

## Stay Packed

Revelation 16

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Last week Osama bin Laden issued a statement saying he was pleased with the terrorist attack of September 11, because all of America was filled with fear. I think he was at least partly right. Sometimes you can feel it in the air — a spirit of fear.

It's not just America that's in fear; Afghanistan is a garden of terror, for women especially. Women are virtually slaves in Afghanistan. *Imprisoned*. In an effort to restore the "purity of Islam," the Taliban has outlawed almost everything: music, singing, children's toys, even wedding parties. For women, even *more* has been outlawed: employment, education, exposing any skin, laughing in public.

For entertainment, men gather in the old Olympic stadium and watch women as they are flogged or stoned for crimes like exposing their face or walking with a man who is not a relative. Afghan women have been so filled with fear and depression that foreign aid doctors report many of them have burned throats from attempting to kill themselves by drinking battery acid and household cleaners.

And now, on top of everything else,  
U.S. bombs are exploding throughout their country  
as their government tells them we *hate* them.

Muslims are quick to point out that the treatment of women in places like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Afghanistan is not representative of all Islam. But it's clear the Koran sees women as inferior. We read this week that one of the terrorists willed that no woman visit his grave. Men are "a step above women" (Sura 2:228) and "superior to women" (Sura 4:38). In the Koran men can marry several women and even acquire them with money.

According to many Muslim scholars and the traditional teaching of the Hadith, women are "a toy for the release of man's sexual storm." Muslims argue about these things, and clearly Christians have repressed women as well, but the Bible does tell a different story.

In the entire Koran the word "kiss" never appears once. But the word is absolutely critical in our Scriptures. In fact, at the end of all things, according to the Bible and the book of The Revelation, there is the ultimate Marriage Supper. Heaven is a wedding party. Heaven is illegal in Afghanistan.

Women certainly know fear in any society. Physically and socially they are more vulnerable than men. That's because their bodies were made to bear life itself.

Hating women is hating life.

Recently I saw a movie about a young woman who fell in love but lost her love at sea. She sank into despair. Years later she was kidnapped by thieves, chased by pirates (more thieves) in the night, and finally one pirate captures her. In terror she finds out this is the man blamed with killing her lover. He holds his blade and tells her, "Life is pain." He mocks her love and then describes her lover's death.

Maybe you feel like that woman . . . vulnerable, plagued by terror, afraid love is a sham and death is what's real. Your world is crumbling, you feel violated, and you wonder, "What do these terrors mean?"

In the beginning we fell, but why did God let us choose evil? Why did He give us our wish? We *died* that day! What do these plagues mean? — wrath, death, hell?

Revelation 16:

*Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God." So the first angel went and poured his bowl on the earth, and foul and evil sores came upon the men who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.*

*The second angel poured his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a dead man, and every living thing died that was in the sea.*

*The third angel poured his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of water, and they became blood. And I heard the angel of water say, "Just art thou in these thy judgments, thou who art and wast, O Holy One. For men have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink. It is their due!" And I heard the altar cry, "Yea, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are thy judgments!"*

*The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch men with fire; men were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him glory.*

*The fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was in darkness; men gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores, and did not repent of their deeds.*

*The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river Euphra'tes, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. And I saw, issuing from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet, three foul spirits like frogs; for they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.*

*("Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!") And they assembled them at the place which is called in Hebrew Armaged'don.*

*The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"*

*And there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as had never been since men were on the earth, so great was that earthquake. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered great Babylon, to make her drain the cup of the fury of his wrath.*

*And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found; and great hailstones, heavy as a hundred-weight, dropped on men from heaven, till men cursed God for the plague of the hail, so fearful was that plague.*

There are approximately 2.6 billion views as to what those bowls represent. It's very difficult to know what to take at face value and what is *more*. For instance, the frogs are not just frogs, they are *demons* enticing kings. There is no Armageddon that we know of. The word means "Mountains of Megiddo." There is a "Megiddo," but there are no mountains there. Are the sores just *sores*, or are they more?

