Sword AND Staff

"Preach the Word" (II Timothy 4:2) • "Feed the Flock" (I Peter 5:2)

Thoughts on the Impact of the Fear of God upon Our Lives

 By JAMES E. GIBBONS—1535 W. Fairfield Dr. Mount Airy, NC 27030 USA

An Indulging and Dotty Old Man

HE FEAR of God doesn't seem to enter into the modern concept of Christianity to any great extent. Years ago in a distant state this writer in speaking used the expression "Godfearing man" in what he was saying. Whereupon hearing this, a lady responded that this was the first time she had heard these words in years (and it sounded good and refreshing to her). To modern man with his fuzzy religious concepts, God comes through as an indulging and dotty old man who is an easy pushover bent on accommodating and pleasing his wayward children. He is just there for man's convenience. But to emphasize one aspect of the being of God, and that distortedly (to the exclusion of other aspects), can lead to wrong conclusions. God is love (that is the hope of our salvation— 1 John 4:8-9; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Yes, but God is holy, sin is awful and the sinner must be dealt with when God's love is spurned. Unprincipled love that does not include the element of fear as part of being religious does not represent the Christianity of the New Testament.

They Are Different, Yet Alike

The Old Testament and New Testament are different, and yet alike, in this matter of fear and love. The Old Testament stands out emphasizing the wrath of God, and fear was a primary motive for obedience. The dramatic way in which the Ten Commandments were initially given from Mount Sinai was calculated to produce fear and obedience (Exodus 19:16-20:21). Speaking to the Israelites in reference to the Law, Moses explained that they should "fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his



statutes and his commandments..." (Deuteronomy 6:2). Ecclesiastes 12:13 could well be used to epitomize what we are saying, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: *Fear God*, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." We come to the New Testament, starting with John 3:16, and love seems to be in the forefront. John says, *"We love him, because he first loved us"* (1 John 4:19). Christ had said, "*If ye love me*, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Notice 1 John 5:2-3. But even as the Old Testament that said so much about fear did not exclude love (i.e., "And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God (Continued on Page 4)

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—THANK YOU—

Proverbially **SPEAKING...**

CHRISTIANITY gives you purpose in living and hope in dying.

We are saved from the wrath of God by the love of God, and the fear of God brings us into the mercy of God.

A life that has no track to run on can easily end up wrecked.

If our lives are not fixed on something higher and greater than what we are, we will become something lower and less that what we are.

Cast all of your cares upon the Lord for he cares for you.

When we are really drawn to the Lord, we will thereby be drawn to the assembly of the saints (others who have been drawn to the Lord).

Before he would spend a day without prayer, Daniel spent a night in the lion's den (Daniel 6).

The three Hebrew children preferred to face temporal flames in a fiery furnace, and to be found faithful to their God, than to finally face the prospects of the eternal flames of the fire of hell (Daniel 3; Revelation 21:8).

When we lift up our eyes and behold the blessings of God, it makes us want to fall on our knees.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS





PHILOSOPHIES, ISMS, ET CETERA (THE MAKING OF THE MODERN MINDSET)

IMOTHY, the young helper of the apostle Paul, had been left in the cosmopolitan city of Ephesus to assist the church and do the work of an evangelist. Fittingly, Paul concludes the letter of 1 Timothy, written to him while there, with these words. "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, oppositions of science [knowledge] falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith..." (1 Timothy 6:20-21). Further inland, up in the mountains from Ephesus, at another time Paul had warned the Colossians in the epistle bearing their name, "Beware lest any man spoil [plunder] you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead [deity] bodily. And ye are complete in him..." (Colossians 2:8-10). In verse 3, he had just stated this wonderful truth, "In whom [Christ] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." To the Christians at Corinth, with Greek philosophy being an obvious backdrop to what he is saying, Paul also wrote, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). He then goes on to say that while "the world by wisdom [philosophyl knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1:21).

All of these warnings, admonitions and statements may have been written back in the first century, but they are just as timely today. With the passing of time, the great apostasy came (as prophesied by Paul and others, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-6; etc.), bringing with it the "Dark Ages." Then finally with the coming of the Renaissance (the revival of learning) and the Protestant Reformation (an effort to reform an apostate church), our "modern" era began. We are now living this side of the so-called "Dark Ages." The modern world stands largely as the product of the parallel and massive thrust of the "rationalism" (so-called) of the Renaissance and the religion of the Reformation, with the eventual convergence of the two. (And this convergence, when fully embraced, results in the undoing of Christianity, with its vitals being zapped). All of the different spin-off schools of thought, philosophies and isms, coming out of the dual Renaissance/Reformation movements, have shaped today's modern world and its mindset—a mindset, as of now, that really doesn't seem to have much set to it. Then, finally, with all of these views

homogenized together in the context of our pluralistic society, it is not a situation conducive to great religious convictions, nor even accepting absolutes. The capacity to accept absolute truth seems to have been lost somewhere alone the way. Tolerance becomes the norm.

Here are names of some of the many schools of thought, philosophies and isms that have entered into the making of the modern mindset:

- *Rationalism*, "a belief or theory that opinions and actions should be based on reason and knowledge [and that alone] rather than on religious belief [revelation] or emotional response."
- *Evolution*, the theory that all life forms have spontaneously evolved from a simple "organism" to the most complex that we see today, even man, by natural selection (thus discounting design and creation by an Almighty God).
- *Secularism*, "a system of political or social philosophy that [basically] rejects all forms of religious faith and worship" in its practice and outlook on life.
- *Humanism*, "a variety of ethical theory and practice that emphasizes reason, scientific inquiry, and human fulfillment in the natural world" as to what life is all about, and consequently rejecting the importance of God.
- *Relativism*, "the doctrine that knowledge, truth, and morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and are not absolute."
- *Existentialism*, a "philosophical movement embracing diverse doctrines but centering on analysis of individual existence in an unfathomable universe and the plight of the individual who must assume ultimate responsibility for acts of free will without any certain knowledge of what is right or wrong or good or bad."
- *Materialism*, "the theory or doctrine that physical well-being and worldly possessions constitute the greatest good and highest value in life."
- *Hedonism*, "the ethical theory that pleasure (in the sense of the satisfaction of desires) is the highest good and proper aim of human life" (synonymous with the playboy philosophy).

