

NOTHING TO FEAR – BUT FEAR ITSELF?

By Robert J. Tamasy

It was U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt who said in his first inaugural address, in 1933, “We have nothing to fear but fear itself.” If I had been alive then, I might have been tempted to respond, “Oh, yeah? That’s easy for you to say!” Roosevelt had a point, however, because fear can be a powerful, paralyzing emotion, preventing us from doing – or even attempting – promising opportunities.

A friend, David Sanford, wrote about five fears he has observed that plague professionals. These include:

- Fear of silence (taking time away from work to reflect, re-envision, think creatively and plan).
- Fear of sharing (presenting initial ideas or very rough drafts for others to consider and critique).
- Fear of selling (promoting polished concepts, products, plans, proposals and recommendations).
- Fear of rejection and failure (worrying about what others might say about us).
- Fear of success (worrying that others might expect more of us if we succeed).

Virtually all of us can identify with at least one of these fears, possibly all of them. Several seem familiar for me. Stepping away from work to think, imagine and plan sometimes goes against my grain. “I should be *doing* something, not *thinking!*” But if we do not take pauses from frenetic activity, how do we know we are doing the right things – or doing them the right way?

Selling has never been one of my strong points, as I learned early on when I was still in college. The prospect of trying to persuade people to buy a product from me often felt like trying to twist their arms behind their backs. And I think we all have had times when we hesitated from moving forward, struggling with the thought, “What if I try and do my best, and still fail?”

Even at this advanced stage of my career, I find myself wrestling with these fears at times. Then I try to remind myself of truths such as, “If I do not try, failure is guaranteed.” Or, to restate the Golden Rule, “Sell unto others as you would have them sell unto you.”

But I have found that the real solution for overcoming fear is not clever slogans, but trusting in God, His wisdom and guidance. Here are some passages I have found helpful in that regard:

Faith in God’s presence. When we confront daunting situations and fears, knowing God is with us in the midst of them can bring us confidence and hope. *“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand”* (Isaiah 41:10).

Belief in God’s love. We as God’s children believe He is sovereign – that He knows our circumstances and is in control. Therefore we can trust He will use them for our ultimate good. *“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love”* (1 John 4:18). *“For you did not receive a spirit of slavery that returns you to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’”* (Romans 8:15).

Trust that God can deal with our obstacles. When problems appear too big for us to handle, we have the assurance God is bigger than our problems. *“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Which of the five fears listed can you identify with the most? Explain your answer.
2. Do you regularly wrestle with other fears not included on this list? If so, what are they, and when do you typically encounter them?
3. How do you usually attempt to deal with these fears?
4. What difference does faith in God make for you when these fears arise, if any? Do you even think He is concerned about your fears and anxieties as you deal with them during the course of a normal day, including your work? Why or why not?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about principles it presents, consider the following passages:

Psalm 118:6; Jeremiah 29:11,13; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:7; 1 John 4:4