



## Revivals And Church History :: Fear of GOD

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Walking In The Fear And Love Of God

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There are many definitions and dimensions to what it means to fear the Lord. There is the reverential awe because He is so other than we are, so able to do other than we are able to do. He is so awesome and so powerful that it should leave you and I standing and trembling in His holy presence. There is also the fear of the Lord in the sense of our accountability to Him. He has given us access to His nature, His life, His power and His majesty through the Cross of Christ, and He has called us into His work. Our life is not our own, but His. It is not our power, but His. It is not our mind, but the mind of Christ. It is not our promise to God, but His promise to us that gives us the strength to live the Christian life. What have we done with all of this? One day we will have to stand before Him and give an accounting of what we have done with these resources.

We have lost the fear of the Lord when we no longer believe God means what He says. We have lost our fear of Him when we no longer believe that He has called us into His work, that He has given us the resources for His work, and that we will have to give an accounting for what we know and what we have been given. We have lost our fear of Him when we no longer believe in His power and plans to transform our lives. He said through the prophet Ezekiel, "A new heart also will I give you, a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezek. 36:26). He said through the Apostle Paul that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). We are changed by the very presence of God within us "into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). This means that we are made into somebody other than what we used to be. We change, our values change and our motives for living change. The Christian life is to be an awesome and exciting life as morning by morning new mercies we see. We leave old things behind us and we press on to the goal set before us.

### A Heart for God's Work

In the seventh chapter of Luke is the account of a religious man, a Pharisee named Simon, and the incredible contrast between what the work of God really was and what his religion had made it (vv. 36-50). As Jesus sat as a guest in this Pharisee's house, a woman of poor reputation came in, and began to wash Jesus' feet with her tears and wipe them with her hair. Jesus had compassion and was willing to be touched with the feelings and infirmities of the struggling and the unclean, the nobodies and nothings of society. Simon, however, began to think critically of Jesus, saying to himself that if Jesus "were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him: for she is a sinner" (v. 39). This Pharisee sat as judge and everything had to conform to his standard; nothing could be outside of what he thought holiness should be. He had no compassion for the stranger and no heart for the work of God. Though we must not have an acceptance of sin, we must have an acceptance of the sinner, an acceptance of people and a love for everyone who is trying to make their way through to God.

Jesus told the Pharisee that "to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (v. 47). This should have stricken him to the core. Jesus was basically saying to him that he was not forgiven very much because he did not love very much. Faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:20). How do I dare say that Jesus Christ is in me if I have no heart for His work?

Consider what Jesus came to do: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus exemplifies the ministry of God in the earth, and He says that "as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). Now obviously we are not going to redeem the world, but we are called to bring people to the redemption of Christ. We are called to be a physical demonstration of the heart of God that led to Calvary. We are called to be representatives, not historians. There is a big difference between someone who knows about Jesus Christ and someone who knows Jesus Christ. Those who know Him have a heart for His work.

## Love for the Lost

When I was a lost man in 1978, a man who was involved in the work of God came to tell me about Jesus Christ. For about three months he kept coming to my door every Wednesday even though I was belligerent and sarcastic about the things he was telling me. Do you know what really won me to Christ? This man loved me and I knew it. He cared about my soul. In spite of what I did, in spite of how I lived, he loved me. And the depth of his love provoked me to read the Gospel of John, and by reading it I saw clearly the Cross of Jesus Christ and His lawful and legitimate claim to my life.

We have been called into an incredible ministry. The world is dying and many are headed to a hell that is for eternity. When was the last time that you and I prayed to the effect, "O Lord, would You increase the depth of love in my heart for the lost? Would You help me not to see any man, any woman, any teenager or any child as unworthy or unlovely? Would You give me Your eyes for all people in this world, starting with the least lovely of them all?"

## A Bridge of Love

Several years ago I visited a Muslim town of about 8,000 people that had lost a bridge during the war in Kosovo. I asked the mayor if there was anything we could do for the town, and he said we could build a bridge so the people could get across the river to their fields. I told him that I would make him a deal: I would build a bridge if he would allow me to come back and preach about Jesus Christ to the entire town for thirty minutes. He looked me in the eye, reached out his hand, and we shook hands. On the strength of that handshake we built a nice bridge, a cement one, across the river.