This listing of names is by no means exhaustive, but we have presented them to stimulate your thinking. Some of them have more than one shade of meaning. But all of them enter into the making of the modern mindset. Most have long been espoused by universities and colleges in our land and have filtered down to, and through, the secondary public school systems without question or thought

by most of the populace generally. We are told that the educated person must always keep an open mind in his pursuit of truth, but with the fuzzy modern mindset he, or she, is going to have a hard time recognizing and accepting truth, as such, when it is come across. Leave an old barn door open all of the time, even all winter, and the hinges will eventually become frozen by rust. Then when you try, you are going to have a hard time closing the door. This is likewise true in recognizing, accepting and embracing truth. The door just won't shut. Religiously, the apostle Paul spoke of some who were "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7).

In closing these comments, we suggest that you go back and carefully read the first paragraph of this article again. Then follow up with what Paul has to say in the 2nd chapter of 1 Corinthians. He says in verses 13 and 14 that "we" speak the wisdom of God "not in the [taught] words which man's wisdom teacheth, but [in the taught words] which the Holy Ghost [Spirit] teacheth; comparing [combining spiritual things with spiritual [words]. But the natural man fin contrast with the spiritual man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." By "natural man" he does not mean "carnal man", but "natural man" in contrast with the "spiritual man." The rationalism of the "natural man," who is hesitant to believe in a God that he cannot see, makes him reject the supernatural and all that it incurs. Consequently, he cannot accept a revelation (the Bible) given externally from man, to man, coming from a supposed God. Thus with such a mindset, the teachings of the Scriptures can mean little or nothing to him spiritually. He cannot fully grasp what it is all about. That is the crux of the problem with the many philosophies and isms going into the making of the muddled mindset of modern man (and he little knows it). Let us personally take to heart everything that the apostle Paul said.

> May the grace of Christ our Savior And the Father's boundless love, With the Holy Spirit's favor, Rest upon us from above.

Thus may we abide in union
With each other and the Lord,
And possess, in sweet communion,
Joys which earth cannot afford.

—John Newton

Thoughts on the Impact of the Fear of God

(Continued from Page 1)

require of thee, but to *fear the LORD thy God*, to walk in all

upon Our Lives



his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?"— Deuteronomy 10:12-13), so the New Testament that talks so much about love, does not discount fear as likewise being a primary factor in our obedience (although the nature of that fear may be different). Read Hebrews 12:18-29. This Scripture refers to the fearful experience of the Israelites in the initial giving of the Ten Commandments and of the nature of the Law, and then turns to our situation today. Fear is still involved in our relationship to God. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh [in the New Testament age]. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth [in Moses' day], much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven [Hebrews 1:2]...Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire."

Fear in the New Testament

Throughout the New Testament Scriptures the element of fear is still there. Jesus, in sending his disciples out to preach, said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather *fear him* [God] which is able to destroy both, soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). After Paul's conversion and his return to Jerusalem, and following his departure again, we read, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost [Spirit], were multiplied" (Acts 9:31). Later the apostle Paul, no longer in the presence of the Philippian Christians, wrote, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trem**bling**" (Philippians 2:12). The apostle Peter admonished his readers to be holy as God is holy and to "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Peter 1:14-17). Then in 1 Peter 2:17, he simply enjoined, "Fear God." And Revelation, the last

book in the Bible, ends with one of the heavenly beings saying, "Praise our God, all ye his servants, and *ye that fear him*, both small and great" (Revelation 19:5).

"Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear"

But in view of what the apostle John writes in his first epistle (1 John 4:7 through 5:3), further explanation is needed about love and fear. Here he greatly extols love. He tells us that "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," and then he goes on to profoundly say, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." However, since the New Testament elsewhere repeatedly mentions fear in connection with Christianity, when John says that "perfect love casteth out fear," he must mean a certain kind of fear (not just fear "blanketedly" excluded). Perhaps what Paul says in Romans 8:15 would be helpful in understanding this: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Our standing before God now is not that of a grueling slave, but that as a child of God (and finally a joint-heir with Christ). That makes a great difference in our attitude toward God.

The Good Fear, "Godliness"

Our fear has been modified into a deep respect and reverence, not a morbid fear, in our wanting to please our heavenly father. It is a wholesome fear. We are right with him and want to live that way. The words "devout," "godly" and "godliness" in the original language of the New Testament accent this. "Devout" (*eulabes*) in its root stems literally means to take hold of carefully (examples of the word, Acts 2:5; 8:2). "Godly," full blown in the word "godliness," signifies a good fear, reverence (and a life that is lived accordingly). But when we get off track and persist in waywardness, no longer being godly, we drop back into the mode of morbid fear accompanied with dread and uncertainty in our altered relationship to God.

Fear Natural When Involving the Supernatural

Regardless of our situation, when we would approach God, or even deal with the subject of deity, it should never be something done casually or flippantly. Fear is always natural when dealing with the supernatural. The awesomeness of the reality and being of God Almighty is overwhelming. This was the experience of the psalmist upon beholding the expanse of the stars and heavenly bodies. He therewith cried out, "What is man, that thou are

mindful of him?" (Psalms 8:3-4). Notice Jonah 1:9. Coupling the perfection and holiness of God with his omnipotence, and that we are sinful human beings, our natural inclination should be that of fear and uneasiness. Throughout the recorded pages of the Bible fear has always been experienced by man in his encounters with God and the supernatural (Genesis 3:8-10; 28:16-17; Exodus 3:6; Daniel 8:15-17: Luke 2:9-10: Matthew 17:1-6: Matthew 28:5.8: Revelation 1:17; etc.). Perhaps that is why God has angels appearing as men when making contact with human beings (to alleviate fear). But even with that they always seem to say, when making these appearances, "Be not afraid." As fragile mortals confronted with the supernatural, this can only be expected.

