

# FEAR OF GOD

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There exists today the constant danger of trivializing in matters of eternal importance, of making commonplace that which is *transcendent* {superior}, and *mundane* {ordinary} what is *supernal* {heavenly}. We are susceptible to the influence of fashion, caprice and misunderstanding. Custom, the most prominent agent in the erosion of personal faith, has all but paralyzed the Church. No age has created such widespread levity and frivolity within the sacred precincts. The sense of God's presence is all but lost.

The antidote for this lamentable condition which worsens continually is found in the divine exhortation, **“O fear the LORD, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him”** (Psalm 34:9).

Remarkable is the fact that the **“fear of God”** is found more frequently in the Bible than the **“love of God.”** Remarkable also is the fact that the Church has sadly neglected this message, if not flagrantly ignored it.

The result of Solomon's famous investigative effort to determine if man can be satisfied under heaven is found in his conclusion: **“Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man”** (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

—S. F. L.

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## THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE CHURCH today is plagued by four serious deficiencies. There is a lack of practical knowledge in the areas of first, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, second, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, third, the omniscience of Deity, and fourth, the fear of the LORD.

To this last-mentioned matter we direct our thoughts in this volume, with the hope that interest in this subject shall be encouraged.

The frequent references to the fear of God in the Scriptures make it rather difficult to account for the lack of attention Christians have given to it. The Bible is noted for its conciseness and pertinence. Thus, the multiplicity of occurrences of the term **“fear of God,”** or the **“fear of the LORD,”** or an equivalent can only bespeak importance.

When we open the window of history and gaze upon the stalwart souls who blazed the trails of Truth, we are awed by their dauntless devotion, their challenging selflessness, their faithful perseverance, and their willing sacrifice. Doubtless there are times when, beneath the cluttering *impedimenta* {trappings} of a decadent day such as ours, a desire is stirred in the breast of the more conscientious believers to emulate the courage of our valiant forebears.

But this spark of desire will never become a flame of reality until the fear of God is evident in the life. Never!

Only God-fearing people rise to commanding heights of spiritual attainment. Only God-fearing people can withstand the rising tide of godlessness in apostate days. Only God-fearing people triumph. Sincerity may make loud its boast of faithfulness and intend to stand firm, but without the fear of God one lacks utterly the basic essential and the propelling dynamic. We must not mistake ingenuity for spiritual might, nor subtle works of the flesh for godliness.

Said the late Dr. A. W. Tozer, once Editor of the Alliance Witness:

*I believe in saints, I've met the comics. I've met the promoters. I've met the founder who puts his name on the front of the building so people know he founded it. I've met converted cowboys not too well converted. I've met all kinds of (professing) Christians throughout the United States and Canada, but my heart is looking for saints. I want to meet people who are like the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Actually, what we ought to have is the beauty of the Lord our God in human breasts. A winsome, magnetic saint is worth five hundred promoters and gadgeteers and religious engineers.*

If we share with this godly man such a passionate longing, let us be advised that only one thing stands between us and its glorious fulfillment—in our lives and in all who are born from above—it is **“The fear of the LORD.”**

And never look upon the term as setting forth some insoluble enigma. Do not let the word **“fear”** produce the overshadowing concept of *“fright.”* While it, conceivably, could involve a state of fright under certain conditions, the prominent aspects of the doctrine are far removed from this idea.

**“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil...”** (Prov. 8:13), but the reader will soon discover that **“the fear of God”** cannot be defined specifically, adequately or satisfactorily. What may be discovered, however, is that the whole interesting and important matter resolves itself to a definite consciousness of the divine Presence in the daily life of a believer.

– S. F. L.

## Chapter I

### FACING THE FACT

**“...where is my fear?”—Malachi 1:6**

EXPERIENCES WITH the LORD may develop in a multiplicity of manners. The circumstances at times may be incidental, but the experience is always important. It can be stirringly real!

*“I've just returned from the Bahamas,”* reported a friend during a telephone conversation, *“and I met on one of the islands a God-fearing people such as I have never known in all my travels.”*

Then, with the force exerted by a moving discovery, he explained why he knew they were God-fearing people, and why he felt he should take the shoes from off his feet as he stood in their inspiring presence.

Like an arrow hitting its target, the related account struck with telling impact upon my heart. God-fearing people....

The remainder of the conversation did not register. Only faintly do I recall placing the receiver in its receptacle, then for some solemn moments staring into space until—until I was able to conjure up enough courage to put a question with directness to my own heart. It was this: “Am I a God-fearing man?”

The reader would do well to ask himself or herself this same searching question. If honesty prevails, a struggle will ensue. One is bound to wrestle with the self-justifying deception of the flesh—to spare one's self the embarrassing conviction of admitting to a far-below-par spiritual status.

Reason as one may, excuse himself as he will, one is or is not a God-fearing person. There can be no modification, adaptation, qualification or imitation. And the One who asks, “Where is My fear?” knows exactly what the situation is, **“And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man”** (John 2:25).

Confessedly, I felt at first that suddenly and rudely I had been *“put on the spot”*—thrown as it were unwillingly into mental turbulence. But such an argument was not tenable. It was I, not my friend, who posed the personal interrogation. He merely related an incident which had moved him greatly. He simply thought I would be interested in hearing about it. But back to the question.

There was no preference, no alternative. An answer had to be given. I knew well that honesty should characterize my response. Just as definitely did I realize, expressed or unexpressed, the answer would be clothed in despicable negativeness. For a minister of the Gospel, this was lamentable—even alarming!

The ensuing days were filled with soul-travail—a painful sense of disqualification, a concern about the quality of ministry I was performing and a disturbing outlook about my future.

When a spiritual crisis arises, as any mature Christian will attest, two facts loom prominently on the horizon. First, there is no point or profit in delaying an attempted solution. It only intensifies the discomfort of one's being and defers victory. Second, the LORD is waiting and willing to lift us out of our dilemma, even as the Lord Jesus was waiting for the desperate cry of the frustrated disciples in the storm on the sea.

Belatedly but rewardingly, I simply asked, *“What meanest this?”*

If our faith were but more simple, we would understand how practical is the promise of our LORD concerning the Holy Spirit's guidance: **“...when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth...”** (John 16:13), is the authentic explanation. How accommodating is this divine Guide when a child of God evidences a desire for knowledge and displays a willingness to be led into it.

THE CHALLENGE. In His directive company, I began a Scriptural journey into an amazing field of revelation. Since Calvary is the incomparable vantage point, that is where we began, where *“burdens are lifted, blind eyes made to see.”* Surprising as it may seem, the Exalter of Christ did not tune my ear to the whispered heartaches of the sacrificing Lamb of God, but to the expulsive outcry of the malefactor.

**“...Dost not thou fear God seeing thou art in the same condemnation”** (Luke 23:40)? He appealed in the throes of his intense agony, as though he were addressing me.

The words were timely and penetrating. A seeking heart is necessarily sensitive, and I found no alternative but to take it as being directed not to the second malefactor, but in this instance to my own needy soul. It was a challenge indeed!

THE CONFIRMATION. Grappling with conflicting emotions, desiring so sorely to be positive, yet plagued with uncertainty, it seemed that I could hear the faithful Guide whisper, **“...ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God...”** (Nehemiah 5:9). That is to say, if one replies to the challenge in the affirmative, the truthfulness must be proved in the daily experience. Yes, we ought to walk in the fear of our God.

Any earnest Christian will soon come to the place where he is strangely conscious of the fact that his relationship with the Most High God is a solemnly serious matter. He must know what is involved in a profession of faith, in being reconciled to Him before Whom the heavenly creatures veil their faces and cry, “...**Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts...**” (Isaiah 6:3). Such knowledge will prevent false testimonies.

It is written, “**Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified...**” (Acts 9:31). And why? The same verse explains that they were “...**walking in the fear of the LORD, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost...**” And if we today bore any resemblance to the early church, our walk too would be both in the fear of the LORD and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. There would not be the pitiful derelicts along the course. There would not be compromisers of Truth. There would not be apathetic believers impeding the church's progress. There would not be the declining testimony with its bitter reproach upon the cause of Christ.

THE EXHORTATION. This was an auspicious beginning: Did I fear God? Was I willing to prove it in a daily walk? But it was just a beginning. “**And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God**” (Luke 9:62). There could be no turning back. Desire had not *waned* {decreased}, thus my whole being seemed to be saying, “*Lead on, Thou blessed Guide.*” And soon we were in Psalm 34:9 for the next briefing: “**O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.**” What an exhortation!

“*Does this mean,*” I began to inquire, “*that if I were a God-fearing man, I would not be retarded in my spiritual growth and hampered in my ministry by so many evident deficiencies?*” Apparently, this is what the revelation is intended to convey.

What sane person would rather be poor than rich, weak than strong, sick than well? Who wouldn't be quick to exchange his loss for gain, his emptiness for satisfaction, his defeat for victory? That is, of course, if the door of opportunity stood widely ajar. Yet, with the riches of all heaven available, we remain destitute. With the power of the Godhead obtainable, we remain impotent. With the hallowed light for our pathway, we walk in darkness. With the good old bread of heaven provided, we remain anemic.

Oh, for that holy disposition to step resolutely into the center of God's perfect will, to fear God and to know His presence to be precious, and that at His right hand are pleasures forever more! “**Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore**” (Psalm 16:11).

THE INVITATION. Two steps farther in Psalm 34 I heard this gracious appeal, “**Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD**” (Psalm 34:11). Is not the intimacy of this divine entreaty awe-inspiring? It is as though our God is saying, “*Come, My*



*children, bring your chairs up to the family hearth and your Father will teach you the all-important lesson of fearing the LORD."*

Let us be advised that this subject is not elective, not optional; it is required and obligatory. But the point in view here is unmistakable; God wants us to learn His fear. Indeed, He will teach it to us. How can we forbear to exult with the hymn writer, "*What more can He say than to you He hath said; to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?*" If we are uninformed on these important matters, it is not the fault of Deity. If we are spiritually illiterate, it is our own choice. But how disastrous!

Walking as we do amid a *labyrinth* {a maze} of voices enunciating doctrines widely diverse, we need as never before to cultivate an ear to hear that "**...still small voice.**" (1 Kings 19:12) which conveys wonderful words of life. We need to have the lines of communication restored; the broken circuits repaired. And we will if we emulate David in saying, "**Make me to hear...**" (Psalm 51:8). Or, better still; join Samuel in praying, "**...Speak, LORD, for Thy servant heareth...**" (1 Samuel 3:9). Then, we would understand what it means to "**hearken.**" Then, we would come to be taught of Him.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT. At this juncture the divine Guide pointed out that "**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...**" (Proverbs 1:7). Face this fact and you will be grateful forever. The wise Solomon, borne along by the Spirit of Truth, loses no time in lifting our sights to highlands of spiritual experience. This entry was given priority in his immortal collection of *sagacious* {wise} advice.

And we will miss the point utterly if we fail to appreciate the practical emphasis in the word "**knowledge.**" Jesus prayed, "**...that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent**" (John 17:3). Paul appealed, "**That I may know him...**" (Philippians 3:10). Yet, in the absence of the fear of God, there is no such realization.

How sadly did Jehovah reveal, "**For my people is foolish, they have not known me...**" (Jeremiah 4:22). They knew about Him, but they did not know Him in their daily lives. They did not walk in the fear of their God. Paul gave himself to the same lamentation: "**Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame**" (1 Corinthians 15:34). And so it goes, pretense suffices for most people. Superficiality does not concern the multitudes when it comes to divine issues. They do not fear God, and not fearing Him, they have not begun to know Him. "**These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;**" (Jude 12)—no yearning for reality, just a careless drifting toward the hour of dreadful disillusionment.

THE WISDOM. Continuing on our course, the Holy Spirit explained that **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...”** (Psalm 111:10). Here is another **“beginning.”** This one, however, is dependent upon the former. The order is something like this: One becomes a God-fearing individual. Then, one begins to know God in a realistic manner. Then, one begins to get wise concerning eternal verities.

There is earthly wisdom and there is heavenly wisdom. Earthly wisdom is practical moral intelligence; heavenly wisdom is practical spiritual intelligence. Deficiency in the latter cannot but reflect the lack of the fear of God. It is a serious affront to the Spirit of God for professing Christians to be ignorant of the eternal purpose and incompetent in the field of service. Where these conditions exist—and they are universal and increasing pitifully—they prove the urgent need for God's people to get back to basic propositions, and the most basic is the fear of the LORD. The cry of the hour is for God-fearing men.

It was infinitely more than a rhetorical question, when Jehovah asked in the days of old, **“Who is as the wise man...”** (Ecclesiastes 8:1). To proceed properly toward the correct answer, we would be required to state: First of all, he is one who fears God. This is the *“first cause”* of any favorable trait apparent to the eyes of Omniscience.

This establishes possibility, a possibility which has a limitless range. To such, God says, **“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:”** (Philippians 2:5). In attitude, such would **“...be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves”** (Matthew 10:16). In intelligence, such can *aver* {affirm with confidence} with unwavering assurance, **“...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day”** (II Timothy 1:12). In operation, such may declare, **“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me”** (Philippians 4:13). In vision, such can testify, **“...absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord”** (II Corinthians 5:8). This is wisdom, and it begins with the fear of God.

THE INSTRUCTION. Escorted by Him, who knoweth all things, makes it inestimably profitable even for a disciple dull of ear to hear and slow of heart to understand. Light was dawning, but my questions were still numerous. Even a yielded mind will find the things of the Spirit quite incomprehensible at first. How does one learn heavenly wisdom? This was my child-like inquiry.

**“The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom...”** (Proverbs 15:33). There was my answer. No problem at all with the Tutor or the tutoring. The instruction is all planned and ready for the interested student. But how can the fear of God instruct? Is there not here a confusion of the abstract with the concrete? No, it is just another way in which to emphasize the prerequisite. One who is near enough to the LORD to be strangely conscious of His presence will find that instruction is not only in order but in operation. It is the fear of the LORD which makes possible

this state of being. It puts one within hearing distance of the Instructor, and in a condition to learn.

Proverbs chapter four reveals this fact in a striking manner, **“Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding”** (Proverbs 4:1). Then, by way of encouragement and to inspire expectancy, the divine Tutor says, **“For I give you good doctrine...”** (Proverbs 4:2). His doctrine is always good. It is the doctrine of men which proves so frequently to be misleading. Then, in a down-to-earth simplicity, He tells the class that His doctrine is good for the heart, **“He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live”** (Proverbs 4:4). Good for the head, **“She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee”** (Proverbs 4:9). Good for the mouth, **“Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee”** (Proverbs 4:24). Good for the eyes, **“Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee”** (Proverbs 4:25). Good for the feet, **“Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established”** (Proverbs 4:26). If we like the practical, here it is.

Aiming for an application of the truth presented, the Instructor presses upon his students the necessity to **“Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established”** (Proverbs 4:26). Nor is the student left to his empty conjecture regarding the path. It is the burden of the whole lesson and is comprehended in this terse outline:

THE PATH OF PROMISE—Proverbs 4:4

THE PATH OF PRESERVATION—Proverbs 4:6

THE PATH OF PROMOTION—Proverbs 4:11

THE PATH OF PROPRIETY—Proverbs 4:11

THE PATH OF PROSPECT—Proverbs 4:18

It is the **“...path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day”** (Proverbs 4:18). God-fearing people aim ever and always, whether by life or by death, to remain in this hallowed illuminated course. This is instruction in wisdom.

THE CONFIDENCE. Here my attention was drawn to the fact that the writer of the Hebrew epistle drew a word picture of a vast segment of believers in his day. He complained about their inability to hear from heaven, their incapability of teaching others, their lack of advancement beyond the elementary principles, their failure to grow out of the *“milk stage”* and their unskillfulness in handling the Word of Truth (Hebrews 5:11-14).

**Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:11-14)**

Since there is always the proverbial seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal, the apostle pointed out another group with a more commendable description, **“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak”** (Hebrews 6:9). Then, he expressed the aim for all, **“...we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence unto the full assurance of hope to the end:”** (Hebrews 6:11). Now, how may we attain unto this **“full assurance”**?

**“In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence...”** (Proverbs 14:26). At this point (and I reluctantly admit of immaturity), I said fervently, *“O, Lord, if there is one person on the earth who needs strong confidence, it is I.”* Well, here it is. I was being introduced to it. It is in the fear of the LORD. And I like the descriptive. It is STRONG confidence. Confidence may be misguided, **“But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus”** (Matthew 27:20). Confidence may be misplaced, **“It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man, It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes”** (Psalm 118:8, 9). Confidence may be discarded, **“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward”** (Hebrews 10:35). But STRONG confidence will abide and bless.

THE REFRESHING. Moving along progressively it became increasingly clear that, as pregnant with meaning, as is the subject of confidence in the reference just cited, it is but the precursor to a most enthralling revelation. And now comes the announcement: **“The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life...”** (Proverbs 14:27). Think of it, a fountain of life—not for the few, but for all. Perhaps none of the other almost innumerable references to the subject give us so concisely, so unambiguously, so clearly, the fundamental aspect of the fear of God. It is a fountain of life.

The imagery here is profound. Perhaps the word **“fountain”** might be thought of as an artesian well. Still we do not have the supernal quality involved, nor the lavish quantity, nor yet the abounding permanence.

David had drunk at this fountain. He tells us so: **“For with thee is the fountain of life...”** (Psalm 36:9). Then with expulsive joy, he rapturously appeals in the following verse, **“O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart”**

(Psalm 36:10). He also was alluding to this **“fountain”** in Psalm 16:11 when he said, **“...in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”**

It does not require the most exceptional kind of perception to sense the appalling need of the *“fountain of life.”* Our present prevailing economic prosperity may conceal the need. Apathy may prevent us from discovering it, but the situation is surely more precarious and more evident than we wish to admit. There is a dearth of Bible knowledge. There is a devastating drought as touching prayer, faith, compassion, church attendance, witnessing and heart-devotion to Christ. Oh, for the fear of the LORD! Oh, for the fountain of life!

Must we starve when the Bread of heaven is available? Must we famish when the Water of life is obtainable? Must we walk in darkness when the Light awaits to shine in Its effulgent brightness? Must we let the foundations be destroyed, **“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”** (Psalm 11:3), when the One in us is greater than the one in the world? Must the church become increasingly anemic when it might **“...be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might”** (Ephesians 6:10). That is, must we accept the *status quo*? No, a thousand times NO! **“O, fear the LORD, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him”** (Psalm 34:9)!

THE SECRET OF THE LORD. We may sing, *“It is no secret what God can do,”* but in one sense it is indeed a secret. If a secret speaks of something hid from our view or from our knowledge, then all the rich and wonderful provisions of grace are a secret to those with blinded eyes. Paul knew that sleeping Christians are neither informed nor alert. That is why he registered such a firm challenge in saying, **“...it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed”** (Romans 13:11).

How do unknown spiritual verities become known? How do such verities now not seen become luminous? Listen! **“The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant”** (Psalm 25:14).

**“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty”** (Psalm 91:1)? Who amongst us is forbidden to dwell in the secret place of the Most High, or to abide under His shadow? Far from being forbidden, all are royally invited. What is the *password*? The fear of the LORD. This is from any point viewed the *“key”* which unlocks the door into the *“all things”* of His provision. One is not a beggar who stands pathetically without. He is an unbeliever. One is not discriminated against who has not entered. He is the victim of his own choice. One is not neglected who laments in his blindness. He is one who prefers not to see. No one is denied the privilege of all privileges, that of fearing God. The **“secret of the LORD”** is an accompaniment of this high and holy privilege, and he who possesses it not only has converse with the infinite God but access to all of His treasures—the wealth of all heaven.

THE ABIDING SATISFACTION. Here the Guiding Advocate registered a warning. He pointed out that Job's *friends* are still around; that the archenemy of God and man is still operating; that Satanic agents are *pastmasters* {experts} in the art of discouraging; that weak hearts are susceptible to intimidation; that the Israelites were stopped cold in their tracks when the spies came back with the report of "*supermen*" in the territory divinely given to them; that they lost their dreams of the land that "...**floweth with milk and honey**" (Numbers 13:27).

One wonders who cornered Demas and convinced him that Paul was an old fogey, that this "**present world**" makes a more imposing offer than the Saviour, "**For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica;**" (II Timothy 4:10). But the strategy worked—he forsook Paul. He stepped out of the ranks of the soldiers of the Cross. The prodigal son had a brainwashing session with someone. He was convinced that the road of the wayward could satisfy his every longing. He made his determined bid for happiness by trampling under foot parental affections, and flinging to the wind his better judgment. No one ever collided with disillusionment more painfully than he.

God's Word must transcend the advice of all, be it from religionists, moralists, philosophers, psychologists, *et al* {and others}. Here is a trustworthy declaration: "**The fear of the LORD tendeth toward life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil**" (Proverbs 19:23).

"**But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth**" (I Timothy 5:6). There are at least seven ways in which a believer may be dead while he lives, "**Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.**" (Ephesians 5:14); and our Father desires that His children be spared from them all. Thus, He tells us what "**tendeth toward life**"—real life, wonderful life. It is the fear of the LORD. It not only tends toward, but points out and directs into. It is the ONLY way. And here again we see something of the unspeakable significance of the fear of God.

To "**abide satisfied**" points toward a relaxed pleasure that leaves nothing to be desired for a day-by-day enjoyment, and that in spite of the *vicissitudes* {changes} which surround us. This is the life in view in the text. It is for him "**that hath it**" (the fear of God). This is comforting information. It speaks of availability and accessibility. The prerequisites are not ability, merit or personal attainment, but rather a simple, sincere willingness. The reward is breathtaking for anyone who will humble himself under the mighty hand of God, and divine honor at once becomes the crowning glory of his earthly existence. Jabez, for instance, is an illustration in point.

"**And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren...**" (I Chronicles 4:9). So reads the Chronicle. In 141 verses there are only names, mostly unfamiliar names. Then, the omniscient Inspirator of Holy Writ interrupts the seemingly interminable delineation of people; that is, just

long enough to insert a thumbnail sketch of this man Jabez. He not only tells us that he was more honorable than his brothers, but He furnishes the reason—“**...Jabez called on the God of Israel...**” (I Chronicles 4:10).

Why was this unusual? Apparently because so few in that day called upon the true God. In his prayer, Jabez asked for divine blessing, enlarged privilege, spiritual promotion and protection from evil. The text states, “**...And God granted him that which he requested**” (I Chronicles 4:10). Then the tabulation of names continues without further comment.

It can be said with comfortable assurance that Jabez was a God-fearing man. He found satisfaction in the LORD when his brothers evidently were going the way of current trends, forgetting God.

A God-fearing person will get from the LORD what he requests; for all that he says and does, both in prayer and in the practical procedure of life, will be solely for the glory of God.

This is but a small portion of the journey on which the Holy Spirit took the author in his quest for an understanding of the fear of the LORD. The following chapters will fill in many of the enlightening details which are invaluable to the earnest Christian—actually indispensable to his growth, fruitfulness, fellowship and, prospect.

**A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? (Malachi 1:6)**

## Chapter II

### IDENTIFYING A GOD-FEARING PERSON

**“...man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”—I Samuel 16:7**

“CAN YOU POINT out a God-fearing man today?” asked a lady when the subject at hand was under discussion.

This is a very natural question, but one not so easily answered, all because it is a condition of relationship between the infinite God and one whose heart is right toward Him. It is, basically, a state of consciousness and closeness, awareness and intimacy. While this surely should reflect itself in the horizontal direction as well as in the vertical, to impress man as well as God, we are altogether too prone to disqualify one because of an evident infraction of a divine commandment.

King Saul was a God-fearing man, so states the Biblical account, yet his biography has serious blemishes which have elicited the most unfavorable reactions toward him by Bible students down through the years.

King Jehoshaphat, likewise, was a God-fearing man, yet he entered into an unholy alliance with Ahab. Jehu, the seer, strongly reprimanded the king for this ill-advised move, saying, **“...Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD”** (II Chronicles 19:2). But the seer, unlike the undiscerning today, added, **“Nevertheless there are good things found in thee...”** (II Chronicles 19:3).

David, too, a God-fearing man, plunged to great depths of sinful failure. Who amongst us, had we been contemporary with him, would not have assigned him to the oblivion of disqualification. But, in spite of the seriousness of the offense (and it is not minimized in the Scriptures, or condoned), the sweet singer of Israel gets his fearfully *discordant* {conflicting} life tuned-up again with the LORD. His contrition and confession in Psalm 51 are undeniable proof of his sensitiveness to the presence of God. His burdened heart moaned, **“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned...”** (Psalm 51:4). He pleaded, **“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean...”** (Psalm 51:7). This is an evident acknowledgement of guilt, with its attendant cry for forgiveness and reinstatement in divine favor.

And what about Peter? Deserting to the enemy in the greatest crisis hour, pathetic in his abject unfaithfulness to the Saviour, denying his Lord, not only thrice as commonly thought, but



six definite times.<sup>1</sup> Yet who can read about the Spirit-filled Apostle in Acts, Chapters 2 and 4, and think for one moment that he was not a God-fearing man? Ponder this classic quote from I Peter, **“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:”** (I Peter 1:8). Does this not speak volumes for the man, though once he waxed cowardly and denied his Lord?

Perhaps no statement in the Bible can furnish us more help here than Psalm 103:13. **“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.”** When would a father be likely to pity a child? When he brings home from school a report card showing an “A” average? When he has broken the existing record for the hundred-yard dash? When he has been chosen president of the student body? When he has been awarded first prize in a forensic contest? Hardly. Well, when would we expect a father to pity a child? When he has stubbed his toe and is crying. When he has studied hard but failed his examination. When he has gotten into some difficulty and gossip is rampant, when every friend points an indicting finger and deserts, and when the boy's little world has folded up. That is when the father, far from disowning his son, opens the flood-gates of his heart and lets his love flow toward the defeated lad.

A most illuminating commentary follows the verse about God pitying them that fear Him. It is this, **“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust”** (Psalm 103:14). This is something we forget when one goes down for the count under the subtle, destructive stroke of Satan. God knows that dust is not stable. It doesn't take too strong a breeze to stir it up. It disintegrates easily. This is man. This is the best of men. This is why those who are dust must cleave to Him Who is divine, that His strength might be made perfect in their weakness, **“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me”** (II Corinthians 12:9).

We must guard against misconceptions. God does not, indeed cannot, tolerate evil even in a God-fearing man. On the other hand, a God-fearing man will not misconstrue the Father's sympathy as license to continue in a sinful way. Paul made this clear when he said, **“...But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:”** (Romans 5:20), adding quickly, **“...Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid...”** (Romans 6:1, 2)!

Anyone who persists in a practice which is in evident conflict with the divine Revelation would scarcely impress one as being a God-fearing person. To persist in any such violation would result

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Johnston M. Cheney of Oakland, California, has engaged himself in a very thought-provoking and a very enlightening endeavor in setting forth the Gospels' relationship to each other, which he terms, “Mutual minute supplementation.” Regarding Peter's denial, he says, “Putting together therefore what the four Gospels say to indicate two separate warnings, Peter was told that he would deny three times before the cock crowed at all, and three times before it should crow a second time.”

in a broken fellowship with the LORD. For how **“Can two walk together except they be agreed”** (Amos 3:3)? Grace teaches us that, **“...denying ungodliness [anything which is not of God] and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly [in keeping with God's revealed desire] in this present world;”** (Titus 2:12) (emphasis added).

It is reprehensible to have self-justifying arguments flaunted on the horizon of the Christian scene. *“What about David?”* says an undedicated believer. *“What he did is far worse than what I do.”* *“How about Jehoshaphat?”* cries another whose associations are most questionable for a believer. *“He had some bad connections, and the LORD used him.”* Without encouraging the matter of judging one another, let's be candid. Would you, in the silence of your thoughts, rate such self-justifying ones as God-fearing people?

Then, there is the person who, with forced and strained piety, searches at length to find a verse of Scripture, whether in or out of context, to justify a matter in the life which has been taboo throughout the Church age. *“I asked Dr. So-and-so,”* one explains, *“and he told me that this verse puts me out in the clear.”* Or, perhaps, it is the person with a habit which he knows in his heart is hurting his testimony, but, loving it, does his utmost to justify himself in it. *“Well, if Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake,”* he reasons, *“I feel sure he would tell me this is all right.”* And on *ad infinitum* {continuing forever}! There is something *incongruent* {contrasting}, something *unpalatable* {disgusting} about such arguments. They do not have the ring of genuineness.

A God-fearing individual is one who ever-and-always wants Christ to have the preeminence **“...IN ALL THINGS...”** (Colossians 1:18). However right a thing might be proved in the eyes of the worldly or the unyielded believer, if it does not honor the LORD, if it does not improve the effectiveness of the Christian's testimony, he willingly jettisons it from his consideration. Paul apparently had no objection to eating meat, yet, when he met those who did object, in order to maintain his spiritual influence among them, he said without hesitation, **“...if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth...”** (I Corinthians 8:13).