Historists like John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, and George Whitfield saw the sores as atheism infecting people of the French Revolution. They taught that chapter 16 was all about the French revolutions and the downfall of the papacy in 1798. And it makes remarkable sense. In fact, they had some astounding, successful predictions in the eighteenth century.

Preterists say chapter 16 refers to ancient Rome or Jerusalem. What *they* say fits remarkably well *also*. For instance, at the seventh bowl 100-pound hailstones fall from the sky onto the city. The Jewish historian Josephus records in his history of the Jews (written independently of The Revelation) that during the siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. the Romans launched 100-pound white stones from catapults, and the Jews cried, "The Son cometh!" Scholars have been confused by that. The best they can make out is that the Jews were mocking Christ and His words on Jerusalem.

According to Josephus, the Sea of Galilee turned to blood, full of the corpses of dead Jews. There were rivers of blood in the city, and like Christ said, Jerusalem fell.

Some Preterists point to the fifth bowl poured on the throne of the Beast. That's at *least* Rome, but that kingdom fell long ago. Perhaps the throne of the Beast is plunged into darkness more than once.

Futurists love to speculate about a renewed Roman Empire, nuclear war, the red tide, sun scorch through ozone depletion, earthquake-related deaths, and the Asian hordes coming over the Euphrates from places like Afghanistan.

Now we can add new speculations involving America, Osama bin Laden, and world trade.

What's remarkable to me is how so much of it really fits. Maybe they're all *partly* right. Maybe all these tribulations are "labor pains," as Jesus called them. Labor pains come in cycles, over and over, until it's time for delivery—life.

Maybe history is repeating itself  
all in the service of giving birth to something.

Malcolm Muggeridge wrote, "History consists of parables whereby God communicates in terms that the imagination rather than the mind, faith rather than knowledge, can grasp." That is, God is using the props of history to get us to have faith in something, to give birth to something.

"You know, there are many pleasures in being old and gaga," writes Muggeridge. "One of the greatest . . . is to realize that history is largely nonsensical. . . . The only reason for studying what goes on is to get at this parable that it conveys. Otherwise it is just like an interminable soap opera whose situations endlessly recur although the characters change."

I've heard my eighty-two-year-old father talk this way. In fact, he was the one who first read me this quote. When I talked to him after the World Trade Center tragedy his attitude was, Hitler . . . Marx . . . Osama bin Laden . . . seen it all before. How are my grandkids? — tell me about love.

Maybe he is getting the parable. Maybe it's like G. K. Chesterton argued, "The most reasonable things are fairytales, not facts."

Well, the bowls, trumpets, and seals look pretty much the same, except seals reveal glories, trumpets proclaim news, and bowls dispense wrath. If you don't want to experience the bowls of wrath, *repent!* Turn your life over to Christ. Turn your fear into faith.

People who receive the bowls in verses 9, 11, and 21 don't repent. So *repent* . . . and you might get sores and get sunburned, but it's not wrath. It's a broken seal, trumpet, or thunder. Repent and Christ *takes* your wrath. "It is done," He says. (That was last week's sermon.)

Now the bowls are also like the plagues on Egypt:

sores,

blood,  
hail,  
fire,  
darkness,  
frogs,  
the slaughter of the first-born.

In the midst of those plagues, God instituted the Passover. The Jews were to place lamb's blood on their doors so the wrath of God (the last plague, death of the first-born) wouldn't fall on them. They were then to eat the flesh of the lamb *in haste*. They were to be packed and ready to go, for in the morning the Lord was coming to deliver them. That was when they were born as a nation and born as the Bride of Ezekiel 16.

So what does it mean? What did the plagues mean for Israel? It meant the Lord was coming to rescue them. So what does all this tribulation mean for *us believers*? He is coming to take us home. When? — Soon . . . any time . . .

So always be packed.  
Always be ready; it could be any time.

If that silly Left Behind series is correct, then these people in Revelation 16 would know *exactly* when He was coming: seven years from when all those Christians were raptured.

But right here between the sixth and seventh bowls He said, "I'm coming like a thief." *Always* be ready. It could be *now*! It could be bio-terrorism this week! If He doesn't come for you at the close of the age, believer, He does come for you the day you die. He said so in John 14. Time is weird, and maybe the day a believer dies and the close of the age are always the same . . . eternity invades *your* time at that point.