With these thoughts behind us, let us further pinpoint the impact of the fear of God upon our lives as human beings and Christians. There are many good lessons to learn here and especially this is needed with so little evidence of the fear of God in our society today.

I. THE FEAR OF GOD ABSENT IN A CALLOUSED AND UNGODLY WORLD

"Fear of God Not in This Place"

The fear of God has a restraining effect upon the lives of men, but it is largely absent in a calloused, deluded and an unbelieving world. From the earliest of times in the book of Genesis this is seen. This situation seemed to confront Abraham and Sarah who at God's bidding had migrated to Canaan and were living in the midst of a heathen people. Abraham had a beautiful wife and thought he might be killed by someone who might want her. Although that which they were about to do was quite an irregular thing to do, they agreed to pass Sarah off as Abraham's sister (which was a "half" truth). Thereupon the Canaanite Abimelech, thinking this was the case, took her. But before any further wrong could take place. God intervened (Genesis 20:1-18). Abimelech was very displeased with Abraham when he learned what he had done. Abraham, trying to explain the situation to him, said, "Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake" (20:11).

"No Fear of God Before Their Eves"

Paul in describing fallen humanity paints a composite picture, drawn from many fragments of Old Testament Scripture. It is not a beautiful picture, but notice how he lays it out and then the climaxing words. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that under-

standeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: *There is no fear of God before their eyes*" (Romans 3:10-18).

II. THE FEAR OF GOD BRINGS GOD'S MERCY UPON US

"Mercy toward Them That Fear Him From Generation to Generation"

Mary upon visiting her cousin Elizabeth (the expectant mother of John the Baptist), rejoice and share their mutual and kindred feelings together about their marvelous conceptions and what is going to take place. Their joyful and inspired words blend, with Mary exclaiming, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," and she continues, "And his mercy is on them that *fear him* from generation to generation" (Luke 1:46,50). Even going back to an earilier generation, Psalms 103:11-13 beautifully highlights this truth. "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that *fear him*. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that *fear him*." Then verse 17 of this chapter further extends these great truths to all generations. "[T]he mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that *fear him*, and his righteousness unto children's children."

"In Every Nation He That Feareth" Is Accepted by God

Bringing this truth of the fear and mercy of the Lord up to date, and to its fullness, we come to the New Testament age. In reference to Peter speaking to Cornelius and his household, the first Gentiles to come into the church, we read, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:24-35). It is said that Jesus was baptized "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). For him it was the right thing to do. Jesus knew no sin, so the purpose of his baptism was not the same as ours, which is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). But, nonetheless. his righteousness is fulfilled in us, as we get the benefits of his sinless life and blood. We are saved

(Continued on Next Page)

Thoughts on the Impact of the Fear of God upon Our Lives

(Continued from Page 5)

from the wrath of God through the love of God. And then the



fear of God that brought us into his mercy, keeps us in his mercy.

III. THE FEAR OF GOD HAS A PURIFYING EFFECT UPON OUR LIVES

"The Fear of the LORD is Clean"

Psalms 19:9 simply and clearly states, "The fear of the LORD is clean..." We see that much of the 19th psalm is dealing with the Law. As spoken here, "The fear of the LORD is clean" means that it was such in bringing about a good response to the Law and how it impacted their lives. Proverbs 16:6 says that "by the *fear of the LORD* men depart from evil." In the same vein, Proverbs 3:7 admonishes, "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil." Coming to the New Testament we find this truth still was effective. The Roman centurion Cornelius stationed in Palestine had discovered the superiority of the Jewish religion over paganism. As a proselyte close to Jewish conversion, he became the first Gentile to be converted to Christ. We read that he was "a devout man, and one that *feared God* with all of his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." The fear of God definitely had a purifying impact upon this man's life. Throughout the book of Acts, when Paul preached in Jewish synagogues throughout the Roman world, he found duplications of Cornelius. We read of Paul addressing the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. "Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience" (Acts 13:16). "Ye that fear God" were the Gentiles in the assembly. Notice Acts 13:43. They were those who were called "devout Greeks" and "honourable women" (Acts 13:50; Acts 17:4,12; etc). The fear of God made them such.

"Perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God"

Paul admonished the Corinthians to not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, to be a separate people and thereby they would be a special people unto God. Then he continues, "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*"

(2 Corinthians 7:1). The fear of God plays a prominent part in our being moved personally to do this. Aside from the personal aspect enjoined in this verse. Paul called for immediate action to be taken collectively by the church at Corinth. The church needed to be purged and purified of many sins. Following Paul's letter of rebuke (1 Corinthians), they were moving in that direction. Paul, pleased about what they were doing, responds, "For behold this selfsame thing [this very thing], that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (2 Corinthians 7:11). Notice. Fear was involved in this cleansing and purification.

IV. THE FEAR OF GOD PRODUCES UNITY AND HARMONY IN THE CHURCH

"The Lord Is at Hand"

A simple admonition stands out in Philippians 4:5 that is far-reaching in its application. Paul says, "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." The word rendered "moderation" means forbearance, gentleness, and fairness. In it is manifested "the spirit or attitude that does not seek to retaliate." Such an attitude and practice was to be in evidence among Christians "unto all men." And having urged this, he said, "The Lord is at hand." This is a somber reminder that "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). Also, it could refer to the second coming of Christ. These words would engender a tinge of fear and respect to back up what Paul had just said. These words remind us of Matthew 24:46-51 where the servant said, "My lord delayeth his coming," and he therewith "began to smite his fellowservants..." (as well as doing other bad things). He tried to numb the fear of the consequences of his actions by projecting the return of his lord into the distant future. Likewise applicable to what we are saying here, Paul admonished the Ephesians, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the *fear of God*" (Ephesians 5:21). Thus the fear of God would make for unity and harmony in all of our relationships and especially in the church.

"They Were All with One Accord"

Read the book of Acts. God was very real in the early days of the church. The resurrection of Christ had taken place. He had ascended back to heaven and the supernatural outpouring of the Holy Spirit had taken place. The apostles miraculously spoke

in other languages. Three thousand were baptized into Christ. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And *fear came upon every* **soul**: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles...And they, continuing daily with **one** accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat [food] with gladness and *singleness of heart*" (Acts 2:41-46). Then in the 5th chapter of Acts the first hypocrites appear in the church. They are stricken dead for lying about their giving. "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch...) (Acts 5:11-12). It is guite evident that fear was prominent in producing the unity and harmony that we see here.