A God-fearing person weighs matters, not by their moral worthiness but by the will of God, for a God-fearing man is Christ-like, and Jesus said to the Father, **“...nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt”** (Matthew 26:39). This is the essential and important difference between acknowledging Him in all our ways and leaning to our own understanding, **“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding”** (Proverbs 3:5). God-fearing people are those who have gotten out of the rushing, noisy low gear of *trying* to be spiritual and into a cruising speed of relaxed confidence of simply trusting.

But, even if a detailed word portrait of a God-fearing person could be given, would you recognize such a person if you yourself were not one? Let's face it, being spiritual is, in a very real sense, being unnatural. The thought itself is frightening to most professing Christians.

The late Dr. Neprash told the author that he felt he knew Evan Roberts, the prominent personality in the great Welsh Revival, more intimately than anybody on the North American continent. He roomed with him. He explained that, at times, he felt uneasy in his presence. He said Mr. Evans seemed to be preoccupied so much of the time. This troubled Dr. Neprash to the point that he closed himself in his room one day and prayed fervently. There he became enlightened about the case. He discovered and confessed to the LORD that he was not as spiritually matured as Mr. Evans, that he himself lived on a lower level, and could not enter very fully into fellowship with him though they occupied the same house.

When David Brainerd expressed his purpose of making a trek to a tribe of Indians whom he understood had never heard the gospel, his brother sought to dissuade him. He reminded David that he was seriously ill with consumption, that he did not have the strength for such an *arduous* {difficult} and dangerous undertaking, that he perhaps would not come back alive.

To this, David Brainerd replied, *"My dear Brother, my heart is grieved because you cannot trace the movements of God's spirit upon your soul. When the Lord of the harvest calls, the servant has no alternative but to go."*

And speaking of Brainerd, so much was being said about his searching diary that a lady, hearing the recommendation, purchased one. As she read the entries which revealed this young man's strong abhorrence of sin, and the manner in which he unsparingly flayed himself for coming short of the grace of God in thought, word and deed, the woman cast the book aside with this comment: *"If Christianity is that miserable, I don't want it."*

Dealing with sin in the life, **"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged"** (I Corinthians 11:31), is always a miserable engagement. Sin eats like a canker. Sin destroys the testimony. Sin causes all the heartache which abounds, and drapes its sorrow upon the whole earth. Sin is to be feared as nothing else. The true believer recognizes this fact. The God-fearing grieve when sin makes a stain upon the life.

Jabez, who was more honorable than his brethren because he called upon the God of heaven when his people were forgetting God, said in his prayer, **"...that thou wouldst keep me from evil that it may not grieve ME!..."** (I Chronicles 4:10) (emphasis added). A godly person will always grieve when he sins, while the less spiritual will be unmoved, will even tolerate it.

The climate of an apostate age such as ours does not furnish an appropriate atmosphere for a consideration of the fear of God, albeit no hour could need it more. Our concepts are too

unclear. Our prejudices are many. Our emphasis is materialistic. We walk amid a labyrinth {a maze} of voices enunciating doctrines widely diverse, and we live in a time much like the days of the Judges. **“In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes”** (Judges 21:25).

There is a certain amount of *awryness* {turning away} in most believers—a reluctance to, **“Draw nigh unto God...”** (James 4:8). There is something of a fear that the exactions will be too exacting, even prohibitive. Though one may possess but a smattering of divine Truth, such a one is conscious of the fact that a message from God has certain distinctives, most of which are not acceptable to the willfulness of the uncommitted heart. It commands and restrains, constrains and forbids. This is divine interference, and this is most unsatisfactory to the ego-centric.

The God-fearing are not so. **“O LORD, correct me...”** says Jeremiah 10:24. **“Search me, O God...”** cries David (Psalm 139:23).

The God-fearing are those who have trained their hearts to love and adore the LORD, to *laud* {praise} and magnify His holy Name. When they fail or falter, their souls, like water seeking its level, *ebb* {receding} back to the place of devotion. Like David, their hearts pant for the living God. They sense a state of suffocation in any atmosphere which is not permeated by the fragrance of the One who is altogether lovely.

The God-fearing are not misfits in the society of the redeemed. They do not precipitate schisms. They do not press for prominence. They are not boisterous in denunciation. They are those who are available for counsel and are not only competent to speak words of wisdom, but are the ones whom the burdened and frustrated can trust. They are those who could be and would be called upon for prayer in emergencies. They are those who dignify the banner of the cross and who promise hope to the coming generations as they transfer a godly testimony from their forebears to those who succeed them.

The God-fearing are those who, in peace and quietness, have learned to possess their souls. They are those who do not become, **“...weary in well doing...”** (Galatians 6:9). They are those who cannot be bribed by vain philosophy. They are those who are not tossed about with every wind of doctrine. They are those whose feet fit the footprints of the blessed ones, **“...who walk in the law of the LORD”** (Psalm 119:1). They are those who can readily detect error in the substitutes which the Deceiver visits upon the unwary.

The God-fearing are those who would willingly go, **“...unto Him without the camp, bearing his reproach”** (Hebrews 13:13). They are those who cannot feel comfortable in the climate of this present world system which is satanically organized and promoted to deceive the elect. They are those who gladly give the LORD the benefit of the doubt when choices are difficult to make. They are those whose devotion does not need to be primed to meet appointments with the LORD or

to do assignments for Him. They are those who know their Master's voice, and who have great joy in saying, **"...Here am I..."** (Isaiah 6:8).

The God-fearing are those whom unbelievers sometimes look upon as strange, even narrow-minded and uncooperative. They are those about whom John the beloved said, **"...the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not"** (I John 3:1). They are those who are not ashamed of the Gospel. They are those who witness a good confession. They are those who cultivate an acquaintanceship with the Holy Spirit. They are those who can speak the language of heaven (the Bible) with impressive fluency.

The God-fearing are the salt which has not lost its savor. They are the lights in this dark place which continue to shine. They are those who are **"...stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord..."** (I Corinthians 15:58). They are those **"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"** (Ephesians 4:3). They are those who **"Pray without ceasing"** (I Thessalonians 5:17). They are those who **"In every thing give thanks..."** knowing that this is **"...the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you"** (I Thessalonians 5:18).

The God-fearing are the bulwark of a nation, for they are righteous, and **"Righteousness (alone) exalteth a nation..."** (Proverbs 14:34). They are those who **"Quench not the Spirit"** (I Thessalonians 5:19). They are those that **"Abstain from all appearance of evil"** (I Thessalonians 5:22). They are those who **"Fight the good fight of faith..."** (I Timothy 6:12) and those that keep the faith, **"...The just shall live by faith"** (Romans 1:17). They are those who **"...endure afflictions..."** (II Timothy 4:5).

The God-fearing testify, **"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"** (Philippians 1:21). They are those who wait for God's Son from heaven, **"And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come"** (I Thessalonians 1:10). They are those who abide in Him now that they may not be ashamed before Him at His coming, **"...abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming"** (I John 2:28). They are those who can testify with honesty and joy, **"...Even so, come, Lord Jesus"** (Revelation 22:20). They are those who have respect **"...unto the recompense of the reward"** (Hebrews 11:26). They are those whose works will stand the test of fire as **"...gold, silver, precious stones..."** (I Corinthians 3:12).

The God-fearing are those who, with Mary, choose **"...that good part, which shall not be taken away from her"** (Luke 10:42). They are those who shall stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ with confidence, **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"** (II Corinthians 5:10). They are those who, when the rewards are distributed, will be made ruler over much because they were faithful in that which was least, **"His lord said unto him, Well**

**done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21).**

Can it be that someone may be saying, *“This is all beyond the pale of possibility.”* Nay, my friend, **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works...”** (Ephesians 2:10). He Who is omnipotent, all-wise and wonderful can fashion any vessel into the glorious image of His Son—that is, if we are **“...sanctified, and meet for the master's use... (II Timothy 2:21), “if”** we yield ourselves to His blessed entreaties and submit to the promptings of His Holy Spirit.

**But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7)**

## Chapter III

### POSSIBILITIES FOR THE GOD-FEARING

**“The fear of the LORD tendeth to life; and he that hath it shall abide satisfied...”**—Proverbs 19:23

THE MANIAC of Gadara frequented the tombs. He roamed the mountainsides by day and by night. He cut himself with stones. He wailed with weird cries. When apprehended and bound, he broke the chains asunder. Then Jesus came, and soon the bedeviled man was found **“...sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind...”** (Mark 5:15). The presence of Deity made the striking difference.

We must keep in mind constantly that **“the fear of the LORD”** speaks strongly of the conscious presence of God. This makes the big difference. This not only **“tendeth to life,”** but actually causes one to **“abide satisfied.”** This is a coveted status—no rioting emotions, no pressing propensities, no covetous attitudes, no annoying restlessness. There is a change of demeanor, a change of comportment. And such a change may be as striking as in the case of the Gadara maniac.

*“But, I’m not a lunatic,”* you object; *“I don’t cut myself with stones and wander in the cemetery.”* Of course not. Thank God for that. Thank Him daily for your sound mind and keen reasoning ability. But, are you a God-fearing person? Are you conscious of the abiding presence of the LORD? Do you have that settled satisfaction that all is well, that there is nothing between your soul and the Saviour? This makes the big difference between a nominal spiritual status and a vital Christian experience. Are you plagued by prayerlessness, impotence, fruitlessness? Or do you really enjoy a surrendered life marked by selflessness, compassion and fellowship with God?

SATISFACTION. A God-fearing person **“...shall abide satisfied...”** (Proverbs 19:23). The Holy Spirit is *unambiguous* {very clear} about this. And you may be sure that His definition of satisfaction would include all the blessedness that heaven can bestow, with freedom from anxiety, suspense and discontent. Imagine it, a prevailing peace to garrison the heart amid the trials, and a supernal calm within the soul when adversity strikes with its fierce blasts. Incredible? Not to those who believe God. His presence can clothe the trusting soul with unshatterable assurance whatever the vicissitudes {change of circumstances} of life. **“Though He slay me, yet will I trust him...”** (Job 13:15), Job asserted with challenging resoluteness. Is not God the same today? Does He not desire to make real His precious promises to us as well? Is He not able to do so?

When we are told that the fear of the LORD **“tendeth to life,”** we must understand that the Holy Spirit is showing us the way out of our leanness and shallowness into the **“...blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich...”** (Proverbs 10:22). He is showing us the way out of superficiality into reality. He is showing us the way out of the cluttering *trivia* of earthly things into eternal values. He is showing us the way out of profitless struggles of the flesh into the rewarding provisions of the Spirit. He is showing us what life really is—not the ceaseless, tiring effort to amass the beggarly elements of a dying age in order to appease the constant urges of a demanding *ego*, or to be in vogue with current customs, or to be at social par with the careless throngs of unspiritual people. May we hear anew that incomparable Voice propounding the superb ideal, **“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee [experientially] the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent”** (John 17:3).

This does not mean that one will have the luxuries of this world, nor does it mean that one must be deprived of them. It does not mean that one will be at ease, that one will be free of problems. Satisfaction has a deeper meaning than this. The word **“satisfied”** encompasses within its meaning such ideas as copiousness, abundance, plentitude, fullness, etc. This must necessarily be so since it is the LORD who **“...satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness”** (Psalm 107:9).

We must admit, however reluctantly, that in our day of such dreadful spiritual decline we do not know very much about the things which produce complete and lasting satisfaction. We do not know, not only because they are not stressed, but because we do not know what does not satisfy. Not knowing what does not satisfy, we become gullible subjects for the Deceiver to sell us his false wares. But we have been warned. Here are a few entries on the subject:

**“He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver...”** (Ecclesiastes 5:10). God is not intimating in this statement that there is anything wrong with silver, that one should not possess it. He is talking about loving it, and explains clearly that first, **“...the love of money is the root of all evil...”** (I Timothy 6:10). And second, money cannot satisfy, **“...which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”** (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

He tells us that the unregenerate heart of man resembles, **“...three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough: “The grave, and the barren womb, the earth that is not filled with water, and the fire that saith not, It is enough”** (Proverbs 30:15, 16). The flames lick for more fuel.

Also, unauthorized effort is without reward, for the LORD asks pointedly, **“Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not...”** (Isaiah 55:2).



How different with the God-fearing who rejoice in present blessing and the hope of future bliss. David testifies, **“The meek shall eat and be satisfied...”** (Psalm 22:26), **“...we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house...”** (Psalm 65:4). As all true believers know, this is but a foretaste. Israel's sweet singer, looking forward with assurance, exulted, **“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness”** (Psalm 17:15).

Whether the goal is position, popularity, prestige, or pleasure, or all of these, the ceaseless desire is for satisfaction. People today go to amazing ends in these pursuits. A prominent weekly magazine, under the caption, *“The Twisted Age,”* made this comment: *“Today's dances are only symbols of a mad and often frightening era.”*<sup>2</sup>

Capital wants greater gains. Labor demands further increases. So, there is a perennial see-saw struggle at the bargaining table with irritation, bitterness, strong accusations, and crippling strikes to enforce the demands. These desires seem perfectly normal in a prosperous age, but they nevertheless reflect the quest of the human heart for something that is never realized.

It is difficult to convey to a restless, writhing humanity that there is satisfaction only in Christ. Paul asserted that you will be satisfied in Christ, **“Ye are COMPLETE in him...”** (Colossians 2:10) (emphasis added). Then, he added, **“...Christ is all...”** (Colossians 3:11). He is the sum total of all worthfulness. He is a satisfying plenitude. How does one attain such satisfaction? **“The fear of the LORD tendeth to life”** [this glorious end] (Proverbs 19:23). Nor is this an over-simplification. A right relationship with the LORD and one moves into the transcendent privileges and provisions of the abundant life.

CONTENTMENT. **“Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith”** (Proverbs 15:16). Who apart from a God-fearing person could know the comforting truth of this divinely-stated preference? Who but a God-fearing person would fully believe it when so informed?

The apostle Paul puts it this way: **“But godliness with contentment is great gain”** (1 Timothy 6:6).

Here is a lesson in spiritual economics. The principle would probably seem strange to the materialist who is concerned about the tangible, and who measures life by the dollar gauge. How shortsighted is the unbeliever! This little inch of earth's sojourn may not be the sum total of his vision, but it becomes the preponderance of his concern. Laying up treasures in heaven has no appeal, no importance; hence no attention. He watches the days slip from under his feet as he

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<sup>2</sup> LOOK Magazine, December 15, 1964

barter away his hope. His treasured possessions, gotten by the sweat of his face, may even hasten the sad and solemn moment of his decease, then to be surrendered forever.

The danger in pressing for gain is that the thoughts, efforts and time may be so completely consumed in the endeavor that there is no room in the life for God—no time or inclination to engage in the study of His Word, no time to enjoy a daily *tryst* {an intimate appointment} with Him, no time to witness to others about salvation, no time to be faithful in attending the meetings of the assembly. Such losses are incalculable. The ledger of life will show a constant deficit. It is like putting money, “...into a bag with holes” (Haggai 1:6). Such are paupers at death when their gains can be carried no farther.

The scales can tip so subtly to the wrong side. Faulty vision, spiritual deafness, a deceitful heart, a misplaced emphasis, and there results a dispossession by preoccupation. One may not be aware of such a situation in the pattern of life he has developed. The record states concerning *decadent* {corrupt} Israel, “**Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knew it not...**” (Hosea 7:9) These “**strangers**” were extraneous and irrelevant matters which crowded into their lives, occupying their attention and displacing the spiritual emphasis. Never were God's people more susceptible to this hideous *malady* {disease} than today.

It requires clear vision and complete confidence for one to believe that, “**Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith**” (Proverbs 15:16). But one is well-advised to believe the promise of God, for the “**little**” becomes big in due course. It brings contentment and great gain—the contentment now and the great gain at journey's end. Realization results from putting the bank of heaven in the foreground, and by laying up for ourselves treasures where thieves cannot break through and steal, and where the dividends constantly increase, where investments are eternally secure.

To enjoy the favor of God, we must first have the fear of God. The favor of God is the “...**great gain...**” (1 Timothy 6:6) which is promised the God-fearing. It is the lavish reward for a sanctified, Christ-honoring life, walking in the law of the LORD with those of Psalm 119:1 and 2, “**Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.**” The evident possibility for such behavior is seen in that the same divine Spirit who moved holy men of old to pen the Truth then will move upon godly men to practice the Truth today. “**For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost**” (II Peter 1:21).

Contentment is a relaxed confidence which results from dedication. One simply settles into it who says, “...**not my will, but thine, be done**” (Luke 22:42). When it does not matter whether it is go or stay, we have spiritual contentment. When it does not matter whether we are exalted

or abased, we have this contentment. When His will takes precedence over our fondest desires, we have found that which is better. We have that which promises **“great gain.”**

WELL OFF. **“Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:”** (Ecclesiastes 8:12). If Solomon were not absolutely right in making such an observation, the LORD would never have placed it in His eternal Record.

Suppose a wicked man does commit a hundred crimes without getting caught. Suppose he does live longer than a godly person who has obeyed the laws of the land and has honored the LORD. What does it prove? In spite of such hypothetical cases, **“It shall be well [only] with them that fear God...”** (Ecclesiastes 8:12).

Suppose John and Betty Stam *were* brutally slain by the communists in China where they were witnessing for Christ, they are well off. Suppose Dr. Carlson *was* cut down in cold blood at such an early age and with so much desire to accomplish missionary work in Africa, he is well off. Suppose the five young men were speared to death by the Auca Indians in Ecuador in their attempt to tell them about the Saviour, they are well off. Suppose Robert Murray M'Cheyne and David Brainard *did* die at the early age of twenty-nine, they are well off. Suppose one turns from position and fame to serve God in a lonely place, he is well off. Anyone who fears God is well off, regardless of the outward appearance of his case.

In the increasing confusion of this apostate day, it is without doubt the strategy of the archenemy of God and man to keep people from knowing what it means to fear God. But shall we succumb to his brainwashing? Shall we deny ourselves spiritual satisfaction and godly contentment? Shall we forfeit the **“great gain”** which awaits those who choose the better part? These are questions which we daily face. Our lives, amid the varied pursuits and questionable emphases, are answering these questions constantly.

*“How is it well with a God-fearing man?”* someone may ask. It is well in every area of his being. He will be preserved wholly, **“...spirit and soul and body...”** (I Thessalonians 5:23). His thoughts will be brought into captivity unto Christ, **“...and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”** (II Corinthians 10:5). His soul will not lust after the beggarly elements of this world system, **“Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things”** (Philippians 3:19). His body will not suffer the abuses of ungodly practices, for he will remember that his body is **“...the temple of the Holy Ghost...”** (I Corinthians 6:19). It is well with him both for time and eternity.

A God-fearing man is well off because he is not habitually trying to muster up self-control against confronting temptations. He can, with one move of faith, slam the door in the face of the tempter. He can say with confidence, **“...the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith**

**of the Son of God...**" (Galatians 2:20). He is not forced to the expediency or to the necessity of trying to determine whether or not it "*hurts*" to do this or that, or whether it could be done in moderation. He has the mind of Christ. He has the direction of the Spirit. If it does not fall into the category of godliness, it is definitely out of bounds for him.

A God-fearing man is not only well off in his conduct, he is well off in his spiritual assets. He knows how to evaluate and how to appropriate the **"...all things that pertain unto life and godliness..."** which are made available to him according to **"...divine power..."** (II Peter 1:3). Also, he knows how to appreciate the fact that he is an heir with God and a joint heir with Christ, **"...then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ..."** (Romans 8:17). He enjoys a sense of reality regarding these facts, while the nominal Christian fails to reach beyond a superficial theory.

It is incomprehensible to a knowledgeable person that a sinner, knowing about eternal life, would remain without salvation. It is equally inconceivable that an informed Christian would remain impoverished, destitute of blessing and power, when the precious provisions of heaven are within his reach. Yet few indeed are they who fear God.

PRAISEFUL! A God-fearing person is a God-praising person. It is his extreme delight to magnify and to glorify the LORD. He will solicit company in doing so. **"O magnify the LORD with me,"** he will appeal, **"and let us exalt his name together"** (Psalm 34:3). Praise does not proceed out of an ungrateful heart. It cannot come from a hopeless soul. It will not arise in a rebellious spirit. True praise is only possible with men and only acceptable to the LORD when a God-fearing state exists. Who are instructed to praise Him? **"Ye that fear the LORD..."** (Psalm 22:23).

Thanksgiving issues in praise, and praise is a type of thanksgiving. It is a coronary "*thank you, LORD*" wafted heavenward on the wings of praise. The countenance of a true, vibrant believer should shine with holy brightness, and his tongue should articulate joyful praise.

VICTORIOUS. **"And they smote all the cities round about Gerar; for the fear of the LORD came upon them..."** (II Chronicles 14:14).

Asa had scarcely ascended the throne of Judah until an Ethiopian army of one million men threatened his country, **"And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots..."** (II Chronicles 14:9). Asa, a God-fearing king, sent an S.O.S. heavenward: **"...LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God;"** he appealed, **"for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee"** (II Chronicles 14:11).

Those who know the LORD can appreciate how a supplication of this nature would register in heaven. How did God answer? “...**the fear of the LORD came upon them...**” (II Chronicles 14:14). God made them conscious of His presence. The victory was awesomely decisive.

While this incident has a collective character, the Bible is replete with illustrations of personal triumphs. There was Joseph who fled from the evil trap set by Potiphar's wife. Jabez stood alone while his brothers departed from God. David's heart-cry when pursued by Absalom was rewarded by a safe escape. Elijah under the juniper, pathetic in his discouragement, found sympathy from above. Jonah, in the belly of the big fish, was assured of deliverance. The disciples in the terrifying storm had their fears allayed by the presence of the Master.

Peter didn't sink in the engulfing waves. One cry, and rescue was provided. The widow of Nain didn't march very far in the funeral entourage of her deceased son until the voice of Resurrection sent her home rejoicing, her son with her. Martha's tears at her brother's tomb were quickly distilled by the victory voice of her Lord. Stephen had his eyes turned from the stoning *horde* {crowd} to see heaven open to his view. Paul at the lashing post found divine strength being made perfect in his weakness. John, exiled on lonely Patmos, saw the curtain rise upon the future.

Hear the wise preacher intoning this most assuring statement, “...**I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:**” (Ecclesiastes 8:12).

God never ordained or decreed escape mechanisms. He does not furnish His erring children with psychological canes to limp out of a sinful dilemma. Imagine Jesus sitting down by a tombstone with the maniac of Gadara, deluging him with personal questions about his past associations and his mental behavior—his reactions under given conditions. Then, with the answers tabulated and classified, saying,

*This young man's behaviorism has been adversely influenced by well-meaning but misunderstanding parents in childhood days. His yen {strong desire} for graveyard meanderings is the outgrowth of insecurity among the living due to over-attention in formative years, robbing him of self-confidence.*

The young man might have come out of the cemetery to obtain employment and to re-establish himself in society through such procedure, but he still would have had the demons within. The right behavior and the only heaven-approved conduct is that which results from confession and repentance of sin. Then the heart is right toward God and man, “**Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life**” (Proverbs 4:23).

Our generation has turned from the heart to the head. We have shifted our diagnostical premise. We have moved from sin to psychosis. A twenty-six-year-old incorrigible in cold blood slays eight young nurses in their dormitory in Chicago. Apprehended and arraigned, his counsel

pleads *“innocent by virtue of insanity.”* Spelled out, this means that it is acknowledged that he committed the hideous and heinous crime, but that he did not realize what he was doing.

It is a heart difficulty which lies at the root of such behavior—at the root of any uncomely conduct. There is no legitimate means of excusing it. The heart, even with the best psychological attention, is still “**...deceitful above all things and desperately wicked...**” (Jeremiah 17:9).

When Christ, Who is the only One who can do so, routed the sinful demons from the Gadara man, he was found “**...sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind...**” (Luke 8:35).

This is not to decry or to disparage the legitimate psychologist, but it is to denounce the blatant underestimation of the power of the Saviour.

We need the fear of God to strike terror into our souls at the very thought of perpetrating evil. This is the effective deterrent. Then, we need the fear of God that “**tendeth to life**” that we may “**abide satisfied.**”

**The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil. (Proverbs 19:23)**

## Chapter IV

### UNDERSTANDING THE FEAR OF GOD

**“Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.”—Proverbs 2:5**

LET US RECALL the invitation. **“Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD”** (Psalm 34:11). And, concerning His instruction, He says, **“...I give you good doctrine...”** (Proverbs 4:2).

The bell has rung. The class is in session. The subject is “The Fear of the LORD.” The Teacher is the One who guides in all truth, **“...the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...”** (John 16:13). The Teacher begins by saying, **“...attend to know understanding”** (Proverbs 4:1). The student replies, **“...Speak, LORD, for thy servant heareth...”** (1 Samuel 3:9). And He says, *“Turn in the text to Proverbs, chapter two.”*

The student is given a general survey of the area of fact to be covered. It resolves itself into three divisions, namely, the prerequisites, the proposition and the product.

#### THE PREREQUISITES

The prerequisites to an understanding of the fear of the LORD are three in number, and each is introduced by a conditional *“if.”* The student is asked to circle each. The first is in verse 1; the second in verse 3; and the third in verse 4. The student is also asked to circle the first word in verses 5 and 9. This will crystallize the format of the Lesson—*“if ... if ... if ... then ... THEN.”*

THE RECEPTION OF TRUTH. **“My son, IF thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;”** (Proverbs 2:1) (emphasis added). This is the first prerequisite, and a most important one it is. All that God does for us, in us, with us, to us, through us, must come by way of His Word. It is the only material God uses to produce life and to promote it. Name it and it has to be in the Bible.

Before the Scriptures can become practical and functional, before they can promote and produce, there must be reception. Reception, of course, is infinitely more than hearing. Some have been subjected to the richest of Bible presentation for many years, and yet have not developed a knowledge of its precepts. To receive divine words is to *assimilate* {incorporate} them, to *imbibe* {absorb} them, to make them one's own possession, to value their worth, to understand their meaning, to profit from their instruction.

This does not require a high I.Q. It does not presuppose some formal training in languages and *pedagogy* {methods of teaching}, in hermeneutics and homiletics. It does not demand classroom study. The possibility inheres in the desire of the Father for His children to learn His will, His way, His work, His worship. And it is more than a trite colloquialism to say, *“The Bible is the only textbook that has the Author present every time it is studied.”* This is a fact.

The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit is both marvelous and unspeakably important, for how can there be reception without presentation? And the manner in which divine instruction is transmitted to humans should fill every earnest soul with gratitude. The Revealer guides into all Truth, **“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...”** (John 16:13). He provides the faculty or facility to grasp it, **“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you...”** (I John 2:27). He promotes the understanding in it, **“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”** (I Corinthians 2:14). Of this we may be absolutely certain. The prevailing problem rests squarely with the student. Will he receive it?

To understand the fear of God, there first of all must be relationship. The Teacher makes this crystal clear. He emphasizes, **“My SON, if THOU wilt receive my words...”** (Proverbs 2:1) (emphasis added). He bolsters this fact later by stressing that **“...the natural man [anyone by rational means only] receiveth not the things of the Spirit...”** (I Corinthians 2:14). Only those taught by the Spirit could possibly understand the language of the Father. And, since only those in the household of faith are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19), only they have the Teacher.

So, the believer is enrolled. He is in the school of God. He has the best textbook ever to be touched by human hands. He has an infallible, all-wise and understanding Teacher. All he needs to do is to receive the words *“which maketh wise.”* But just as the sons of men had no room for the living Word, so the sons of God have little room for the written Word. Thus, there is a pathetic lack of reception. This bodes ill for the Church.

It is not that Christians in general would tell the divine Teacher, impudently and irreverently, that His teaching is not of value or not presented properly. It isn't that they would say, or even think the lesson material is not relevant. It is more *subtle* {clever} than this. Few people in confessing Christ claim Him as Lord. Few learn to love Him and His Truth. Few hunger for the things which are high and holy. The tempo of life has created a momentum which allows little time for attention to eternal verities. The interest is not there.

THE INTENSITY OF DESIRE. **“Yea, IF thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;”** (Proverbs 2:3) (emphasis added), the Teacher continues.



It is not enough, therefore, to receive truth. The openness of the ear and heart must be accompanied by an ever-increasing outreach of a burning desire to learn more and to learn better. David put it this way, **“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God”** (Psalm 42:1). But no one can long after God and not long after His Word. There are places in the Bible where the Lord and His Word are indistinguishable. Jesus said, I am Life, **“...I am the way, the truth and the life...”** (John 14:6). He also said, My Words are life, **“...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”** (John 6:63). A different life? No, the same.

Hunger is the evidence of appetite, and appetite depends for its strength upon health, and health is derived from food. This is equally true in the spiritual. If one has proper and sufficient food, he should be noticeably healthy, and, being healthy, he should have an appetite. Such an appetite will express itself in hunger.

**“...Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”** (Matthew 4:4). Now we know what the spiritual bread is. It is God's Word. Jesus said, **“...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”** (John 10:10). This life, as the physical, must be nurtured. It must be nurtured with increasing care and vigor. This is the abundant aspect of Christian development. We are to **“...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever”** (II Peter 3:18).

And we never need to fear about over-eating in the spiritual as we are warned in the physical. **“Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live [prosper]...”** (Isaiah 55:3), saith the LORD, but He never adds that one may hear too much of His Word. Jesus said, **“...learn of me...”** (Matthew 11:29), but He never warned that we could learn too much of Him. When the heavenly Teacher urges, **“My son, if thou wilt receive my words...”** (Proverbs 2:1), He did not insinuate that we could over-indulge. On the contrary, He strongly advises His students to cry for knowledge, **“Yea, if thou criest after knowledge...”** (Proverbs 2:3). If such a hunger were to grip God's people today, it would revolutionize every area of life. Then, we would put God first—always.

A devout couple, leaving a Bible Conference session which the writer was conducting, dropped this comment as they hurried on their way, *“We got visitors just as we were departing for the meeting. When they exhibited unwillingness to accompany us, we merely said, ‘Do make yourselves at home until we return. We have a date with the LORD to hear His Word.’”* May their kind increase.

And, speaking of an intense desire for Bible truth, we should covet the attitude of the young man in Psalm 119. He said, **“My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments**

**at all times**" (Psalm 119:20). One may not want to be hungry all the time in the physical, but it is a healthy condition in the spiritual, one that is richly rewarded, for **"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled"** (Matthew 5:6).

When this same Teacher was instructing Ezekiel in matters of solemn importance, He asked, **"...Son of man, hast thou seen this..."** (Ezekiel 47:6). When Jesus was teaching His disciples at a later day concerning the mysteries of the kingdom, he tested their reception by inquiring, **"...Have ye understood all these things..."** (Matthew 13:51).

Is it not clear to any open mind that the LORD wants His truths learned well? Are we receiving His Words? To what extent? With what inward reaction? Are we sufficiently healthy spiritually to have a hunger for the Scriptures? Is it an increasing or a decreasing desire? How does our hunger for truth manifest itself? What do we do to satisfy this hunger?

THE EXTENT OF STUDY. Now comes the third *"if."* It would not have been logical earlier. **"IF thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure;"** (Proverbs 2:4) (emphasis added).

What would you think of a person, bag or basket in hand, pushing the leaves back and forth in a field or on a slope, saying, *"I'm looking for silver. I'm looking for gold?"* Your reaction would be too obvious for expression. Anyone knows silver and gold are seldom discovered that easily. Men hazard their lives to get such precious treasures. They descend to the bowels of the earth. And what is the moral? Just this, precious truths which bless the soul are seldom on the surface. They are not impressed upon us with lasting blessing by a cursory glance at the Sacred Page. The most that many people get from the great Treasure Mine of Scripture is a quick glimpse of a daily devotional verse. This is not enough to make one strong and to keep one healthy in the LORD.

*"Seeking"* and *"searching"* are suggestive of study. Study involves research and investigation. The tools are many today, and readily obtainable. Anyone who can read a newspaper can just as easily pronounce every Hebrew word in the Old Testament and every Greek word in the New, and get the meaning, that is if one has a good exhaustive concordance. No engagement is more intriguing, more enjoyable, more profitable than working with the Scriptures. We must do our homework. The Divine Teacher does not do the studying for the pupils. He daily reminds them to **"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"** (II Timothy 2:15).

## THE PROPOSITION

Now, where does all this lead us? At what is the great Instructor aiming?

UNDERSTANDING THE FEAR OF GOD. Every statement enunciated thus far by the Teacher has been profound, but listen with *rapt* {completely fascinated} attention to this utterance, **“THEN shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God”** (Proverbs 2:5) (emphasis added). If the prerequisites have been met, it is like knowing the combination to a safe. How easily does the strong, impregnable door swing open to the treasures within when the knowledgeable person gently turns the knob to the left, to the right, to the left, to the right. Is the analogy clear?

If we will receive God's wonderful Words into our heart and life, if we will evidence a powerful, pressing desire to know their enlightening truths, and if we will plunge deeper and deeper into their rich and abiding blessing, **“THEN”** will the way be clear for us to understand the fear of God. It is a privilege *par excellence*, not one into which one casually or indifferently stumbles, but one into which one grows by hard, steady concentration. The discoveries will be limitless!

In another class, apparently with elementary pupils, for He speaks of them as little children, **“My little children, these things write I unto you...”** (I John 2:1), the divine Teacher counsels, **“But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected...”** (I John 2:5).

We call attention to this for the express purpose of noting how it is necessary to keep His Word, **“But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected...”** (I John 2:5). The word **“keepeth”** means to appreciate, to appropriate, to apply the message taught. And this is vital. Interest is predicated on appreciation. One surely could not help but be interested in Bible Truth if once one appreciated what It is and what It does.

*“The Bible,”* said John Locke, *“has God as its author, salvation for its end, and truth without admixture of error for its matter.”*

*“Destroy this Volume,”* observed Sir Payson, *“and you blot out the sun, dry up the ocean, and take away the atmosphere from the moral world.”*

The Bible cannot be accounted for upon a purely natural and human basis. We are driven to accept its own self-explanation and concede the mysterious supernatural element it contains. Nor is this difficult when we appreciate its authorship, **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God...”** (II Timothy 3:16), its perfection, **“The law of the LORD is perfect...”** (Psalm 19:7), its veracity, **“...thy word is truth.”** (John 17:17), its accuracy, **“I know, Oh LORD, that thy judgments are right...”** (Psalm 119:75), **“...I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right...”** (Psalm 119:128). its immutability, **“...the scripture cannot be broken:”** (John 10:35), its dependability, **“...I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.”** (Acts 27:25), and its sufficiency, **“That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works”**

(II Timothy 3:17). Is it any wonder the Psalmist exulted, "**Thy testimonies are wonderful...**" (Psalm 119:129)?

Appropriation should follow very readily when once appreciation of the wonders of divine Truth begins to develop. This simply means "*to get hold of, "to acquire," "to make one's own."* This, of course, is the *wharf* {platform} and *woof* {bark} of study, the center and circumference of searching, or as the apostle Paul would say, "**...a wise masterbuilder...**" (I Corinthians 3:10). No one is so well informed as one who knows well the sacred precepts.

THEN application is in order. It is the *transmuting* {changing} of boundless potency into daily practice. It is availing one's self of the dynamic of propulsion in spiritual conduct. It is being "**...doers of the word, and not hearers only...**" (James 1:22). It is the wherewithal to make one proficient in spiritual enterprise. It is "*operation progress.*"

The Teacher points out, "**THEN shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.**" (Proverbs 2:5) (emphasis added). The "**Then,**" of course, presupposes that each step in the lesson thus far has been learned, approved and applied. The word "**understand**" involves perception and intelligence. So, what was nebulous heretofore about the fear of God is now being perceived with understanding. And verse 5 goes on to state that, when one gets this far, he will "**...find the knowledge of God.**" It means not only to know about, but to know experientially. This is reality in all its sublimity {height}. A precious sense of satisfaction settles on one and the highlands of spiritual appeal beckon constantly to his rejoicing heart.

## THE PRODUCT

UNDERSTANDING RIGHTEOUSNESS. The Teacher, bringing the lesson to a conclusion, points out to the students the inviting possibility.

"**THEN shalt thou understand righteousness...**" (Proverbs 2:9) (emphasis added). To fully meet the prerequisites, to experientially know the presence of God in one's life, is to qualify for the richest experience possible—that of walking with God, even as Enoch of old walked with Him, and had the assurance before he left, "**... that he pleased God**" (Hebrews 11:5). In the vernacular, this separates the men from the boys. This is unmistakable proof of one's thorough devotion and obedient response to the teaching of the Spirit. And why settle for less?

A careful look at the Text will reveal that the word "**righteousness,**" employed in Proverbs 2:9, has strong practical connotations. This particular use of the word is only found twice in the early part of the Bible (once in Leviticus; once in Deuteronomy), and does not appear again until we reach Job, where it occurs three times. In the Psalms, it abounds; seventy times. Then, in Proverbs, it is numerous; twenty times. It occurs in 289 verses with a total of 306 times in the entire Bible. There could be much significance to this.

The whole purpose of Bible teaching is to produce a walk with God while yet in the earthly body, for **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”** (II Timothy 3:16). And what is practical righteousness? It means being right and doing right in the sight of God according to His Word.

If our Teacher were to subject us to an examination on this lesson, how much would we prove to have learned? And we may be sure, He is not merely interested in a theoretical learning or a superficial knowledge. He wants us to experience the soul-refreshing blessing of reality. **“Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God”** (Proverbs 2:5).

**Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.**

(Proverbs 2:5)

## Chapter V

### THE PRIVILEGE OF THE GOD-FEARING

**“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you...”—James 4:8**

THE SONG OF identification is a popular present-day custom. There is the national anthem, the college *Alma Mater*, the battle hymn, the broadcasting signature, the musical advertisement, the testimonial lyric, the liturgical chant and the congratulatory chorus, to mention a few, but the *theme-song* of those who fear God could not be better expressed than in the favorite old hymn,

*There is a place of quiet rest  
Near to the heart of God,  
A place where sin cannot molest  
Near to the heart of God.*

The sinner is made nigh unto God through regeneration; the saint is made nigh unto God through dedication. The former is positional; the latter, practical. The former results in relationship; the latter, in fellowship. The former has to do with the standing; the latter, the state. The former gives access to the Throne; the latter, communion. The former introduces us to grace; the latter promotes us therein.

As the tree is drawn upward by the sun, so the believer, through submission, is drawn heavenward by the Spirit. His hunger for holiness is never satiated; his thirst never satisfied. He feasts joyfully at the table and drinks deeply at the fountain. Soberly, humbly and fervently he declares, **“...so panteth my soul after thee, O God”** (Psalm 42:1).

With the masses, this is not true. The restless throngs of unbelievers have no such concern. They live as though the Saviour never came. They act as though they do not need salvation. They speak as though they do not care. They go on as though it is immaterial. They try their best though that is not sufficient. And they die as though it does not matter.

In the realm of religious profession, the situation is not at all impressive. In the allegory setting forth the two systems of law and grace which cannot co-exist, Ishmael the son of the bondwoman and Isaac the son of the freewoman symbolize, respectively, the professor and the possessor—the one who merely pretends and the one who is genuinely saved. The conclusion is sadly enlightening: **“...for the desolate hath many more children [illegitimates] than she which hath an husband”** (Galatians 4:27). This cannot be related to any one church or assembly, but it is an

authentic account of the scarcity of true believers in the realm of religious profession, “...**narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it**” (Matthew 7:14).

Among the comparatively “**few**” who have definite assurance of salvation, there is little desire for the deeper things of the Spirit. The *narrow way* which leads to life, and eventually to glory, has felt the tread of countless feet. But those noble souls who have longed after God, those who have left a deeper imprint, are a pitiful minority. Some of them have walked through fire and blood. Lashed to the stake, locked in the dungeon, lifted to the cross—these are some of the more difficult tests of devotion for many of the unfaltering *stalwarts* {loyal supporter}. Others, of course, were just as steadfast along a more tranquil pathway. But why is it so universally difficult for us to step resolutely into the center of God's will where His nearness is the constant joy of the trusting heart?

A needy woman in the days of old felt constrained to contact Jesus. She had a physical indisposition for which she had received no help. As with Zacchaeus, the crowd hindered her, but she pressed through the throng to touch the hem of His garment. The incident may be tersely summarized in this manner:

The woman reached; Christ responded. The need was stated, the need was satisfied. No one could help, but One did. The crowd interfered but Christ intervened. Faith went out of her; virtue went out of Christ. Only one in the throng touched Christ; Christ touched only one in the throng. (The multitudes know nothing about touching Christ.) The faith that reaches is the faith that is rewarded. The desirer's persistence met with divine pleasure. If she could come with her plague, can we not come with our problem? If she knew she had contacted divine power, can we not likewise know? If she could surmount obstacles to reach Christ, can we not overcome hindrances to get hold of God?

**And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.**  
(Matthew 9:20-22)

Elijah contacted conquering power (I Kings 18). David contacted convicting power (Psalm 51). Ephraim contacted reviving power (Hosea 14:8). Peter contacted refining power (Luke 5:8). And Paul contacted transforming power (Acts 9). This supernatural power is still abundantly available. The God-fearing know this to be true. They have experienced its operating dynamic in their lives.

Drawing nigh to God presupposes some very essential prerequisites. They are listed in James 4:8, 10— “**cleanse your hands,**” “**purify your hearts**” and “**humble yourselves.**”

**Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, ye sinners; and purify *your* hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.** (James 4:8-10)

Preparation of this nature is concerned largely with precluding factors, those disqualifying things which hinder the outflow of the affections Godward.

For instance, how can one draw near to God in prayer until one has detached himself from the *myriads* {countless number} of things which have been crowding in upon his soul, such as secular responsibilities, personal engagements, and developing plans. Such preoccupying matters anchor the thoughts to the mundane. One is not free to follow the Holy Spirit to the Throne of Grace. A godly man, gifted in prayer, made the assertion that it conceivably could require an hour of meditation in the Scriptures or in song or in quiet musing before one has dislodged himself from the earthly in order to move into the supernal.

The same is true of adoration. Before the affections can embrace the heart of God with tender sincerity, they must let go those things which have held priority. There must be a definite disentangling, a losing process to insure the fullness of appreciation, reverence and gratitude—the outpouring of the soul in *extolling* {praising enthusiastically} the LORD.

A certain detachment is also necessary in order to exalt Deity. Exalting is magnifying. It is making God great as the object of our worship, great in dominating our thoughts, great in brightening our hopes, and great in satisfying our every longing. Tune in to Moses' song of redemption for a magnificent illustration: **“Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”** (Exodus 15:11).

Moses had to be delivered from his captors to thus present this lyrical laudation. And it is not pressing the idea beyond warrant to remind ourselves that our prayer, adoration and exaltation of the LORD cannot be effectual and acceptable until deliverance from captivating restraints has been effected. When once the unclean is renounced, both in attitude and action, then one may be clothed in the moral excellencies of Christ, for, as Charles Haddon Spurgeon once remarked, *“The grace of God is not a clean glove for a dirty hand.”*

To **“draw nigh to God”** has a variety of interesting meanings. It proves a hatred for sin and a longing for holiness. It indicates a renunciation of Satan and a yieldedness to the Holy Spirit. It confirms a spiritual development with a desire for further advancement. It denotes an awareness of God and a recognition of His will. It displays an appreciation of richer things and the importance of their eternal value. It reveals a perception of righteousness with its many implications.



Draw nigh to God? What about the hymn, you ask, which tells us, “*Near, so very near to God, nearer we cannot be, for in the person of His Son, we're just as near as He.*” Is this not true? It is true! It is true because “**...we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones**” (Ephesians 5:30). But this “*nearness*” pertains primarily to regeneration and not necessarily to sanctification. Again, it is the positional aspect and not the practical. Otherwise, why would the Holy Spirit tell the regenerated to draw nigh to God? And speaking of hymns, here is something of what is in the heart of one drawing nigh:

*I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice,  
And it told Thy love for me;  
But I long to rise in the arms of faith,  
And be closer drawn to Thee.*

Now, take a joyful and thankful look at the other side of the matter. “**...and he will draw nigh to you...**” (James 4:8). Incredible? No, not when we have His Word for it. Incomprehensible? Well, perhaps, for everything about the Infinite is too much for the finite to comprehend. Here is where faith is invaluable.

How pleasant to contemplate the nearness of God! What an atmosphere when He is near! What exhilarating emotions fill one! What an elevating experience! But we should never acquire the misconception that it is a momentary or fleeting condition, for the consciousness of the LORD's presence should be the constant climate of the believer's life.

There is a grossly *erroneous* {mistaken} concept abroad. It is the general consensus that the life of Christian victory is optional. When did God ever say to any of those born into His family, “*You may choose as to whether or not you remain in spiritual infancy, or whether you grow to maturity?*” The command is to grow, “**But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ**” (II Peter 3:18). Those who neglect the means of grace and spurn divine instruction are in a constant state of sin, for “**...to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin**” (James 4:17). The Saviour came not only that they, “**...might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly**” (John 10:10).

As another has said, “*God is interested in our holiness—not our happiness. Happiness stems from happenings; holiness from Him.*” Because God is unchangeable, there is no change in His purpose, in His provision, in His procedure, in His product. He made those of another day like Him. What reason is there to believe He cannot do the same today? It is true that faith has a foe to withstand and a fight to wage, but it is also true that faith has an inexhaustible storehouse on which to latch. Faith comes from this incomparable source, so does instruction, direction and wisdom. Such knowledge is the multiplier of strength, stability and sturdiness in every believer who capitalizes on it.

When God draws near, opportunity is glorified. He comes with enlightenment and *endowment* {infusion}. It is increasingly necessary to recognize this fact in this day of such fantastic technological developments and such amazing space exploration. Faith must either grow or die as the mind is stretched to see a universe of such immensity. If faith is giving ground in these stupendous times, it is because we are not drawing nigh unto God.

The royal official was forced to Christ by his son's illness (John 4:46, 53). The Philippian jailor was forced to Christ by fear (Acts 16:26). The Samaritan woman was forced to Christ by His words (John 4). Nicodemus was forced to Christ by a sense of need (John 3:2). Three thousand were forced to Christ by the impact of a sermon (Acts 2). But God will not *coerce* {force} us into daily victory. The young man of Psalm 119 demanded that the LORD make him to go in the way of His commandments, **“Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight”** (Psalm 119:35). But if God forced one He would be obligated to do the same for all since He is no respecter of persons (Romans 2:11). Even if He forced one, where would be the obedience? The love? The honor?

If we could read the heart of the Father in this respect, surely, we would find a longing on His part for nearness to His children. How surely must He say today, as did Jesus in the long ago, **“...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”** (Matthew 23:37).

How true it is that we are **“Ever learning, and never able to come to the [experiential] knowledge of the truth”** (II Timothy 3:7). It seems that we are forever dealing in the elementary matters of the Christian faith. There is little progress toward maturity. Oh, that we might draw nigh to God! Oh, that we might experience His nearness to us! We have never so much needed times of refreshing from out of His presence. Oh, for God-fearing people to stem the tide of sin and spiritual indifference!

Observe also that God drawing near to men involves an indescribable *condescension* {decent of rank}. All we like sheep had gone astray. We had all sinned and come short of the glory of God. We were sold under sin. We had brought reproach upon the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Yet, for all of this, love went to work and found a way to deliver. The Son of God *condescended* {lowered Himself} to leave His highest throne in glory, to be found in human form, to be hated and despised, to die an ignominious death, to expiate our sins. The Holy Spirit of God condescended to regenerate, to baptize us into a heavenly body, to seal, indwell and direct. The Father-God bestows His perfect gifts and calls us near to His heart of love. He promises a manifestation of His presence day by day. What condescension! What love! What grace!

This fullness of divine favor is the inexplicable portion of those who fear God. **“The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea I have a goodly heritage”** (Psalm 16:6).

**Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and  
purify your hearts, ye double minded. (James 4:8)**

## Chapter VI

### THE ASSOCIATIONS OF THE GOD-FEARING

**“I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.”—Psalm 119:63**

COMPANIONSHIP TELLS on character. Sooner or later we become like unto them with whom we associate. It is equally true that character determines the type of associations we enjoy. Birds of a feather will invariably flock together.

In the above text is a telling testimony of an anonymous individual—anonymous because he is typical of anyone who has moved into spiritual maturity. He is a young man who learned of a company of people termed **“blessed.”** This designation was divinely given to them because they walked in the law of the LORD and sought Him with their whole heart, **“Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart”** (Psalm 119:1, 2). He expressed a personal desire for a comparable experience, **“O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!”** (Psalm 119:5). He began to search for something richer, fuller, deeper. His defeats long outweighed his successes. He was plagued with disappointments. Then, through definite self-examination, he discovered two basic difficulties.

First, he feared the reproach which he thought might attend a total commitment to the LORD. He feared what people would think, what they would say, **“Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good”** (Psalm 119:39).

Second, he discovered a misplaced emphasis. Like most people, he was more concerned about the blessing than the Blessor. He did not understand that the secret of spiritual strength and victory is realized by giving the Lord the pre-eminence, by making Him the controlling force, by finding in Him a satisfying plentitude, **“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:”** (Colossians 2:10). When once this truth registered, the error was corrected, **“Thou art my portion [all I want!], O LORD...”** (Psalm 119:57), he finally confessed. This is the turning point in Psalm 119. It was then, and only then, that he could declare, **“I am a companion of all them that fear thee...”** (Psalm 119:63).

This is an unusual testimony. Others in the Scriptural record expressed the same truth, but not in such revealing terminology. It is more than the acknowledgement of spiritual attainment. It is the explanation of spiritual association. It involves all that Paul incorporated in his immortal

declaration of Galatians 2:20—“...the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the **Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.**” But it goes on to indicate a full appreciation of those who had preceded him in discovering the same blessed experience of full surrender to the LORD.

Further, it unveils a clear understanding of what once was so enigmatic and seemingly impossible of realization. He remembered how he had frustratingly demanded, “**Make me to go in the path of thy commandments...**” (Psalm 119:35). At the time, he seemed to cast a longing eye at the examples of victorious believers in the first three verses of the Psalm 119, as though he had concluded it was beyond the pale of possibility for him. Now that the LORD has been good in honoring what faith he had, and now that the hindrances have been removed, his testimony has a joyful ring of discovery.

When the Psalmist declared, “**I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.**” (Psalm 119:63), he did not mean that he was acquainted with all such or that he had contact with them. That would not be conceivable. He simply meant that, with his clearer perception and more thorough dedication, he could accept and enjoy the company of all those who were deeply spiritual, those that constantly sought to honor the LORD.

It is not difficult to imagine the chief places of interest for God-fearing people. You would not expect to meet them in the questionable areas of this world system which so strongly appeal to the emotions and lusts of the unregenerate. You would not expect them to be where the atmosphere is beclouded with irreverence and blasphemy or where debauchery slays chastity. You would not expect them to be where the unprincipled heap reproach upon the gospel of Christ, or bring dishonor to His name. You would not expect them to be with those who plot mischief and scheme evil devices. Then, where would you expect the God-fearing and with whom?

COMPANIONSHIP WITH WORSHIPPERS. It must be admitted, of course, that people without perceptible godliness attend meetings of worship. Wittingly or unwittingly, it is done by such either through the force of custom, the influence of others, or simply because it is considered, even in this day of spiritual decline, to be a respectable habit.

Only those with positive Christian assurance and a degree of growth in grace have the Spirit-prompted urge for frequency and faithfulness in public worship. It is the atmosphere which dedicated Christians love to breathe—an atmosphere which exhilarates the soul, elevates the spirit and rejoices the heart. Said Washington Irving: *“I do not know of a grander effect of music on the moral feelings than that of a full choir and the pealing organ performing an anthem in a cathedral, filling every part of the vast pile with triumphant harmony.”*

But it does not require a cathedral, nor yet a full choir, nor the pealing notes of a great organ to inspire worshippers. A lovely young missionary, home for her first furlough, told about her fierce struggle in relinquishing her teaching position and surrendering her life for missionary service. She arrived in French Equatorial Africa on a gloomy Saturday afternoon.

*Words fail me to explain my feelings, she commented, as I began unpacking my limited belongings in the little mud hut which was to be my home for four long years, and, for all I knew, the remainder of my life. The surroundings were dreadfully unenticing, and the natives stared at me with what seemed to be gross suspicion rather than usual curiosity. I was almost terrified as I prepared for my first night's rest, with creeping things in evidence and the fear of poisonous serpents and wild animals. I was fast falling victim to self-pity and misgivings. However, this was short-lived.*

*The next morning, I attended my first worship service on the field. It was in a crude building with little or no equipment and insufficient space for the attendants. I sat in the pulpit with the experienced workers. The first hymn was announced. I did not understand the language, but I recognized the music as being Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty. I joined the congregation (singing in English) and, as I looked upon the wholesome faces of the natives, their dark skin and conspicuously white teeth began to look attractive to me. I felt a warmth. I knew I was with God's people, and God was there. I became acclimatized in a matter of moments. They were one with me; I was one with them.*

There is a tie that binds hearts in Christian love. This is seen and sensed in the gathering together of worshippers. But it seems there is more involved in the testimony of the Psalmist than this. Apparently, he had engaged in worship with other believers before he discovered that he was a companion of all them that fear God. Now he had moved into a deeper, more solemn appreciation of the meaning of worship.

Imagine yourself being in a church service when the pastor addressed three companies of people in the congregation as did the apostle Paul in Antioch in Pisidia. First, he mentioned **“Men and brethren,”** meaning, it is thought, the proselytes. Second, he referred to the **“children of the stock of Abraham,”** designating the orthodox Jews. Then, he addressed himself to **“...whosoever among you feareth God...”** (Acts 13:26). Of course, he did not preach three different messages. But make no mistake about it, the God-fearing segment of that congregation, with keener perception and a more intense desire, benefited the most. Their capacity is greater, their grasp of the Truth quicker and their vision clearer.

It is said that thirst which knows no season manifests itself on four levels. First, the earthly level with its base desires, worldly lusts, and inordinate cravings. Second, the moral level with pressing propensities for position, privilege and prestige. Third, the emotional with a longing to be appreciated, honored and loved. Fourth, the spiritual with an insatiable outreach for God. **“My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God...”** (Psalm 42:2) was the fervent outburst of the Psalmist of old.

The distinguishing characteristics between the nominal Christian and the God-fearing are most evident. The former lacks zeal in spiritual enterprise; the latter presses toward the mark of the high calling of God. The former is *“scarcely saved”* **“And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?”** (I Peter 4:18); the latter says, **“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”** (Philippians 1:21). With the former, worship is superficially ceremonial, a customary procedure; with the latter, worship is a process that awaits its fullest expression when, on their faces before the throne, they will join their voices *laudaciously* {full of praise}, **“Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen”** (Revelation 7:12).

The God-fearing see this day looming brightly on the horizon of their hope. They nurture an awe, a reverence and a love in their present adoration, anticipating that great day when faith will give way to sight—that day when they shall see the King in all His beauty, **“...and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes”** (Revelation 7:15-17).

This is the association the God-fearing enjoy. This is the atmosphere in which they now live. The veneer of empty profession has disappeared. The levity of shallowness has given way to depth. Pretense has given way to reality. This is why the young man of Psalm 119, after entering into fellowship with those who fear God, could exultantly declare, **“The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy...”** (Psalm 119:64). He could see God in everything.

*Heaven above is softer blue,  
Earth around is sweeter green;  
Something lives in every hue  
Christless eyes have never seen.*

*Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,  
Flowers with deeper beauty shine  
Since I know as I am known,  
I am His and He is mine.*

It has been strikingly stated that *“there is a lot of hell on the way to hell, and there is a lot of heaven on the way to heaven.”* No one who thinks realistically would question this. The derelicts along the broad road which leads to destruction, together with the filth and *squalor* {extremely dirty}, the heartaches and disillusionment, prove the truth of the first observation. But the joy and blessing, the service and fruitfulness, the present assurance and glorious expectation, combine to give the true believer a foretaste of the land that is fairer than day. Godly companions add a priceless touch to all of this.

COMPANIONSHIP WITH BIBLE LOVERS. To the unenlightened or to those weak in the faith, the study of the Scriptures is not too appealing. But those who love the LORD have an insatiable desire to move from the *“milk of the Word”* and into the *“strong meat.”* This to them is as natural as breathing, **“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”** (Hebrews 5:14). Their chief delight is to meet with others to search the Scriptures, **“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me”** (John 5:39). They are those who can testify with the Psalmist **“O, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day”** (Psalm 119:97). They also join him in assuring, **“The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver”** (Psalm 119:72).

It is not unfair to charge that the Bible to many professing Christians is scarcely more than an ornament. Many a bride has walked the aisle with a white Bible in her hand who never thought seriously about walking through life with it in her heart. Many families display the Bible on a library table but never attempt to discover its wonderful truths.

The God-fearing are not so. They find great pleasure gathering to ponder its precepts, to master its teaching, to assimilate its truth, to understand and apply its directives, to better know Him Who is its luminous object. They find it to be the seed of life, **“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible...”** (I Peter 1:23), the food of the spirit, **“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”** (Matthew 4:4), wisdom for the mind, **“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”** (II Timothy 3:15), the sanctifier of the soul, **“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”** (John 17:17), light for the course, **“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”** (Psalm 119:105), the discerner of the heart, **“...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”** (Hebrews 4:12), the purifier of the life, **“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,”** (Ephesians 5:26), the map for the journey, **“I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment:”** (Proverbs 8:20) and the judge of all thoughts, words and deeds, **“...the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”** (John 12:48).



There was a day when David exclaimed with urgent concern, **“Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men”** (Psalm 12:1). That we are in a similar day of spiritual decline cannot be denied. Just how far into such darkness we have gone may not be readily ascertained. This we know, *stalwarts* {loyal} of the faith are not numerous.

The late Dr. William L. Pettingill, just before his home-going, said to the writer, *“The mighty men of God with whom I’ve rubbed shoulders in more than fifty years of ministry have gone. I’m getting lonesome.”* Then, with almost startling directness, he added, *“The present crop of Christians is not made of the same kind of stuff.”* Does the reader wish to debate the matter? We can only bow our heads in shame, confessing our shallowness, our weakness, our pathetic lack of spiritual growth.

But, here is a very serious angle to the matter. We have enjoyed a rich spiritual heritage through these *stalwarts* {faithful and loyal supporters} of another day. Think of the torture, the anguish, the faith, the willingness of the martyrs to die at the stake, to have their blood sizzled from their veins. This enables us to sing, *“Faith of our fathers living still, in spite of dungeon, fire and sword.”* But there is a big question as to whether we are prepared to leave for coming generations a living faith so challenging and so glorious. This should prove to us how greatly we need to become God-fearing people—quickly!

Make no mistake, the great and pressing need of the hour, for us as individuals and for us as a nation, is to get back to God—back to the deep, rich things of His holy provisions, back where the soul of man can find rest in the rush and hurry of our frustrated age, back where the heart can find confidence as the foundations crumble about us. And the way back to God is the way of His Book. It is and ever shall be **“...a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”** (Psalm 119:105). Its hallowed illumination leads into the way of the just, **“But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day”** (Proverbs 4:18).

Those who gather about the Word of God with hungry hearts and trusting souls are neither intimidated nor disturbed by the attacks of the agnostic or the *invectives* {insults} of the infidel. The discerning God-fearing person is unshatterably assured that the Bible cannot be accounted for upon a purely natural or human basis. He finds no difficulty in accepting its own self-explanation and *conceding* {yielding to} the mysterious, supernatural character it claims.

The student of the Bible sees Christ as its glorious personage. He is impressed with its structure, for he sees in the Old Testament preparation for the coming of Christ, in the Gospels the *manifestation* of His presence, in Acts the *propagation* of His truth, in the epistles the *explanation* of His gospel, and in the Revelation the *consummation* {completion} of His purpose.

Without controversy, the Bible is the chief object of the true believer's interest even as the Christ of Whom It speaks is the chief object of his heart's affection. The Bible encourages

association of those of like precious faith because it stimulates prayer, praise and service. It enables the righteous to exalt the LORD and to magnify His name together, **“O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together”** (Psalm 34:3).

COMPANIONSHIP IN WITNESSING. It would seem that a pattern has been etched upon the record of Christian ministry. Jesus sent out the seventy, two-by-two. Peter, James and John seemed constantly to be in league with each other. Paul not only had his praying partners but his traveling companions as well. This is decidedly a precedent worthy of emulation.

Fellowship in any realm presupposes standing on common ground, thinking similar thoughts and being interested in like matters. And He who draws dedicated hearts to Himself draws such hearts toward one another. Those who experience closeness to Christ evidence the compassion of Christ. Kindred minds can encourage action. One can provoke another to godly jealousy, and often two can do the job more effectively than one.

On the outskirts of a small town in Western Maryland lived an aged man in a little abode on the hillside. It was a familiar sight for people of the community to behold him, provision bag over his shoulder, going to the market for groceries. One evening a near neighbor said to her husband, *“You know, I haven't seen Mr. Scott for days. Maybe he is sick.”* The husband suggested that his wife go up to the little home and investigate.

The next morning, taking her small daughter, she went up the winding path and tapped on the door. There was no response. She tapped again, but still no response. She lifted the latch and slowly pushed open the door. There on a couch lay the elderly man, motionless. Her first and frightening impression was that he was dead. She moved to his side and called, *“Mr. Scott. Mr. Scott.”* He opened his eyes only to stare at her. She asked if she could get him some food. Some water. There was no reply. Then, she noticed his lips moving though there was no audible sound.

*“Would you like some coffee?”* she inquired. He slowly shook his head. *“Some tea?”* she continued. Again, the negative gesture. She was in the process of putting other questions to him concerning his need when her little daughter just outside the window began singing, *“Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”*

The old man's countenance began to show signs of interest and his lips began to move. She put her ear down closer, and barely heard him saying,

*Them's the words. Them's the words.*

He was a dying man, soon to plunge into eternity. He needed something to support him, to encourage him, to comfort him. When he heard the child singing about Jesus' love, he somehow knew, perhaps from a Bible lesson in childhood, that this was his only hope—the only help he

could get, the only help he needed, the only help that could satisfy as earth began to recede. Here is proof that assistance can be invaluable.

The world of lost men is likened unto a harvest field where the laborers are alarmingly insufficient. But in this regard, as in every spiritual enterprise, we not only have fellowship with one another, but with the Holy Spirit as well. **“For we are labourers together with God...”** (I Corinthians 3:9). And as the desire to beget is second only to hunger in the physical, so should it be in the spiritual. First, one hungers after righteousness, **“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness...”** (Matthew 5:6), then longs to beget spiritual children by winning souls to Christ. This was Paul's pronounced desire, **“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”** (Romans 10:1), and we are exhorted to be followers of Him, **“Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me”** (I Corinthians 4:16).

When the Macedonian call came to Paul and his colleagues, Dr. Luke made this entry in the record, **“...we endeavoured to go...”** (Acts 16:10). We may never be as successful in turning people to righteousness as we would wish, but when we stand before Christ for the final, solemn accounting, it should at least prove eternally consoling if we are able to say, *“We endeavoured.”*

COMPANIONSHIP IN PRAYER. We do not speak in relative terms with regard to practical Christianity. That is, we do not say that prayer is more important than some other spiritual privilege, or more blessed. We should not elevate one privilege above another. But what could be more precious or more stimulating to the deeper precincts of our being than to go **“By a new and living way...”** (Hebrews 10:20) unto the throne of God in the company of those who are fervent in prayer?

One reason a God-fearing person is what he is, is due to the fact that he is no longer a novice in the art of praying. He feels at home in the presence of God. He knows the meaning and value of tarrying often and long where his strength is supplied. He knows how soul-enthraling it is to come to grips with God.

And what may be said of fellowship in prayer? Words fail us. The historic prayer meeting in the upper room previous to the pentecostal manifestation of the Spirit should impress everyone. They were expectant. Their hearts were united. They were all in one accord. The things of the world fade from view in such an atmosphere. The *irksome* {annoying}, disconcerting matters of common day distil into thin air. The burdens which press so heavily are lifted. Confession is easy. Forgiving others is a delight. Love flows freely. God is loved. Christ is exalted. The Holy Spirit is honored. Praying for the sick, the bereaved, the perplexed, the wayward always binds hearts together. Again, it is no trite saying that *“the family that prays together stays together.”*

COMPANIONSHIP IN CONVERSATION. What is it that dictates discussions when people are together? Matters of common interest. What should we expect to hear when God-fearing people

are with each other? **“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name”** (Malachi 3:16). And please observe that those who speak often about the LORD are those who have Him continually in their thoughts.

There are unlimited ways in which we can induce attention to the LORD. Two men were walking toward the end of the city. One was Samuel; the other Saul. **“...Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God”** (I Samuel 9:27).

Take Paul for instance. **“And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening [expounding] and alleging, [depositing truth] that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead; that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.”** The result? **“And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas...”** (Acts 17:2-4). The word **“consorted”** means “to stick, to cleave, to have in common, to intimately partner with.” Those who have eternal things in common, those who stick to the faith, those who cleave unto the LORD are those with whom someone reasoned out of the Scriptures somewhere along the way.

God-fearing people are in league with one another, are fellow-saints in the more abundant life. They are people of the Book, people of deep spiritual conviction, compassionate, discerning, prayerful, joyful, valiant, hopeful and steadfast. In such company hearts are warmed, expectancy is encouraged, and the testimony is strengthened.

**I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.**

(Psalm 119:63)

## Chapter VII

### THE VIRTUES OF THE GOD-FEARING

**“...Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom...”**—Job 28:28

LIKE BEGETS like. When a seed is planted, it yields its kind. And not only this, the sower will get an increase of what he plants. This same principle operates in other areas as well—in the moral and in the spiritual, **“...whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting”** (Galatians 6:7, 8).

The serious part of the principle, which is so sorrowfully overlooked when one sows to the flesh, is the multiplication aspect. Sow something bad and you get more of it. It may be sown without calculating the risk, but it can produce a *progeny* {offspring or descendant} of problems. It may be sown in fun but reaped in sorrow. It may be sown in pleasure, then yield a lifetime of bondage.

**“Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death”** (James 1:15).

Increased attention to *“sowing to the Spirit”* needs to be stressed today. We simply are not reaping eternal things. The Seed is ignored, the fields are neglected and the sowers have lapsed into a fearful apathy.

**“...The seed is the Word of God”** (Luke 8:11). The heart is the soil. **“Thy word have I hid [planted] in mine heart...”** the Psalmist testified in Psalm 119:11. And it will be found that the Scriptures have a great deal to say about planting, cultivating, pruning and harvesting. To His ancient people, Jehovah said, **“...Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns”** (Jeremiah 4:3).

This is not here a principle of agriculture. It is more solemn than that, and more important! Note also that **“fallow ground”** is plowed ground. But why should plowed soil be broken up? The answer is simple.

Can the reader imagine a farmer plowing his field, then, through diversionary interests and neglect, fail to sow the seed until wild growth had cluttered the acreage? Desiring a harvest, he belatedly scatters seed among the thorns and the thistles which have sprung up. *“Absurd!”* you say. Yes, but not more so than that which obtains in the religious realm continually, where growth

is choked by extraneous and irrelevant interests. The text implies that it is disappointing to expect victory in carnal lives, or productive effort from the spiritually handicapped. There must be a clearing out of hindrances.

As grapes and figs are not gathered from thorns, neither is the fruit of the Spirit reflected in the backslider, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance...”** (Galatians 5:22, 23). This is graphically illustrated in the parable of the sower in which Jesus explained, **“And some [seed] fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:”** (Matthew 13:7). It is the *“squeeze”* strategy of Satan to prevent the Word of God from producing the moral excellencies of Christ in the believer.

Nothing good can be said of thorns. Symbolically, they are the offspring of slothfulness, **“The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns”** (Proverbs 15:19). They are the bitter, disconcerting result of rebellion as, for instance, **“...I will hedge up [overflow] thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths”** (Hosea 2:6). Thorns found their most sacrilegious manifestation when platted about the head of the Saviour in the ignominy of Calvary, **“And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head...”** (Matthew 27:29). And because the people of Jeremiah's day did not uproot the thorns from their lives, even though they planted wheat, they reaped droughts and famines, **“They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns: they have put themselves to pain, but shall not profit...”** (Jeremiah 12:13).

In the early Church, it was said, **“So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed”** (Acts 19:20). If present-day Christianity is to know the blessing of a mighty growth of God's Word, with its blessed benefits, and to experience the joy of His presence and power, the parched soil of the heart must be harrowed. As another has aptly stated, *“Our hearts must be broken by the things which break the heart of God,”* for thorns in the heart of a child of God are infinitely more painful to the Father than the thorns on the head of the Saviour. In a sense, they nullify the benefits of His work at Calvary.

A God-fearing person may not always be identifiable to men, but God, **“...who knew what is in man.”** (John 2:25), will see in him purity, sincerity, prudence and a perfect heart. At least, these virtues will be growing in prominence.

THE VIRTUE OF PURITY. As evidence is the material of proof, so purity is the essence of holiness. Purity is not the absence of evil; it is the handiwork of the Spirit. The Spirit is holy, and His presence in a yielded life leaves the imprint of His nature. Purity, therefore, is not the product of one's best behavior, one's willpower and careful restraint. It is decidedly an accomplishment of the Holy Spirit.

As stated earlier in this volume, the Word of God is the only material the LORD uses to produce life and to promote it. Since the Word is pure, it makes pure. When applied, it promotes. **“Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it”** (Psalm 119:140).

Purity does not make one God-fearing. Fearing God makes one pure, and keeps one pure. Purity, in other words, is not the prerequisite; it is the product.

**“...all things come of thee, [exulted David in a most expulsive expression of thanksgiving,] and of thine own have we given thee”** (I Chronicles 29:14). This refers not only to tithes and offerings; it applies to praise, prayer and love as well. Praise, to be accepted, must be pure. The same is true of prayer and love. The purity He gives to us is the purity we return to Him. It is purity which transmits worthy worship and communicates effective prayer.

**“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”** (Matthew 5:8). Such shall see God in Christ **“...who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;”** (Hebrews 7:26). They shall see God by learning of Christ, **“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me...”** (Matthew 11:29). They shall see with unmistakable clarity what God expects of His people in the way of daily conduct. **“...and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”** (Micah 6:8). This is not a burdensome requirement, for He proclaims, **“...my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”** (Matthew 11:30).

The Bible refers to a pure heart, **“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart...”** (I Timothy 1:5), a pure conscience, **“Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.”** (I Timothy 3:9), pure minds, **“...whatsoever things are pure...”** (Philippians 4:8), a pure offering, **“...and a pure offering...”** (Malachi 1:11), pure religion, **“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”** (James 1:27), etc. When these choice characteristics adorn the child of God, he is then **“...an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”** (I Timothy 4:12). Perhaps you are asking, with Nicodemus, **“...How can these things be?”** (John 3:9). This is but the portrait of the God-fearing, encouraged constantly by the expectancy of the coming of our blessed Lord Jesus, **“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure”** (I John 3:3).

The means to become pure are amply provided. Take a look at the **“red heifer”** offering in Numbers 19. The LORD instructed the people through Moses to bring **“...a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke:”** (Numbers 19:2). These three specifications make the red heifer a type of the Saviour. Then the priest was to **“...take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer”** (Numbers 19:6). This was a type of man in his stateliness, in his weakness, in his strength. They were burned

together, then **“...a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place...”** (Numbers 19:9). Man's goodness as well as his badness must go. When Christ died, we died.

The ashes were taken and water poured over them. This was termed **“...the water of separation...”** and is referred to five times in the context—Numbers 19:9,13, 20, 21; 31:23. This ordinance was designated **“...a perpetual statute unto them...”** (Numbers 19:21). Why? Because cleansing is necessary daily.

In the New Testament, there is a total absence of such a ceremonial procedure, for the glorious reason of the *expiatory* {atoning} work of Christ at Calvary, **“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us...”** (Colossians 2:14). Now, we are told in sublime simplicity that we are cleansed by the **“...washing of water by the word,”** (Ephesians 5:26). The Word of God, daily appropriated and applied, will keep one cleansed and in fellowship with the Father and the Son through the Spirit, **“...that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ”** (I John 1:3). And though spoken on the other side of the Cross, nothing could be more contemporary than the information Jesus gave the disciples en route to the garden of Gethsemane, **“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you”** (John 15:3).

THE VIRTUE OF SINCERITY. **“Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth...”** (Joshua 24:14). These words are extracted from the account of a most momentous meeting of Israelites in the long ago. It is an excerpt from Joshua's *“Valedictory Address,”* for he explained that **“...this day I am going the way of all the earth...”** (Joshua 23:14). The LORD had said to him, **“...Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed”** (Joshua 13:1).

Joshua was a competent leader. He was both austere and encouraging. He made frequent allusions to the goodness of the LORD. He reminded the people, **“There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass”** (Joshua 21:45). He was not only grateful for the faithfulness of the LORD, but for the cooperation of the people. He complimented them by saying, **“...Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you:”** (Joshua 22:2).

When all seemed to be well, a problem arose with the tribe of Reuben and the tribe of Dan. They built an imposing altar, **“And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to”** (Joshua 22:10). This disturbed the children of Israel to the point of their considering war against them, **“And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at**



**Shiloh, to go up to war against them”** (Joshua 22:12). However, before resorting to belligerency, they decided to send a delegation to look into the matter more fully. There were eleven men, headed by Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, **“And the children of Israel sent unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest,”** (Joshua 22:13). They pleaded with the Reubenites and the Gadites to recall how great was the displeasure of the LORD because of the sin at Peor, **“Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us...”** (Joshua 22:17). (See Numbers 25:3-9 and the experience of Achan in Joshua 22:20)

The delegation returned with a satisfying report. **“...This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, [so they said] because ye have not committed this trespass against the LORD...”** (Joshua 22:31). But all was not well in Israel, for Joshua told them there were strange gods among them and that their hearts were not inclined unto the LORD God of Israel, **“Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel”** (Joshua 24:23).

This condition so grieved the soon-to-expire leader that he called for a rally of the tribes of Israel, for the elders, their heads, their judges, their officers, to assemble in Shechem. Joshua rose to impressive heights of eloquence and was effective in his forensic appeal. He told them about the grace and goodness of the LORD, reviewing many historical incidents. It was at this time, the noble leader exclaimed, **“...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”** (Joshua 24:15).

This saying is just as famous in *Israelitish history* {history pertaining to Israel} as Patrick Henry's *“Give me liberty or give me death!”* in American tradition.

Yet, this was not the keynote of his address. The point he labored, with what strength an aged man could muster, was this: **“Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth...”** (Joshua 24:14).

Sincerity is unvacillating earnestness. It is devotion which has crystallized into steadfastness. It is a stability which refuses to flinch. This was the final advice of a God-fearing leader, who wished for his people no greater success than that of being God-fearing.

THE VIRTUE OF PRUDENCE. **“...Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding”** (Job 28:28). The fear of the Lord clothes one with prudence.

When Hiram, the king of Tyre, said of Solomon, **“...Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, that made heaven and the earth, who hath given to David the king a wise son, endued with prudence and understanding...”** (II Chronicles 2:12), he revealed that prudence is an enduement. Hiram was quite discerning, for **“...the prudent are crowned with knowledge”** (Proverbs 14:18).

A wealth of Bible truth is discoverable on the subject of prudence. It tells us, among many other things, that a prudent man is:

1. Not a gossip—**“A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame. He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit”** (Proverbs 12:16, 17).
2. A knowledgeable person—**“Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly”** (Proverbs 13:16).
3. Of clear perception—**“The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going”** (Proverbs 14:15).
4. A person of vision—**“A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished”** (Proverbs 22:3).
5. Gracious in his speech—**“The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning”** (Proverbs 16:21).
6. Understanding the way of the LORD—**“Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein”** (Hosea 14:9).

Anyone who possesses these virtues could **“...adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things”** (Titus 2:10). And should this not be the chief desire of every earnest believer? What a brilliant testimony the Church would have in this dark day! Actually, the day would not be so dark, and the outlook so grim and forbidding. Were we prudent, as God-fearing people, we would serve the LORD with wisdom and understanding, and amazing results would be registered. Is there any excuse for our not being that kind of servants?

Speaking of servants, the Lord Jesus came to serve. We would do well to note the prophetic announcement about the character of His service: **“Behold, my servant shall deal prudently...”** (Isaiah 52:13). **“Behold”** means to gaze upon. It is analogous with the exhortation, **“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...”** (Hebrews 12:2) Here, the import is to change the viewpoint of God's people. Some were (and are) men-pleasers. Others were angel worshippers, and failed to glorify Christ. Still others had various divergent views. The exhortation is to look away from these to behold the prudent Servant, and, beholding Him, to become like Him, **“...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for**

**the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”** (Hebrews 12:1, 2).

On the Mount of transfiguration, the three disciples **“...saw no man, save Jesus only”** (Matthew 17:8). This is what is termed *“a consuming vision.”* It is transforming. It is reassuring. It is strengthening. It is comforting. It is inspiring. It is a vision glorious, for seeing Him, is to long to be like Him—to deal prudently.

THE VIRTUE OF PERFECT-HEARTEDNESS. Never let Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab blind your eyes to the many commendable traits in the king of Judah. Hanani, the seer, had a meeting with Jehoshaphat. He was cognizant of the king's failures, but in a forthright manner he said to the king, **“Nevertheless, there are good things found in thee...”** (II Chronicles 19:3). Then, this considerate and unprejudiced seer enlarged upon his complimentary statement. He pointed out to the king the following:

1. **“...thou hast taken away the groves out of the land...”** (II Chronicles 19:3). This type of idolatry had been a stench in the nostrils of the Most High God. King after king would institute a reform in the nation, but would stop short of removing **“the groves”** and the **“high places.”** But Jehoshaphat made a clean-sweep of these disturbing practices. The seer was commending him for it.
2. **“...and hast prepared thine heart to seek God”** (II Chronicles 19:3). While the king set a noble example in this respect, the people on the other hand **“...had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers”** (II Chronicles 20:33).
3. **“...he went out again through the people from Beersheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers”** (II Chronicles 19:4).
4. He gave good counsel, for he **“...said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD who is with you in judgment”** (II Chronicles 19:6).
5. He urged the judges further to **“...let the fear of the LORD be upon you...”** (II Chronicles 19:7).
6. **“And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart”** (II Chronicles 19:9).

There are many reasons why the heart of a believer should be **“perfect”** before the LORD: **“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”** (Proverbs 4:23). What therefore *emanates* {comes} from a life will reveal the kind of heart. When we deal with the

heart, we are at the headstream, the point of origination. This must be recognized. Otherwise, we will concern ourselves with the symptoms rather than the causes, and wage a losing battle. *“An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure.”* An act spawned by a wicked heart cannot be retrieved. Its effect may throw a whole household into sorrow, involve great expense, bring shame and reproach and result in imprisonment. It could be indescribably worse.

**“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he...”** (Proverbs 23:7). This is essentially the same thought couched in different language. One actually thinks himself into the type of person he is. Said a conscientious lady following a Bible Conference session where the searching of the Holy Spirit was evident, *“If people knew what I think much of the time, I wouldn't have a single friend.”* But to a measurable extent, people do know what we think when they see what we are and what we do and what we say. And the reason a God-fearing person is more appealing in his attitude and comportment is that he is conscious of the presence of the LORD who understands his thoughts, **“O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off”** (Psalm 139:2).

The scriptural expression **“thinketh in his heart”** should not pose a psychological problem. It speaks of that kind of thinking which grips one, that manner of pondering which obsesses. Mind is the sum total of our consciousness, and if the LORD does not dominate it, the thought processes cannot produce impressions of holiness.

Here is some Pauline advice: **“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things”** (Philippians 4:8). The six things *delineated* {described} in this text, namely, truth, honesty, justice, purity, loveliness and good reputation, form a safe and substantial foundation upon which to establish our thoughts. In reality, there are but two categories here. The first is *truth*; the second, *purity*. Truth is the basis of orthodoxy. There is no *“straight thinking”* (orthos doxa) if the well-defined lines of truth are not adhered to tenaciously.

When one thinks in terms of truth, it is obvious that there will be both honesty and justice in one's conduct. However, it is necessary to advise purity as well. Some things which are true may not necessarily be wholesome. **“The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times”** (Psalm 12:6). If God's words are so pure, then His thoughts are just as pure. When the LORD controls the life, He controls the thoughts. It is, therefore, His life and His purity in a God-fearing individual which make for what the Scriptures term **“a perfect heart;”** **“And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart”** (II Chronicles 19:9).

This suggests another “**finally**” in Paul’s encouraging counsel. “**Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you**” (II Corinthians 13:11). This is a prescription which assures the maximum of spiritual blessing. It is a prescription with promise—“**...and the God of love and peace shall be with you.**”

Paul urged the brethren to be perfect. An impossibility? No, not when we grasp this fact. Imperfect humans may have perfect hearts toward God. Job was perfect by divine declaration and by human demonstration. He proved that his devotion to God was not dependent upon people, possessions or prosperity. His losses were both sudden and severe. In rapid succession, he was dispossessed of his cattle, his camels, his children, his home, his health and the encouragement of his wife. Yet, through it all, he maintained steady confidence in the LORD.

To be perfect would seem a sufficient stipulation, but the Apostle enlarged upon the matter, extending it to a point of comprehensive completeness. Being perfect toward God should result in personal satisfaction with the divine will, a unification of minds to comply with the divine purpose, and a disposition of heart to live together *amiably* {agreeably}. Comfort, oneness of mind and peace are subjective. Then, there is the objective aspect—God will do something, “**...the God of love and peace shall be with you**” (II Corinthians 13:11).

**And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding. (Job 28:28)**

## Chapter VIII

### ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE GOD-FEARING

**“The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him...”**—Psalm 25:14

THE IDEA OF inducement through the offer of reward is ageless. It is that element which makes competition keen in almost every department of life. It makes attainment compelling and worthy of the effort expended. It is a challenge to the best that is in one.

The inducements in the spiritual realm are many, and, of course, incomparable. From the cup of cold water given in the name of the Lord to the life not counted dear unto itself in martyrdom, the divine promise points to the appropriate remembrance.

**“The secret of the LORD** [which is said to be] **is with them that fear him...”** (Psalm 25:14); means, by implication, *“intimacy.”* It is comparable with current colloquial expressions such as *“on the inside,” “in the know,”* or the *“inner circle.”* It is the fear of the LORD which puts people in such a sphere of privilege. They are those who are obedient to the divine instruction and are therefore rewarded accordingly. The blessings are lavishly bestowed and are innumerable. We ponder but a few.

POSITION. **“And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them”** (Jeremiah 32:39). What a statement! That the Church is in the world but not of the world is a most important distinction, yet this necessary truth has become ill-defined and sadly indistinct. Jehovah called upon His people of old to maintain a separated position, to be an identifiable people. Thus, He put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel, **“...that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel”** (Exodus 11:7). But Satan employed every possible means to erase this line of *demarcation* {distinction}, and the chosen and holy nation slowly but surely lost its distinction. They moved without restraint into compromise and complicity with the pagans, *imbibing* {absorbing} their forms of worship, adopting their customs, desiring monarchs like theirs and marrying into their families.

The LORD's desire is the same today. That is why we are told to **“Love not the world** [system], **neither the things that are in the world...”** (I John 2:15). And let us understand that being distinguishably His is not proved by wearing a small cross on the lapel of the coat or on a necklace. It is living in an atmosphere that is conducive to holiness. As of old, people then will take knowledge that we have been with Jesus.

No life has been more exemplary of the Christian position than that of the beloved Paul. The old warrior was energetic, fearless, dynamic, persistent, steadfast and progressive—all because he was conscious of the presence of the LORD. Were we to emulate him (and he calls on us so to do) there would be surprises galore and successes aplenty in our adventures into the deep things of God.

For the spiritual, you know, is the realm of the unlikely. An axe swims. A lad fells a giant. The foolish confound the wise. The weak subdue the mighty. Things which are not bring to nought things that are. The persecuted prosper. The minority is invincible. One man turns a city upside down. A lions' den becomes a place of safety. A sordid prison is turned into a sanctuary of praise. How do we account for this? The presence of the LORD is the indisputable reason.

Jesus, at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, relieved the situation when the wine was exhausted. His presence among the hungry throngs changed their want to satisfaction. His presence in the storm-tossed vessel at sea spelled peace to troubled hearts and *placidity* {calmness} to the turbulent waters. His presence at Nain dried tears from the eyes of a widow bereft of her son and delivered the boy to her care. His presence before the ten lepers brought renewed health and happiness. His presence at the grave of Lazarus proved His resurrection power and comforting grace. His presence in the temple revealed His authority to the money changers. His presence with Peter, James and John on the mount produced a display of effulgent glory. His presence at the sycamore tree meant salvation for a tax gatherer. His presence in the home at Bethany created inspiration for the three residents. His presence during the fierce *Euroclydon* {Mediterranean storm} clothed Paul with courage. His presence with John on the Isle of Patmos unveiled the future.

What else could enable us to so dignify, to so exemplify and to so magnify the distinctive position of a Christian as the manifest presence of God? And this is the meaning of the fear of the LORD.

PROTECTION. **“When a man's ways please the LORD, [when a man fears God and walks uprightly] he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him”** (Proverbs 16:7). This is graphically illustrated in Jehoshaphat. When he ascended the throne of Judah, the record gives this account of him:

**“...the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim;”** (II Chronicles 17:3). **“And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD...”** (II Chronicles 17:6).

And they **“...had the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people”** (II Chronicles 17:9).

And what was the result?

**“And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat”** (II Chronicles 17:10).

Incomprehensible though it may be to some, the fear of the LORD has a restraining effect upon the enemy as well as a motivating effect upon His people. In both respects, however, the evidence of the fear of God is *contingent* {dependent} upon the relationship of His people with Him. God only can honor those who honor Him, **“...but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed”** (I Samuel 2:30).

The account of the Kadesh-barnea failure should be memorized by every Christian. When the Israelites came to the **“...mountain of the Amorites...”** (Deuteronomy 1:20), they halted in discouragement and fear. Moses *castigated* {rebuked} them for their folly. He spelled out to them what they had thereby done to themselves, far worse than the enemy might have inflicted upon them. Not one of them (excepting Caleb and Joshua) would ever enter the Promised Land, and their little ones would become a prey. When they changed their minds and said, **“...we will go up and fight...”** (Deuteronomy 1:41), they were told that it was too late.

The LORD was so grieved with their conduct that he said, **“...Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you...”** (Deuteronomy 1:42). Israel, like the paralytic at the pool of, Bethesda (John 5), lay paralyzed thirty-eight years in the wilderness.

Here again is a contrast. The fear of God makes the difference between defeat and victory, between impotence and power. God among His people means that no enemy can prevail. God not among them means retreat.

PRESERVATION. Moses, in a very special way, was Jehovah's mouthpiece in communicating with Israel. He instructed the people **“...to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive...”** (Deuteronomy 6:24). Before this instruction, proving that purpose is primary with Deity, he told them, **“...he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land...”** (Deuteronomy 6:23)—out of the house of bondage into the land of corn and wine.

This illustrates the two great steps in the Christian life—*“out of”* and *“into.”* Exercise of faith in the Saviour's work at Calvary **“...delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”** (Colossians 1:13). But only those are preserved alive (vibrant, energetic, productive) who fear God, enjoy the consciousness of His presence and experience His life in its greater abundance, **“...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”** (John 10:10).



PRIVILEGE. There was in the days of old a famine of unprecedented severity, and Egypt alone had a plentiful stock of grain. Aging Jacob sent ten of his sons to Egypt to negotiate a deal. When they arrived, they appealed to Pharaoh's authorized agent who was none other than their rejected brother Joseph. While Joseph was not recognized by them, he knew they were his brothers. Acting strange to preclude his identity, he dealt with them strictly in a professional manner. Inquiring about their family, all so familiar to him, he was told that they had a younger brother by the name of Benjamin.

Joseph made it plain that Pharaoh was constantly on the alert for spies. To prove that they were not spies, he made two stipulations. First, that nine of the brothers go with corn to their home and return with their youngest brother. Second, that one be kept in custody until the return. Before they departed for home, Joseph said, **"...This do, and live; for I fear God:"** (Genesis 42:18).

The whole account is rich in meaning and tender with affection. Because he feared God, Joseph had the privilege of saving his family from discomfort if not from starvation, for God had miraculously granted him the privilege of occupying a position of responsibility.

While Joseph is in many ways a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, he is also a type of a true Christian who is in a most strategic position. Standing in Christ's stead, **"...we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead..."** (II Corinthians 5:20), the Christian has the privilege of winning the lost, the privilege of teaching the Scriptures, the privilege of prayer, the privilege of being an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ, **"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ..."** (Romans 8:17).

There exists today the constant danger of trivializing in matters of eternal importance, of making commonplace that which is *transcendent* {superior}, and *mundane* {ordinary} what is *supernal* {heavenly}, of exploiting and abusing our holy privileges. We are susceptible to the influence of fashion, caprice and misunderstanding. Custom has all but paralyzed the church. It was custom that induced Pilate to crucify Christ. **"...I find in him no fault at all.** [he explained] **"But ye have a custom..."** (John 18:38-39). And Jesus was crucified. Custom is one of the most prominent agents in the erosion of personal faith.

And there is the danger of caprice which is defined as *"a sudden change of impulse, mood or action, arising from a whim."* No age has created such wide-spread levity and frivolity. God's people are impulsive, moody and whimsical. Such instability destroys sincerity and reverence.

How many in the pews appreciate the fact that even the heavenly creatures veil their faces and cry, **"...Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of Hosts..."** (Isaiah 6:3)? How many remember that the striking dead of the two sons of Aaron was an evidence of God's strong detestation of irreverence. How many in *"good and regular standing"* know the practical meaning of

sanctification? How many obey the exhortation to **"...Be holy; for I am holy"** (I Peter 1:16)? How many of us are God-fearing?

PROSPERITY. Because prosperity points to a state of thriving, it finds an application in various realms. Plants thrive in certain soils. Animals thrive in certain climates. Men thrive in health, in business and in other undertakings. More attention should be given to thriving in the spiritual.

The continual exercise of faith will keep one on a prosperous course, for Jehoshaphat prepared Judah for a conflict with the Ammonites and Moabites at Mt. Seir by saying, **"...Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper"** (II Chronicles 20:20). Here it is evident that prosperity and establishment are synonymous.

The establishment of a believer as a God-fearing person is one of the most practical doctrines of the Bible. This fact is seen in corporeal illustrations such as:

1. **"...it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace..."** (Hebrews 13:9).
2. **"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings"** (Psalm 40:2).
3. **"And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it"** (Psalm 90:17).
4. **"Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established"** (Proverbs 16:3).

All this interesting instruction leads to establishment in the FAITH, **"Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught..."** (Colossians 2:7), through establishment in the TRUTH, **"...though ye know them, and be established in the present truth"** (II Peter 1:12). And this sends one on his way rejoicing—knowledgeable and discerning, strong and steadfast, compassionate and productive, victorious and expectant. He is like the blessed man who, with delight, meditates in the Scriptures day and night, and is like a tree planted by the rivers of water. The Word says, **"...whatsoever he doeth shall prosper"** (Psalm 1:3).

The student in Bible School and Seminary, preparing for the LORD's work, surely should desire a prosperous course. Today he wrestles with theory; tomorrow with challenging experience. Each saint in the pew will be saying to him with the Greeks of old, **"...Sir, we would see Jesus"** (John 12:21). Each sinner in the congregation will be asking, with the Philippian jailor, **"...what must I do to be saved?"** (Acts 16:30). Each suffering person will be inquiring, **"...who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"** (Romans 7:24). Each defeated individual will be pleading,

**“...lead me to the rock that is higher than I”** (Psalm 61:2). Each bereaved heart will be wanting to know **“If a man die, shall he live again...”** (Job 14:14).

Logistics will not suffice. *Polemics* {sermons} will not be enough. Philosophy will not meet the need. As stark reality stares a servant of Christ in the face, he must have authority. He must have the message of the Bible. He may then expect the God of heaven to prosper him even as did Nehemiah when he undertook to rebuild the walls, **“...The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build...”** (Nehemiah 2:20).

PERPETUITY. Longevity is desired by most people. **“...Skin for skin, [said Satan of Job] yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life”** (Job 2:4). This is true, and right. We were born to live. Only Christ was born to die. But the best formula for longevity is found in Proverbs 10:27: **“The fear of the LORD prolongeth days...”**

Here is where a careful distinction must be made. Life is not simply existence; it is experience. It is contact with one's environment. Contact with wrong makes one's life sinful. Contact with good makes one's life respectable. But contact with God makes one's life godly—holy and righteous. And, since *perpetuity* {an endless duration} connotes a continuing influence, this is precisely what is involved in a God-fearing life, **“...he being dead yet speaketh”** (Hebrews 11:4). Abel is in view in this quotation. **“...Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them”** (Revelation 14:13). They leave an influence here; they carry a fragrance beyond.

Moses, in a position of leadership, met these conditions. To the people, he advanced this counsel: **“...fear the LORD thy God, keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; that thy days may be prolonged”** (Deuteronomy 6:2). This does not mean that a godly person may not die young, but there are causes for untimely deaths, **“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep”** (I Corinthians 11:30).

It should be kept in mind that it is the **“whole duty of man”** in the matter of fearing God, **“...Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man”** (Ecclesiastes 12:13). This includes the body as well as the soul, for there are divine laws for the physical as well as for the spiritual. Medical science estimates that upwards of 80% of the patients in hospitals are personally responsible for their being there. Can one be a God-fearing person and ignore and violate the physical laws governing his body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, **“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you...”** (I Corinthians 6:19)?

The human body is largely a chemical factory, producing one main product, that is blood, and **“...the life of the flesh is in the blood....”** (Leviticus 17:11). It is said, *“If one's chemistry is zero*

*efficient, he is dead. If it is 100% efficient, he is very much alive. But the cold facts are (in the U.S.A.) that the percentage runs largely between 40% and 80%."*

One wonders how many lost man-hours in the realm of Christian service are chargeable to bodily abuse through the violation of divine laws. The statistics in the mental area are next to incredible, for believer as well as unbeliever, yet the LORD has promised a **"sound mind"** to those who obediently walk uprightly, **"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind"** (II Timothy 1:7). And whether or not we are able to comprehend the full significance of Spirit control for the *"whole man,"* there must be in the minds of conscientious Christians the provocative thought that we would be far better off in every department of our lives if we received and applied the whole counsel of God, **"For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God"** (Acts 20:27). We would live better and live longer. This is but simple deduction.

PROSPECT. Life's fleeting moments are carrying us toward the inevitable. For the believer, of course, a glorious day shall dawn when the shadows shall flee away. All that now is so mysterious shall be as bright and as clear as the day. Doubtless the greatest surprise, when all secrets are revealed, will be the discovery that God meant exactly what He had said in His Word.

With the second coming of Messiah in view, Jehovah told Israel, **"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings..."** (Malachi 4:2).

The prospect for the New Testament believer has an earlier development in the personal appearing of our blessed Lord in the air to catch away His Church to be with Him for evermore. The fact is established with convincing and reassuring impressiveness. The blessings attending it are multiple. The fact itself has a magnitude of abounding proportions and a magnetism of captivating force. We will see Him and be like Him, **"...but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is"** (I John 3:2).

Perhaps the reader may ask why the fear of God is so prominently referred to in the Old Testament and yet so few such references in the New. Let it be known that the truth is there just as importantly, though differently expressed. Just as we find **"justification"** instead of **"pardon"** in the New Testament, and **"reconciliation"** instead of **"atonement,"** even so the truth of the fear of God is variously presented. We have such expressions as **"...cleave unto the Lord"** (Acts 11:23), **"...filled with the Spirit"** (Ephesians 5:18), **"...yield your members..."** (Romans 6:19), **"...be ye steadfast..."** (I Corinthians 15:58), and **"...abide in me..."** (John 15:7).

Perhaps this last-mentioned has the richest connotations, **"And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming"** (I John 2:28).

It is all well and good for the Christian to sing lustily, *“That will be glory for me,”* but the above verse seems to qualify this melodically expressed anticipation. The serious question which faces the believer with regard to the coming of the Lord is; *“Will our sight of the Lord at the meeting in the air find us supported by confidence or shrinking with shame?”*

Does it not concern us that the latter condition, as things now obtain with us, may actually be the situation in that day? To cower in shame, to shrink from His glorious presence, to be unprepared for this blissful moment, to have our works burned up as wood, hay and stubble, to suffer eternal loss, **“Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is”** (I Corinthians 3:12). Is this the prospect?

Fearing God and abiding in Him are one and the same state of being, and this only will assure confidence at His appearing, and this only will preclude the shame of shrinking in guilt when we see Him face to face. Until this is the order of the day, we shall never be able to say in truth, **“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus”** (Revelation 22:20).

**The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.**

(Psalm 25:14)

## Chapter IX

### THE VICTORY OF THE GOD-FEARING

**“...And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent”—I Samuel 11:7**

APART FROM LIFE and death, what other antithesis suggests so much as victory and defeat? The words involve freedom and bondage, joy and sorrow, honor and disgrace, prosperity and destitution, opportunity and deprivation, gain and loss, hope and discouragement. A slight breeze can put raindrops on a side of a watershed which makes a difference of thousands of miles in their destination. And so may be the dividing line between defeat and victory.

We come now to a Bible revelation of the distinction between the absence and the presence of the fear of God, showing in dramatic detail what a stupendous difference it makes.

Abraham journeyed toward the south into the province of Gerar (Genesis 20:1). He conceived the idea for safety reasons (so he thought) of declaring that Sarah was his sister, not his wife, **“And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister...”** (Genesis 20:2). In something of a modern type of kidnapping, Abimelech, the king of Gerar, had Sarah brought to him, but God appeared in a dream by night and informed him that the woman was another man's wife, **“But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.”** (Genesis 20:3), thus averting a moral catastrophe.

The king, greatly *incensed* {infuriated} with Abraham's misrepresentation, called him to task for this premeditated misdeed. Abimelech demanded, **“...What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing?”** (Genesis 20:10), meaning: *“What did you have in view?”*

It is hard to see a champion go down in any realm. Abraham was the father of the faithful, a man of great integrity and much honored of the LORD. He enjoyed an envious reputation among men, an example of the finer spiritual qualities. Now he stands before royalty to explain why he had resorted to falsehood. He must have been pitiful in his abjectness. But for all this, he was honest and revealing in his reply, **“...Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake”** (Genesis 20:11).

Abraham might have been *ambiguous* {unclear or a double meaning}, as he later explained, because Sarah was a half-sister to him, **“And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife”** (Genesis 20:12). But

he was wrong, willfully wrong, even seriously wrong, and he not only did not make excuse when he was confronted by the king, but he gave a *forthright* {straightforward} reason as to why he did it. In his answer, we find some very provocative facts.

First of all, it is noteworthy that the Holy Spirit chooses a man of Abraham's stature to illustrate to us the unspeakable need of being God-fearing people, for if the famous symbol of faith and obedience could fall into sorrowful defeat without the fear of God, how much more the lesser lights along life's course.

It would seem that prominent among the various lessons taught in this experience is the ease with which Satan can trip a believer who is not conscious of the fear of God (His constant presence). If Abraham took the liberty to sin because he thought “...**Surely the fear of God is not in this place...**” (Genesis 20:11), would not weaker souls plunge even deeper into sin when devoid of the conscious presence of the LORD? Actually, does this not account for every failure, for every sin, for every wrong on the part of those who belong to the LORD? Believers should refrain from going to places where the presence of God cannot be felt.

Now for a dramatic example on the opposite side. Old enemies pay return visits, especially if once defeated. There is usually that smoldering resentment which can only be assuaged by revenge. The incubating desire for the advantageous moment has an undiminishing persistence. The enemy, like a cat poised in motionless silence to stalk its prey, bides his time; then with the stealth and swiftness of a coiled serpent, springs to the attack at the strategic moment. This was Nahash, the Ammonite, who deployed his forces against Jabesh-gilead, “**Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee**” (1 Samuel 11:1).

Israel had had her difficulties with the Ammonites. In fact, she had dealt them a decisive blow at an earlier time. Now, with Israel's pathetic decline, their perennial adversary with a buildup of power is in a commanding position.

A DIPLOMATIC MANEUVER. *Cognizant* {aware} of their military inability to cope with the imminent threat, the Israeli diplomatic corps was quickly pressed into operation with the hope that shrewdness at the bargaining table might compensate for lack of advantage in the field of conquest. They pressed for a negotiated peace, “...**all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant** [agreement, treaty] **with us, and we will serve thee**” (1 Samuel 11:1). The men of Jabesh appealed to Nahash, whose name means “*serpent.*”

The request was a sad one from many angles. First, it was sad that God's people were out of touch with Him, that they would dicker with the Devil for some desired end. Second, it was sad that God's people would tell the enemy to draw up the agreement and to name the conditions. But, then, the victor, not the vanquished, dictates the terms. And, while Israel was not actually

defeated militarily at this particular moment, she was, in this act acknowledging defeat and ascribing superiority to her foe. Third, it was sad that God's people would readily accept the enemy's terms especially before knowing them. **"We will serve thee"** means *"We will do whatever you say."*

THE ADVERSARY'S RESPONSE. Nahash was sitting in the driver's seat. He was bent upon a *"tough policy."* The *Old Serpent*, the Devil, whose *emissary* {representative} Nahash was, desired more than a military defeat of Israel. It is ever his *diabolical* {devilish} aim to humiliate, decimate and utterly destroy God's people. Here, he had Israel corralled. She was in a tight corner indeed. Severity, not sympathy, would prevail. But, let the record speak for itself.

**"And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this condition will I make a covenant [treaty] with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel"** (I Samuel 11:2).

What a price! The treaty was unilateral. Israel had nothing to say about it. The condition laid down was brutal, savage, terrifying. He insisted upon gouging out all their right eyes.

In the reference to the eyes is a significant spiritual suggestion. Where does the Devil strike first? Usually at the vision. **"Where there is no vision, the people perish..."** (Proverbs 29:18). And there may be some further suggestion in his designating the right eye for destruction. Those who have the right vision of God and the things of the Spirit, a clear appreciation of fundamental facts, a stable, orthodox position, would be Satan's strategic objects for attack.

It is noticeable also how open a cool, calculating adversary is in his aims. **"...I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field"** Goliath shouted to young David (I Samuel 17:44). On November 18, 1956, while addressing the Western ambassadors, the Soviet First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev used this phrase to warn the western powers, *"We will bury you!"* Here, in I Samuel 11:2, Nahash reveals his bent to bring **"...a reproach upon all Israel."**

THE ELDERS' REACTION. Not much can be said about Israel's leaders in this instance. Take a look at them around the conference table when the rigorous conditions were stated. They were too stunned to squirm. A ghastly *pallor* {paleness} clothed their countenances. Perhaps they asked for a brief recess, an opportunity to huddle, a chance to consider the matter more thoroughly before signing on the dotted line. They would report back in due course. Their considered judgment was to stall, if they could, and attempt to find an alternate course.

They pleaded, **"...Give us seven days' respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if there be no man to save, we will come out to thee"** (I Samuel 11:3). That is to say, if they could not find a man in Israel to deliver them from their trying dilemma, they would be forced to come back and submit to the imponderable proposition of Nahash.



Bear in mind that the Elders were primarily religious leaders. But how spineless! How bereft of courage! How totally unimpressive! “**...Give us seven days respite...**” they asked. It should not have required seven seconds. Had they been God-fearing men, they would have said, “*We will die in honor rather than submit to your brutality and savagery.*” But they were not God-fearing men. How do we know? The Word so states: “**And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations...**” (I Samuel 10:19).

Since “**...man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward**” (Job 5:7), what else can finite, helpless creatures do in the face of overwhelming emergencies but seek man's help when they are out of touch with God? So, turning from God, they now search for a man to save them. Messengers were sent “**...unto all the coasts of Israel...**” (I Samuel 11:3).

THE INHABITANTS PLUNGED INTO SORROW. This was a very dark day in Israel. From one village to another, they ran, going from door to door, accosting sojourners by the way, explaining the dreadful emergency, and looking for a “**man.**” How much better for the glory of God and the good of the nation had these couriers been sent on a missionary endeavor, telling people the love and commandments of Jehovah.

One cannot but wonder what characteristics such a man was to possess, and how the couriers would recognize him. When the LORD sent Jeremiah to find a man, the description was clearly written out, “**Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth...**” (Jeremiah 5:1). Only those impress the LORD who have spiritual discernment and a love for His Word.

“**Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: all the people lifted up their voices, and wept**” (I Samuel 11:4). The nation was turned into mourning. The weeping denotes a broken morale, a state of fear, a disrupted economy; and the expression “**lifted up their voices**” indicates how tremendous was the impact of these tidings on the people. They stood in jeopardy. Their institutions were threatened. Their children's future was being bartered away. They wept.

Tears, of course, may have a certain eloquence. They speak when words cannot be spoken. Depending upon their prompting, tears may be liquid love, drops of sympathy, flowing sorrow, floods of jubilation. But not so here. Sometimes the omniscient One sees with sympathy the falling tear. Other times, He looks upon them reprovngly. For instance, this is what He said in Malachi's day, “**And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out...**” (Malachi 2:13).

These were dry tears out of parched souls, empty tears out of empty hearts. They made imprints upon the altar but no impression upon the LORD. They were unavailing. Tears without

the weepers turning to God exhibit no tenderness. Tears without conviction only torment. They distill without dissipating the distress. Tears without contrition can never assuage anguish. There may be floods of grief without a vestige of relief. Nor can this kind of tears ever merit heaven's approbation though shed again and again. It must be remembered that tears speak of emotion, and emotion can be as meaningless as the tears.

One wonders if the people would have wept, in spite of the serious character of the tidings, if the messengers had added, *"But we expect to find a man?"* In the final analysis, especially in apostate days, the concern of the people is not for the glory of God but for their own personal interests. And whatever caters to this end meets with their approval, or is accepted.

SAUL STANDS IN THE GAP. **"And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, What aileth the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh"** (I Samuel 11:5).

Saul had just been *coronated* {crowned}. He was the first king of Israel. Following this historical event, **"...Saul also went home to Gibeah..."** (I Samuel 10:26), just as President Lyndon B. Johnson visits his ranch in Texas. The king was in the act of looking over his herd in the pasture when the people came to him with their distressful sobs. It was then he asked the reason for this state of being and was informed about the tidings of the messengers.

It was not exactly according to protocol for the new leader of Israel to learn of this critical national emergency in this manner, and it wasn't a very pleasant way to begin his reign with such a situation existing.

Not everything about king Saul was unfavorable, as some would have us think, for when he went home to Gibeah, he took with him **"...a band of men, whose hearts God had touched"** (I Samuel 10:26). Whether this band of men constituted a cabinet, a group of counselors, or simply close friends; it nevertheless remains that the man who travels in such company will have spiritual encouragement. It put him in what is termed a *"sphere of privilege."* At least, he had been in good company, and this was a real advantage when he had to face a serious emergency so suddenly.

SAUL FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT. Perhaps no entry in the account up to this point was so vital as this: **"And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings..."** (I Samuel 11:6).

It would seem, with what facts are available, that we are forced to the conclusion that Saul was God's man for the hour. Why did he come to Gibeah at that precise moment? Why was he companioning with men whose hearts God had touched? Why did the Spirit of God come upon him?

*"The whole world is a stage, and men and women are merely players,"* so commented a literary *sage* {scholar}. And whatever the human creature does in his performance on this stage, never forget it; the hand of God has much to do with the rise and fall of the curtain. And that is not all. The hand of the Almighty has much, exceedingly much, to do in the movement of the players. This is especially seen in the spiritual cast.

God moved Noah into position to wave men into the *safety shelter* before the deluge struck. God sent Moses to lead the exodus of His captive people. God moved Nathan to rebuke David. God privileged Elijah to stop rain and to command fire to fall. God selected John the baptizer to introduce the sacrificing Lamb who **"...taketh away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29). God struck down a persecutor (the Apostle Paul), sent him into Arabia for three years to get his bearing, then took him up into the third heaven for a unique revelation before placing him in the role of Christianity's greatest *exponent* {promoter}. God secluded John the revelator on the lonely island of Patmos to brief him in the phenomenal unveiling of the future. And God brought king Saul to the sheep pasture to stand in the gap in one of Israel's very grim hours.

OTHER MESSENGERS WITH DIFFERENT TIDINGS. **"And he [Saul] took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen..."** (I Samuel 11:7).

Admittedly, this case is singular in the annals of sacred history. It sounds gruesome, and perhaps was. But it is evident that something of a most drastic nature was required to shock the people out of their lethargy and unbelief.

Visualize, if you can, the couriers, each standing before the king, each holding his piece of bleeding flesh, each listening to the instruction. Conceivably, they might have said, *"Your honor, we wish to regard with proper respect the dignity of the royal office, and we desire to reverence His Majesty, but is this not going too far? Does this not savor of the unreasonable?"*

No man raised an objection. Remember, the Elders only asked for seven days *respice* {postponement}. Means of transportation were slow. What was to be done had to be done with rapidity, and the seriousness of the situation was clearly etched upon their conscience. The welfare of the whole nation hung in the balance. The *"object lesson"* aspect of this mission was designed to speak its own message, to emphasize the critical situation facing them all.

The people were to be advised with forceful *un-equivocation* {no other choice} that it was either follow **"after Saul and after Samuel,"** or have their oxen (possessions) destroyed.

This was, to begin with, a sharp *repudiation* {rejection of the proposal} of the Elders. There was not to be any further negotiating with the enemy, and certainly no thought of accepting the

enemy's demands. Further, there was no desire for a compromised peace. When the Spirit comes upon God's people, they settle for nothing short of victory. So, the messengers went on their way, each carrying his piece of bleeding ox flesh.

Many of our Bible commentators are critical of this action on the part of King Saul. They feel it could not have been of the LORD because he did not pray, and, when victory did come, there was no rejoicing. But how can anyone be sure the king did not pray? There is, of course, no record of open prayer, but did it have to be open? Did this situation call for a platform to be built, as at the dedication of the Temple, for the king to ascend and pray in a public manner? Was it that kind of a situation? And can we be positive there was no rejoicing? Surely the tears of sorrow must have given way to some expression of joy.

THE EFFECT OF THE CHALLENGE. The first reaction was a mighty encouraging one. **"...And the fear of the LORD fell on the people..."** (I Samuel 11:7). Now the **"fear of the LORD"** does not fall on any people, anywhere, just any time. Certain conditions must obtain. It is presumed that the proper requirements were met. Looking for a man to deliver them must cease at once. Following incompetent leadership must terminate immediately. Trying to appease a wicked enemy must cease forthwith. Willingness to settle for a negotiated or compromised peace must vanish utterly.

On the positive side, they had to turn their hearts toward the LORD. They had to desire the will of God for their lives and for their nation. They had to comply (at least in spirit) with the instructions of II Chronicles 7:14: **"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways: then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."** The words **"humble ... pray ... seek ... return"** presuppose, respectively, pride, prayerlessness, personal pursuit, and waywardness. Such hindrances must be removed before a thrice holy God can manifest His presence to any people.

The effect of the challenge had a striking effect of unification upon the *erstwhile* {formerly} divided populace. **"...they came out with one consent"** (I Samuel 11:7). This **"one consent"** was not to accept the offer of Nahash the serpent, but to follow Saul and Samuel, at least in this emergency. Subsequent developments prove this to be true.

THE DECISIVE VICTORY. **"And it was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together"** (I Samuel 11:11).

This was a miracle! Even with the best of ancient militarism, this was beyond the ingenuity and capability of man. The foe was not merely discomfited, not just put to flight; he was destroyed utterly! The few survivors were so scattered that two could not be found together.

Nahash did not succeed in his *perfidious* {treacherous} aim. No eyes were thrust out. No reproach came upon Israel *resultant* {consequences} from the Serpent's scheme. And as for Saul, he ascribed all the glory and honor unto the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, “**...to day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel**” (I Samuel 11:13).

THE REVEALING CONTRAST. The LORD has shown us through the pages of His Word how the absence of the fear of God results in painful defeat, while the presence of the fear God occasions victory, complete and incontestable. These are striking illustrations.

Read the biography of Abraham. He would have been the last person whom we would expect to fail so pitifully. He trusted the LORD for the miraculous birth of a son when he and his wife Sarah were beyond the years of reproduction. Abraham was willing to launch out on a journey over unknown territory all because he believed God. Yet, on one occasion he was not strong enough to tell the full truth. And why? He himself confesses, “**...Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place...**” (Genesis 20:11).

But in one of Israel's darkest days, with poor spiritual leadership, with national security weak, with the enemy deployed against them, with their bitter foe pressing for their dishonor and downfall, with no man strong enough to give them hope, “**...the fear the LORD fell on the people...**” (I Samuel 11:7). They were at once united as a people. They looked heavenward. They trusted God. They were spared disaster at the hand of a brutal enemy with *preponderant* {far superior} forces. The difference between defeat and victory is the fear of God.

**And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.** (I Samuel 11:7)

## Chapter X

### SUBVERTING THE FEAR OF GOD

**“...their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:”—Isaiah 29:13**

BE IT KNOWN that **“...we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”** (Ephesians 6:12). Nevertheless, **“(...the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)”** (II Corinthians 10:4).

Thus, we are properly *apprized* {notified} of the common enemy. We also are equipped adequately to wage the battle. But let us honestly consider a few *pertinent* {related} and penetrating questions:

Are we dismantling the enemy's strong holds? Or are we destroying our own defenses?

Are we really advancing the cause of Christ? Or are we apathetically retreating?

Are we properly advised as to orthodoxy? Or are we afflicted with prejudiced impressions?

Do we have power with God and man? Or are we simply beating the air?

One has said, *“We are to stand like a soldier, study like a scholar, separate like a saint, submit like a servant, and suffer like a stalwart.”* Yet, in this grim hour, as another has commented, *“The pulpit is channelized {forced directions}. The sermon is intellectualized. The witness is sterilized. And sin is minimized.”*

The net result of our folly is painfully apparent. Our churches are operating but not producing. Our members are in *“good standing,”* but out of touch with God. Our lack of spiritual depth leaves our children without a godly challenge. Our persistent diversions have perforated our loyalty to Christ. So, the enemy pushes his offensive.

If this sounds like an unwarranted and deplorable declaration, let it be pointed out that the only challengeable aspect is its understatement. Dr. Clyde Taylor, Executive Director of the National Association of Evangelicals, publicly asserted that *“In the realm of fundamental Bible profession, less than 3% of the people bear a faithful witness for Christ.”* The implications are alarming.

In search for a Scriptural diagnosis of our present situation, it would seem that a frame is discoverable in Isaiah 29:8-13 into which the picture may aptly fit.

**<sup>8</sup> It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite...**

**<sup>9</sup> Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.**

**<sup>10</sup> For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes...**

**<sup>11</sup> And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot...**

**<sup>12</sup> And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.**

**<sup>13</sup> Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:**

In these verses, we have something of a *“cause and effect”* relationship. And it lends itself equally to either an inductive or a deductive treatment. That is to say, it does not matter whether we begin with the *“cause”* and move toward the *“effect,”* or start with the *“effect”* and proceed toward the *“cause.”* The message is the same.

THE LACK OF REALITY. Verse eight, so rich in descriptive simile, has both an immediate and a remote application; but, no matter how it is viewed, it speaks of a state of superficiality—an unreal and non-satisfying condition.

At a later day, Jesus exposed the unreason of the unbelieving Pharisees. **“And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like?”** (Luke 7:31). Then noticing the frolics of children in the Galilean market place, He added, **“They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace...”** (Luke 7:32).

The children were playing a game of *“make believe”* or *“let's pretend.”* One wanted to play marriage. *“I will be the bridegroom and you fellows will carry lamps and lead me to the bride's home.”* *“No,”* objected another. *“We played marriage yesterday and you were the bridegroom.”*

*Let's play funeral. I will be the dead man and some of you carry me out of the gate while the others mourn and lament.*" But the bridegroom would not play funeral and the dead man would not play wedding. They sulked and would respond neither to merriment nor to grief. The moral? What children do in their play, men do in their prejudice.

So, here is a hungry man. He lapses into sleep and begins to dream that he is at a table heavily laden with *delectable* {delicious} dishes. There are savory aromas. Food is in abundance, and, in a *congenial* {friendly} atmosphere with friends, he satiates the pangs which had gripped his being. But it's only a dream, and dreams end. And when he awakened, he was in a far worse condition.

Then, the figure changes from a hungry man to a thirsty man. He, too, falls into slumber and dreams. He is before a fountain of cool, refreshing water. Now he will not famish. His thirst will be quenched. But, unfortunately, it too is only a dream which terminates in a rude awakening. His need is not only present but magnified.

The whole import of these two vivid illustrations is spiritual in character – “**...his soul is empty...**” and “**...his soul hath appetite...**” (Isaiah 29:8).

Since hunger and thirst know no season, the message here has perennial meaning. It means the same today as it meant in the Prophet's day. Unreality furnishes no satisfaction to the soul. The hunger and thirst remain. How unfortunate that people “*play church.*” How lamentable that people pretend to be saved? Never forget it, it is a simple matter for one to confirm one's self in an empty, meaningless profession and to relax in a false peace. Such live in unreality and, if not aroused out of such a state of hopelessness, will die that way. Then the dream ends. Then disillusionment stares at them ominously. Then the weird cries of desperation carry them to their eternal doom.

THE INSTABILITY. This most solemnly consequential “*effect*” must have a reason from which it springs, so we ask ourselves, “*What causes such a state of unreality?*” Verse nine gives us a resounding answer: “**Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.**”

Why should such an explanation come with a crying intensity? Why should one be asked to stay himself? Why all the wonderment connected with it? Because of the subtlety and deception which permeate the matter. The ferment of unbelief saturates the atmosphere as the yeast leavens the whole lump. Each generation slips a bit farther than its predecessor. What was frowned upon yesterday is *countenanced* {tolerated} without *compunction* {regret} today. What could not have been tolerated by our godly forebears now becomes the order of the day.

But where is the give? How do we relax our grip upon spiritual absolutes? How can we accommodate ourselves to an atmosphere befouled by irreverence? What makes us veer from



the path of the just? What agent is at work? What is the effective stratagem employed to produce such disastrous results? It is an instability caused by intoxication. God's people stagger.

Again, it is important to note that it is a spiritual matter before us. We are clearly informed that the *"inebriates"* are not staggering because of wine or strong drink. They simply became obsessed with the unreal. With their soul's **"faint"** (verse eight), they could not walk the narrow way of devotion. They could not be sufficiently strong to wrestle **"...against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"** (Ephesians 6:12). They declined from the faith. They deviated from the way. They diverted from the goal.

When Israel, the northern kingdom, plunged into idolatrous departure, Jehovah revealed that Judah, the southern kingdom, **"...saw it."** Then He added a stinging denunciation, **"...[Israel's] treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also"** (Jeremiah 3:7-8).

We today have the advantage of the mistakes of these ancient people and the catastrophe which they have suffered. We have seen what terrible ends befell them. We have the witness of the Scriptures, the account of history, the contemporary reports of anti-Semitism. Yet, for all of this, we have embraced the *extraneous* {irrelevant}. We have involved ourselves in the extra-curricular. We have cluttered our lives with *"things."* We have neglected our souls. We are taking the same course. We, likewise, stagger when we should stand. Our deterioration is exacting its toll. The enemy has us on the run. We retreat daily. **"...Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; and the faithful fail from among the children of men"** (Psalm 12:1). Conversely, and as a consequence, **"The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted"** (Psalm 12:8).

THE INSENSIBILITY. But what caused the instability—the erratic, sporadic and unpredictable antics of the people? We are told it was the **"...spirit of deep sleep..."** (Isaiah 29:10): a kind of spiritual *somnambulism* {sleepwalking}. They could do nothing of a productive nature. Their activities were senseless. Such behavior had evoked from Jehovah the statement that **"...Israel slideth back like a backsliding heifer..."** (Hosea 4:16).

Two observations are important here:

1. It was the LORD Himself who poured out upon them the spirit of deep sleep. Is this difficult to understand? Does the LORD who speaks so much about alertness and steadfastness desire that His people become drowsy and lackadaisical? Never! But there are many entries in the sacred Record where the LORD ceases to restrain those who insist upon wayward pursuits. Dissatisfied with God's provision of manna in the wilderness, the murmuring Israelites cried for flesh. We are told **"...he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul"** (Psalm 106:15).

In the Roman epistle is another sad entry, **“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools”** (Romans 1:21, 22). **“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts...”** (Romans 1:24).

Also, as Jesus began to tread the *Via Dolorosa*, He went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Peter, James and John were with Him. He instructed them to **“...tarry ye here, and watch with me”** (Matthew 26:38). Upon His return, He found them sleeping. He aroused them and issued the same instruction. He went back to pray. Returning again, He found them asleep. On this occasion, Jesus said to them, **“...Sleep on now, and take your rest...”** (Matthew 26:45). In the hour of His passion when His soul was freighted with heaviness, the three closest to Him slept instead of watching. They were told to sleep on. And so it is in the message of our text; if God's people prefer to sleep in a critical hour, that is what they will do. The LORD does not enforce devotion.

2. The second observation is that God closed their eyes. The vision was gone. The door of opportunity was shut. Can any condition be more dreadful? Such a *pernicious* {damaging} state of being is variously indicated. God withdrawing His visible presence (the Shekinah) is one. God rejecting His people is another. The word *“rejecting”* in this connection means removal of opportunity or the revocation of privilege. The dethroning of King Saul is a classic example, **“...for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel”** (I Samuel 15:26). The grieving of the Spirit is a contemporary danger. The **“spirit of deep sleep”** will always lead to loss.

If honesty and humility asserted themselves, we would be forced to confess that our wayward tendencies and spiritual inactivity have made us sadly inept. Our eyes are closed. They are closed to the holiness of God. They are closed to the high standards of Christian conduct. They are closed to the millions dying without hope. They are closed to the dangerous trends of the times. They are closed to the solemn day of accounting. Perhaps the LORD may be forced to say, **“Sleep on.”** One trembles at the thought. How stupendous is the need to be aroused!

THE INCAPABILITY. **“And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith I cannot...”** (Isaiah 29:11). What is it therefore that causes insensibility? It is incapability.

A certain pastor expressed a present-day analogy:

*My church is riddled through with **cancer**, he remarked. When I ask a man to teach a class, he replies, 'I can't sir.' When I approach a lady to counsel with a problem-ridden young woman, she answers, 'I can't sir.' When I request a young person to contact a new family and invite the youth therein to attend the meetings, he says, 'I can't sir.'*

This is obviously a play on words, but it illustrates the truth of our Lord's statement, **"...The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few..."** (Luke 10:2).

Such incapability is not solely chargeable to unwillingness. It is due to a lack of challenge and training on the part of leadership. We press for crowds, not competency. Like the farmer of whom our Lord spoke who tore down his barns and built larger ones, we have demolished our smaller *edifices* {organizations} to erect larger ones. It is a mark of distinction and prideful proof of success to announce a big membership. But this limits efficiency of training and concentrates too many in one corner of the vineyard. There are some exceptions, to be sure, where efficient leadership has succeeded in establishing a sizeable membership of active and productive people, but by and large people in our churches do not know the Bible, its doctrines and its directives. And very few produce impressively.

Few present-day Christians seem to take seriously that their witness is to the **"...uttermost part of the earth."** (Acts 1:8); that each stands **"...in Christ's stead..."** (II Corinthians 5:20) before a dying world; that each must have the compassion of Christ who, **"...when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them..."** (Matthew 9:36); that each should have the same compulsion of Him who said, **"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work"** (John 9:4).

When **"...the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed..."** (Isaiah 29:11), indifference has reached a critical stage. It is then a dark, dismal and unpromising day indeed. Divine tolerance lasts only so long under such conditions and, though the patience of God is the greatest mystery of the hour, it may cease. With its *cessation* {termination}, judgment falls upon the land. The nation that forgets God goes backward. Said the renowned General William K. Harrison; *"The extent of our unprecedented God-given blessings and the flagrant prevailing rebellion against the Lord make our nation the most deserving of judgment of any people on the earth."*

We cannot! We cannot rise to curb the trend. We cannot rise to guarantee a spiritual heritage for our children. We cannot rise to glorify God. This is our day. We bear a striking resemblance to those of Isaiah's day who precipitated a cavalcade of catastrophe.

THE *INELIGIBILITY* {disqualification}. We drill deeper. What causes incapability and inactivity? Ineligibility. The book was then turned over to one without formal training, indicative of

destitution in the leadership. At once, he pleaded, *"I am not learned."* Such shallow excuses, however, are not legitimate. Why is one *"not learned"* in the things of the Spirit? No bona-fide reason is discoverable. All may not own an earned degree. All may not have had classroom opportunity. But in this day of grace all believers do have the same divine Instructor. **"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth..."** (John 16:13). It is worthy to repeat, *"The Bible is the only textbook which has the Author present every time it is studied."*

**"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ"** (I Corinthians 12:13). Since every true believer is a member of the body of Christ, it follows that each has a function. If the gift given is not exercised, and if the commission is not obeyed, then of course one is ineligible, unable to perform. It is imperative that we understand the seriousness of this condition.

*Must I go and empty-handed;  
Must I meet the Saviour so?*

Each should have some project designed to win souls to Christ. Each should set himself to be thus engaged. No greater incentive can be given. No greater command can be issued. Refusal can but set one at variance with the LORD. Divine fellowship then is impossible, and prayer is precluded, for how can a disobedient, indifferent, inactive child of God expect to get through to the Throne of Grace?

THE INSINCERITY. Deeper we go as we move toward the basic cause of this reprehensible development. What produces ineligibility? Very evidently it is insincerity. The text states, **"...this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me..."** (Isaiah 29:13). There it is; incompatibility between the lip and the life.

We are grossly in the dark if we have not learned that getting on with God is ever and always a heart matter. **"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness..."** (Romans 10:10). **"When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek"** (Psalm 27:8). The LORD always takes notice of the lack of heart attitude, as, for instance, **"...they have not cried unto me with their heart..."** (Hosea 7:14).

Had these ancient people's hearts not been far from the LORD, had they been sincere, they would have had an entirely different reaction. They would have reasoned thusly:

*We are God's people. We must learn how to know and to do His will. We must never become indifferent or rebellious. We must be about our Father's business. We must never become enamored of the world and cluttered with divergent issues.*

If only this had been their attitude, they would have walked into the wonderful will of God. Like Mephibosheth, sitting at the king's table, they could have sat down in “...**the banqueting house...**” (Song of Solomon 2:4) with great delight. They could have drunk rich draughts at the fountain of Life, “**For with thee is the fountain of life...**” (Psalm 36:9). They could have reaped a harvest for His glory, “**He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him**” (Psalm 126:6). And it would not have been merely a dream.

THE BASIC CAUSE. We can now place our finger squarely on the infectious *progenitor* {forerunner} of this sad spiritual unreality. The LORD reveals that, “...**their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:**” (Isaiah 29:13). This is what caused insincerity. This is what threw the derail, sending the hearts of those people on a divergent course of unbelief, failure and catastrophe. This, then, is the villain to be watched.

Only the Holy Spirit can teach our hearts to fear God. The precepts of men may advance counsel of value. The precepts of men can reveal facts that enlighten. The precepts of men can promote secular knowledge. But the fear of God with all its profundity, with all its supernal character, with all its exclusiveness, with all its necessity, is not, indeed cannot be, a product of human faculties.

Only God through His Holy Spirit can *inculcate* {instruct} within man the awe-inspiring consciousness of His own precious presence. And this, fundamentally, is the meaning of the fear of the LORD.

**Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: (Isaiah 29:13)**

## Chapter XI

### GOD-FEARING LEADERSHIP

**“...He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God” —II Samuel 23:3**

THERE NEED BE no *conjecture* {guesswork} about the standards of God, especially with regard to leadership. Concerning the supervisor of the ancient tabernacle construction, the Record reads, **“See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,”** (Exodus 31:2-3).

If it is simply a committee to guarantee equity in the welfare distribution among widows, they must be **“...men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom whom we may appoint over this business”** (Acts 6:3).

Among the last words which issued from David, words which God Himself communicated through him, were these, **“...He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God”** (II Samuel 23:3).

It must be *conceded* {accepted} that being **“filled with the Spirit”** and having **“the fear of God”** are closely akin in meaning, if not indeed synonymous.

Zerubbabel was charged with the responsibility of finishing the temple. The LORD sent Zechariah to him with this assurance that it is **“...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts”** (Zechariah 4:6). And this immortal statement, blazed upon the pages of Scripture, is just as meaningful, just as necessary, just as encouraging and just as applicable today for those who would be used of the LORD.

What a stinging, stunning blow herein is dealt the ego of man! In language singular and *sublime* {beautiful}, yet simple and solemn, it is settled once and for all that spiritual accomplishments are dependent not upon the might of man, but rather upon the dynamic of Deity.

THE MIGHT OF DAVID. What may be said of one who fears God and is filled with the Spirit? Simply this, he is one who walks like a wise man amid the folly of a self-reliant age. He is one who

moves like a victor against vicious opposition. He is one who stands resolutely on the side of godliness, regardless of his position.

The *Who's Who* of ancient days listed King Saul as one who stood head and shoulders above all in Israel. His armies were impressive to view and their equipment excellent for the day, but they trembled at the sight of the Philistine. David, by contrast, marched forthwith to a decisive victory over the taunting, terrifying Goliath without assisting forces or blaring fanfare. Saul was bulwarked with human might and power, but failed; David was clothed with the fear of God. He advanced in the name of the LORD and succeeded.

THE CASE OF STEPHEN. There was Stephen who stood on the threshold of a new era and decried without restraint the empty traditions of men which counteracted the message of the Gospel. The account is reported from two viewpoints; namely, the human and divine:

Men said: **...This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:** (Acts 6:13)

God said: **And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.** (Acts 6:8)

The discrepancy in these reports is at once revealing, **"...all that sat in council..."** (Acts 6:15) came up with the same decision. They were unanimous, **"Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,"** (Acts 7:57). They gnashed upon him with their teeth. They stopped their ears. They ran upon him. They cast him out of the city. They stoned him. They resented his words. They resisted his works. They rejected his Saviour. Thus, Stephen became the first recorded example of one emulating the words of the Lord Jesus: **"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul..."** (Matthew 10:28).

This man's soul could not be killed. His spirit could not be broken. As his body collapsed under the punishing attack of his persecutors, his faith, forgiveness and fearlessness caused heaven to smile with *approbation* {approval}. At the same time, Christianity's greatest advocate-to-be was being impressed with a demonstration of supernatural power manifested in a God-fearing man. Saul of Tarsus stood by.

What was the secret of Stephen's historical death? There was no secret! The explanation is an open letter to be read and known by all men. He had not been famous in the sight of men. He left no fortune of gold and silver, of stocks and bonds, of real estate and possessions. The fact which is monumental to the memory of this martyr is that he was **"...full of faith and of the Holy Ghost..."**—a God-fearing man (Acts 6:5). This was his supporting power, even in martyrdom.

PETER WITHSTANDS SATAN. The early church faced severe tests of faith. There were problems within as well as pressure without, and dealing with internal matters is usually the more trying. Enemy soldiers are more recognizable on the field than are enemy saboteurs in the factory, and more easily disposed of. All subversive agents are dedicated to destructive enterprises. Their design is to weaken the internal structure. The overall pattern is essentially the same whether in the political, economic, moral or spiritual realms.

The church, with the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, alarms Satan. He energized Herod to plot the destruction of the Babe of Bethlehem. He later employed diverse *artifices* {lies} to ensnare the Son of God and to *controvert* {contradict} His message. His stratagems were multiple at Calvary, but when the phenomenal tongues of fire and rushing wind bespoke the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, Satan was little prepared to do more than produce a few mockers, **“Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine”** (Acts 2:13). Soon, however, he feverishly deployed his forces, and organized opposition became evident. He faced Jesus in person in the wilderness temptation and failed. Later, he faced the Spirit indwelling Peter and fell.

Ananias and his wife Sapphira were evidently prominent people in the assembly. (Subversion succeeds more effectively where there is position, prestige or popularity.) They pretended to be *“in fellowship,”* to be cooperative, but they withheld part of the sale price of their property. Of course, there was no legitimate reason why they should not have retained the total amount for themselves, but for the fact that they had promised it all and pretended to have given it.

Here is the divine record on the matter: Peter, specially commissioned by his resurrected Lord, was **“...filled with the Holy Ghost...”** (Acts 4:31). Ananias, filled with Satan, entered the assembly. The peace and wholesomeness of the fellowship were thereby threatened. Discerning Peter withstood him and demanded firmly, **“...why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost”** (Acts 5:3).

That day, the two greatest of all powers were arrayed one against the other. One had to go down. One *did* go down!

**Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God!** (Acts 5:4) thundered the old veteran of the faith.

**And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost...** (Acts 5:5). It was the victory of the Holy Spirit through a God-fearing man.



FAITH AND THE FLOGGING POST. An unprincipled mob ruthlessly prodded a humble man to a place of *penal* {severe} striping. While the accused was lashed to the post as though he were a cruel monster of vicious intent, the executioner administered the stripes. As the whip fell with no lessened force or fierceness for the thirty-ninth time, one wonders how the system of a mortal could endure such unspeakable infliction. Not once, but twice; then the third time, the penalty was imposed.

On still another occasion, the persecutors resorted to rods with their bone-bruising impact. At yet another instance, they took up stones against the man of little stature but of great faith. Perils and painfulness multiplied. In the midst of such intense maltreatment and bodily discomfort, this stalwart, battle-scarred servant quietly prays, “**...Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me**” (II Corinthians 12:9).

Paul had discovered a possessing power, a sustaining force, a persevering energy. It was the dynamic of Deity, the power of Christ resident within him through the Spirit. It was the stabilizing factor in all the triumphant testifiers of Truth who willingly hazarded their lives for the cause of Christ. It enabled the martyrs to defy the frailties of the flesh as the flaming *fagots* {bundle of sticks} burned their skin and sizzled the blood from their veins. This is the supreme might imparted by the Spirit to God-fearing men, “**I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me**” (Philippians 4:13).

THE FETTERS OF STATE CONTROL. With the spirit of *feudalism* {dominant social system} rampant, the feeling of clanship fervent, the brutality of the *aristocracy* {high class} rough, the ignorance and *profligacy* {reckless extravagance} of the clergy disheartening, the spiritual cast in Scotland was most confusing in the mid-sixteenth century. The state-controlled church left little alternative to the dissatisfied and despairing people. Then John Knox, though previously exiled for his dissenting boldness, dared to oppose the use of the English Prayer Book.

In 1555, he preached with great effect in different parts of the British Isles, “*thundering against idolatry, and the people responded by breaking in pieces the images of the saints and pulling down the monasteries*” (*History of Christian Church* by Fisher).

The kings and the queens had at their disposal both might and power, but the LORD spoke by His Spirit through Knox who was willing to *wield* {use}, not carnal weapons, but the Sword of the Spirit which is mighty under God to the dismantling of strongholds, “**(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)**” (2 Corinthians 10:4). This is a further example of a God-fearing man.

CONTEMPORARY SYSTEMS. We witness in our day stupendous attempts to operate in the spiritual realm through humanly mobilized might and organized power. Church councils spread out from boundary to boundary in a nation, and then join hands in a world-wide *amalgamation*

{merger}. From a centralized office, a few men or even a lone individual may sign documents of far-reaching significance or speak concerning a policy, purporting to represent the “*strength*” of many millions.

When God wants to shake the dominion of Satan, however, He noticeably bypasses these colossal machines and moves upon a man. It may be a Finney or a Moody, a Judson or a Taylor, but God energizes a man instead of organizing a movement. What an organization of global proportions could never accomplish, God can do through a God-fearing man who is propelled by the dynamic of Deity.

POWER PROMISED. As the resurrected Christ gathered His little group of servants about Him before His glorious ascension, He made it clear that they would need power as they went out against the forces of wickedness. He knew of what that power would consist. He knew what it would accomplish. He had said earlier that it was to their advantage that He should ascend into heaven in order to send the Holy Spirit to be both in them and with them, “**It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you**” (John 16:7). Thus, God would be with men in the person of His Spirit and they would know the fear of God.

POWER TO PREACH CONVINCINGLY. Dear old lovable Peter, unschooled in logic, *exegesis* {explaining Scripture} and public speaking, but God-fearing, had power to drive the message of the Gospel to the very hearts of three thousand at one time. When he was ordered to desist, he politely but firmly replied, “**...We ought to obey God rather than men**” (Acts 5:29).

The cultured Corinthians charged that Paul's bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible, but they acknowledged with honest confession that his message was weighty, “**For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible**” (II Corinthians 10:10). If he were not handsome in appearance, he could not help it. If his voice lacked resonance, that too was beyond his control. But it would have been inexcusable, with a revelation from heaven, for a God-fearing preacher to deliver anything but a weighty message. “**For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you...**” (I Corinthians 11:23).

Physical deficiencies of the messenger fade into nothingness when the message is one of life and power. If we believe “*an ounce of divine revelation is worth more than tons of men's empty speculations,*” then let us present heaven's message with vision and vigor. God's words are spirit, and His words are life, “**...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life**” (John 6:63). Hearts are hungry; souls are thirsty. Indeed, they will perish without it. Let us fear God and herald His message in the demonstration of power!

POWER TO SUBMERGE DIFFERENCES. **“And all that believed were together, and had all things in common;”** (Acts 2:44). People differ in temperament and, therefore, reflect varying reactions. But something had actually homogenized hearts in the early church. There was an impressive unity. They volunteered to share and share alike in all things. Love abounded. Sympathy flowed. There was a new relationship. There was a changed atmosphere.

This was not a *utopian* {perfect} dream come true. They could not have previously conceived it. The fire of the Holy Spirit had welded them together in a tie that binds hearts in Christian love. The fear of God fell upon them. They found no points over which to argue, no dogmas to dispute, no *liturgical* {public worship} procedures to divide them. Old things had passed away, and now all things had become new. How sorely the church of Christ today needs a baptism of this power! **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”** (II Corinthians 5:17).

POWER TO EVANGELIZE. Peter emphasized, **“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12). The atmosphere was not *congenial* {friendly}, for there were no praying saints with him at the time. The preacher faced the cold, *stoic* {tolerant}, reactionary leaders of a *decadent* {corrupt} Judaism. There was a mortuary cast about the courtroom; a bitterness in the air. His life was in jeopardy. But the prisoner preached! He pressed home to their hearts the claims of Christ as the Spirit gave him utterance. A God-fearing man always has boldness.

POWER TO WITHSTAND OPPOSITION. Peter stood before the Sanhedrin. Perhaps it was Annas himself who put the question in solemn tones to the Christian evangelist as the members of the *august* {noble} body looked on with *disdain* {scorn or contempt}.

**“...By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?”** (Acts 4:7) the high priest demanded.

**“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel”** (Acts 4:8). **Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole”** (Acts 4:10).

The power of the Spirit has given a firm stability and a wholesome steadiness to all those who fear God. With it, Paul withstood Felix and Agrippa. With it, Titus overcame the heretics at Crete. With it, Timothy became a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

*Lord, as of old, at Pentecost  
Thou didst Thy power display;  
With cleansing, purifying flame,*

*Descend on us today!*

**The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just,  
ruling in the fear of God. (II Samuel 23:3)**

## Chapter XII

### A GUARANTEE FOR POSTERITY

**“O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!” —Deuteronomy 5:29**

EXCLAMATION IS not a separate form of speech. It is declaration amplified. It is expression intensified. There are many kinds of exclamation—of surprise, of fright, of joy, of warning, of urgency—but a divine exclamation is not so readily classified, nor so easily quoted. Intermittently, we meet such outbursts in the Biblical Record as:

**...My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?** (Matthew 27:46)

**O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness...** (Jeremiah 4:14)

**O my people, what have I done unto thee?...** (Micah 6:3)

Then there are instances when exclamatory enunciations of the LORD are registered through His servants. To Jeremiah, He said, **“Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem...”** (Jeremiah 2:2). To Isaiah; **“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet...”** (Isaiah 58:1). And, since this latter quotation concerns spiritual blessing for *subsequent* {following} generations, we shall pursue its revelation.

### THE PROPHET'S ASSIGNMENT

It was a dark day in Judah with an increasingly grim outlook for posterity. The people not only were unprepared to leave a heritage for their offspring, they actually were about to see the curtain fall upon their nation, and themselves carried into captivity. Their un-spirituality, like the *insidious* {treacherous} effect of *malignancy* {distortion}, had ravaged them disastrously.

The official record describes them after this fashion, **“From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment”** (Isaiah 1:6). Yet the patient had not succumbed. There was a faint pulse, and Jehovah in His tenderness and love sends the prophet to *effect* {to produce} a revival, to pave the way for a brighter day.

**“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins”** (Isaiah 58:1). This was the commission. It was both an unpopular and an unpleasant undertaking.

In the first place, God's people had drifted so gradually, so subtly and so unconsciously into sin and indifference that they had become adjusted to their state of estrangement from Him. Any reference to their condition therefore was resented immediately. Of Jeremiah's message the people said, **“...Come, and let us smite him with the tongue...”** (Jeremiah 18:18). **“...Wherein shall we return?”** (Malachi 3:7), was the stiff *rejoinder* {response} which met Malachi. With Ezekiel, they were **“...impudent children and stiffhearted...”** (Ezekiel 2:4). This is characteristic of the backslider.

In the second place, to be shown personal transgressions and sins is, to say the least, an indictment usually too painful for the sensitive ego of the offender to accept. A case in point transpired when Jesus entered the temple and said, **“...My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves”** (Luke 19:46). Resentment was immediate and extreme, **“...the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him”** (Luke 19:47). Thus, if backsliders rebelled so vehemently against the Lord, how much more fiercely would they rail against His servants?

The assignment once given, the manner of its execution was described—**“Cry aloud, spare not...”** (Isaiah 58:1). The prophet must exhibit serious urgency. He must exclaim with a full-throated voice as one would register an alarm with people in a burning building. And the **“...voice like a trumpet...”** (Isaiah 58:1) called for a clear, much-to-the-point, *unambiguous* {unmistakable} citing of their trespasses against God.

## THE PEOPLE'S PROBLEM

Omniscience is not forced to the expediency of diagnosing. God knows what is in man. He knows every case, every condition, every need. He puts His finger on the spot with unflinching accuracy. The problem was two-fold:

First, there was *meaningless worship*. Worship without doubt is the barometer of one's spiritual life. To register in heaven, worship must be **“...in spirit and in truth”** (John 4:24). These conditions were not met in Isaiah's day. They were reminded, **“...ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice heard on high”** (Isaiah 58:4). Then, pointing to their empty ritual, the prophet asked, **“...wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?”** (Isaiah 58:5).