But He is coming; always be ready.

And the more intense the tribulation gets, the closer your Lord comes. The more intense the plagues became, the closer the Israelites were to enduring freedom.

Maybe your castle is being stormed;  
Maybe your world is under siege because you are being  
rescued, and your liberator is drawing near;  
Maybe you're actually imprisoned here,  
intoxicated into acquiescence by an evil prince who has lulled you to  
sleep so you won't hear your Savior's call.  
Maybe we were in *much more* danger before September  
11 than now, comfortably asleep in the Evil  
One's castle, but now the Lord is waking us to  
life, and the tribulation means Jesus is coming!

In the midst of tribulation Jesus calls, “I’m coming soon!” Does that fill you with *fear* or *hope*? Is He your *enemy* or your *Savior*? Do you fear His wrath? Do you think He’s coming to rape you? Steal your life? Crush your heart? Is *that* who you think He is?

I don’t think we even begin to understand the sorrow we inflict upon our Lord Jesus when we’re afraid. The opposite of fear is faith, and anything that does not “proceed from faith is sin.” Over and over in the Gospels the disciples insult Christ with their lack of faith. He admonishes them, “Fear not!”

The opposite of fear is faith. Your lack of faith makes you fear.

The same fear that makes you turn to porn and not trust your desires to Christ . . .

The same fear that makes you eat and eat and eat instead of stopping . . .

The same fear that causes you to lie instead of depending on truth . . .

The same fear that keeps you from entrusting every moment of your life to Christ in joyful and thorough obedience . . .

The same fear that makes you close your heart to Him . . .

I bet it’s the same fear that you felt on September 11. September 11 just awoke you to the fear that was already there.

Many think they are courageous, but it’s just that their faith hasn’t been tested and their fears have never been exposed. But fear, hidden or revealed, is what robs you of life now. Fear can be an evil spirit Satan sends to keep you in bondage. So when you are afraid, *rebuke* fear and call on Jesus.

Paul writes, “We have not received a spirit of timidity [fear] but power, love, and self-control.” Fear is a false suitor. We think it offers us security, that it will guard our hearts. But for the Bride of Christ, fear is a *lie*. Jesus is our security.

It’s true: Fear of God is the “beginning of wisdom,” but not the end, for “perfect love casts out fear.” John 14:13: “Let not your hearts be troubled,” says Jesus, “I will come for you.” John 14:18: “I will not leave you desolate. I will come to you.” He was talking about His Spirit.

Whenever we hope in Christ’s coming (in the end at death), He comes *now* in Spirit and drives out fear.

You’ve probably already noticed this: You’ve had moments when the feeling of fear increased. In the last few weeks you’ve felt more fear. But you turned to Christ and the feeling of life increased.

Worrying about “bio-terrorism” last week, I went for a walk with Coleman and Becky. I was half-consciously praying, and I thought, “We could all be dead soon.” Then I thought, “Well, Jesus, that’s great! You love Coleman and Becky more than I do.” I looked up and the sun was shining, the mountains were glorious, and the field in which we were walking by Hampden was bathed in light.

Becky and Coleman were running through the tall grass laughing, and . . . I *lived*. I was blessed; I was happy. I thought, “This is *glorious!*” And it was. For He was there, transforming fear into faith.

When fear says, “You could die,”  
Jesus says, “You will live.

When fear says, “You could get crucified,”  
Jesus says, “And I will raise you up.”

When fear says, “You could lose everything,”  
Jesus says, “I am giving you everything.”

When fear says, “Satan is coming to get you,”  
Jesus says, “I am coming to set you free.”

When fear says, “All Hell has broken loose,”  
Jesus says, “Hell is under siege,  
and Heaven has come to take you home.”

Lookout Mountain Community Church, stop listening to fear! Fear is an insult to Christ, and it robs you of life *now*! When you’re afraid, you don’t dance well, you don’t sing well, and you don’t live well. And you certainly don’t *kiss* well.

