

The Writing on the Wall

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Freedom from Fear

It is a funny thing about grapevines, there is not a news service in the whole world that is faster. When Derek was attacked at school by a group of kids, the whole town knew about it within a day. This was no innocent scuffle among boys being boys; Derek was placed in the hospital with a concussion. Derek was a totally non-violent boy and was universally loved by those who knew him. A more likable child you would never meet, but his soft manners and appearance made him a likely target for people of the “bully” variety. However, it was not with the concussion and the bruises that the real damage was done – it was the fear that was born in his soul that day.

I was working at the service counter in our store serving his father a few days later. I saw him step nearer his father and I heard him whisper, “That’s them over there.” To which his father responded, “It’s all right, just stay here.”

I froze right there, and in my heart I felt an ache. But that is not all I felt, for this scene awoke within me anger and my protective spirit. I wished with a fervent desire to have been able to prevent this from happening, to have been there. *I could have stopped it, I could have protected him.* There are few things I hate more in this world than people who feel that they must make others suffer for their pleasure – a bully. I wanted to be able to talk to Derek. I never had my chance, but if I had, this how I imagine it would have went.

I was kneeling down in the aisle talking to Derek while I stocked shelves. I glanced over my shoulder and saw Derek watching some boys walk around the corner. I could see the tension in his body, and the fear in his eyes. I could not watch idly any longer.

“Derek, have you ever watched wolves?”

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“I mean, have you ever observed wolves? They are very interesting animals. One of a wolf’s greatest assets is his ability to smell fear. When they smell fear, they know they have won. Fear paralyzes you. It makes you a victim; it robs you of your victory. How many battles have been lost because of soldiers who have been too scared to fight? Too many people back down because they are scared. And because they don’t stand, they lose. They lose their self-respect, their dignity, their rights and freedoms. What kind of place would this country be if we had not fought England? You see, when a wolf smells fear, it keeps on coming, it preys on it, it feeds on it. In some respect, bullies are like wolves. They can smell fear. And when they smell it, they grow stronger and bolder, more demanding. When a bully smells fear in you he pushes you, harder and harder until he owns you.

“It is all right to be afraid, it is natural. But fear does not have to rule your spirit. You do not have to live in fear. God does not want you to live in fear. King David prayed to God in Psalm 56:3, ‘What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.’ Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:7, ‘For God hath not given us a spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.’ God told Abraham not to be afraid because He was his shield and He was with him. (Gen. 15)

“If you want to win against these boys, you do not have to be a kung fu master. You do not even have to fight them. But there is a battle that must be fought. It must be fought in the heart and in the mind. Ephesians 6:12 says that our battle is not with ‘flesh and blood’, and it is not. The battlefield is the mind, and the opponent is fear. You cannot win by surrendering. You have to stand firm and face it. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the conquest of it; the greater the fear, the greater the courage that conquers it. Once you have beaten your own fear, they have no power over you.”

“That is easy for you to say. You don’t fear anyone.”

“That isn’t true, I have feared many things and many people, but fear does not rule my spirit – God does. I do not fear those who can destroy only the body, I fear Him who can destroy the body and the soul (Matt. 10:28). But if God is with me, who can stand against me! So what if they hurt me, no physical suffering could be worse than what Christ suffered for me on the cross. So they kill me! Paul said that to be absent from the body was to be present with Christ in paradise (2 Cor. 5). All the suffering is

nothing compared to the riches I have in Christ! There is freedom from fear through Christ.”

I do not know if Derek would have taken me at my word or not, but I know that he never had any more problems with bullies. And I do not suppose that the point of my telling Derek was for him to make a decision either, for after all, it is only my job to tell and God’s job to change the hearts of men.