When it came time to dedicate it, the mayor was true to his word. This was a very radical Muslim town, so only the men were allowed to come. Most of them had fought in the war and were very hardened soldiers. I brought my own translator and dismissed their translator which sent a shockwave through the officials. The whole time I spoke the deputy mayor was hitting me on the side with his fist trying to get me to stop. He was so scared and shaking so badly that the whole platform shook. The people in the audience were in an ethical dilemma because they were religiously bound to kill me for what I was doing, but culturally bound to show hospitality because I had built a bridge for them.

I had been warned that if I said God has a Son they would kill me. They consider that blasphemy. I was also told that they would not understand the idea that they have sinned and need to make it right. I had all of these potential problems, but in my heart I loved these men. The Lord gave me this opening line: "I want to tell you today where I get the power to say 'I love you.' I want to tell you why we came to your town and built a bridge for you." I talked about God building a bridge by becoming a man so that we can get to where we need to go, that we were cut off from the love of God. As I shared, God's love in my heart began to pour out to these men.

This was a rough and radical looking crowd with rifles, and yet, after I had spoken about fifteen minutes, the tears started to come, mostly from the men in their 30s. Some of the older men began to heckle me, but the younger men who far outnumbered them began to clap their hands to drown them out and stop them. And when the hecklers had stopped, I continued speaking. Later that evening, twenty-six people stepped out of the crowd and publicly gave their lives to Jesus Christ. This was a miracle!

## God's Love Working through Us

Now you have to understand who is sharing this with you. Years ago I was stone cold. I was a police officer and would go to an accident scene, do my work, and not care about anyone or anything. But the Bible says if any man be in Christ, he becomes a new creation; his old ways begin to pass away and all things become new (2 Cor. 5:17). Now I did not love everybody overnight, but little by little the work of God began coming into my heart. I began to walk in the fear of the Lord, understanding the incredible resources of heaven that were mine and that there would be an accounting at the end of my life for what I have done with these resources. He produced in my heart a love for Him and for His work.

You cannot help but love when you walk in the fear of the Lord because you begin to see how other God is than we are, how wonderful His work is, how deep and infinite His mercy is, how insurmountable His power is, and how He is able to open any door He wants to open. If we have the courage to go through the doors He opens, He begins to do miraculous things through our lives. We are not called to live a natural life, but a supernatural life in the kingdom of God. We are called to be the embodiment of the passion of God that sent His Son to the Cross. Our hearts are to be no less than His heart because Christ is in us, and that is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). If Christ is in us, there has to be in our lives an outworking of His love, compassion and service toward others. This generation will not be won by an argument, fancy theology or by any number of conferences we may hold, but by followers of Jesus Christ who have laid hold of the resources

of heaven and determined to not get to the throne of God with their basket empty.

#### The Ministry God Desires

The prophet Isaiah was sent by the Lord with this message: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God" (Isa. 58:1-2). The Lord wanted Isaiah to preach this message passionately so that the people would take it seriously and know the Lord's heart. These people had all the outward trappings of being dedicated to the Lord. They delighted in seeking Him and in knowing His ways. They were "as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God." They asked Him the ordinances of justice. These are people who today would open the Bible and say it is awesome and true. They would go to prayer and ask God to stop abortion, to stop crime, and do something powerful in our nation. By the standards of today, we would give them the church of the year award.

But there was something wrong. They were fasting and afflicting their soul (v. 3), but God was not drawing near. He then reveals the reason to them: "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thy own flesh?" (vv. 5-7). They were seeking, but hiding at the same time; they were seeking God, but not entering into the work of God. He wanted them to care for the oppressed, the hungry, the poor and the naked.

Notice His promise to them if they would do these things: "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward" (v. 8). In other words, there will be a reputation in a sense. The glory of the Lord, the weightiness and power of God, will surround you and carry you. He continues, "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity" (v. 9). He is calling them to focus on relieving the suffering that has come to humankind because of sin, and to stop blaming people and stop speaking empty talk about what they are going to do some day. He goes on, "And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in" (vv. 10-12).

When I first began to hear these things, they were so foreign to me. But I began to read them and began to see. I began to understand the work of God. I began to reach out when it was not within me to reach out. And little by little, line by line, my nature started to change. I was given the ability to do things that were beyond my own limitations. The Bible says that the awesome giftings of God and the ability to do these things that bring glory to Him will be given to us when we are willing to walk through the doors before us.

#### Unto the Least of These

In the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt. 25:31-46), Jesus points out that when the righteous minister to those who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick or imprisoned, it is not a program to them, it is just who they are. No one has to tell them to do these things; it is just part of their lifestyle. These are people with compassion, people who simply cannot turn away from human need.

