



Trading Fear for Faith

By

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The idea of trading “fear for faith” is a primary principle for learning self defense. The full statement is -

“Don't be ‘afraid,’ be ‘aware’ ... trade ‘fear’ for ‘faith’.”

What is this “faith” we use instead of being afraid? It's faith in our ‘training,’ our ‘equipping,’ for defending ourselves. The hours we spend with a self-defense instructor learning how to escape from dangerous situations is what we would trust in if we faced an attacker for real.

The same is true for Christians. The Apostle Paul warned leaders of the Ephesian Church about guarding Christians against the dangers they would face -

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” Acts 20:28-31

Paul later wrote those same leaders and the Christians in Ephesus about the importance of training to *trade fear for faith* -

“And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” Ephesians 4:11-16

Notice the process — Jesus gave gifted people (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers) to His Church to equip (train) believers to edify (build up) the Body of Christ until we all come to:

1. Unity of faith
2. Knowledge of the Son of God
3. A perfect man
4. Measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

5. No longer children
6. Speaking the truth in love
7. Grow up in all things in Christ who is the Head of the Body
8. Joined and knit together by what every joint supplies
9. Every part doing its share
10. Causing growth of the Body for the edifying of itself in love

Now that's what I call "faith defense"! Jesus Christ building His Church, Christian leaders equipping the Church, Christians training, maturing, serving and growing up in all things in Christ.

That is the process that prepares believers to 'trade fear for faith'.

So, how's that working out today? We know Christ is building His Church (Matthew 16:18), so how is the rest of the process working? Are Church leaders equipping? Are Christians maturing and serving? If you take the ten points from Ephesians 4 listed above and place them next to your church, your leaders, your service, do you see any need for improvement?

My guess is that your answer is the same as mine — there is room for improvement.

That shouldn't be surprising given Christ's feedback to Ephesian church leaders about 30 years after Paul wrote his letter to them —

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: ‘I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place— unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.’” Revelation 2:1-7

This caught my attention many years ago and hasn't let go of my mind and heart. Paul the Apostle preached the Gospel in Ephesus decades earlier and spent years ministering in that city and writing to and meeting with leaders of the Ephesian church. However, Jesus Christ, the Builder of the Church, had something “against” the Ephesian church a generation later. The believers at Ephesus had “left” their

“first love.” Jesus called on them to repent and return to that most-important love. He also called on churches to “overcome.”

If Jesus dictated a letter to us today, what would He say? Would He say that everything is fine, we’re doing a great job, no improvement necessary? Or might our Lord point out some areas where we need to improve? Might He tell us we had fallen in some respect and call on us to repent? Might He warn us, as He did the Ephesians, that unless we repented He would remove our lampstand from its place? Would He challenge us to “overcome”?

I think He would and is calling on church leaders and members in our city to do just that — repent and overcome. Our Lord and Savior loves us deeply. He wants us to trade in our earthly fears for spiritual faith in Him. Jesus wants church leaders to love, lead and equip and believers to follow, mature and serve.

There is so much to be done in our city and we can do it as we ‘trade fear for faith’ — faith in our training, faith in our Lord.

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