Suppose such a pointed question were put to present-day worshippers. How could we justify our careless attitude toward such a sacred matter? Perhaps some self-interrogation might prove

helpful in safeguarding us against improper procedure. What is true worship? What is its purpose? How is it accomplished? What are the principles involved? What should be the attitude of the worshipper? When is worship acceptable to the LORD? How important is worship? What are the scriptural regulations?

Nowhere is lack of the fear of God more noticeable than in the matter of worship. Personal *piety* {religiousness} and the *solemnity* {earnestness} of ritualistic involvements cannot compensate for the absence of a sense of the divine Presence in the individual heart. To be impressed with the *aesthetic* {beauty} in the liturgy {ritual} is not the same as being subdued by the nearness of God. To be carried away in empty informality is not to be enjoying the liberty of the Spirit. To have our emotions soothed by sermonical eloquence does not necessarily denote communion with God. Ecstasy of inspiration may not be true fellowship with Deity.

True worship incorporates within its sacred exercise such elements as reverence, adoration, praise, meditation, confession and communion, but when we have exhausted all our descriptive and *expletives* {oaths}, we must admit that it is more readily experienced than explained. Only the God-fearing can know its deep meaning. Conscious of His presence, their souls well up with appreciation and gratitude and love. They *laud* {praise} and magnify His holy name. They *extol* {exalt} His greatness. They *exult* {glory} in His goodness and mercy. They pause in loving devotion to commune with Him. They wait with silent longing for the stirring of God's Spirit in their souls. They relax in the restful comfort of His benediction.

Second, there were *unauthorized works*. Judah had not learned the folly of spending their “...**labour for that which satisfieth not...**” (Isaiah 55:2). They did not realize that unauthorized works were unavailing effort, much like putting money “...**into a bag with holes**” (Haggai 1:6). But the fact is, what God does not authorize, He cannot approve; what He cannot approve, He will not accept. Hence, it is futile.

Unauthorized endeavors deny the sovereignty of God, reject His will, ignore His purpose, exalt the flesh, encourage pride and obviate obedience. In brief, it is unmitigated rebellion against the LORD. Such diversionary procedure leads to sad ends. It has but one alternative—turn or die! But Judah did not turn. She became adamant and “...**they have made their faces harder than a rock...**” (Jeremiah 5:3). Plunging toward certain disaster with the speed of a horse rushing into battle, “...**every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle**” (Jeremiah 8:6). Their hearts became as stone and their attitude one of persistence in pursuing idolatry. What a frightening situation it was!

## WHAT GOD REQUIRED OF THE PEOPLE

Divine exactions are never grievous, never burdensome. How could they be when they result in peace and rest and victory? In the chapter before us (Isaiah 58), we will detect at least five simple directives. Each has a prefatory “if.” They are found in verses 9, 10 and 13, with the “if” of verse 9 introducing three.

1. **“...If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke...”** (Isaiah 58:9) (underline added). They were guilty of questionable affiliations and unholy alliances. These had to be severed, for such entanglements diverted their affections from the LORD. Ephraim (the ten northern tribes) joined himself to idols, **“Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone”** (Hosea 4:17). The Jewish women affiliated themselves with the pagans in weeping over Tammuz, **“Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz”** (Ezekiel 8:14). The Jewish men turned their backs toward the temple of the LORD and worshipped the sun, **“...at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east”** (Ezekiel 8:16). Even in early times, they danced around a golden calf, **“...as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing...”** (Exodus 32:19). But regardless of the character of their unholy associations, the yoke must be broken. And this necessity is unequivocally the same today. The line of *demarcation* {separation} between the Church and the world system must have more careful attention, **“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”** (I John 2:15).
2. **“...If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger”** (Isaiah 58:9) (underline added). This of course was blatant covetousness, the pointing to “out of bounds” attractions, thus, indicating the outreach of desires into ill-advised areas. **“...now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.”** (I Samuel 8:5) cried the demonstrating masses in the days of Samuel as they pointed to the Gentile monarchs. And it is ever true, if the heart does not point upward, the finger will point outward.  
  
Achan coveted the wedge of gold and forfeited his life. David coveted Uriah's wife and sinned fearfully. Demas coveted this present world and forsook Paul. When the *Decalogue* {Ten Commandments} was given, **“Thou shalt not covet...”** (Exodus 20:17) was emblazoned upon the revelation. Yet for all of this, God's people have succumbed to this terribly disqualifying sin. It was destroying Judah.
3. **“If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;”** (Isaiah 58:9) (underline added). The reference here is very obviously to false profession, for in spite of their empty worship, their unauthorized



works, their ill-advised associations and their covetousness, they readily claimed relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Even at this same time of their national apostasy, though described as unclean, self-righteous, and unstable in their iniquities, they boldly professed, **“But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people”** (Isaiah 64:8-9). While this was positionally true, they were at the time out of touch with God. The prophet was forced to lament, **“...there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee...”** (Isaiah 64:7).

History as such cannot repeat itself, but in all these respects we bear an alarming resemblance to these ancient people. In the midst of our apathy, barrenness and sinfulness, we call ourselves Christians. Some have been known to so state unhesitatingly though in the midst of vile sin and known waywardness. As formerly, so now, a *cessation* {termination} of such conditions is required.

4. **“And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul...”** (Isaiah 58:10). The prophet continues to lay the requirements of the LORD before the people. Here the charge against them was lack of compassion. The words **“draw out thy soul”** at once reveal a self-centeredness. What can cramp a believer more? What can more completely blind his eyes to the needs of others? What can so *injuriously* {tend to} distort his distinctive position? The LORD termed them **“A wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure...”** (Jeremiah 2:24). They had become a people wholly unrestrained in seeking their ends, with no thought of the needs of others.

The human capacity is only what we allow the grace of God to make it. If we expend ourselves in selfish endeavors, we are fruitless. For such, there is no reward. Only he is favored with heaven's *approbation* {approval} who *“draws out his soul to the needy.”*

*It is not what we give, but what we share,  
For the gift without the giver is bare —James Russell Lowell*

5. **“If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:”** (Isaiah 58:13). This was evidently the most *comprehensive* {across the board} of the requirements. The record shows that they had been doing *diametrically* {completely} opposite what God had commanded them to do. No fair-

minded person can read the history of the Israelites and be in the dark concerning the reason for their dispersion and persecution, **“...the way of transgressors is hard”** (Proverbs 13:15). They learned it by experience.

**“...if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear...”** (Malachi 1:6), Jehovah sadly enquired. They had gone far afield. Jeremiah tells us that **“The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger”** (Jeremiah 7:18). Their hearts were far from the LORD. The prophet pleads for them to renew their devotion to Jehovah.

### WHAT GOD PROMISED THE PEOPLE

As the requirements were prefaced by the qualifying *“if,”* the promises were introduced by the word *“then.”* These promises, however, were *predicated* {based} upon their compliance with the requirements.

1. *The Promise of New Life.* **“Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee...”** (Isaiah 58:8). This points up a spiritual re-vitalization. This was sorely needed. Without it, they could not worship God acceptably. They could not be holy. They could not produce effectively. The *resurgence* {revival} of life alone could make possible a reversal of their disastrous plunge. And the promise was most encouraging. A vital spiritual status would ensue. Here is the authentic possibility:
  - a. **Then thy light shall break forth**
  - b. **Then thine health shall spring forth**
  - c. **Then thy righteousness shall go before thee**
2. *The Promise of God's Presence.* **“Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am...”** (Isaiah 58:9). Who would not meet any requirement for such an experience as this? Who would not be willing to forfeit pleasure to have the joy and blessing of the divine Presence? Who would not turn a deaf ear to any allurements to hear the Lord of Glory say, **“Here I am”**?

Moses heard it! Jehovah said, **“...My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest”** (Exodus 33:14). Enoch heard it! He walked with God for three hundred years, **“And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years...”** (Genesis 5:22). Noah heard it! **“And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation”** (Genesis 7:1). The disciples heard it! **“...lo, I am with you alway...”** (Matthew 28:20).

John heard it! He reports, **“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me...”** (Revelation 1:12). We shall hear it! In that glorious appearing in the air, **“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout...”** (I Thessalonians 4:16). Life for the sincere believer is not worth the living without the blessed nearness of the altogether lovely One here and now.

3. *A Promised Restoration of Testimony.* **“...then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:”** (Isaiah 58:10). And just what is the meaning of this?

Their testimony was eclipsed. It became as a candle under a bushel. A light that does not shine is a monstrosity, but this is one of the oddities into which God's people *devolve* {transfer to a lower level} when they slip down the dangerous *declivities* {downward slope} of unbelief. One with a lost witness is without light for a lost world. He has, as it were, fallen into obscurity. No one is blessed or encouraged because he is around. The spiritual cause is not benefited. The Devil is not disturbed because of him. He wields no influence in matters of holiness. But when new life re-appears, when God's presence is felt, when the testimony is restored, there is *virility* {the quality of having strength} and *vitality* {energized activity}. The witness then has an impact. Not only do such come out of obscurity, but the following verse portrays them as **“...a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not”** (Isaiah 58:11).

Nor does the description end here. Reverting to verse 10, we read, **“...thy darkness be as the noonday:”** The thought is that once again they could reflect the glory of their LORD if their tarnished testimony became brightened. Then, whereas their light could not shine because of unspiritual conduct, now with certain conditions met, it could burst forth with brilliance. All of this was the looming possibility.

4. *The Promise of Abounding Joy.* **“Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD...”** (Isaiah 58:14). This has neither measure nor end. It cannot be over-indulged. The joy of the LORD is an accompaniment of His presence, for in His presence is fullness of joy, **“... in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore”** (Psalm 16:11). And the increasing capacity to experience this joy is *commensurate* {equal} with the spiritual growth. Then idols fade from the life. Wrong associations are not indulged. Then holy desires may be realized, **“Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart”** (Psalm 37:4).

## WHAT THE PARENTS MUST DO

All the remarkable foregoing considerations led up to a grave and solemn matter. The prophet laid a challenging proposition on the hearts of the parents. It was this: “...**thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations...**” (Isaiah 58:12).

Nehemiah faced the disturbing situation of demolished walls about the city of Jerusalem and worked valiantly to remove this reproach. Isaiah was confronted with the alarming disintegration of the basic spiritual life of the people. There had been for many generations an erosion of godliness. Now there were no absolutes, no standards of holiness, no challenging evidences of faith, no adherence to the old paths, no foundations on which posterity could build. Apostasy was *rife* {widespread}. There was a complete spiritual breakdown.

The prophet in faithful obedience to his assignment called upon the parents to “...**raise up the foundations...**” to reverse the trend, to move back into the orbit of God's will, to establish a challenge of holiness for their children. Then they would be called, “...**The repairer of the breach...**” (Isaiah 58:12). The “**breach**” was clearly spelled out. “...**your iniquities have separated [caused a breach] between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear**” (Isaiah 59:2). This sorely-needed repair work had to begin with contrite confession of their sins before Jehovah could honor and bless.

**If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.** (II Chronicles 7:14)

Observe, too, they were also called “...**The restorer of paths to dwell in**” (Isaiah 58:12). “*The restorer of paths that lead home*” (literal rendering). These paths of love and devotion; honor and obedience had become most *indistinct* {unclear}. They had become cluttered with digressions, perversions, dissensions and *interpolations* {outbursts}—a most unpromising situation for their children. How could the coming generations latch their faith to the heavenward course when parental signposts had become so distorted? Thus, the call to restore the paths that lead home by repairing the breach between their hearts and the LORD.

Only God knows how disastrously the foundations of godliness have disintegrated today, how much repair work must be done by parents in order to restore the paths that lead home. We must admit that, in the overall picture, we are out of line with the divine standard, out of touch, with divine power and out of agreement with the divine purpose. When self-interest supersedes sovereign claims, it suppresses the call of the Spirit.

We need to pursue after personal holiness, to live above the rate of common Christians, labor to distinguish between the true and false, sense the motions of God's Spirit upon our souls, look to Him for daily help, seek His face for proper direction, and compare our affections with His Word.

## WHAT POSTERITY MUST DO

The prophet's appeal had in view a long-range plan. With foundation stones repointed, the door of opportunity would be opened for their children. They were told, **“And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places...”** (Isaiah 58:12). Then, there would be, not only opportunity, but incentive. The parents' example would be a *boon* {something helpful} to the spiritual development of their children.

Said a prominent Christian leader recently, *“How could I do less than dedicate my life fully to the LORD and His work when there constantly looms before my mind the godly character of my Father?”*

But Isaiah's success with Judah was not impressive. The people were so devoid of vision and willingness that they cared little about turning to God, and they seemed to care even less about raising the foundations and restoring the homeward paths for their offspring. Jeremiah tried at a later date to place the same challenge upon their hearts. He asked them to halt, to ponder their dangerous course, to ask for the old paths, to walk therein and find rest, but they flatly declined with these bold words, **“...We will not walk therein”** (Jeremiah 6:16).

Do you ask how we may account for such an attitude then and now? The answer is both simple and sad—the lack of the fear of God. They were not conscious of the greatness and goodness of God, nor concerned about His holy claims. The Truth of the LORD did not register. Their hearts were far from Him. His prophets could not make an impact upon them. They were devoid of perception. They could not choose between the fading things of time and matters eternal. They were not pliable as is the clay in the potter's hand. They were proud and *impenitent* {unrepentant}, totally unconcerned about the prophesied consequences of their wicked ways. Once in the hands of captors, their tears along the rivers of Babylon brought them no comfort **“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.”** (Psalm 137), even as the weeping of Esau was unavailing, **“...for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears”** (Hebrews 12:17).

One trembles to think of the costly course people pursue. Discerning ones tell us that our only hope today is for God to raise up a Whitefield or a Wesley, an Edwards or a Finney. But would we become contrite and humble, God-fearing and holy? Billy Graham's evangelistic efforts internationally dwarf those of his predecessors as to attendance, decisions, prayer and publicity, yet the famed evangelist constantly tells us that revival is not in evidence. The church statistics he quotes at home and abroad are proof positive that the spiritual situation worsens yearly—that apostasy has reached alarming proportions.

Christian parents would do well to summon the members of the family to review the claims of Christ, then to call on each one to face his individual record. The self-examination should be engaged in with the utmost *solemnity* {earnestness} and seriousness.

It is crystal clear that revival is greatly needed. But it will not be realized by our hoping and praying that the other person will do something about it. Revival is what you and I do to reverse the trend toward disaster by coming to grips with the LORD, by *abhorring* {detesting, despising and hating} and confessing and renouncing and deserting every known sin, and by letting God through His Spirit fill us with holy desires and righteous determination.

Then, when our generation has run its course, when we have passed from the scene of human activity, each child we have brought into this world will be able to pray with abounding gratitude, **"For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name"** (Psalm 61:5).

**O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!**  
(Deuteronomy 5:29)

## Chapter XIII

### BONUS BLESSINGS FOR THE GOD-FEARING

**“...no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”**—Psalm 84:11

HERE IS A BLANK check, signed and drawn on the Bank of Heaven. There is no limit to the amount, for the capital is exhaustless. If the endorsement is penned in the fadeless ink of trustworthiness, the bearer can cash it forthwith. Jabez, who was more honorable than his brethren, found this to be true: **“...And God granted him that which he requested”** (1 Chronicles 4:10).

This matter of getting things from God is intriguing. It is intriguing because of its simplicity. It is intriguing because of its reality. Jesus inquired of His disciples, **“...how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”** (Matthew 7:11). Then James *chides* {scolds} us by reminding, **“...ye have not, because ye ask not”** (James 4:2). The *inference* {implication} is, it is there all the while, just awaiting the taking. The door of heaven does not require a key; it only requires a condition—an upright walk. This being true, the door swings widely ajar. No good thing will He withhold.

It should prove interesting to take an imaginary jaunt down the course in which the upright walk, **“For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly”** (Psalm 84:11). Many paths, of course, are discoverable in the Bible. There is the path of the just, the way of the fool, the walk of the saint, the road of the prodigals, the avenue of faith, to mention a few. But the upright travel a highway. **“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it...”** (Isaiah 35:8). Only one turn is required to mount it. **“The highway of the upright is to depart from evil...”** (Proverbs 16:17).

All the sojourners on the highway of holiness are walking in the **“...newness of life”** (Romans 6:4). This bespeaks the highest ideals and the holiest desires. It makes aspirations lofty and fellowship rich. A sense of urgency drives people to seek of divine Providence, a satisfaction for every need, but only the upright press on toward the *plus-ultra* {go beyond}—the added blessings which are promised. These good things which will not be withheld from the God-fearing are innumerable.

We must never doubt the ability and the willingness of the LORD to do as He promised. In the days of old, the people lived in houses with cedar ceilings. God had but a tent (tabernacle) for His

dwelling among men. David began to remedy this situation and Solomon finished the undertaking. The great temple was built. When the dedicatory prayer was offered, the fire came down and glory filled the house. When the people saw it, they all bowed down and worshipped. Solomon sent them away **"...glad and merry in heart..."** (II Chronicles 7:10).

In the New Testament scene, Jesus, who is God dwelling in human flesh, declared, **"...a greater than Solomon is here"** (Matthew 12:42). He sent the blind away with vision, **"And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God..."** (Luke 18:43). He sent the impotent away with strength, **"Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk"** (John 5:8). He sent the hungry away satisfied, **"When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost"** (John 6:12). He sent the thirsty away refreshed **"...but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life"** (John 4:14). He sent the *fettered* {bound} away free, **"...Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go"** (John 11:44). He sent the troubled away comforted, **"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me"** (John 14:1). He sent the bereaved away with joy **"And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother"** (Luke 7:15). He sent the perplexed away in peace, **"...Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague"** (Mark 5:34). He sent the obedient away rejoicing, **"And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them"** (Luke 24:50). He sent the expectant away with hope, **"...this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"** (Acts 1:11).

**"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"** (Romans 8:32). The average Christian looks upon these precious words altogether too lightly. When we sense the severity of the Saviour's death, we must appreciate its glorious sufficiency. It was sufficient to *vindicate* {clear of suspicion} the justice of God. It was sufficient to expiate the sins of men. It was sufficient to reconcile the vilest sinner. It was sufficient to open a new and living way unto the Father. It is sufficient to separate from worldliness. It is sufficient to satisfy the needs of the saints. It is sufficient to destroy the power and works of Satan. **"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"** (Romans 11:33).

God's purpose cannot be thwarted, **"For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"**  
(Isaiah 14:27)

God's Word cannot be destroyed, for **"...the scripture cannot be broken;"**  
(John 10:35)



God's promises cannot fail, for Abraham was **"...fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."** (Romans 4:21)

God's opposition cannot prevail, for **"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee..."** (Psalm 76:10)

God's operations cannot be annulled, for **"But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it..."** (Acts 5:39)

God's judgment cannot be escaped, for **"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God..."** (Revelation 20:12)

God's welcome cannot be denied, for **"...whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."** (Revelation 22:17)

We are not kept in doubt as to the primary purpose underlying the mystery of godliness, **"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory"** (I Timothy 3:16). Jesus came **"...to seek and to save that which was lost"** (Luke 19:10). He took upon Him all that man was in order that he might bestow upon man all that He has. He became sin for us that **"...we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"** (II Corinthians 5:21). He descended to reach man; He died to redeem man; He lives to liberate; and He bestows His grace for the enrichment, enjoyment and sustenance of those who believe.

It was the late Dr. Peter Philpott who said at 86 years of age, *"The greatest of all tragedies is that of growing old without God,"* Conversely, the greatest of all good fortunes is that of walking and talking with God, of knowing His presence each passing day, of growing in grace and heavenly wisdom, of moving toward the sunset of life with full assurance and joyful expectancy.

From whatever angle we view things, life in its every phase seems to be in the turbulent rapids and hastening toward the inevitable. It is growing late and the lateness of the hour increases the necessity of immediate spiritual decisions. Each faces eternity. Does it not seem reasonable that we should, in the rush and hurry of our present-day accelerated living, listen to the voice of God, believe and accept His promises, and let Him glorify Himself in our lives? But the cold, grim facts are that most professing Christians remain in the darkness of unbelief where the outline of God's grace is not perceived, where the outflow of God's love is not experienced, and where the outlook of God's purpose is not enjoyed.

The writer of the Hebrew epistle gives us a pitiful portrait of immature believers. He said, **"...seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become**

such as have need of milk and not strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe” (Hebrews 5:11-13).

Then the apostle points out another company, saying, **“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation...”** (Hebrews 6:9). And what is it that accompanies salvation? We have His Word:

We are therefore fully furnished, **That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.** (II Timothy 3:17)

We have His Spirit, and are perfectly guided, **Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth:** (John 16:13)

We have His power, and are sufficiently endowed, **I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.** (Philippians 4:13)

We have His grace, and are adequately sustained, **And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.** (II Corinthians 12:9)

We have His love, and are abundantly supplied, **And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.** (Romans 5:5)

We have His presence, and are constantly accompanied, **...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.** (Hebrews 13:5)

We have His life, and are complete in Him, **And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:** (Colossians 2:10)

If we have a burden, He will carry it, **Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.** (Psalm 55:22)

If we have a care, He will take it, **Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.** (I Peter 5:7)

If we have a temptation, He will make a way of escape, **There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.** (I Corinthians 10:13)

If we are confused, He gives wisdom, **If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.** (James 1:5)

Add to all this the fact that **“...the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;”** (Titus 2:11-12). It is grace, then, which directs us into proper spiritual behavior, **“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;”** (I Timothy 3:2). This is not only higher than the highest moral plane, it is a different plane. It is a realm in which God is real.

The Christian's disciplined conduct is not the successful overpowering of selfish desires by imposing stringent measures of personal prohibitions, or by declaring *moratoriums* {halts}. It is definitely more than telling the flesh (ego) to behave itself. Spiritual behavior, or Christian conduct, is the Spirit-motivated life taking precedence over the self-life. It is the dominance of the Holy Spirit in a yielded person.

Did you ever wonder what it was that gave to the apostle Paul all those fine qualities and commendable traits? Here is your answer: **“But by the grace of God I am what I am...”** (I Corinthians 15:10). Grace was the impelling force which gave to him his vitality, his vision, his ventures and his victories. But what grace did for him and through him, it is capable of doing for and through us—that is, if we have not received it in vain. To receive the grace of God in vain is to receive it without using it, without applying it to our daily life.

An alarm needs to be sounded. We need someone to proclaim with a full-throated voice, **“Awake to righteousness and sin not...”** (I Corinthians 15:34). And how would one know when he is awake to righteousness? When he cannot help but speak the things he has seen and heard, **“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard”** (Acts 4:20). When he must obey God rather than men, **“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men”** (Acts 5:29). When he does not count his life dear unto himself **“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy”** (Acts 20:24). When he begins to warn others with tears, **“...of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping...”** (Philippians 3:18).

We need also to be urged to **“Keep yourselves in the love of God...”** (Jude 21). This verse in its entirety has a cluster of verbs which speak of earnestness, fervor and zeal. Earnestness says, **“It's all or nothing!”** Fervor says, **“...my soul doth magnify the LORD”** (Luke 1:46). And zeal says, **“...whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be”** (2 Samuel 15:21). To keep in the love of God is the same in the spiritual as for an athlete to keep in form in the world of sports.

Then, for the strongest incentive, we need to be reminded, **“...as ye see the day approaching”** (Hebrews 10:25). This is the day of the coming of the Lord when **“...we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”** (II Corinthians 5:10). This should exert a purifying effect, **“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...”** (Hebrews 10:22), a stabilizing effect, **“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering...”** (Hebrews 10:23), a practical effect, **“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works”** (Hebrews 10:24), a restraining effect, **“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is...”** (Hebrews 10:25), and an urgent effect, **“...but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”** (Hebrews 10:25).

Only a God-fearing person would take seriously these matters. That is why only a God-fearing individual is able to have fellowship with the LORD. And only a God-fearing man is interested in letting the Holy Spirit advance him in the new life to its greater abundance, **“...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”** (John 10:10).

The righteous are those who have unshatterable assurance. Immaturity indulges too readily in *supposition* {assumption}. When Jesus walked on the water, the disciples *supposed* Him to be a spirit, **“But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit...”** (Mark 6:49). When the resurrected Christ spoke to Mary at the tomb, she *supposed* He was the gardener, **“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener...”** (John 20:15). When Jesus was in the flesh for thirty years, they *supposed* He was the son of Joseph, **“And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph...”** (Luke 3:23). On the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit descended upon the disciples, the mockers *supposed* they were drunk with wine, **“For these are not drunken, as ye suppose...”** (Acts 2:15). And some people are said to *suppose* that gain is godliness, **“Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness...”** (I Timothy 6:5). But mature John, with Paul, could affirm with inspiring emphasis, *“I know!”*

**I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.** (John 13:18)

**For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.** (II Timothy 1:12)

How do we recognize those from whom the LORD will not withhold any good thing? You may identify them, not only because of their firm assurance, but by their aspirations, attitudes and actions.

THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE GOD-FEARING. Take Joshua, for instance. At a specially-called gathering of the leaders of Israel at Shechem, the successor to Moses pleaded with the people for a greater devotion to Jehovah, but with little success. Then, with a distinct timber to his voice, he declared, **"...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"** (Joshua 24:15).

Note also the testimony of David, **"One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple"** (Psalm 27:4).

And in this connection, Paul's voice must be heard: **"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection..."** (Philippians 3:10).

These are the people who can get the bonus blessings from God. They are the ones who give respect unto the *recompense* {reimburse} of reward. They are those who are faithful, even unto death, not for the blessings but for the glory of the LORD, **"...that in all things He might have the preeminence"** (Colossians 1:18).

THE ATTITUDES OF THE GOD-FEARING. Job said, **"Though he slay me, yet will I trust him: but I will maintain my ways before him"** (Job 13:15). David explained, **"...neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth costs me nothing..."** (II Samuel 24:24). Isaiah testified, **"...I will trust, and not be afraid..."** (Isaiah 12:2). Jeremiah declared, **"O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself: It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"** (Jeremiah 10:23). Paul maintained, **"...neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy..."** (Acts 20:24). The Auca martyrs asserted, *"We don't have to come back but we have to go."*

All of these inspiring declarations add up to one statement—not my will but Thine be done, O LORD! This is what is foremost in the mind of the upright as it was in the mind of our Saviour:

**And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.** (Luke 22:41, 42)

THE ACTIONS OF THE GOD-FEARING. Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice in spite of threats from his brother and at the cost of his life. Joseph fled from the temptations of the king's wife. Gideon attacked and defeated the Midianites with but a small band of warriors. Abraham went on a significant journey, at the command of the LORD, even though he knew not where he was

going. Nehemiah rebuilt the walls in spite of the harassing attempts of the saboteurs to deter him. Paul pressed toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God.

If the writer to the Hebrews exhausted his words in listing the nobles of another day who had triumphed through faith, **“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:”** (Hebrews 11:32), what shall we say more than these few-mentioned illustrations of dauntless, determined *protagonists* {heroes} of the faith? The righteous are challenged by the fact that, **“...If God be for us, who can be against us?”** (Romans 8:31).

These are the kind of people from whom the LORD will not withhold His abounding blessings.

There are television programs on which amazing prizes are offered. The contestant is given a choice. When his selection is made, the director of the show will say to an assistant, *“Pull back the curtain and show him what he has won.”* It may be something quite insignificant even though there is much applause. Then, the director will ask his assistant to pull aside another curtain to show the contestant what he might have won. The audience gasps in amazement to see the lavish display of valuable items which might have been received had the better choice been made.

Earth's little day will be over shortly. When the curtain of *futurity* {a future event} is drawn aside, when we shall know as we are known, one wonders if the LORD of glory will not grant us to see what we might have had if the better choice had been made.

These greater blessings are placed within our reach. They are the result, not of a request, but a walk.

**For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. (Psalm 84:11)**

## Chapter XIV

### STEPS TOWARD THE FEAR OF GOD

**“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD...”—Psalm 37:23**

WHEN ONCE THE SIMPLE but profound truth of this statement is seen, the sincere cooperation of faith will send one down the highway of holiness. There will be inducement without insistence, encouragement without enforcement, constraint without *coercion* {forcing}—a strong but tender wooing of the heart of man by the Spirit of God. It is not gravitation of human affection but motivation of divine love. **“For the love of Christ constraineth us...”** (II Corinthians 5:14).

Nor does one lack direction. We are not left to decipher an intricate plan or to determine a possible course, nor yet to decide on a proper way. The steps are ordered of the LORD. And here is where we will find that **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”** (II Timothy 3:16), and, we might add, practical.

First, as the apostle Paul explains, Scripture is profitable for *doctrine*. This is the highway of Truth, and on it the LORD desires His people daily to travel. It is the course of obedience, of growth, of fruitfulness, of victory, of reward. It is the way of God's revealed will.