I remember the first time I kissed Susan. She was seventeen years old. It was like kissing . . . a post. (Don’t worry — it’s gotten better . . .) I understand why — she was afraid. She did not yet have faith in me. So her kiss was impure (infected with fear), and her kiss lacked passion (fear guarded her heart). So that kiss ranks at just about the *very bottom* of my list of kisses.

Tribulation comes, but for us Christians that shouldn’t mean fear. What *does* it mean? In the midst of the bowls of wrath, right before the great earthquake, the voice from the temple calls out, “Behold, I come like a thief. Blessed [happy] is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.”

I used to dress fast in California, because in my first two encounters with major earthquakes I was caught naked. (I had just gotten out of the shower.) I still remember the whole room shaking . . . and me diving into a moving closet, trying to get my pants on, hopping on one foot in a moving room, all so I wouldn’t be found naked in the rubble of my fallen world.

And Jesus says, “Be ready. Always keep your clothes *with* you.”

Some people think that means . . .

Underground bunkers,  
Survival gear,  
Stashes of food . . .

But Jesus isn’t talking about physical clothing. (You can take a shower in *peace* . . . *relax* . . .) Paul tells us we are to “put on Christ.” In Revelation 19 the fine linen is the “righteous deeds of the saints.” Our righteous deeds are the fruit of faith. Remember in Revelation 14 good deeds are Christ’s righteousness on us. We are to clothe ourselves with faith, not fear. With fear Satan tempts us to cover our naked shame from the wrath of God. But with faith Christ covers our shame with His righteousness.

Fear closes our hearts,  
but faith opens our hearts.

Jesus doesn’t just want our bodies; He wants our hearts. If He only has our bodies, he has purchased a whore. If He has our hearts *and* our bodies, He has won a bride.

In the Koran women are like property. “They are a man’s field,” says Muhammad. Men may own them as slaves, and men may acquire them with wealth. In much of Islam then, it appears as if a woman’s heart doesn’t matter. Her wishes don’t really matter.

One contemporary Muslim scholar wrote, “Sexual intercourse is an action, and the woman does not act.” Undoubtedly that sentiment is behind the practice of female circumcision and female genital mutilation. The pleasure is for the man, not for the woman.

I think Jesus calls that rape . . . surrender by fear. Islam means “submission” . . . “surrender” . . . but it’s surrender in fear. (By the way, that’s the *law*, which is a much larger religion than just Islam.)

In Islam  
men get many virgins  
to have sex with in Heaven.  
In Christianity  
we *are* the Bride,  
who has surrendered in love.

And our Lord will not ravish us until He has won our heart. For in His furious love our pleasure is His pleasure, and our sorrows are His sorrows. So He longs for our kisses . . . but only if they are freely given.



Do you see the suffering of Jesus? His Bride has gone to bed with the Evil One, and she thinks it's *life*. He comes to set her free, and the Evil One fills her with fear. He must rescue her from the Evil One and also win her heart. He crushes the Evil One with power but must say to His Bride, "As you wish." For kisses surrendered in fear have no value to Him.

In Afghanistan we're dropping bombs . . . and we're dropping food. I'm so proud of my country. Although the U.S. is terribly infected with sin, and although I understand that food drops are politically expedient, I do believe it's a faint reflection of Jesus.

Afghan women are seeing their world destroyed, but it's an evil world. And the one destroying it is sending them food. So maybe the bombs don't mean they're being attacked but they're being rescued. That's a weak analogy, but tribulation means, "Bride of Christ, you're being rescued."

For the one who calls to the angels  
To pour out the bowls of wrath,  
Which destroy your old world, is the one  
Who feeds you bread from Heaven.

That manna in your wilderness is His body broken. And with His blood you wash your garments white (Revelation 7). Now He calls, "Keep your garments ready." In Revelation 19 the garment is white linen . . . the righteous deeds of the saints . . . and it *is* what the Bride wears. It is a *wedding dress*. He comes to elope! He wants to marry you! But only "as you wish."

With joyful hope can you say, "Come, Lord Jesus"? That's the last line of Revelation (before John's benediction). Throughout Revelation Jesus keeps saying, "I'm coming." We keep answering with fear. But He is the Great Lover, so in the end we finally say in faith, "Come, Lord Jesus." He must answer, "As you wish," for that's the end.

