

Holy Fear

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Date: 18 January 2009

[0:00] Acts 9.31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied.

It's one of the characteristics of the early church, of God's church, of the apostolic church, of the church of the Acts, of the apostles.

The church had this distinctive feature that the people were walking in the fear of the Lord. The fear of God, holy fear, is something that enters an aspect that's missing.

In many circles, in many ways, it's something that has been put on the shelf, it's been lost in many regards, in many respects in the world today.

The fear of God. What does it mean? What's it all about? Fear talks about a dread, a reverence. A dread. A reverence.

[1:24] And sadly, this is something that many Christians don't have that anymore. They don't have that holy regard for the things of God. Who is to be feared? The Lord.

It says here, they were walking in the fear of the Lord. So they had a sense where Christ was sovereign. Christ was the master, the Lord, the supreme authority. I know this one verse, and the reference escapes me, but it talks about Christ as being a potentate.

And as being, it's a very strong word. It sounds like a dictator that Christ has got that supreme authority over the Christian.

That he is someone that we should tremble before, we should have a holy regard and respect for.

That we truly recognize his absolute sovereignty, his absolute right to rule us.

His awesome purity that he should be regarded with in the working of his spirit in his church.

Walking in the fear of God.

[2:32] What was the result of this fear? In the Acts of the Apostles, in Acts 9 here, God blessed his church. God blessed his church with souls won. When souls converted, there was a true conversion, there was a true edifying or building up of the saints in their faith.

People turned to Christ and they were saved. People got radically saved. It's like you could refer to Philippians 2 verse 12. Where Paul exhorts the saints of Philippi in verses 12 of chapter 2.

He says, Wherefore my beloved brethren, he goes on, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Is that how you regard salvation? Is salvation something that you work out with fear and trembling?

That you take it seriously? That you take it seriously, this faith that you profess in Christ? Or is it just some component of your life?

Christ is our life. He should be, shouldn't he? Christ is our life. To live is Christ. He is our life. Here is the one that we should want to take that message, that truth so seriously.

[3:45] The truth of your salvation is that there is something that you want to work out. Now, don't misunderstand me here. I am not saying work for your salvation.

But work out your salvation. When you say there is fruits that are just going to come out. By God's working. By His, the natural effect of you being a Christian is that fruits are going to be the result of your life.

There is going to be good works. Paul exhorts the saints here, said work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Let it be something that there is works, there is fruits.

Not that you are working for your salvation because that is your possession. That is reserved in heaven for you. But you are working because you love the Saviour.

You must work. You cannot but work because you love Him. And it is the natural progression. It is the natural consequence of you being a Christian. Some Christians shy away from thinking of God in these terms.

[4:51] From thinking of God as if He were someone that is due our fear and trembling in response. It isn't popular today. That people would much rather have or hear about God's love.

God's patience, His mercy and we want to hear about that too. But by the same token God also has righteous anger. Righteous anger.

Holiness and justice. We see right through the pages of scripture we know the many accounts of God's dealings with Israel. Israel with Israel's enemies.

With the godless ones of Sodom. The godless ones of Babylon. The godless ones of the Baal worshippers.

The idol worshippers of the day. God was very strong and very strict and stern. And really we deserve that treatment too.

[5:52] But it is only by His grace that we have salvation. And because of His great work on our behalf. We have a love that it instills in us.

That love that Calvary provokes in us. That God's grace has been given to us. It makes us one. To work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Fearing God is a good thing.

There was a monument in Westminster Abbey. In London Westminster Abbey. Yes. And there was a monument there. It says, He feared man so little because he feared God so much.

Now I was talking along the lines this morning about witnessing. Sometimes fear stops a Christian from opening his mouth. Fear stops a Christian man or woman from speaking for the Saviour.

From being a witness for Christ. And just one reason. But fear is the fear of man. Should we not rather fear God? Fear Him who rather can cast us into hell?

[6:57] Don't fear man. Obey God rather than man. Fear God rather than man. Fear of God. And we are going to look at some of the instances. Some aspects about the fear of the Lord in the record of Scripture.

Just a few. Touch on a few instances. Of where the fear of the Lord leads us to do some things. It leads us in a number of ways. To do a number of things.

So we are going to take some snapshots through the Bible record. Of the fear of God in action. In the pages of Scripture. How we need to be a people who walk in the fear of the Lord.

And we see. If you flick back to Exodus chapter 14. On record here. Where we see a reference to the fear of God. Exodus 14 verse 31.

And straight after they crossed the Red Sea. God miraculously opened the waves. Opened the river of the Nile.

[7:59] And they walked across as on dry land. And then God judged the Egyptians who were chasing them. And they were wiped out.

Those that were in the sea of time. The Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And Exodus 14 verse 31.

And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians. And the people feared the Lord. And believed the Lord. And his servant Moses.

The fear of the Lord leads us to have right faith. Right faith. The people feared the Lord. And tied with that.

And believed the Lord. Faith or believing. Is connected with the fear of the Lord. And the Lord.

[8:59] So I know when some preachers wisely refer to the judgment and the righteous condemnation of God against our sin. As evidenced by the breaking of the law.

Of the lawlessness. Of the missing of God's perfection. As we know all have come short of the glory of God.

And we know that God in his righteous justice must punish sin. And we're all due to that punishment. And our only hope of escape is that someone will stand in the gap.

Will stand in our place. That's what Christ did at the cross in paying our penalty. And so the fear of the Lord. Realizing our dreaded condition. And our awful penalty that faces us.

Is tied with believing in the Lord. And in his grace in saving us. As we see the salvation of God. God could have closed those waters on Israel.

[9:58] As they were crossing. But Israel got through by God's grace. And then in God's judgment. The Egyptians were wiped out. When the waters closed. And so. As we see the sense of the healthy fear of the Lord.

It gives us faith. To trust him. It gives us that faith to trust him. The only one who is our only lifeline. Our only hope. Our only savior. In complete and utter dependence upon him.

So the context here is of the Lord. Saving the Israelites. They miraculously passed through the sea. On dry ground. And then the Lord destroying the Egyptians.

Who were chasing after them. The Lord dramatically intervened. On behalf of God's people. They had a shocking encounter. With the power of the almighty God. This was a great work.

Verse 31. It refers to it as a great work. It was astounding. It was a shocking thing. The judgment of God was. As they crossed through by God's grace.

[10:59] And they turned around. And saw what happened to the others. The ones who weren't saved. The ones who hadn't trusted in the blood of the Lamb. They were wiped out. And shouldn't faith be prompted in us.

By fear of God. By realizing the great grace of God. In context of his judgment. Of his law. Of his punishment.

That we duly deserve. We rightfully deserve. It prompts faith. Doesn't it? So faith. Is a word that's used. So glibly.

Sometimes. At times. When. We. Use this word. Faith. Or believe. In a very. Tokenistic way. In a very. Shallow way.

In a casual. Kind of believing way. But. Bible kind of faith. Saving faith. Is. Not just a token acceptance. Of truth. It's not just some words. Repeated.

[11:56] Parent fashion. Faith is a grasping. Of who God is. Of the almighty judge. Of the almighty. Perfect one. Who. Condemns us.

In our sin. Rightfully. And righteously. And of yet. The one who's. As we put our faith. Our hearts. Trust in him. In believing his work. On our behalf.

As we believe him. Who is a rewarder. Of them that diligently seek him. As we realize the great work. The great work. The great work. Even a greater work. Than what happened here.

In Exodus. The great work. As you realize the great work. Of the one who said. It is finished. The finished work. Of Calvary's. Cross.

As you realize the great work. Of. What Christ did for you. On your behalf. Of your sin in his body. As you realize. That it was done for you.

[12:51] On your behalf. On your behalf. How can you not. Believe. How can you. Not believe. We can give grateful thanks. For saving us. From the wrath. To come.

Think of the wrath. That. Was to face you. Yet. It is. No longer. In. In your future. Because the wrath. Has been. Vented.

Upon Christ. It's been. Fully born. Born. He's born. The full brunt. Of the wrath. Of God. For you. How can you not.

Believe. How can you not. Have faith. The Lord Jesus. He took the hatred. Of God. Against your sin. He paid for you. In his suffering. For you.

In his suffering. For me. In his suffering. And death. And he took the penalty. The penalty. Of God's. Justice. That was required. So.

[13:46] Fear. Is tied. With faith. That connects it. And as we. Declare God's judgment. Against sin. We also. Declare God's grace.

At Calvary. That is extended. And right faith. Is about that conversion. It's about. The light going on. Wow. It was for me.

It was my sin. And if I can but. Profess that. Believing in my sin. Believing in my heart. And confess that. With my mouth. The Lord Jesus. That he died.

That he rose. That he lives now. As my saviour. And my master. That's what right faith is. It's about conversion. An eternal change of direction. An eternal change of family.

An eternal change of nature. The fear of God goes hand in hand. With the faith of God. They're tied. And this faith. Is not just a talked about concept. It's a lived out reality.

[14:42] The just shall live by faith. Romans 1.17. This is life. Life with a capital L. And so we see. Fear. The fear of God leads to right

faith.

Secondly. It leads to right living. Right living. In Exodus 20. Verses 18. Forward there. The context here is of. The Ten Commandments. That had just been given.

And they were down. Down in the valley. Playing with sin. At the very moment. God's finger was. Writing out.

His. Commandments. Not the. Not the Ten Suggestions. He was writing out the Ten Commandments. And God's people were there. Playing the fool. And. Playing with sin. At the bottom of the hill.

And Exodus 20. Verse 18. And all the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings and the noise of the trumpet.

[15:43] And the mountains smoking. And when the people saw it they removed and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses. Speak thou with us and we will hear. But let not God speak with us lest we die.

Don't let God speak to us. They said. And Moses said unto the people. Fear not. For God has come to prove you. And that his fear may be before your faces.

That you sin not. God doesn't want us to sin. He wants us to have right living. And there is a sense where we should have. A real holy terror. The people had a holy terror there.

As they. Realised. Their great need. The people were certainly fearful. And they had fear. In the context of judgment. Again to. The holy terror of the awesome and the righteous nature of God.

2 Corinthians 5 verses 10. On which talks about the judgment seat of Christ. Now. As a believer. There is a judgment for you. You will be judged.

[16:42] I will be judged. Everyone. Everyone will be judged. Either at one judgment throne or the other. And 2 Corinthians 5 verses 10 onwards. It talks about. The judgment seat of Christ.

Which is the judgment. That a believer will have. So. Don't think friends. If you are a Christian.

There won't be judgment for you. There will be judgment for you. But of course.

It is not a judgment. That. Is about your eternal destiny. Because that. You have been judged.

Christ has been judged on your behalf. And the wrath of God. Against your sin.

Is already being. Paid out in full. But the judgment seat of Christ. Is the judgment for your works.

The judgment for how you've lived. The judgment for what you've done. With your Christian life.

Whether you've been. Faithful. How you've lived. There will be rewards. There will be losses. At the judgment seat. Of Christ. And it says. 5.10 of 2 Corinthians.

[17:37] For we must all appear. Before the judgment seat of Christ. That everyone. May receive the things done. In his body. According to that. He hath done. Whether it be good. Or bad.

Knowing therefore. The terror of the Lord. We persuade man. We call it there. The terror of the Lord. The judgment seat of Christ. Paul says. It provokes in us.

The terror. Of the Lord. Sounds like a horror movie. Doesn't it? The terror of the Lord. Certainly not a horror movie. It's a reality. The terror of the Lord. We should have a holy terror. The Lord wants us to live right.

To be holy. 2 Corinthians 7.1 onwards. It talks about. Having therefore these promises dearly beloved. Let us cleanse ourselves. From all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Perfecting holiness. In the fear of God. Again there. That right living. That holiness. That living right. The fear of God. Is a sensing again. Of the holiness of God. Of the sinfulness of sin.

[18:34] Of the dire need we need. We need. To get right. And walk in holiness. To walk in the Holy Spirit. To walk in the light. Perfecting holiness. It means a growing thing. It means a maturing.

The fear of God draws us to that sweeter communion with him. To be serious. Friends. Do you take your Christian life seriously? Do you take it really seriously? I urge you. There was times when I. And there are times. When I don't take my Christian life seriously. And I've got to put my. Pull myself. In check. I've got to check myself. And take it seriously.

It's 24 by 7 being a Christian. It's not. Two hours a week. When you come to a meeting. If you come. It's. 24 by 7.

It's a lifetime. It's a life. It's a life. It's a life. Live. And are you serious about that devotion that you claim to have. For Christ. That devotion that you profess.

[19:33] About your turning from sin. About your living for him. There is no time for a shabby profession. No time for a careless walk. Christian. Live. Right. Live as. As if. Tonight were the night. That judgment seat of Christ. Could be for you. Of course we know. As I understand it.

There will be a time. If you were to pass away tonight. Your soul will go to. That. Compartment. Of paradise. And then.

At the resurrection. Your body will be reunited. You'll have a conscious existence. With. The saviour. And then. Your body will be reunited. And at that moment. When all the bodies are resurrected.

When all the raptures are joined as one. Then the judgment seat of Christ will happen. So it is a future event. And it won't happen immediately on deck. But. It is something that you need to be prepared for.

[20:33] because when time's up, that's it down here below you can't do any more works of service you can't do any more labours of love you can't do any more sacrifice or devotion or witness time's up for you so make your time count in the light of the judgment seat of Christ to come and it's a good time to think about am I dealing with sin?

am I dealing with those stumbling stones? am I being a stumbling block to others? to repent to forsake our selfishness and our godlessness someone has said it's not enough for a gardener to love flowers you must also hate weeds now don't ask me about gardening that's Julie's department at my house there's always weeds they just happen you don't have to try very hard to get weeds to grow it seems it's like that with a Christian life isn't it?

the weeds of sin they come and tangle and infest and it's Adam's curse in reality as well as spiritually too that you've got the sinfulness of sin with the tangled web that Satan wants to drag us down in and we need to root out the sin in our lives think about in the context of the fear of God do you want to be found facing Christ and to be ashamed before him at his coming?

and it talks about folk like that I think it's 1 John where they're ashamed before him at his coming wouldn't that be a great loss and tragedy? what if you were to face the judgment seat of Christ and all the things that you're striving to do are just actually when Christ's x-ray vision takes a deep look at them they're just wood, hay and stubble they're just vanity all the things that you might try to do as a Christian they just go up in a puff of smoke you're still saved but the works the things that you've done they're just wood, hay and stubble they reckon there's nothing as valueless and yet wouldn't it be much rather better that there wouldn't be gold, silver and precious stones that there'd be something tangible that there'd be something that's real that's eternal that happens here below that will be recognised in the hereafter wouldn't that be much better?

and that's I guess the kind of banking we need to have in the light of the fear of God to be really genuine and serious about right faith and right living and another one is right worship Psalm 2 verse 11 fear leads us to right worship worship is something that's talked about and there's many definitions and many methods of worship and styles of worship you could say and it's not about whether a song's modern or traditional it's not about so much the style of the music but it's the content of it it's the depth of it are you singing admonishing one another teaching and admonishing one another in the songs that you sing is it right worship?

[23:46] Psalm 2 verse 11 it talks about again the fear of God it says serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling the rejoicing the praising the worship is again in the context of the fear of God the fear of God is our worship something that is just a jazzed up tune that people can bop and jive to and yet it misses the whole point of what worship is about and yeah there could be songs in our book that you could tap your toes to it's not about that but it's about the sense of the fear of God in our worship that it's that trembling before and it's that recognizing of who He is He's not just one of us He is the high and holy one He's worthy of our absolute devotion and praise and that healthy awe and reverence for the Lord that He wants us to have it can help us to worship Him and honour Him so much more to have that sense of the Almighty in our worship that our worship is not just something that makes us feel warm and tingly and gives us a

catchy tune to whistle through the week as much as that

I do that sometimes and it's a great thing to do but have that worship that's provoked by the sense of who He is of what He has done of Calvary of who God is that sense of the Almighty that's what we need brother and sister that's what you need when you worship Him that enthrallment that captivating sense of who Christ is that draws you to worship from the innermost being of you to get that perspective of the Holy One and of our unworthiness it's been said the capital of Heaven is the heart in which Jesus Christ is enthroned as King that's the kind of worship we need and so we can see the sense of that right worship and another aspect lastly is that fear leads to right witnessing right witnessing we touched on witnessing earlier today but the Bible describes the fear of the Lord as witness is given as witness is given and we know those of us who witness in different ways especially when you are talking one to one with an eternal soul eternal soul you want to be careful what you say don't you and especially if they say yeah

I'll become a Christian okay what next and if they it's what I'm telling them the truth am I giving them a clear enough picture of what salvation is all about that they'll really and truly believe and really and truly be converted not by my words or my prayer or my counsel but by the Holy Ghost by the Holy Spirit of God that will come and live and there'll be a divine intervention that God by His Spirit will come and dwell within them that there'll be an eternal change of direction an eternal conversion that will happen by God's grace and so we want to get it right when we witness otherwise we could miss it and they could miss it and God forbid that we should witness to someone and we think yeah I think they've become a Christian but uh-uh it's not not real what a shame and woe to me woe is me woe unto me if I preach not the gospel clearly enough that someone can truly get saved and woe unto me if I should guide someone in salvation and they're not really saved and they've got some false impression that they're saved that would be a dreadful thing wouldn't it and so fear should be motivating and leading us in our witnessing the message as the prophets and preachers of old in the bible declared it it was sharp it was convicting it was stirring stuff it was cutting them to the heart they were pricked in their conscience it was stabbing pain that the hearers felt convicting message that was heard and as we witness as you witness as you witness this week as you are a witness this week let it be real that the fear of God would drive you and motivate you it talks in Ezekiel about a man with blood on his hands doesn't it of someone who was failing to declare and there was some kind of responsibility because he failed to witness because he failed to declare the message

I guess there's an aspect to that where God forbid that you would have blood on your hands that there would be someone you could have witnessed to that you didn't and you missed an opportunity that you could have taken Acts 2 36 gives us an account of Peter look at how he declares the message it's pretty strong I don't think it was seeker friendly that much Acts 2 36 he says therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made that same Jesus whom you crucified you killed him God has made him Lord and Christ that was pretty strong stuff wasn't it the people there some of them may have been in the crowd around that hill or seen or heard of it no doubt as a contemporary of that time now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles men and brethren what shall we do how can we get saved what can we do in the light of what we have done in the light of this one who has been made Lord and Christ is the one who's going to judge us the one who we killed what shall we do Acts 7 52 Stephen speaking here he wasn't mentioning his words either he talks in verse 52 of Acts 7 which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted and they have slain them which were showed before of the coming of the just one of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers he was calling the crowd the audience you know the assembled throng you're allowed to murderers and betrayers who have received the law by the disposition of angels have not kept it when they heard these things they were cut to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth pretty strong isn't it they must have been pretty hungry so gnashed on him with their teeth but they were pretty ropeable they were pretty stirred up because he called them murderers and betrayers and of course we know what happened to Stephen they were cut to the heart it was the fear of

[31:21] God it was a message that provoked fear in those who heard it and the fear of the Lord comes upon non-Christians in Acts 24 25 Paul's witnessing here with the feelings this is Acts chapter 24 verse 25 Paul talking and as he reasoned of righteousness temperance and judgement to come Felix trembled and answered go thou away for this time when I have a

convenient season I will call for thee a lot of people have that response don't they when you witness to them oh well I'll think about it later on one day one day I'll become a Christian we know folk like that in our family circle that they think that someday they're going to make a decision that someday they'll get a chance to decide and make it right Felix trembled and trembled he was shaking in his boots at the message that Paul gave of righteousness of temperance of judgement to come

Paul witnessed Felix trembled Felix was being convicted by the Holy Spirit to decide for Christ as the word tells us in Genesis that God's spirit shall not always strive with man God sometimes he wants to grab us by the neck and shake us I think the spirit of God is wanting to strive with man to catch our attention to wake us up to the dread danger we're in if we're not sane Felix put it off Paul wasn't giving Felix some airy fairy lecture or some light and breezy fuzzy wuzzy spiritual laws Paul was talking about righteousness temperance judgement to come righteousness temperance or right living and judgement to come he was saying get right with God the holy fear of God was there in Paul's witnessing the holy boldness he was here before this man of authority and he told him straight it's like

John the Baptist told King Herod about his blatant sin John the Baptist wasn't backward in coming forward to when it was called for the men and women of God and that means you and me need to have that forthrightness and we're not going out there to condemn people but to show them their condemnation before God so that they can have salvation by his grace and how we need witnessing that is strong strong you know there's folk there's a chap in our acquaintance who is moaning about all these problems and I was telling him Christ is your answer Christ is the one you need you need to get saved because he was asking me about all kinds of worldly problems he's got trying to get advice about this that and the other problems he's got but Christ is the one this man needs and without Christ he's doomed he's damned and we need to have the outspoken to be bold to point them to Christ while they've still got time there's no time to muck around giving them all kinds of other advice and counsel the one they need is Christ and it's

God stirring your heart but like Felix you've just got this thinking I'll put it off for a more convenient time Paul was giving the word of God strong and clear the conviction of the Holy Spirit came upon him he was trembling strong words gave a strong reaction but this man said another time the righteous demands of God needs to be given when you're witnessing it's not something to be toyed with or taken lightly and commitment for Christ means commitment for Christ conversion means conversion and that's by God's grace what we'd love to see truly and really happen and we need to have Paul's strong message too of challenging of sin of righteousness of judgment and as we talked about recently it's a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God to get that sense of that awe of that and the Holy Holy

Spirit and I didn't make a mistake there the Holy Holy Spirit will convict and challenge lost ones and saved ones about their state to convict to stir the heart John 16 8 and when he is coming he will convict or recrue the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment there's a challenge there's a confrontation with a holy God there's a decision point that you need to get to we need to get to think of the folk evolved the movements of God through history they were holiness movements there was a holiness movement when revival came there was a holiness there that spread it was contagious it was an influence that pervaded whole communities that families and neighbourhoods were transformed by the power of God as people took things seriously and yet today how do we treat these things they're just disregarded just given token regard to you must choose every one of you every one of us here must choose like

[37:01] Felix chose Felix chose to put it off by putting it off you're refusing it you may not get another opportunity to them I don't know if everyone is here is saved you know God knows by God's grace you can get saved if you're not already you've heard me today I've prayed you've seen the truth of what I've said the question now is so what what does it mean for you what are you going to do the bounces