Next, all Scripture is profitable for *reproof*. Since there is a general tendency to veer from the course, reproof is preventively designed to restrain the *propensity* {natural tendency} of the believer. It is something of a “*red light*” or stop signal. And we are prone to forget, when willfulness takes precedence, that “*running the red light*” in the spiritual sense is in a real way more serious than doing so in the physical. In the latter instance, one falls into the hands of the law. In the former, into the hands of the LORD, and **“...whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth”** (Hebrews 12:6).

Then, all Scripture is profitable for *correction*. In this regard, we have the tender hand of love turning wayward feet back into the path of obedience. The design in view is fourfold:

1. To safeguard the testimony
2. To strengthen confidence
3. To increase devotion
4. To stimulate service.

And noteworthy is the stated fact that correction is for our profit and for our promotion in holiness, **“For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness”** (Hebrews 12:10). And the manner in which a good man's steps are ordered of the LORD becomes increasingly evident as we ponder the Scriptures. We meet such directives as the following:

**“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;”** (Hebrews 12:12). This calls for a renewal of service and a revitalization of devotion. Fallen hands and feeble knees are symptoms of a spiritual deterioration. This speaks of fainting hearts and drooping spirits—a *disinclination* {unwillingness} to **“...press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”** (Philippians 3:14). The Holy Spirit views this condition with concern. But this is not all that concerns Him.

**“...make straight paths for your feet...”** (Hebrews 12:13), the LORD further counsels. And why this? Because Christians are often enticed into by-paths where their *meanderings* {following a windy course} create a curvature of the testimony. But how can we make our paths straight?

In drill practice for novices, the commanding officer once lectured the guide for what he termed *“walking like a corkscrew.”* Then he instructed him to fix his eyes on a tree at the end of the field and march toward it. This is precisely the principle to keep **“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...”** (Hebrews 12:2). And, an important reason cited for a straight walk is the effect it has upon others. Weaker souls may be diverted through a poor example. And further:

**“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:”** (Hebrews 12:14). And how could the steps of men be ordered more commendably? The argument sometimes heard as to whether the word **“which”** refers to **“peace”** or **“holiness”** is utterly *futile* {useless} since both are in view. Peace is the product of justification, **“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:”** (Romans 5:1) and one will never see the LORD without being justified. Holiness is the nature of God of which one must be a partaker through regeneration or he cannot see the LORD, **“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature...”** (II Peter 1:4). So, sharing His peace and His holiness, the believer is commanded to walk accordingly. Then comes the next step:



**“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God...”** (Hebrews 12:15). In a gracious manner, the Holy Spirit is telling us here that we should always keep our eyes open as we walk, and that diligently. It requires this kind of alertness since we walk amid counterfeits and deception. A little more alertness with the people of Judah and their situation would have been different. Jehovah warned them that **“Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit...”** (Jeremiah 9:6), and that they did not heed the warnings indicated in the same verse which states, **“...through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.”**

Lack of alertness in the daily walk not only robs God of glory and the sojourner of grace, but it could foster bitterness that might result in many being defiled, **...lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;** (Hebrews 12:15). This could greatly disturb the peace and unity of the local church. Then, note the next step:

**“See that ye refuse not him that speaketh...”** (Hebrews 12:25). The point here of course is obedience to the LORD’S Word. It also infers that the Christian pilgrim should be in touch with his heavenly headquarters—always. It means that divine direction is indispensably necessary, for we will find with Jeremiah **“...it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”** (Jeremiah 10:23).

The text reminds us that they did not fare well who refused the voice of Moses who spoke on earth, and then emphasizes the fact that neither shall we fare well if we refuse Him that speaks from heaven. There must be willingness, desire and determination in ascertaining God's will for our daily procedure. Then there should be unqualified submission to His hand of correction when it is necessary for Him to impose it.

After calling attention to the fact that children do not develop disrespect for fathers who chasten them, the apostle asks the question, **“...shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?”** (Hebrews 12:9). That is, is it not infinitely better to let the LORD direct our steps even though it may involve firm discipline, and that without displaying irreverence or rebellion? This is but the reasonable attitude of a sincere believer, for such a course leads into a life of profitableness, pleasure and joyful prospect.

## **THE MATTER OF REPROOF**

**“For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not”** (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Thus, deterrents are an essential part of divine direction, and this is particularly the function of reproof.

THE ADVANTAGES OF REPROOF. By the very nature of the matter, there are many advantages. Chiefly:

1. Reproof is for *direction*. **“Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you”** (Proverbs 1:23). Here is direction by revelation through the Spirit, and this is exactly the manner in which God deals with His people today. However, such direction must be desired. **“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”** (Proverbs 3:6).
2. Reproof also leads to *wisdom*. **“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame”** (Proverbs 29:15). By divine assertion, **“Wisdom is the principal thing...”** (Proverbs 4:7). If the LORD did not curb the foolish tendencies of His people, none would be wise. And those who refuse reproof drift into vanity. The people of Judah are a convincing example, **“For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge”** (Jeremiah 4:22).
3. Reproof is advantageous for *understanding*. **“...he that heareth reproof getteth understanding”** (Proverbs 15:32). Wisdom and understanding are like Siamese twins in spiritual living. That is why, when informing us that **“Wisdom is the principal thing...”** the LORD quickly adds, **“...with all thy getting get understanding”** (Proverbs 4:7). Just as wisdom is necessary to appreciate knowledge, even so understanding is required to utilize wisdom.
4. Reproof also leads to *honor*. **“Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured”** (Proverbs 13:18). Honor is prominent in the promises of the LORD, **“...them that honour me I will honour...”** (I Samuel 2:30) was His word to Israel. It is just as valid today. As an incentive to obedience, sincerity and steadfastness in following Him, Jesus said, **“...if any man serve me, him will my Father honour”** (John 12:26). What honor can with this compare?

THE ADMONITION OF THE REPROVER. Just as correction is said to be for the Christian's profit, so is reproof. It is interesting and encouraging to note why the LORD issues His *admonitory* {warning} instructions.

1. He reproves to prevent error. **“He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth”** (Proverbs 10:17). What graphic diction! How consequential the information—the way of life, the way of error!

The Bible speaks of errors of the heart, errors of the head and errors of the feet. These errors are made only when the warning signals are ignored. Innumerable and unavailing are the pleas before the judge in traffic court that the signs were not seen. Many suffering the shipwreck of faith and facing eternal loss plead that they were not *cognizant* {aware} of error as failure, guilt and conviction tighten their grip upon the disillusioned heart. The Great Judge who will one day hear each case at the *bema* declares, “...**eyes have they, but they see not:**” (Psalm 115:5). The signs are all visible, and no one can be held guiltless who deliberately sins against light.

2. He reproves to prevent loss. “...**he that hateth reproof is brutish**” (Proverbs 12:1). This word “**brutish**” yields some interesting thoughts. It is the idea of “*wasting by burning.*” And what does one burn? Money? Stock certificates? Never! Why? Obviously because these have value. We only burn that which is worthless, and the *inference* {implication} is clear. Only those refuse divine reproof who misjudge its value. They disregard its meaning and purpose as they are propelled by driving urges into out-of-bound engagements.
3. He reproves to prevent death. “...**he that hateth reproof shall die**” (Proverbs 15:10). It is easy to understand how actual death could result from ignoring a warning sign, as, for instance, “*bridge out.*” But the reference cited seems to apply to a state of death in the spiritual realm while one is physically alive.

While this was alluded to in an earlier chapter, it is important enough to repeat, the Bible indicates there are at least seven ways in which one may be dead while one lives. Two references may suffice to *corroborate* {verify} this fact:

...**she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.** (I Timothy 5:6)

...**Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.** (Ephesians 5:14)

How frequently does a testimony suffer a mortal blow because Bible reproof is deliberately pushed aside. Church leaders are hard put these days to know the kind and extent of discipline to impose upon those who have run the “*red light*” and have brought reproach upon the cause of Christ. Reproof is designed to prevent such sad ends.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE REPROVED. It is not revealing anything of a surprising nature to state that no one enjoys being reproofed. But the Scriptures show at least two definite reactions.

1. First, an attitude of disesteem. “**They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof**” (Proverbs 1:30). Such an attitude can only *bode* {promise} ill for those

who hold it. To despise divine warning is to ignore both the omniscience and the sovereignty of Deity. It is to rely on imperfect human judgment which cannot suffice. It is to plunge into inevitable failure and loss.

2. Second, an attitude of disregard. **"...ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:"** (Proverbs 1:25). The implication here is that of willfully bypassing a barricade set up to prevent traffic from proceeding into a dangerous situation.

No motorist delights in meeting a barricade which presupposes a delay or a detour; but, when it is necessary for one to be established, it is both unwise and unlawful to ignore it. Yet God's people are so prone to set aside those prohibitions in His Word which hinder the fulfillment of personal desires. This is what accounts for so much individual sorrow, so much disturbed unity in the local church and such loss of effectiveness in Christian work.

And speaking of the steps of a good man being ordered of the LORD, it is interesting to observe how the various phases of divine correction and reproof direct his steps into the area of confidence. The word **"reproof"** is mentioned only once in the New Testament. The Greek word from which it is derived, however, is translated another time and is the word **"evidence"** in Hebrews 11:1. This word also leads to the word *"conviction,"* and this word *"conviction"* is part of a family of words meaning *"confidence."* Thus, reproof takes the obedient one through a narrow channel into an ocean of assurance:

*Confidence to plan, Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:* (Philippians 1:6)

*Confidence to pray, And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:* (I John 5:14)

*Confidence to trust, Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* (Hebrews 11:1)

*Confidence to live, Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:* (II Corinthians 5:6)

*Confidence to die, We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.* (II Corinthians 5:8)

How wonderful to move through earth's fading day with unshatterable assurance that all is well between us and the LORD. Then, how wonderful to reach the sunset with unwavering confidence. Following is a testimony in this regard. It is an excerpt from a letter written by the late Dr. Northcote Deck, a medical missionary to Guadalcanal, shortly before his decease:

*It is only a matter of a month or so when I can expect to reach journey's end. Once I realized any further public ministry was out of the question, I was able to sink back into the perfect will and peace of God. Friends write to me of the 'valley of the shadow,' but it is not a shadow but rather the gracious presence of the Saviour I can enjoy more than ever as I await His call. It is not suffering for I feel perfectly well apart from increasing breathlessness on the least exertion.*

*God has allowed very many wonderful experiences in sixty years of ministry, but this is something new, something intensely interesting as I quietly await the call to 'be with Christ, which is far better.'*

**The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.**

(Psalm 37:23)

## Chapter XV

### AN ALL-CONSUMING MATTER

**“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”—Ecclesiastes 12:13**

**“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended...”** (Philippians 3:13)

The author borrows these words from the beloved Paul as we reach this final meditation on a theme which not only has eluded the attention of most Christians, but which, in its oceanic depth and broadness, defies human comprehension.

Of one thing however, we may be most certain. The fear of God resolves itself into the practical import of a consciousness of the divine Presence. This has far-reaching connotations, and establishes a challenge of the first order.

The wise Solomon set himself to the task of determining whether or not one may be satisfied **“under the sun,”** or apart from God. He explored philosophy, pleasure and industry with all the ramifications thereof, but to no avail. He termed it all **“vanity.”**

His investigation once completed, Solomon called for an audience. Then he released his findings concerning the closest relationship a human can sustain to the Almighty. His report would not make the headlines in the daily papers. It lacks utterly the philosophical and the psychological components which attract the unbelieving *intelligentsia* {intellectual people of society}. It has little appeal for the indifferent, self-willed Christian. But wisdom expressed in human language could never be so weighty or so infinite in its importance. The greatest sage of all time emerges from his laboratory to make one of the most remarkable announcements the world has ever heard, and in the most amazing *brevity* {briefness}. It encompasses the whole of man's being—his mind, his emotions, his desires, his aims, his determination—then *predicates* {declares} success in every area upon one simple but profound prerequisite.

What would require libraries, involve deep theories and endless explanations for us to set forth, this *sagacious* {wise} spokesman for the LORD presented in six simple well-chosen words: **“...Fear God, and keep His commandments...”** (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

There it is, reduced to an irreducible minimum and applicable to every human soul. We need not complicate it with theological connotations. Nor need we over-simplify it to the point of inattention. We need but believe it and obey it and experience its abounding possibilities. And

let us be advised that it allows for no partial subscription to a creed, or a fractional devotion to a person, nor yet a limited dedication to a cause. It demands unqualified totality, a complete commitment. It calls for a placing at God's sovereign disposal the total facility, the total desire, the total willingness and the total determination.

This points in but one direction. It leads to absolute peace, to complete satisfaction, to abounding joy, to relaxed confidence and to exhilarating anticipation. The steps of development are first, a crystallization of Truth, second, a full resignation of will, third, final severance of vanity and fourth, a deep realization of oneness with God.

The **“whole duty of man”** therefore equates itself to an all-or-nothing attitude, an all-out endeavor to do the will of God. And it cannot be emphasized too strongly that His requirements are not impossible, nor even difficult. Further, it must be firmly settled that the LORD will never default in His precious promises. He is not only faithful but able to perform.

This is not only putting the business of living in proper perspective, but it allows for no alternative. This is the design of infinite purpose. It is without modification, adaptation, duplication or imitation. It provides for the solemnizing and stimulating awareness of the LORD with its limitless meaning and blessing.

Then the brilliant, Spirit-led researcher climaxed his conclusion with an authoritative, *sublimely* {completely} *succinct* {concise} assertion: **“This is the whole duty of man.”**

What is the **“whole duty of man?”** It is the overall area of his existence. It is the total outreach of his influence. It is the complete sphere of his activity. It is the ultimate precinct of his thoughts. This is comprehended in II Thessalonians 5:23, where the writer says, **“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** This is the inclusiveness of the divine purpose for the true believer.

Visionless Christians, immature and *ego-centric* {thinks only of oneself}, take one look at the standard of holiness and react as the murmuring Israelites in the wilderness. But why? Can someone explain to us why it is so universally difficult to step resolutely into the center of God's will? Why would anyone prefer to remain in spiritual infancy with its lack of enjoyment and absence of productive effort? Why does the challenge of holiness not register in the hearts of so many? Why would anyone choose to moan at the *wailing wall* of disillusionment later rather than walk the highlands of victory now?

Perhaps someone may ask how one can bring the whole duty of his being into proper focus with this divine plan. The answer is: He can't. This is the basic and precluding problem. It is a

matter definitely of trusting, of confident resignation, of allowing the great Potter to fashion the vessel as it pleases Him.

People receive new life through acceptance of Christ by faith, then attempt to improve their old life. They are constantly *trying*. They try to understand the spiritual in the light of the material, the sacred in the light of the secular. They try to correlate God's way with man's. They try to rationalize every stated injunction, all of which amounts to nothing more than picking a path through the jungle of reason. They never come out properly. Indeed cannot. They try to advance themselves without acknowledging and accepting Holy Spirit direction. They try to be good by adhering to a code of ethics, by conforming to a self-designed standard, by performing religious duties. This is what Solomon labeled "**vanity of vanities.**" It proves grossly disappointing sooner or later.

We are reminded of a case during the Civil War. A Confederate soldier had gotten lost from his regiment in a fierce conflict. He tried to subsist on berries and herbs for weeks. He feared to leave the dense woods lest he fall into enemy hands. When unable to hold out longer, he made his way tremblingly to a roadside and saw some Union soldiers. With uplifted hands, he at once attempted to surrender, only to be informed that the war had been over for days and there was peace. His fears were in vain; his starvation diet was unnecessary.

If only we knew the glorious meaning of the Saviour's victory at Calvary, that peace has been made for us, that we need not wander amid the thickets of confusion, frustration and misunderstanding, that we may enjoy here and now the full benefits of His victory! But how can it be made clearer?

*What more can He say than to you He hath said,  
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?*

Jesus once prefaced a stupendous announcement with these words, "**Nevertheless I tell you the truth...**" (John 16:7). Why did He find it necessary to explain that He, the very embodiment of truth, was advancing unadulterated veracity? Because men do not take His statements at face value.

For instance, how many honestly believe, without mental reservation, that, in this day of rampant sensuality and immorality, one may actually "**...reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God...**" (Romans 6:11)? Or that one may "**...Be ye holy; for I am holy**" (I Peter 1:16)?

The announcement Jesus was about to make in John 16 revealed that His ascension into heaven was to the advantage of the believer. He was going to send the Holy Spirit to be in and with the Christian, to make each operative and productive in spiritual enterprise. This puts within



the reach of faith the resources of heaven for the requirements of earth. This not only puts God into the life; it puts God over the life. Divine management then becomes possible in every department of the believer's being.

Thus, the Holy Spirit is in our day the Administrator of the divine economy. We deal with Him, else we are out of touch with heaven. We yield to His gracious promptings, or we submerge ourselves in the *futility* {uselessness} of self-will. We receive of His strength, or we remain impotent. Our eyes will be unopened; our minds unenlightened; our hearts unaffected; our feet unled.

The Holy Spirit operates among men and in men by empowering, directing and prospering. Where there is a lack of acquaintanceship with Him, there will be a lack of development through Him. Then *declension* {falling away} *ensues* {follows}—spiritual darkness sets in; the saints weaken; the Church limps and lags; and the unconverted plunge unchecked toward disillusionment and doom.

The Holy Spirit has power to regenerate, providing a new nature. He has power to sanctify, producing a new character. He has power to energize, promoting a new fruitfulness. He has power to illuminate, presenting a new vision. Yet, to the multitudes, this member of the holy Godhead is no more than a fantasy or a mere influence. We tremble at the consequences of inattention, indeed willful rejection, exhibited so prevailingly with regard to His presence and ministry. This can only invite sorrow, defeat and eternal loss.

We must learn, that to lay the groundwork for an out-and-out fellowship with God, there is no starting point without a willingness to dissolve all self-interest. Paul was willing to “...**count all things but loss...**” (Philippians 3:8) for the experiential knowledge of the Lord. This may sound terribly exacting to the unenlightened and to the self-centered, but it is the challenge of godliness. Faith must co-operate with the claims of the Spirit. This assures the most rewarding ends.

Then we will make God's Word the sole rule of our faith and practice. We will make God's glory our chief end in all actions. We will make it our endeavor to please Him at all times. We will make His will our strongest desire. We will make His designs our chief delight. We will be workers together with Him in a realistic way. Frequency of prayer, constancy of service and consistency of living will be the normal procedure. The activating factor will be need. The motivating factor, love. The stimulating incentive, hope.

Why should we make spiritual life and growth to be such an *insoluble* {mysterious} *enigma* {puzzle}? The principles and conditions of growth and development are clearly stated. We are told what the Christian should put off and put on; whom he should and should not follow; what he should desire and what he should not desire; what his associations should and should not be.

He is told to walk in the light, to follow peace, to try the spirits to see whether they be of God, to prove that which is excellent, to separate from evil, to honor the LORD, to rescue the fallen, to comfort the sorrowing, to help the needy, to search the Scriptures, to pray without ceasing, to rejoice in the LORD, to edify one another, to forgive, to assemble for worship, to watch for God's Son from heaven, and to keep ourselves in the love of God. This is the involvement of the **"...whole duty of man."**

This involvement calls for a fixing of one's affections on things above, **"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth"** (Colossians 3:2). This is total commitment to the sovereign LORD. This most certainly is what Paul meant in pleading, **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service"** (Romans 12:1). And, further, it would seem that this should be a definite, conscious crisis which one may look back upon, remembering that he, knowingly and willingly and completely, to the best of his ability and judgment, came to grips with the LORD and yielded control of his life to Him then and there.

With Peter, the point of full surrender arrived in a little ship in mid-sea. It was the grandest moment in the life of the apostle. This sturdy weather-beaten fisherman, in bent posture, was broken at the knees of Jesus. His bearded, upturned face was stamped with indescribable, gripping amazement, he pleaded, **"...Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord"** (Luke 5:8). He had followed and revered His Master for some two years, but now he gains a different perspective. Now he has witnessed something, sensed something, faced something which had never registered before. At once he became ready and willing to leave, not only his ship as before, but his all.

It was the sight of the Saviour's wounds for Thomas. It was the voice of the resurrected Christ for Mary. It was the temple vision for Isaiah. It was the ladder with the angels ascending and descending for Jacob. It was the loss of all things for Job. It was the question posed by the Captain of the LORD'S hosts for Joshua. But, whether in a ship, at a home, by a tomb, in the temple, in a dream, through great loss, or on a battlefield, there must be a point where the heart of the believer attaches itself to the heart of Christ with unwavering *fidelity* {loyalty} and earnest intensity, that is, **"...the whole duty of man."**

The *ether waves* {air waves} are filled with myriads of wave lengths of electrical vibrations, but they strike the ear with information and pleasure only when proper tuning of an appropriate facility is applied. Likewise, there is within the reach of every born-again person unspeakable riches of eternal value, to say nothing of the elevating awareness of the LORD himself, but only those whose hearts are tuned into the voice of the Holy Spirit, through thorough submission, will gain reception.

The conclusion of the **“whole matter”** about which Solomon spoke, when spelled out in practical terms, assures us that the *plus ultra* {the more beyond}, the abundant life, the victorious walk, is not empty speculation, nor yet a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow which cannot be grasped. It is not an elusive something which is theorized but never crystallizes. No, it is the promise of eternal verity that those who **“Fear God, and keep his commandments”** will walk, as did Enoch of old, with the God of all grace, have sweet intimate communion, know victory over the world, the flesh and the devil, stand steadfastly firm in the midst of prevailing frustrations, be joyfully fruitful in works of righteousness, and glorify God from whom all blessings flow.

This challenge to the **“whole duty of man”** is worthy of the most prayerful consideration. We are called upon time and time again in the New Testament to attach our heart's affection and desire to it, to believe that God means what He says, and will do what He promises. No true believer should settle for less. And there is a magnificent simplicity to it—**“Fear God, and keep his commandments.”** Then we may stand still and see the salvation of the LORD.

*We may trust Him fully, all for us to do;  
They who trust Him wholly find Him wholly true.*

*Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest;  
Finding as He promised, perfect peace and rest.*

Isaiah explained as he waxed eloquent in painting a promising prospect **“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”** (Isaiah 58:11). Paul expressed the same encouraging truth in these words, **“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,”** (Ephesians 3:20). What more need be said to capture the heart's full affection?

*I saw a life ablaze with God—  
I felt a power divine,  
As through an empty tent of clay  
I saw God's glory shine.*

*Then woke I from a dream and cried,  
'My Father, give to me  
The blessing of a life consumed  
That I may live for Thee!'*

It is a tender and telling fact indeed how Deity *condescends* {descends} to knock at the door of the human heart, how He calls for an audience, how He awaits to impart His Truth, how He

longs to bestow His blessings, how He desires to lead His children into the rich provisions of His love, and how imponderably sad that the hearts of men remain so adamantly unresponsive.

Solomon had scarcely emerged from his investigative endeavor to determine the course to man's best good and God's great glory until he called for an audience. **“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter...”**, he urged as he spoke with quiet assurance. He wanted everyone to know that he had found the way. He was *bent* {focused} upon informing all. And how did he summarize his findings? **“...Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”** This is what he wanted us all to hear, yet to his proclamation men have shown and are now showing either attention or inattention—largely inattention.

The seriousness of inattention inheres in three grim facts. Such bypass Deity, play with destiny and precipitate disaster.

But by careful and prayerful attention, there will be at least three commendable results. Such will enrich their lives, build up Biblical resourcefulness and please the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit is pleased, He will in one way or another manifest His presence.

Then the fear of God will no longer be merely theoretical or strangely *ethereal* {delicate}. Then the **“whole duty of man”** will respond with willingness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Then, as another has said, *“The mind will probe with delight the wonders of God's Word. The will will bend to its ultimatums. The emotions will dance to its music. The shabbiness of doubt will disappear, and God will be satisfyingly real.”* The life then will be in tune with the Infinite. This is the Fear of God.

**Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments:  
for this is the whole duty of man. (Ecclesiastes 12:13)**

## AN APPENDIX

That the roots of this subject are deeply embedded in the Sacred Writings, and that it infiltrates almost every aspect of divine instruction for the wellbeing of the true believer is suggested in the following *delineation* {descriptions}:

Fear of God and PEACE – **“And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.”** (II Chronicles 20:29, 30)

Fear of God and PURITY – **“And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always.”** (Deuteronomy 14:23)

Fear of God and POWER – **“That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.”** (Joshua 4:24)

Fear of God and PROSPERITY – **“Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.”** (Deuteronomy 10:20)

Fear of God and PROTECTION – **“And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.”** (II Chronicles 17:10)

Fear of God and POSSESSIONS – **“And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.”** (Deuteronomy 31:13)

Fear of God and PRESERVATION – **“And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.”** (Deuteronomy 6:24)

Fear of God and PRIDE – **“The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.”** (Psalm 36:1)

Fear of God and PRAISE – **“Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.”** (Psalm 22:23)

Fear of God and PITY – **“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.”** (Psalm 103:13)

Fear of God and PERFECTION – **“And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart.”** (II Chronicles 19:9)

Fear of God and PLEASURE – **“The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.”** (Psalm 147:11)

**“And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.”** (Luke 1:50)

Fear of God and PROFESSION – **“Then spake Solomon, The LORD said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.”** (I Kings 18:12)

Fear of God and PRIVILEGE – **“And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God:”** (Genesis 42:18)

Fear of God and PRUDENCE – **“And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.”** (Job 28:28)

Fear of God and PROWESS – **“Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:”** (Exodus 18:21)

Fear of God and PREREQUISITES – **“Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.”** (Deuteronomy 8:6)

Fear of God and POSTERITY – **“But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;”** (Psalm 103: 17)

Fear of God and PERPETUITY – **“That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy**

**son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.”** (Deuteronomy 6:2)

**“The fear of the LORD prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.”** (Proverbs 10:27)

Fear of God and PROSPECT – **“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.”** (Malachi 4:2)

As impressive and meaningful as the foregoing tabulation may be, give a cursory glance at these additional matters affected by this important but neglected truth:

Fear of the LORD and REJOICING – **“Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.”** (Psalm 2:11)

Fear of the LORD and HERITAGE – **“For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name.”** (Psalm 61:5)

Fear of the LORD and WORSHIP – **“O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.”** (Psalm 96:9)

Fear of the LORD and MERCY – **“For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.”** (Psalm 103:11)

Fear of the LORD and SAFETY – **“He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.” “Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth.”** (Psalm 115: 13; 15)

Fear of the LORD and FELLOWSHIP – **“I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.”** (Psalm 119:63)

Fear of the LORD and SATISFACTION – **“He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.”** (Psalm 145:19)

Fear of the LORD and CHOICE – **“For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:”** (Proverbs 1:29)

Fear of the LORD and SEPARATION – **“Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.”** (Proverbs 3:7)

Fear of the LORD and ENVY – **“Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long.”** (Proverbs 23:17)

Fear of the LORD and VANITY – **“For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.”** (Ecclesiastes 5:7)

Fear of the LORD and SINCERITY – **“Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.”** (Joshua 24:14)

Fear of the LORD and VICTORY – **“And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.”** (I Samuel 11:7)

Fear of the LORD and LEADERSHIP – **“The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.”** (II Samuel 23:3)

Fear of the LORD and INTEGRITY – **“But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.”** (Nehemiah 5:15)

Fear of the LORD and SATAN – **“Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?”** (Job 1:9)

Fear of the LORD and SEDUCTION – **“Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.”** (Deuteronomy 13:4)

Fear of the LORD and DELIVERANCE – **“But the LORD your God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.”** (II Kings 17:39)



There is an increasing challenge in this area of revelation. It would be impossible to conceive of richer matter for profitable meditation or more exhilarating refreshment for the soul. The following hints will furnish convincing substantiation:

The challenge of the fear of God – **“But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?”** (Luke 23:40)

The confirmation of the fear of God – **“Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?”** (Nehemiah 5:9)

The exhortation of the fear of God – **“O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.”** (Psalm 34:9)

The invitation of the fear of God – **“Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.”** (Psalm 34:11)

The enlightenment of the fear of God – **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”** (Proverbs 1:7)

The wisdom of the fear of God – **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.”** (Psalm 111:10)

The instruction of the fear of God – **“The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.”** (Proverbs 15:33)

The assurance of the fear of God – **“O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!”** (Deuteronomy 5:29)

The guarantee of the fear of God – **“Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.”** (Proverbs 2:5)

The confidence of the fear of God – **“In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.”** (Proverbs 14:26)

The refreshing of the fear of God – **“The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.”** (Proverbs 14:27)

The intimacy of the fear of God – **“The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.”** (Psalm 25:14)

The satisfaction of fear of God – **“The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.”** (Proverbs 19:23)

The consequence of the fear of God – **“And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.”** (Genesis 20:11)

The conclusion of the fear of God – **“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”** (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

Those conversant with the matter will soon discover that the **“Fear of God”** cannot be defined specifically, adequately or satisfactorily. What may be discovered, however, is that the whole interesting consideration resolves itself to a definite consciousness of the divine Presence in the daily life of a believer.