He does not want a frightened harlot;  
He wants a Bride full of faith, hope, and love.

What does it mean then when bombs are exploding and giants are loose and the castle is being stormed? It means you're being rescued. You're being rescued by your heart's deepest desire. You're being rescued by *True Love*.

Remember the movie I told you of? The pirate that captures the maiden? The maiden's name is Buttercup. The pirate is the Dread Pirate Roberts, who is actually her true love Westley, who has crossed the sea, fought the Spaniard and the giant, and outwitted Vesini to reach her. But now he's testing her heart, for she has been betrothed to the evil Prince Humperdink.

So he accuses her of faithlessness for her betrothal to Humperdink. She cries, "I *died* that day. And you can die too!" And she pushes him down a steep hill. As he falls he cries,

“As . . . you . . . wish . . .” Buttercup realizes it’s Westley, her true love, and she flings herself down the hill to die with him. She’s the “Princess Bride,” and so are we.

As you know, they get separated again, but the whole movie is about Westley winning Buttercup’s heart—Buttercup’s faith. For in the beginning, Buttercup’s heart is arrogant. She orders Westley around until she realizes that when he says, “As you wish,” he is really saying, “I love you.”

At one point Westley dies. But he’s only “mostly dead.” So he’s resurrected by Miracle Max for true love. He plans to storm Humperdink’s castle where Buttercup is once again tempted to marry Humperdink out of fear. Before the wedding she has a dream that wakens her.

She dreams of marrying Humperdink, and she dreams of an old woman in the crowd who keeps yelling, “Boo! Boo!” Buttercup asks, “Why do you do this?” The old woman says, “Because you had love in your hands and you gave it up!”

“But they would have killed Westley if I hadn’t done it!” Buttercup responds.

“Your true love lives, and you marry another!” cries the old woman. “True love saved her in the fire swamp, and she treated it like garbage. And that’s what she is, the Queen of Refuse. So bow down to her if you want. Bow to her. Bow to the Queen of Slime, the Queen of Filth, the Queen of Putrescence! Boo! Boo! Rubbish! Filth! Slime! Muck! Boo! Boo! Boo!”

The dream is fear (her fear), but Buttercup wakes to faith.

Bride of Christ, True Love has saved you from the fire swamp (Lake of Fire). True Love lives, and you have treated it like garbage. But He *will not* let you go. You will not marry another. Wake up and live now.

On Buttercup’s wedding day the castle is stormed and Buttercup is saved. The moral of the movie is, true love *always conquers* . . . just as Westley said at the first to Buttercup: “Hear this now, I will always come for you.” She asks, “How can you be sure?” He replies, “This is true love.”

You say,  
    “‘That’s a fairy tale.’ *Yes*.  
    “‘It’s not real life.’ *Wrong*.

It is real life invading unreal life (this world). It’s the revelation of St. John. Jesus always wins.

You say:  
    “‘Well, why this life?’  
    “‘Why the struggle?’”

“Why the tribulation?”

“Why history?”

At the end of *The Princess Bride*, as dawn rises, Westley and Buttercup kiss. And the narrator says, “Since the invention of the kiss, there had been five kisses that were rated the most passionate, the most pure. This one left them all behind. THE END.”

If you’ve been asking lately, “What does God want?” Jesus told us in John 4:23 that God seeks true worshippers, “proskuneo” in Greek. Scholars agree: that basically means “a good kiss.”

He is coming soon. When He arrives, may you say to Him in perfect faith without fear, “As you wish.”

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“Come, Lord Jesus. Forgive us for our fear, the fear we felt on September 11, the fear we feel when we worry about our children, the fear that knocks on my door when I preach and scares me as I prepare. Forgive us for our fear, Lord Jesus, for it must mean we have forgotten just *who you are* and who *we* are—Your Bride.

“And so, Lord Jesus, we invite you to come, not just at the end of time but right now. We open our hearts to you like a flower opens before the sun, like a bride opens to the bridegroom on her wedding. Open our hearts to your life. We love you, Lord Jesus. We are a bit scared, but you are good. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.”

