

# Symbols of Fear

By David Chandler

*[This chapel talk at Web School was prompted by an activity suggested by Ron Marson of [Tops Learning Systems](#). The world's nuclear arsenal, at its peak, represented the explosive energy of one million Hiroshimas. A million grains of rice will overflow a 5-gallon jug. At the beginning of the talk I dropped one grain of rice into a 5-gallon jug through a large aluminum funnel. That, I announced, was Hiroshima. I dropped another one. That, I announced, was Nagasaki. I then proceeded to pour a million grains of rice through the funnel into the jug. The demonstration took about five minutes.]*

The size of our nuclear arsenal represents the magnitude of our fear: pure, psychotic fear. Fear creates paralysis. It locks us into our rut. It is out of fear that we continue to pour our nation's wealth into bombs that cannot defend us but only destroy us. Out of fear we have created a monster that, if unleashed, would put to shame all the villains of history, from Genghis Khan to Idi Amin. We say we are defending freedom, but how can that be? When we are paralyzed by fear we are not acting freely. Freedom cannot co-exist with fear.

Freedom is a spiritual thing. In this sense you can be free regardless of where you are or who may be oppressing you. Some of the world's greatest literature on freedom was written from prison cells by people such as the Apostle Paul, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King.

Beyond the freedom of the spirit, which no one can take away, we all value a free society: one in which we are not penalized for seeking our own fulfillment or expressing the free spirit within us. A free society is not easy to come by. When we act freely, we may step on other people's toes. We may pose a threat to them. If I can control you, I can feel secure. If I let you out of my control, how do I know you won't do me harm? You see, fear is at the crux of the freedom issue. A society preoccupied with "national security" will inevitably become a repressive society, regardless of its ideals. A free society can only be attained by people secure enough in their own freedom to overcome the fear of the freedom of others. Even the framers of the Constitution fell short, as any slave could have told you. If Russian society is less free than our own, and I believe it is, then it is for the same reasons: they are afraid to let go of control. If they are so afraid of their own people, is it any wonder they are paranoid about us?

Before we can break the grip of the nuclear monster we must lay aside our fear. We must act courageously, reaching out to other nations in new and creative ways. Are we not strong enough and secure enough to call a complete halt to the arms race? To do so we must give up our easy assumptions about our own virtue and the wickedness of our adversaries. They are

fearful human beings as are we, and their evil side can be found in us as well. There is no magic plan for world harmony, but laying aside our fear and acknowledging the worst of our enemies as our brothers is a necessary first step. Perhaps upon taking one step the succeeding steps will appear more clearly.