sin, pride (**Psalms 10:4**).

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. 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 crowd. You can't hit the bars and church too. My pride, my image and ego was by far too important. How I was viewed by my peers outweighed my need for God or at least religion at the time. 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, Psalm 27:9, Psalm 37:25**). It's difficult to pretend to be a Christian when you show up to church once in a while on a Sunday morning. If you're doing that you're only pretending anyway. What's even more common is the Christmas and

Easter version of the church attendee. One foot in the world and the other in God's house is apparently quite comfortable for all the "good people" who are going to go to heaven when they die... (**Matt. 6:24, Luke 16:13, John 3:13**).

But then there are those who genuinely and whole heartedly believe in the Bible and the whole "born again, go to heaven" theology. Sincere and honestly good moral folks who just miss the mark of God's truth (**Luke 13:24**). You and I before the veil was lifted (**Romans 7:11, Titus 3:3**). You and I before we were baptized and began to keep the Holy Days, You and I before we made the choice to run the race (**1 Cor. 9:24**). The difference between the called and chosen (**Matt. 22:14**). Again, this is an award we won't receive until the trumpet sounds but one we won't want to miss once committed (**1 Cor. 15:52, Rev 5:10**). THIS IS ANOTHER MAJOR FEAR FACTOR (**Heb. 6:6**).

Once committed there is NO turning back. 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, 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 mentioned last week, 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. I had to make the choice. That was Sabbath worship (**Exodus 20:8, Exodus 31:14**). That was a huge step for me but it was the beginning. Like wearing lead shoes and the many "dead horse" cartoons I flashed at Chauncey and "do you see! (sorry, 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 I the desire for them is gone. I've learned to trust God (**Ruth 2:12, 2 Cor, 1:9**).

I can't help but believe it's because 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 is something we cannot do alone. We need help (**Romans 8:37**). 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). 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 ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. - John 16:33.**

### **1. Fear**

**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.

### **2. Pride**

**Pride** is a feeling of 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: