

The Sovereign Grace Messenger

A Publication of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship

“THE LORD HATH PREPARED HIS THRONE IN THE HEAVENS;
AND HIS KINGDOM RULETH OVER ALL.”

Psalm 103:19

Issue 22

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NO FEAR

Mark Webb

“No Fear!” It’s a popular slogan seen bandied about on a line of tee shirts and athletic paraphernalia. It’s apparently intended to impress us with the bravado of the wearer. However, as is the case so much of the time with the slogans of this world, it speaks far more truth than what either the manufacturer or wearer intends!

Consider the flow of the Apostle Paul’s argument in the book of **Romans**. After an introduction, he begins in **Rom. 1:18** to declare the plight and problem of lost man. He’s guilty, says Paul, of suppressing the intuitive knowledge he possesses of his God and of seeking after the glory of a created thing instead of seeking the glory of his Creator. Further, he violates the internal, subjective testimony of his own conscience by committing the very acts that he condemns in others. Finally, the Jew, who’s been given the external, objective standard of God’s Law, fares no better in his conduct. Though he has received the Law and preaches the Law to others, he himself does not keep it. So, Paul, as a prosecuting attorney giving his closing argument in a court of law, summarizes the indictment hanging over the head of lost man beginning in **Rom. 3:9**. All men, without exception, have failed, falling short of the standard of conduct demanded of them by their Sovereign. Their conduct is deficient because of a deep deficiency of their own nature. Sin has infiltrated and contaminated every area of their lives—their throats, tongues and lips (**Vs. 13**), their mouths (**Vs. 14**), and their feet (**Vs.**

15). And note carefully the final, concluding, summarizing indictment of their condition in **Vs. 18**: “*There is no fear of God before their eyes*”! While others will, no doubt, be dealing in this issue with what constitutes the fear of God, it falls to me to describe its absence and negation. It appears to me that this lack of fear can be expressed by a denial of three essential things: God’s Presence, God’s Power, and God’s Provision.

Denying God’s Presence

Paul begins his summary by citing Scripture, most notably the first three verses of **Psalm 14**, to prove beyond question the universal sinfulness of man. However, he does not quote the very beginning of that Psalm. The passage actually begins with these words: “*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*” The sinful actions now described in the verses that follow are thus to be understood as flowing out of this basic denial.

I truly doubt that there are true atheists. It appears that man is “hard-wired” with an intuitive, inherent knowledge of his Maker. While it’s true that many assert that they are atheists, let them be in a life-threatening situation—such as a plane nose-diving towards the ground—and it’s amazing how quickly they repent of their conviction! Man, at such times, instinctively and reflexively cries out to the God Whose very existence he previously denied! The atheist’s claim to the non-

existence of God is merely an example of that suppression of truth Paul asserts in **Rom. 1:18**. It’s like a “Jack-in-the-box”: The truth of God’s existence keeps popping up and sinful man keeps pressing it back down.

While *true* atheists may not exist, the man who has no fear of God lives and conducts his life as a *practical* atheist. While he may allow for God’s existence, or may actually assert it, he lives in such a way as to deny it. One would think that one who believes in God would enquire after God and be concerned as to whether or not he’s pleasing or displeasing his God. Yet not so with the man with no fear of God. He conducts his affairs as if he can hide them as easily from God’s eyes as from his fellow man. He plays games with God. Like an actor assumes a role for a play or a movie, so lost man puts on a front and plays the hypocrite before His God, denying that all things are open and naked to the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.

The Bible contains many examples of such hypocrisy. Consider Achan’s attempt at hiding the forbidden items taken from Jericho; or Gehazi’s attempt at concealing his lie and greed in the matter of Naaman; or Ahab’s attempt at deception by switching armor with Jehoshaphat. The list goes on and on. The man with no fear of God suppresses what he knows deep within to be true: That God is always present and always sees!

continued next page



Mark Webb is pastor of Grace Bible Church of Olive Branch, Mississippi. He is an accomplished musician, composer and singer, as well as an able expositor of the Word of God.

Denying God's Power

Listen to the words of the repentant thief, rebuking his fellow thief, as they're being crucified on each side of the Savior: "*Dost thou not fear God?*" The answer is, of course, "No, he doesn't!" What an amazing thing! Here is a man, only a few hours from death, struggling for breath, using that breath, not to do business with God, but to cast insult and scorn into the teeth of Jesus! While the salvation of the repentant thief is a wonderful reminder of the possibility of a "death-bed conversion", the other thief illustrates the well-known fact that most men die as they live. They live a life of bravado, mocking death, sneering at judgment, joking about Hell, and they usually die with the same attitude.

The man with no fear of God loves to boast himself as a "self-made" man. He views himself as self-sufficient, needing nothing, the "master of his fate", the "Captain of his soul". He doesn't see himself as needing God's instruction or assistance. All he needs, so he thinks, is for God to get out of his life and just leave him alone. And—amazingly!—all the while he's making this boast he's using the very air that God has put into his nostrils!

Consider the fragility of man. He needs an environment tailor-made to his necessities or he cannot survive. He needs a certain temperature range in which to function; a certain composition of the atmosphere if he's to breathe; an ecosystem designed to provide a food and water supply; a climate conducive to the growing of crops, etc.

And, of course, there's my old favorite, atmospheric pressure. Yes, that's right, atmospheric pressure! Do you realize that if we didn't have the weight of the equivalent of about thirty inches of mercury pressing down on us constantly that our blood would evaporate and boil away in our veins? So much for man's vaunted self-sufficiency! What delicate creatures we are! What foolishness to imagine myself as having the ability to withstand my Maker!

Especially, a man with no fear of God thinks himself impervious to God's judgment and punishment. He imagines that, if there is such a thing as judgment, his wit and might that have served him so well in life will enable him to stand in that day. He imagines that his sin will never be discovered, or, if so, that sin will not be that serious a matter to his Sovereign. Scripture—the testimony of God—tells a quite different story! Many examples could be cited of those who seem to have gotten away with sin having their sins find them out in the final analysis. But what of those whose sins never seem to catch up with them in this life? In a few places Scripture pulls back the curtain to let us view the scene beyond the grave—*i.e.* the rich man of **Luke 16:19**, or the awful scenes of judgment in **Revelation**. God's Word assures us that those who seem to 'get away with it' here will one day be called into account. But the man with no fear of God lives as though life lasts forever, as if God's power and vengeance are but small things, and as if God's judgment will be a snap to overcome. O the sheer idiocy! What a fool I would be to think that my limited arm of flesh can prevail against the infinite Power of God, or that my wisdom can outwit Divine Omniscience!

Resisting God's Provision

Finally, we observe that the man with no fear of God has no use for the refuge God Himself has provided for sinful man in the Person and Work of His Son. "Faith"—that action of the soul whereby the sinner receives Christ as Lord and Savior—has a deep, intrinsic connection with a high view of God and a low view of man. The man who fears men more than God will not, nay, cannot believe the Gospel, according to the words of Christ (see **John 5:44**). The man whose heart is lifted up in pride and self-righteousness is simply disqualified from exhibiting that faith rooted in the soil of a humble heart (see

Luke 18:9-14). The fear of God and the corresponding humiliation of man's own self-exalting thoughts are the moral prerequisites of faith. Such comprises the soil from which saving faith springs! Man without fear of God and without the knowledge of his own spiritual impotency will not and cannot flee from wrath and avail himself of God's provision in Christ! Put another way, until we realize our lostness—the hopelessness of our condition and the helplessness of our case—we will never look to the mighty Christ Who alone is able to save.

Only a hundred years ago or so, a "Christian" was commonly identified and described by the society around him as "a God-fearing man". Such verbiage is seldom heard today. Nevertheless, it remains a true description of all who have put their faith in Christ. A Christian is a man who lives his life under the conviction of the above two things—God's Presence and God's Power. He is a man who realizes his sins cannot possibly be hidden from the scrutiny of an All-Knowing God. He is a man who realizes his need of a refuge from the coming storm of judgment and a shelter from the righteous wrath of his God. He is a man who, in the light of the above facts, realizes he is not able to save himself and desperately needs and seeks a Savior. He is a man whose eyes have been opened to take seriously the testimony of God found in His Word. He is a man who, being taught of God, realizes an astounding fact: All that power, all that omnipotence, that could have justly been arrayed against him, destroying him forever in Hell, has been exercised on his behalf to provide a remedy for his sinful soul. The "arm of the Lord" has been bared for him. A great work, an amazing work, an infinite work of redemption has been executed, providing an infinite remedy for his infinite need. And so, drawn by the Spirit, he comes to Christ, believes on Christ, and receives Christ—embracing and appropriating for himself this great salvation by faith. And it all begins with the "fear of God, the beginning of wisdom."

May I ask a question? What about you, my reader? Is your motto, when it comes to the things of God, "No Fear"? My prayer is that God would be pleased this very day to begin a good work within you—a work that replaces your attitude of "No Fear" with "Know Fear"!



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Missions and The Missions Editor

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship does not serve as a missions agency. *The Sovereign Grace Messenger*, the organ of the Fellowship, serves only as an informational organ for missions. The individual missionaries are members of local churches and are under the authority of the church to which they belong. Where for legal purposes in order to secure compliance with foreign governments missionaries must make use of agencies, they yet remain under the authority of the local church.

It is the desire of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship to provide a medium of information in order to promote support of sovereign grace missions and missionaries. To this end we deem it needful to have a missions editor who will be responsible for gathering and overseeing the information to be published.

Pastor Larry Dean of Bridgetown Baptist Church in Nesbit, Mississippi has accepted the position of Missions Editor. We welcome him to this position and are thankful for his willingness to serve. He is serious-minded and eager to work with those whose purpose is to spread "*the gospel of the grace of God*." Please read his message on page 7, titled "Greetings from the Missions Editor."

The Enduring Character of Godly Fear

Rodney A. Gray

“The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.” **Psalm 19:9**



Rodney Gray serves as pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of Hummels Wharf, Pennsylvania. He is also a conference speaker and writer.

It is well known that in **Psalm 19** the focus appears to suddenly shift from the **work** of God in **creation** to the **word** of the Lord in **revelation**. But it would be a mistake to assume that David has changed the subject. Instead, we recognize that he develops one theme with two branches. **The unifying theme is the godly man’s purpose to glorify God for his works and for his word.** David has brought together two strands of the theme of the glory of God that are very intimately related. Consider how David’s estimation of God’s **creative work** dovetails with God’s **revelatory word**. If both tell us something about the character of God, does one render the other superfluous? Wasn’t God’s revelation of his glory in the creation good enough? The answer is that it is good enough, but the problem is that man is not good enough. Sin has blinded our eyes so that we do not see what is in front of us (**II Cor 4:4**). Sin has spoiled our senses, faculties, and affections. Sin has corrupted our minds, poisoned our thoughts, and polluted our hearts. Because of sin our understanding is darkened (**Eph. 4:18**) and we cannot know the things of the Spirit of God (**I Cor. 2:14**). Sin has so ravaged our humanity that we have been left in a condition of total depravity (**Rom. 3:10-18**). No aspect of our humanity has escaped sin’s corrupting power.

What is the difference between what God reveals in creation and what he reveals in Scripture? The proclamation of God’s glory in the creation is sometimes called God’s “general revelation.” It is called “general” because it is of a general nature. It reveals the glory, the power, and the greatness of God. It is called “general” also because it has a “general” audience. According to the first part of **Psalm 19** it is universal in its scope and continuous in its duration. On this basis the apostle Paul insisted that God’s “*eternal power and divine nature*” have been clearly revealed in the creation, “*so that men are without excuse*” (**Rom. 1**). Every human being has sufficient reason to worship, serve, and glorify the Creator, yet everyone worships and serves the creation itself. This is why “*the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men.*” Creation proclaims the Creator in a way that ought to compel all men to worship him. But because of sin every person does the opposite and is therefore under the righteous judgment of God.

But this is where what is sometimes called “special revelation” comes in. This is what David begins to discuss in the second part of **Psalm 19**. This is where he speaks of “*the fear of the Lord.*” And it is what the apostle Paul set out to explain when he wrote his Epistle to the Romans. Special revelation is the revealed and written word of God. It is special because it has a special purpose. It reveals the way of life and restored fellowship with the Creator. It explains the way of salvation through faith in the person and work of God’s appointed Mediator. It is special also because it is for a special people, the elect people of God. Because of sin no one will ever come to know God through looking at creation. This is why God has given us a special revelation that explains what general revelation does not. The heart and soul of this special revelation is the gospel. It is the message that God has sent his Son into the world to save a people from their creature worship and make them worshippers of the Creator. Everything in the Bible is about Jesus Christ and how he

accomplishes this purpose of God. This also explains why David uses the name “*LORD*” when he discusses God’s written word. This is God’s covenant name, his saving name. It is his proper name, the special name by which he makes himself known to his people.

“The Bible teaches us that this is a God-created world. It follows from this that it is a God-related and a God-interpreted world.”

What this all means is that we cannot understand what God has done in creation unless we understand what God has said in revelation. The former can only be understood in the light of the latter. The former provides sufficient reason why we ought to be God-fearers, but the latter actually instructs us in the fear of the Lord. We know that David understood this because he wrote both parts of **Psalm 19**. Scripture is God’s special revelation that informs us about how the creation proclaims the Creator. We who are Christians are able to understand the world around us, not because we are all scientists in one area of specialization or another, but because God has given us new birth. He has opened our spiritual eyes and made us spiritually minded to be able to read his written word to find out what and how to think about his creative work. The Bible teaches us that this is a God-created world. It follows from this that it is a God-related and a God-interpreted world. This means that it is possible for a Christian to develop a well-rounded worldview because he understands these fundamental principles. We apply these principles to everything we find in God’s creation. It is the Bible that

assures us that the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows the work of his hands. Apart from the Bible and the Savior revealed therein we could not know this. The message of Christianity is that we must learn to see everything through the lens of God's written word.

The apostle Paul wrote to the church of God in Corinth that the world in its wisdom did not know God (**I Cor. 1:21**). Sadly, the wisdom of the world has become the dominant force in much that passes for Christianity at the present time. The natural man never has understood the things of the Spirit of God (**I Cor. 2:14**). While earlier generations were often characterized as "God-fearing people," the notion that God should in any sense be feared offends many contemporary churchgoers. The fear of the Lord is out of fashion because the Lord to be feared is out of fashion. This is the tragic result of modern man's thinking that what may have been important for King David in ancient times must sometimes give way to what is significant to the more sophisticated tastes of 21st century religion. But this is to reject both the word of God and the God of the word at the same time.

David declares in **Psalms 19:9**, "*The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.*" We immediately notice a sort of pattern in the way David has outlined his comments about the revealed word of the Lord. There is a series of six statements, each of which has three parts. Each statement begins with a designation of **what it is**, continues with a description of **what it is like**, and concludes with a declaration of **what it does**. In every sequence we are confronted with a different way in which God's special revelation is so special. We find in every case that it is exactly suited to our need. It is perfectly qualified to diagnose our problem and completely sufficient to give us the remedy. It tells us that we are creature worshippers who ought to worship the Creator. It tells us the one and only

way to be transformed from the former to the latter.

What did David have in mind when he described God's word in this particular way? To be sure, it is surprising to find "*the fear of the Lord*" in this series of descriptive statements. We usually associate fear with emotion, a subjective response to people or circumstances. But in this sense it may simply mean, "to be afraid" with or without good reason. But the fear of the Lord is not so defined. Generally this fear is the description of the inward response of the heart produced by the right reception of God's revelation of himself. Fear implies a desire to please the Lord and a dread of offending him. But since God must reveal to us how he is to be feared, David is perfectly justified in speaking of his revealed word as "*the fear of the Lord.*" God's revelation is **objectively true**, but it always demands a **subjective response**.

The Lord instructed Moses that when Israel became established in the land and asked for a king, the king would be required to possess and read a copy of the law so that he would know how to fear the Lord. "*It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere/fear the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees*" (**Deut. 17:19**). The same principle underlies other texts. "*Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord*" (**Psalms 34:11**). "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding*" (**Psalms 11:10**). "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline*" (**Proverbs 1:7**). "*The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor*" (**Proverbs 15:33**). So the fear of the Lord is put here for the word of the Lord, because the word of the Lord always calls for the appropriate response.

