“The Mastery of Fear,” Sermon outline

I Int There is probably no emotion that plagues and crumbles the human personality more than that of fear. Every where we turn we meet that monster fear. Fear expresses itself in such diverse forms—fear of others, fear of oneself, fear of growing old, fear of death, fear of change, fear of disease and poverty; Russia fears America and America fears Russia, the young lady fears that she will not be married, the wrongdoer fears that he will get caught. Every where we turn we see that monster fear, every road we travel we meet that monster fear. Fear begins to accumulate to the point that at last many face what psychiatrists call phobia, the fear of fear, being afraid of being afraid. Fear of death. The terrifying spectacle of atomic warfare has put Hamlet’s words “To be or not to be” on millions of trembling lips. Fear has risen to such extensy proportions in the contemporary world life that one of the leading psychiatrists of the world has said “If fear were abolished from modern life, the work of the psychotherapist would be nearly gone.”

II Text It seems that Jesus had an amazing insight into the tragic and ominous effects that can flow forth from fear. He was continually saying to his followers “fear not” “Be not afraid” Be not anxious.

III Now we must make it clear that the admonition Be not afraid does not mean get rid of all fear. Without fear the human race could have never survived. Fear is the elemental alarm system of the human organism which makes it sensitive to the first sign of danger. Fear of darkness, fear of pain, fear of ignorance, fear of war.

IV Fear is a powerfully creative force. The fear of ignorance leads to education etc. Every saving invention and every intellectual advance has behind it as a part of its motivation the desire to avoid or escape some dreaded thing. And so Angelo Patn is right in saying, “Education consists in being afraid at the right time.” So if by “a fearless man” we mean one who is not afraid of anything, we

8 Fosdick, The Hope of the World, pp 60–61 “Everywhere, all the time, men and women face fear—fear of others, fear of themselves, fear of change, fear of growing old, fear of disease and poverty “
9 Fosdick, The Hope of the World, p 61 “and at last many face what the psychiatrists call phobia, the fear of fear, being afraid of being afraid”
10 Shakespeare, Hamlet, act 3, sc 1 King wrote this sentence in a second pen.
11 Fosdick, On Being a Real Person, p 111 “When it becomes terror, hysteria, phobia, obsessive anxiety, it tears personality to pieces. Dr. J. A. Hadfield says ‘If fear were abolished from modern life, the work of the psychotherapist would be nearly gone’.” For a similar quote, see Fosdick, The Hope of the World, p 63. For Hadfield’s words, see J. A. Hadfield, The Psychology of Power (New York: Macmillan, 1924), p. 36
12 Fosdick, The Hope of the World, p 59 “Fear is the elemental alarm system of the human organism, one of our primary and indispensable instincts”
13 Fosdick, On Being a Real Person, p 110 “Angelo Patn is right in saying, ‘Education consists in being afraid at the right time’.”
are picturing, not a wise man, but a defective mind. There are normal and abnormal fears.

V So the difficulty of our problem is that we are not to get rid of fear altogether, but we must harness it and master it. Like fire it is a useful and necessary servant, but a ruinous master. It is fear when it becomes terror, panic and chronic anxiety that we must seek to eliminate.

VI How do we master fear?
A Of basic importance in mastering fear is the need of getting out in the open the object of our fear and frankly facing it. Human life is full of secret fears.
B A further step in mastering fear is to remember that it always involves the misuse of the imagination.

AD CSKC Sermon file, folder 45, "Mastering Our Fears"

"Mastering Our Fears"

[21 July 1957]
[Montgomery, Ala?]

I Introduction
a The universality and oldness of fear
b The prevalence of fear everywhere
   (1) Russia fears America and America Russia
   (2) Management fears labor and labor [management?]
   (3) The Negro fears the White man and the White man the [Negro?]

Everywhere we turn we meet see that monster fear, every road we travel we meet that monster fear—fear of others, fear of the future, fear of change, fear of old age, fear of disease—and at last many come to that chronic state of what the psychiatrists call phobophobia, the fear of fear, being afraid of being afraid. And so our homes, institutions, prisons, churches are filled with people who are hounded by day and harrowed by night because of some fear that lurks ready to spring into action as soon as one is alone, or as soon as the lights go out.

C Jesus realized both the gravity and the disastrous effects of fear in human life. He said again and again "Be not afraid," "Be not anxious." All of this shows his clairvoyance into many a broken and hopeless life.