V. THE FEAR OF GOD HAS A BEARING UPON OUR PREACHING AND TEACHING

"Let Him Be Accursed"

Preaching the gospel is a great privilege, a joyous and pleasurable experience, but at the same time it is the most solemn of responsibilities. It involves salvation and the eternal destiny of human beings (Mark 16:15-16). Paul said to the Ephesian elders in reviewing his work among them, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27). Writing to the Galatians in the most serious tone, with their apostasy as a backdrop to his words, he solemnly said, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). Yes, It is an awesome responsibility to preach the gospel, and we should be governed by a great respect for the Word of God, even approaching fear lest we misrepresent its holy teachings. Jude in his short epistle represents false teachers as men "without fear" (Jude 12) as they continued on in the error of their way, speaking perverse things.

A Most Solemn Charge

Notice these solemn words addressed by Paul in the second epistle to Timothy from his second Roman imprisonment just before his execution, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick [living] and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and

doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Timothy 4:1-5). The seriousness of what he is saying here is seen when he said, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead..." Heaven is called to witness this charge being made to Timothy, and the coming Day of Judgment is flashed before him. This should impact him with an element of fear as to the magnitude of his responsibility to "preach the word." Men would no longer "endure sound doctrine." They would turn from the truth. It does make a difference what a person believes. The truth must be preached. Would today that preachers had a little more of the fear of God in them when they stand to preach!

CONCLUDING REMARKS

John's Admonition Again

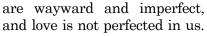
We could go on and on with lessons about the impact of the fear of God upon our lives, even highlighting the great truth emphasized in the book of Proverbs that, "the *fear of the LORD* is the beginning of wisdom..." (Proverbs 9:10; 1:7). Fear is part of our human experience in our relationship to God, even as a Christian. We are imperfect. But in pointing out these lessons on fear we don't want to overshadow the truth expressed by John that "perfect love casteth out fear." More in particular, let us consider his words again on this subject: "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out *fear*; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:16-18). As we noticed, as we brought other Scriptures to bear upon this subject, John must be talking about a paranoid fear of dread and uncertainty (not a good fear). Ours is a good and wholesome fear anchored in the love of God. It is the fear of deep respect and reverence, "godliness."

Deliverance and Boldness

Perfected love, love that prompts obedience to the Lord's commands in the context of the grace of God (John 14:15; 1 John 2:5; 5:3; Ephesians 2:8-10), "casteth out fear." However, many times we (Continued on Next Page)

Thoughts on the Impact of the Fear of God upon Our Lives

(Continued from Page 7)





Then the fear of dread and uncertainty returns. But, when we are right with God, and are living within the bounds of his grace, it gives assurance and boldness as we look to the Day of Judgment. Yes, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). However, Christ came to "deliver them [us] who through fear of death were all their [our] lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:15). The sting of death has been removed. The fear is gone. And it was in fear that Adam and Eve hid themselves from God in the Garden (Genesis 3:8-10). But now since the Savior has come a different situation prevails. The writer of the book of Hebrews extends an invitation, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). We approach God in boldness and confidence mingled with a deep respect and reverence.

The Apostle Peter's Admonition

In closing we leave this admonition of the apostle Peter with you. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [in all that you do]; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Peter 1:13-17).

A Matter of How You Look at It...

Attitude (A Fable)

THERE ONCE WAS a woman who woke up one morning, looked in the mirror, and noticed she had only three hairs on her head.

"Well," she said, "I think I'll braid my hair today." So she did and she had a wonderful day.

The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror and saw that she had only two hairs on her head. "Hmm," she said, "I think I'll part my hair down the middle today." So she did and she had a grand day.

The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror and noticed that she had only one hair on her head.

"Well," she said, "today I'm going to wear my hair in a pony tail." So she did, and she had a fun, fun day.

The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror and noticed that there wasn't a single hair on her head.

"Hooray!" she exclaimed. "I don't have to fix my hair today!"

Attitude is everything.—Selected

BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

- 1. When was Abraham's name changed from Abram to Abraham (and what is the significance of each of these names?
- 2. What were the more ancient names of the cities of Jerusalem and Hebron?
- 3. What charge and admonition from God highlighted how Joshua was to lead in the conquest of Canaan?
- 4. What king of northen Canaan formed a coalition of kings and armies against Joshua and the Israelites in their conquest of Canaan?
- 5. If the children of Israel had gone straight to the Promised Land from Mount Sinai (Horeb), how long would it have taken them (instead of the 40 years they were condemned to wander in the wilderness?
- 6. What well known man in the Old Testament Scriptures was given the second name Jedidiah when he was born?
- 7. In the Old Testament times what was the Sea of Galilee called (and what does that name mean)?
- 8. What was the Dead Sea called in Old Testament times?
- 9. What was the Mediterranean Sea called in Old Testament times?
- 10. What physical malady befell the Philistines sometime after they had taken the Ark of the Covenant from Israel?
- 11. Who in the Bible is likend unto a "backsliding heifer"?
- 12. What was the other variation of the name of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia?
- 13. What is the only chapter in the Bible that was written by a pagan?
- 14. Of the four gospel writers, which one called the Sea of Galilee "lake Gennesaret" and which one call it the "Sea of Tiberias"?
- 15. What hour of the day was Jesus crucified, and from what hour to what hour was darkness over the land?
- 16. Who is the first person, outside of the apostles, mentioned as doing "great wonders" and performing "miracles"?
- 17. What two martyrdoms are recorded in the book of Acts?
- 18. Of what city did Paul and Barnabas shake the dust off their feet in leaving it?
- 19. When the Jews were no longer receptive to Paul's preaching in the synagogue at Ephesus, what other public place did he use to present the gospel?
- 20. What does the last verse of the Bible fittingly say?

(NOTE: Answers found elsewhere in this issue of the paper)



APOLOGY: Please accept our humble apology for slowness in getting correspondence answered. "We" have no staff of secretaries, etc. to handle such, and this is done by the "editor" as time allows. Be it known that you are sincerely appreciated.

FLORIDA:

- "Thanks for all you do. I appreciate THE SWORD AND STAFF and your website."
- "God bless you for THE SWORD AND STAFF. It is a ministry that brings God the glory. God bless you and your family..."
- "We are thankful for the many years of life that God has blessed you with to publish THE SWORD AND STAFF and to preach the Word..."
- "THE SWORD AND STAFF is one ministry I wish I could send more support to. I appreciate the work you do and the service you provide. I let anyone who will listen know about your website and the excellent material you provide. I trust the Lord is providing all of your needs..."

VIRGINIA:

- "Thank you so much for your ministry. It is greatly appreciated!"
- "Thank you for the work you are doing. May God bless and keep you safely."
- "Thank you for all your work for the Lord. THE SWORD AND STAFF is always a welcome 'read.' It seems it always comes at the right time for the messages you have presented."
- "Please use the enclosed donation to help publish and distribute THE SWORD AND STAFF. The most recent one (titled 'The Awfulness of Sin') was especially hard hitting and relevant to today's events. Perhaps hundreds of these can be distributed in the vicinity of Capitol Hill and other so-called 'centers of power' in Washington. I can only imagine some of the responses this would generate.

"Thanks again for your publication. May it continue to reach and touch lost souls and strengthen those of believers."

TENNESSEE:

■ "May God continue to bless you with good health and more years to continue THE SWORD AND STAFF plus all the other literature. I pray sister Freda is doing better each day."

WEST VIRGINIA:

- "I enjoy reading your publication of THE SWORD AND STAFF. Praying your great work will continue forward."
- "Thanks so much for the bound volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF. When I received them, I felt as though I had received a box of gold. They are so valuable and are helpful to me to understand the Bible better.

"Thanks again.""

PENNSYLVANIA:

■ "Daily I pray all will be well with you, needs met, [that you will have] good health and live a conservative life to 95 to 97 years old. The kingdom needs THE SWORD AND STAFF."

NEW YORK:

■ "Enclosed please find my order for bound volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF and some tracts. I thank you so much...for sending me your publication regularly. It has been such a great blessing in my life that I want to share the messages with my family and friends in my country, the Philippines..."

OHIO:

- "[I] really appreciate your writings as you let the Bible be the total authority. Enclosed is a check to help with expenses."
- "Thanks so much for your continued faithfulness to the Word and the printed page! May the Lord continue to bless you with health to do so."

MISSOURI:

■ "Please put these people on your mailing list for THE SWORD AND STAFF and include the bound volumes of 2009 and 2010 if you would. Also, if you would, comment on Hebrews 6:4-6 in your articles.

"Thanks..."

COMMMENTS ON HEBREWS 6:4-6

The Scripture: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost [Spirit], And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-6).

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READERS'... Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

Grasping the Situation

It is helpful, and necessary, in understanding this Scripture that we get an over-all view and grasp of what the book of Hebrews is all about. Obviously, the original readers of this epistle were Jewish Christians. Because they had taken their stand for Christ, they had undergone many trials and afflictions (10:32-33), including confiscation of their property (10:34), with the prospects of the shedding of blood looming before them (12:3-4). The writer of the epistle encouragingly reassures them that they have done the right thing in taking their stand with Christ, showing the superiority of Christ and Christianity over the Law of Moses (in each and every way); that is the great theme of the book. The gospel was/is the "so great salvation" spoken by the Lord, the Son of God. It is the "everlasting covenant" (Hebrews 13:20).

The Deterrent, A Warning of Ultimate Apostasy

But it seems they were becoming very discouraged and there was the real possibility of a falling away on the part of some of them. They had left the Law of Moses in becoming Christians and were now suffering the consequences (from their unbelieving countrymen). Disheartened, and being under hostile circumstances, some were forsaking the assembly (10:25). The subtle encroachment of temptation that would lead to falling away was there. Starting with neglecting the assembly, falling into sin could more easily take place, finally climaxing with the abandonment of Christianity altogether in unbelief. With the Law and the gospel thrown over against one another, Hebrews 2:1-3 admonishes and warns, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels [the Law, Acts 7:53] was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward [the punishment deserved]; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...?" An evil heart of unbelief could settle in, with them being "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (3:12-14). Failure to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord put them in a precarious position (5:12-14); thus, the warning, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God" (12:15). In chapter 6:1-6, he holds before them the possibility of ultimate apostasy, if they continue in a downward spiral, not just a simple backsliding. They could reach the point of disavowing Christ altogether, just like those who mockingly crucified him, treating him as a "malefactor" and regarding him as an imposter (6:6; Matthew 27:39-43). They would deliberately denounce their faith. They would willfully sin. Full circle, they would

have put themselves outside of the realm of Christianity and its beliefs (back to where they were before their initial conversion, only more so). They would be in such a state that it would be "impossible" for them to be renewed (6:4-6), impossible perhaps more from their own standpoint than that of God's (who would have all to come to repentance, 2 Peter 3:9, whether initially, Luke 24:47, or from backsliding, 2 Corinthians 7:10-11). The writer holds up the worst possible scenario that could possibly come to pass as a deterrent to their falling away, not that he thinks they would reach that point (6:9-12; 10:35-39), but to make them realize the seriousness of the situation. The falling away is not simple apostasy, but ultimate apostasy of no return.

More could be said, but these are our thoughts upon this Scripture, trusting this will be of some help in our understanding it. Let us likewise today take what is said here to heart lest we have an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

KANSAS:

- "Please remove...from your mailing list." (E-mail)
- "[I]"m a fairly new Christian going on my 3rd year of walking with Christ. I just want to tell you and all those who help put THE SWORD AND STAFF together that I greatly appreciate your hard work. I know and understand the careful studying, time and commitment it takes to put something together like this. The articles I have read encourage me and confirm my faith and convictions. Rarely do I see Christians like you guys who contend for absolute truth and try to be exactly what the New Testament church is to be, HOLY!..." (E-mail)

TEXAS:

■ "I just received my first copy of THE SWORD AND STAFF and was I impressed with it as I'm always looking for informative information to read and sometimes to put in my church bulletins. I struck gold with the complimentary copy you sent to me..."

OREGON:

- "Thank you so much for all the work you do for the Lord."
- "[I] enjoy your paper very much and share it with others."
- "I want to thank you for your tireless work in publishing THE SWORD AND STAFF..."

UNITED STATES:

- "Thank you for continuing to send THE SWORD AND STAFF to me even though I am unable to send regular offerings. The blessing of this publication is passed on to others and has helped strengthened me again and again."
- "THE SWORD AND STAFF has so many thought provoking little tidbits (Barbs...with a Point, Proverbially Speaking and others), along with the meaty

articles you write. I would like your permission to use some of the thought provokers along with my 'DAILY THOUGHTS...'"

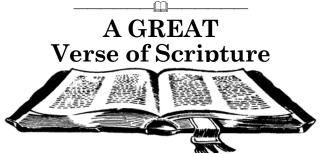
Editor: You are welcome to use the material that you requested in a context for the glory of God.

AUSTRALIA:

■ "Thanks for the 'SWORDS' you have sent over. We do appreciate them so much!..." (E-mail)

PHILIPPINES:

■ "I would like to thank you for your untiring effort of sending your articles worldwide and I am privileged to have them sent here to the Philippines. May God bless your noble task in just sharing the truth with others through reading your articles..." (E-mail)



• "Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (Acts 10:33).

HIS IS a great verse of Scripture that deserves further study and application. The more that we look at it, the more it impacts us with thought. There are so many great lessons to be learned from it. Would to God that we had more ready-made audiences, sitting, waiting and eager to hear the gospel, like this one today!

"Cornelius"

Cornelius was an officer in the Roman army over a hundred men. He had been stationed at Caesarea in the occupation of Palestine. Like other centurions mentioned in the New Testament, he had been impressed and drawn to the Jewish religion. In it's concepts and purity, especially in contrast with Roman paganism, he had found it very attractive. Not only was it attractive to him, as seen in his devotion that is described here (Acts 10:1-2), it seems he was what was called a "proselyte at the gate" (one ready to be circumcised and embrace the Jewish religion). God used this good man as an emphatic signal to the early church that the Gentile world was to have the gospel preached to them, he therewith becoming the first Gentile convert, along with his family and friends, to come into the church. Read the 10th chapter of Acts.

"Immediately"

In this verse (Acts 10:33), "*Immediately*" is the word that first gets our attention. Cornelius was praying about the "9th hour" (3 o'clock in the afternoon)

when in a vision an angel of the Lord appeared to him. The angel told him, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." (If we reach out to God, we will find that he has all of the time been reaching out to us). Cornelius was instructed to send to Joppa (about 30 miles further south), inquiring for one Simon Peter, for "he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." He "immediately" and unhesitatingly responded, sending two of his servants and a faithful soldier attendant. This man wasted no time, complying with what God told him to do. And when God says something that we should do, and we learn the truth and urgency of it, we will not delay or gainsay into putting it into practice if we are of the disposition of this man Cornelius (yes, if we really mean business with God!). "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

"Therefore"

Immediately he complied, and then we have two "therefores" that follow. When we see a "therefore," we need to look and see what it is there for. God spoke and Cornelius obeyed connects with this "therefore" (this action involved is seen in "I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou are come"). His two servants and the faithful soldier had made their trip to Joppa and now on the fourth day they were back in Caesarea accompanied by the apostle Peter and six Jewish "brethren" (Christians). Cornelius is more than pleased that they are there. He is eagerly awaiting to hear what Peter will have to say. He had been fasting to that hour.

The second "therefore" now appears before us in this verse. "Now *therefore* are we all here present before God..." The connective thought of the antecedent verse 24 ties in with this. "And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsman and near friends." After the initial meeting with the arrival of Peter, they "went in, and found many that were come together" (10:27). Then verse 33 sort of sums it up. "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." Cornelius wanted this momentous occasion, of which he did not fully understand yet, to be shared with his family and those who meant something to him. (And if our conversion is real, we will want it to be shared with those close and dear to us).

"Present Before God"

The next words that get our attention here are "present before God." They were all gathered there "before God." God was totally in the picture, and they fully realized that the picture was spread out before an all-seeing God. God was watching everything that was taking place. From experience, Cornelius was very conscious of this. The angel had said "thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God" (10:31). God was behind all that was

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A GREAT Verse of Scripture

(Continued from Previous Page)

going on. So in such a sensitive atmosphere they were ready to hear all things that were commanded of God. Add to that the words in 2 Timothy 4:1-2 and you have the most ideal setting for the reception of God's message. Here Paul charged Timothy "before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick [living] and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" to "Preach the Word…" God was looking on. Peter would know the truth of this. Care would be taken in faithfully relating God's word to these people. Listener and preacher were ready. In such a setting, look for something great to happen.

"Hear All Things that Are Commanded Thee of God"

They were gathered to "hear all things that are commanded thee of God." Cornelius, including himself, said, "We all" are here to hear "all things" that would be coming from Peter as God's inspired spokesman. He did not want Peter to hedge on what would be said. We want to know all that we should do. Just tell us. (How unlike most people today!). He was much concerned and careful, wanting and expecting that what would be said would be coming directly from God as its source and that it would be coming from God's appointed spokesman only. (Let this be our criterion, as we always look to the Bible, the inspired word of God). How great and commendable are the things that he said! Jesus had said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," and they surely had ears to hear. Let us take notice, be and do accordingly.

One more single word of note is seen here in the word "commanded." We are told that in the original language of the New Testament the word that is translated "commanded" is a military term. That being the case, what is the force of it being used here? Cornelius was a military man and a soldier. He was used to receiving commands and giving commands. Soldiers were expected to follow orders without question. He, in essence, is saying to just speak the command and we will obey it.

Peter's Explanation

Later in explaining to the church at large the experience of going into the house of the Gentile Cornelius, how things unfolded and finally what happened, Peter tells of the things that the angel had said to Cornelius and of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The angel had told Cornelius that Peter would "tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost [Spirit] fell on them, as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:14-15). Notice. In his speaking he had reached the point where he said, "To him [Christ] give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (10:43). Then we read, "While Peter yet spake these

words, the Holy Ghost [Spirit] fell on all them which heard the word" (10:44). Peter had not actually finished all that he was going to say. Before he fully told them words whereby they would be saved, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place (11:14-15).

Further Understanding This

However, he did say that those who believed through the Christ's name would receive remission of sins (10:43). The outpouring of the Spirit made it emphatically evident that the Gentiles should be receiving the gospel. Consequently, in amazement, Peter asked, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?" Then we read 10:48, "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." (The word "commanded" here is the same in the Greek as used in verse 33, a military term. So that fits in as one of the all things "commanded" of God). "Remission of sins" would come through the name of Christ (10:43). This corresponds with Acts 2:38 where the same apostle Peter told the Jews on the day of Pentecost to "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]." The gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38 has reference to that which came with salvation, not the charismatic outpouring. Along with remission of sins, this regular gift of the Spirit would be given universally to all of those that "are afar off, even as many as the Lord out God shall call," to every convert (Acts 2:39: Romans 8:9). And in reference to Cornelius, by saying that the "Holy Ghost [Spirit] fell on them, as on us at the beginning" (11:15) implies that this was not an everyday, every conversion experience. Why say, "as on us at the beginning" if it happened all of the time? The beginning was a few years before, the day of Pentecost. The gift was charismatic in nature, not that which accompanies salvation. With Cornelius, it fell on unsaved people. With the apostles on Pentecost, it fell on disciples of Christ, people who were already saved.

(Footnote thought: In the charismatic manifestation of the Holy Spirit, there was the speaking in tongues ["For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God," 10:46]. Some would tell us that "tongues" mean ecstatic speaking, not an intelligible human language as such. But notice it says that in speaking in "tongues" they magnified God. They said great and wonderful things about God [like on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:11]. If what was said was just ecstatic noises, how would they know that God was being magnified? That doesn't make sense.)

TRULY ACTS 10:33 is a great Scripture. Cornelius was the ideal recipient to receive the gospel message and as such was honored to be the first Gentile to come into the church. Let us learn from his example and be of the same disposition. Amen.—*J.Gibbons* \square

From:

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,

And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave, Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.

The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

—Thomas Gray



DON'T be a hypocrite, just be converted.

"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching [not foolish preaching] to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21b).

When you excuse yourself, you accuse yourself.

You need to find God, not because he is lost, but because you are, and when you find God, you will find yourself.

When you get where you are going, where will you be when you get there?

If you fail to put God first in your life you are a failure, and if you die that way you are not only a failure, but you will be a loser throughout all eternity.

If we measure success only in terms of material things, we are already a failure.

There is something wrong with your concept of grace if you think it gives you permission to keep on sinning (Romans 6:1-4; 1 John 3:9).

When you go the course of least resistance, you will go down the drain.

To make a difference you must be different; otherwise you are still part of the problem.

It is hard to walk with the Lord when you are dragging your feet.

Many churches that in the past have claimed to be New Testament churches have now become indistinguishable as part of the denominational landscape.

Religion that makes you feel good without being good is not any good.

Many "churches" today, if they got down to business being the Lord's church, would find they had never been in business in the first place as far as being the Lord's church is concerned.

Unless Christ is Lord of all in our lives he is not Lord at all in our lives.

Shouldn't the work of the church be done through the organizational structure that the Lord set up for the function and ongoing of the church? Those who leave God out will find they have been left out by God.

If Noah had thought like modern "religious" people think today, when God said to build an ark he would have built a gymnasium.

When we "dumb down" our religion, it is no longer the wisdom that is from above.

It is not a question of **who** is right, but of **what** is right; when the **what** is right is settled, the **who** will take care of itself.

I don't know why some preachers think that it is part of their role as a minister to be a "court jester."

If the church of Christ is Christ's church, why call it anything else except his church (not some denominational division)?

Don't cross a bridge before you get to it for it may not be there when you get there.

Professing Christians with no Christian values are of no value to the cause of Christ (in fact, they are a hindrance).

When people you have looked up to let you down, it really is a big let down.

Sometimes it takes more faith to accept unanswered prayer (that this is God's will) than it does to have answered prayer.

If we have more heat than we have light, we will swelter in the night.

Why pray for the Lord's leading if we are not willing to follow?

All "smart" men are not necessarily "wise" (there is a difference).

Instead of yearning for Christ's return many are yawning in unconcern.

A thankful people do not murmur and complain.

Live like you are going to die, then you can die like you are going to live.

You cannot go forward looking back.

Let Us Make 2012 Count!

- Begin to love God with all of your heart...
- Choose to love all others, including enemies...
- Be the best husband or wife you can be...
- Be a respectful and responsible son or daughter...
- Do your daily duties with sincerity and zeal...
- Add worthy virtues of God to your life...
- Keep a sensitive conscience before the Lord...
- Live as though each day might be your last...
- Look forward to Christ's glorious return...
- Always reject the wrong and do the right...
- Run from hell and look forward to heaven...

—Richard Hollerman

Shaking the Apple Tree

"I STUDY MY BIBLE like I gather apples. First, I shake the whole tree that the ripest may fall. Then I shake each limb, and when I have shaken each limb, I shake each branch and every twig. Then I look under every leaf. I search the Bible as a whole like shaking the whole tree. Then I shake every limb—study book after book. Then I shake every branch, giving attention to the chapters. Then I shake every twig, or a careful study of the paragraphs and sentences and words and their meanings."

-Attributed to Martin Luther

I Am Thankful for...

The mess to clean after a get-together because it means I have been surrounded by friends.

The taxes I pay because it means that I am employed.

A lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning, and gutters that need fixing because it means I have a home.

My shadow that watches me work because it means I am out in the sunshine.