### Further Reading

("Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!")

-Revelation 16:15

In this manner you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you, upon the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall fall upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

-Exodus 12:11-13

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" --for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

-Revelation 19:7-8

"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen. . . . But know this, that if the householder had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with the drunken, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the hypocrites; there men will weep and gnash their teeth. Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. Afterward the other maidens came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. . . ."

-Matthew 22:11-14; 24:43-25:13

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

-Galatians 3:27-29

Your wives are your field: go in, therefore, to your field as ye will . . . . And it is for the women to act as they (the husbands) act by them, in all fairness; but the men are a step above them. God is mighty, wise. Ye may divorce your wives twice. . . . But if the husband divorce her *a third time*, it is not lawful for him to take her again, until she shall have married another husband . . . . And if ye are apprehensive that ye shall not deal fairly with orphans, then, of *other* women who seem good in your eyes, marry *but* two, or three, or four; and if ye *still* fear that ye shall not act equitably, then one only; or the slaves whom ye have acquired: this will make justice on your part easier. . . . *Forbidden to you* also are married women, except those who are in your hands as slaves: This is the law of God for you. And it is allowed you, beside this, to seek out

wives by means of your wealth, with modest conduct, and without fornication. . . . Men are superior to women on account of the qualities with which God hath gifted the one above the other, and on account of the outlay they make from their substance for them.

-The Koran, 2:223, 228, 230; 4:3, 29, 38

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . . . "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church . . . .

-Ephesians 5:25, 31-32

**Woman:** Because you had love in your hands and you gave it up!

**Buttercup:** But they would have killed Westley if I hadn't done it.

**Woman:** Your true love lives, and you marry another! True love saved her in the fire swamp, and she treated it like garbage. And that's what she is, the Queen of Refuse. So bow down to her if you want. Bow to her. Bow to the Queen of Slime, the Queen of Filth, the Queen of Putrescence! Boo! Boo! Rubbish! Filth! Slime! Muck! Boo! Boo! Boo!

-The Princess Bride

"Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. . . . I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. . . ."

-John 14:1-3, 18

"For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

-Matthew 16:27-28

And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

-Luke 23:42-43

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

-Revelation 16:1

History consists of parables whereby God communicates in terms that the imagination rather than the mind, faith rather than knowledge, can grasp. You know, there are many pleasures in being old and gaga. One of the greatest of them is to realize that history is largely nonsensical. How does this come about? Because when you get to be into your middle seventies, events and situations and circumstances that you very vividly and clearly remember are already history. Yet when you read them written as history they are completely and utterly unconvincing, with no possible resemblance to what you remember as the original on which they are based. So you have the pleasure of knowing that you need not bother in any way about history. The only reason for studying what goes on is to get at this parable that it conveys. Otherwise it is just like an interminable soap opera whose situations endlessly recur although the characters change.

-Malcolm Muggeridge

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

-Philippians 4:4-7

Neither can one who wills the Good do so out of fear of punishment. In essence, this is the same thing as willing the Good for the sake of a reward. The one who wills in truth one thing fears only doing

wrong, not the punishment. In fact, he who does wrong, yet sincerely wills the Good, actually desires to face the consequences – so that the punishment, like medicine, may heal him. He understands that punishment only exists for the sake of the sinner. It is a helping hand. It goads one to press on further toward the Good, if one really wills it. On the other hand, the one who is divided considers punishment or hardship as a sickness. He fears all worldly setback for there is nothing eternal in him.

True, fear deceptively offers to help us. It too offers to keep us on the right track. Yet the one who strives in fear never becomes God's friend. Fear is a deceitful aid. It can sour your delight, make life arduous and miserable, make you old and decrepit; but it is never able to help you toward the Good. The Good will not tolerate any alien helper.

Those who live in fear may indeed desire heaven but not for itself. . . . Only one thing can help us to will the Good in truth: the Good itself.

-Soren Kierkegaard

*Also Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6; Matthew 26:64; Revelation 1:7, 2:25, 22:7, 12, 20*