Jesus goes on in the parable to warn that those who do not minister to those in need "shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:46). Remember that we have lost the fear of the Lord when we no longer believe that He means what He says. A real relationship with Christ produces supernatural compassion. This cannot be drummed up in the flesh, it cannot be programmed and it cannot be faked. God Himself has to give it. He has to put it inside your heart.

We have to understand that one day we will stand at the throne of God and give an account of what the awesome resources given to us through Calvary produced in our lives. Are they now producing a religion that is indifferent to human need, or is the heartbeat of Jesus beginning to beat within us for fallen humanity? One day we will give account.

When others ask me how to enter into and walk in these things, I point out that Jesus says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Luke 11:9-10). Jesus goes on to say that if we know how to give good gifts to our children in our condition, how much more will our Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (vv. 11-13). We have to want this work and we have to ask Him for it.

Jesus says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least" (Matt. 25:40). Isn't it amazing that He did not point to kings, governors, the influential, the rich or the powerful, but to "the least." It is to those who really have no help unless God helps them – the least, the depressed, the suicidal, the addicted, the marginalized, the single mom struggling to feed her kids. Someone once asked me where it starts. Here is how it starts: if you only have enough to make a peanut butter sandwich, cut it in half and take half across the hall to that mom who cannot feed her kids. It starts with tenderness and acts of compassion, and with praying and asking God for a heart for His people. I try to get out once in a while in Manhattan and just walk around, and if I see someone crying I sit down and talk with that one for a minute.

### Love Is Our Greatest Calling

Now some people will reject the words I have shared. There are people who have settled into religiousness and are content to criticize the church and really do not want to get involved in the work of God. Others may study these words and unfortunately think that study is an acceptable substitute for action. Others will simply say, "Jesus, love people through me." Perhaps the greatest revelation in my life next to salvation is that God is love. He loves people. He came because He loves people, and He died because He loves people. He has a church on the earth because He loves people. He calls us to Himself because He loves people. He empowers us and transforms us because He loves people.

I do not want my city to go to hell while I am still in it. I do not want teenagers that have been raised without God, as vile as their behavior may be, to end up in eternity without Christ because I did not tell them about Him or share His love with them.

It all comes down to this: If we have faith to move mountains, if we can prophesy, if we understand all mysteries and knowledge, but have not love, we are nothing. It is all in vain. It is all just a religious exercise devoid of the fear of God and the love of God. My heart's cry is for Jesus to love people through me. That is how I want to finish my life. That is how I want to feel about all people, good and bad, because He sends His rain on the just and the unjust. I want to love others the way God does. At the end of my life I want to be able to say that I brought glory to God by finishing what He gave me to do; that I represented Christ who went to the Cross.

This is the highest calling of the church of Jesus Christ. I encourage you to ask the Lord to love people, all people, through you. You will have what the Pharisees did not have. You will have water for people's feet, the oil of joy, and for givenness abounding. Trust the Lord for the power to be a living witness for Jesus until He comes. This generation is not going to read their Bibles, but they will read you. And you cannot fool them – your Christian life is either true or it's not, it's real or it's phony, it represents God or it only talks about Him. This generation knows the difference.

The life of love I am speaking about is available and it comes into the heart of those who are humble and who by faith ask the Lord to do this in them.

Lord, we are aware that we fall short of the glory of what You desire to do for Your Name's sake through us. We open our hearts to You and ask You to pour into us love and compassion. Give us hands that truly represent You, and feet that are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Give us the eyes to see men as You see them. If You have to take us out of town and touch our eyes twice, then do it, Lord, but give us sight. We want to see. We want to understand our inheritance in Christ. We want to fulfill Your calling in our lives. Don't let our nation, our towns, our workplaces, our schools and our homes perish. Let them see Christ in us.

Open the hearts of Your people to know the depth of Your love. Help us embrace the fullness of who You are. Get us off the treadmill of religious drudgery. Get us out into the highways and byways, reaching out and ministering to those who need Your love. Give us the supply we need every day for Your work.

We are asking You to breathe life into Your people, into every denomination, every church. Breathe and cause dry bones to come to life. Cause Your people to stand and be an exceeding great army in our generation. Take us to something deeper and farther than we have ever known. Fill our hearts with faith and fill our souls with Your glory. Help us finish

his generation the way the church started in the beginning: in love with You and willing to be spent for people. Thank You that in Christ there is victory, life, joy, hope, purpose, power and promise. In Jesusâ€™™ Mighty Name we pray. Hallelujah.

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