The spot I find at the far end of the parking lot because it means I am capable of walking.

All the complaining I hear about our government because it means we have freedom of speech.

The lady behind me in church who sings off key because it means that I can hear.

The alarm that goes off early in the morning hours because it means that I am alive.

The piles of laundry and ironing because it means my loved ones are nearby.

Weariness and aching muscles at the end of the day because it means I have been productive.

Did You Know?

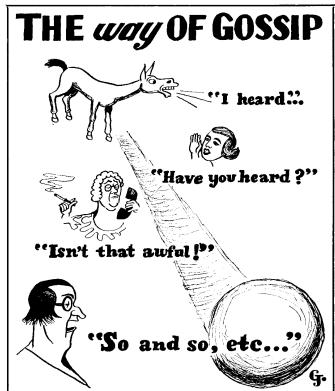
DID YOU KNOW the Bible teaches that a Christian, when getting married, is to only marry another Christian? That's right.

- "Have we not power [the right] to lead about a *sister* [*in Christ*], *a wife*, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas [Peter]?" (1 Corinthians 9:5).
- "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; *only in the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 7:39; Galatians 3:27; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:1).
- "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with

an infidel [an unbeliever, non-Christian]? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?..." (2 Corinthians 6:14-16).

However, if you are converted to Christ and your mate is not, 1 Peter 3:1-6 and 1 Corinthians 7:10-16 apply to your situation.

From an old SWORD AND STAFF...



The Elders of the Church

N OUR DESIRE and commitment to divest our-Leselves of denominationalism and return to the Christianity of the New Testament, thereby being one with the church of the first century, there are many things that are troubling and get our attention. One is the clergy leadership of the church. So many things have gone through a change since early New Testament times. Older qualified men who were called "elders" were vested with the care and oversight of the local church. In keeping with the multiphases of their work, they also were at times called "bishops" and "pastors," the word "bishop" meaning overseer and "pastor" meaning shepherd. There was a plurality of these in each local church that had been set in order. Notice the words "elder" and "bishop" are used interchangeably in the New Testament, referring to the one and same position in the local church (Titus 1:5 and 7). Notice there was a plurality, more than one bishop or elder in each local church (Philippians 1:1—This letter was written to the "saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons").—Selected

"What's on the Inside Is What Matters"

A MAN TOLD of painting the house of an elderly lady in Spokane, Washington. She had a large family Bible prominently displayed on the coffee table and remarked that it was 116 years old and a priceless heirloom. The man commented on how remarkable that was, and added, "It doesn't matter how old the Bible might be, what's on the inside is what matters." She immediately replied, "Oh, I know. That sure is the truth. Why, we have family records and births and marriages and deaths that go so far back, all recorded in that Bible; we could never replace them." To her that was what mattered.

And we might ask a direct question, "What is on the inside of that old Bible in your house that really matters to you? More specifically, are you familiar with its spiritual contents?"—Selected

"Pray Without Ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Some things for which we are to pray:

- 1. Pray for those who despitefully use you—Matthew 5:44.
 - 2. Pray that God's will be done—Matthew 6:10.
 - 3. Pray for our daily bread—Matthew 6:11.
 - 4. Pray for forgiveness of our sins—Luke 11:4.
 - 5. Pray for deliverance from evil—Matthew 6:13.
- 6. Pray for laborers in the Lord's harvest—Matthew 9:38.
 - 7. Pray for little children—Matthew 19:13.
- 8. Pray for deliverance from temptation—Matthew 26:41.
 - 9. Pray to be ready in that day—Mark 13:33.
 - 10. Pray for our faith to fail not-Luke 22:32.
 - 11. Pray that we do no evil—2 Corinthians 13:7.
- 12. Pray that our love may abound—Philippians 1:9.
 - 13. Pray for the preachers—1 Thessalonians 5:25.
- 14. Pray that the Word of the Lord have free course—2 Thessalonians 3:1.
- 15. Pray that the Word of the Lord be glorified—2 Thessalonians 3:1.
 - 16. Pray for the sick—James 5:15.
 - 17. Pray for one another—James 5:16.—Selected

The Eagle Wouldn't Fly

A FARMER once killed a huge eagle with a wing span of seven feet. He was amazed that he was able to get close enough to this huge bird to kill it. After the kill, he approached the bird and discovered why it had not escaped. He found a steel trap attached to the bird's leg. The trap had not killed the eagle, but it did weigh the bird down so that flying was extremely dif-

ficult. With the additional weight of that trap attached to its leg, the bird's efficiency was lowered and its strength was depleted. The trap did not kill the bird, but its weight did weaken the bird's ability to soar and survive. What is it in your life that is weighing you down and lowering your efficiency as a Christian?—*Lindsey Garmon*



"WINE is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (THE BIBLE, Proverbs 20:1).

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Answers to:

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BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Genesis 17 (Abram: exalted father; Abraham: Father of a multitude); 2. Jerusalem (Genesis 14:18; Judges 19:10-11); Hebron: (Joshua 15:13; Genesis 23:2); 3. Joshua 1:6,7,9,18; 10:25; 4. Joshua 11:1-5; 5. Deuteronomy 1:2; 6. 2 Samuel 12:24-25; 7. Numbers 34:11; Joshua 13:27; etc. (Chinnereth, meaning harp shaped); 8. Numbers 34:3,12; Joshua 3:16; 15:25; 9. Numbers 34:6; Joshua 1:4; 15:12; etc.; 10. I Samuel 5; 11. Hosea 4:16; 12. Nebuchadrezzar: Jeremiah 21:2,7; 22:25; 24:1 (used extensively throughout Jeremiah); Ezekiel 26:7; 29:18-19; 30:10; 13. Daniel 4; 14. Luke 5:1; John 6:1 (21:1); 15. Mark 15:25 (3rd hour = 9 o'clock); Luke 23:44-45; Matthew 27:45-46 (6th to 9th hour = 12 to 3 o'clock); 16. Acts 6:8; 17. Acts 7:57-60; 12:1-2; 18. Acts 13:51 (14); 19. Acts 19:8-10; 20. Revelation 22:21. □

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