

Finding Freedom From Fear In Anxious Times

Fear. Nervousness. Anxiety.

If you are lucky enough to avoid these feelings dominating your person right now and turning a few more hairs gray, then you can likely still smell them in the air and see them in the actions of those around you.

It doesn't matter which political party people align themselves with. Liberals' fears showed in their frantic attempts to impeach Trump at any cost and call for the National Guard to secure Joe Biden's inauguration, even after they [lambasted a similar action by Trump](#) during the summer riots. Meanwhile, conservatives look askance at politicians who seem prepared to [pursue politically motivated punishments against voters](#) for whom they chose to vote for, all while ducking for cover from the censorship onslaughts of Big Tech.

Fear? Yup, it's all around us.

Sadly, such fear plays right into the hands of diabolical forces, a fact masterfully portrayed by C.S. Lewis through the demon Screwtape in the [Screwtape Letters](#). Fear, writes Screwtape, is best fostered when men fixate on the future, giving their hearts to it and "plac[ing] their treasure in it." Thinking about the future "inflames hope and fear," giving a focus to the unknown, "so that in making them think about it we make them think of unrealities." This is the opposite of what Screwtape's "Enemy," aka God, wants men to do.

Screwtape continues:

But we want a man hag-ridden by the Future—haunted by visions of an imminent heaven or hell upon earth—ready to break the

Enemy's commands in the Present if by so doing we make him think he can attain the one or avert the other—dependent for his faith on the success or failure of schemes whose end he will not live to see. We want a whole race perpetually in pursuit of the rainbow's end, never honest, nor kind, nor happy now, but always using as mere fuel wherewith to heap the altar of the future every real gift which is offered them in the Present.

This mentality sounds familiar, especially in the political realm. Each party is always looking toward the next election, convinced that a certain candidate with the right political ideals will be the savior we need. We pull strings and work hard to see that messiah ride in on a white horse, only to be disappointed when he fails to achieve office, or disillusioned when he does, but pursues an agenda opposite of that which we imagined. While all this plays out in a continuous cycle, we live in a continuous state of fear, first worrying about what will happen if our plans don't succeed, then worrying when we don't see them come to pass.

So how do we get off this merry-go-round of fear fostered by our fixation on the future?

Here Screwtape also reveals the answer: live in the present and focus on the eternal.

The humans live in time but our Enemy destines them to eternity. He therefore, I believe, wants them to attend chiefly to two things, to eternity itself, and to that point of time which they call the Present. For the Present is the point at which time touches eternity. Of the present moment, and of it only, humans have an experience analogous to the experience which our Enemy has of reality as a whole; in it alone freedom and actuality are offered them. He would therefore have them continually concerned either with eternity (which means being concerned with Him) or with the

Present – either meditating on their eternal union with, or separation from, Himself, or else obeying the present voice of conscience, bearing the present cross, receiving the present grace, giving thanks for the present pleasure.

For us humans who seem to exist in a state of constant worry, following such a path is easier said than done. But it does give us some perspective and goals. We can make sure we behave responsibly and respectfully to those around us, even when we are being treated unfairly. We can rejoice in the small victories and happy moments which arise amongst our families and friends. We can embrace the difficulties which come across our path and seek to weather them with a peaceful, calm attitude, rather than the angry one which so readily rears its head.

Lastly, we can focus on eternity and the One who holds it. As Screwtape reveals, true freedom and fulfilled existence are found in God. Might we not find the freedom from fear that so many of us crave right now if, [as St. Augustine posited](#), we rest our restless hearts in Him?

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