Not only that, the fear of the Lord is "*pure.*" There is no significant difference in meaning between this word and the word "*radiant*" in the previous statement, which some translations render as "*pure.*" This is a more common word, however, and it was often used to describe the purity of metals and the ceremonial cleansing of holy things. For example, the ark of the covenant was to be overlaid with "*pure gold, both inside and out*" (**Ex. 25:11**). Aaron and his sons were required to "*distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean*" (**Lev. 10:10**). David prayed that God would give him "*a pure heart*" (**Psalms 51:10**). We may conclude that God's word produces in us a reverence for him that is worthy of God himself. It is not an artificially induced response, nor is it a cowering dread that causes us to flee from his presence. The fear of the Lord is such that we are drawn to him in humble and reverent worship. God has made himself known to us in Scripture for this purpose.

But let us not forget the final part of this sequence. "*The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.*" This means literally that "it stands forever" or better still, "it is standing forever." The fear of the Lord never goes out of style. It does not change with the times. When it comes to God's revealed word and the response it requires of people, it is not subject to the likes and dislikes of the people to whom it is given. It stands on its own, and it stands forever. The psalmist said that "*the plans of the Lord stand firm forever*" (**Psalms 33:11**) and "*his righteousness endures forever*" (**Psalms 111:3**). These things are so because they are rooted and grounded in the very character of God. The fear of the Lord is essentially the right knowledge of him, a knowledge that he grants to us through his special revelation. If the Lord himself endures forever, so must the fear of the Lord endure forever.

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The Quilt Project

The Quilt Project was begun under the leadership of T..... J..... to help Indonesian women who confessed faith in Christ and as a result lost the support of their Muslim families. They make high quality quilts, such as would sell at much higher prices in the U.S. If you are looking for a high quality quilt, this would be a way to help support these converts as well as obtain a fine hand-crafted quilt.

Information on quilt designs, sizes and prices may be obtained by contacting Jeannie Henry in St. Louis, Missouri at (636) 677-6241 or emailing her at bbcinstl@aol.com.

Editorial: True Assurance or Carnal Security?

Ron Staley

To some it would seem that “*the fear of God*” should end when one is brought to the assurance that he is “saved, sure, and on the way to heaven.” It is for sure that when one is truly brought to own his sin against God, and becomes convinced that God is absolutely right in judging him for his sins and consigning him to “*everlasting punishment*,” a reasonable fear of death and hell will seize him. God is holy and we are sinners. God is a God of just judgment and we are in His hands to do exactly as He will with us. But when the sinner truly hears and believes the gospel, he gives up any thought of merit and puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God. He looks only to the Christ who was for sinners slain and rests in Him and His “*finished*” redemption alone. Then the believing sinner may have a proper assurance that he is reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

To the one thus brought to trust Christ alone, understanding that Christ crucified is the only basis upon which God receives him, relief comes from this tormenting fear of God. John Newton expressed this great truth in his famous hymn, “Amazing Grace,” when he wrote, “Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, - And grace my fears relieved; - How precious did that grace appear - The hour I first believed.” But the fear that comes from great dread should not be confused with the totality of “*the fear of God*.”

Godly fear and genuine faith operate together and are never at odds with one another. They are friends, not enemies! This is the reason for ongoing repentance from sin, which always accompanies genuine saving faith in Christ. There can be no true faith in God without some knowledge of Him. And one thing we must know about Him is that He is absolutely true. God is true in all that is revealed about Him, and true in doing exactly what He says He will do. This realization comes when one is convinced he has sinned against God, that sin bars him from God, and that God’s wrath is set against him. The writer of **Psalm 90** expressed this truth, saying, “*Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*” It is this very fear of God, knowing He is holy and we are sinners, that puts us in the position of hearing the good news that He has done for us in Christ what we could never do for ourselves. A fear of dread takes possession of our hearts in conviction. But because God is absolutely true, and we believe this, we are in the position of knowing that He is true in all He says. We may thus also absolutely rest in the promise that if we “*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*,” that is, if we truly put our trust in Him, we are forgiven of all transgression and given the never-failing promise of eternal life (**1 John 2:25; 5:13**).

Thus, it is “*the fear of God*,” in the firm conviction that He is absolutely true, that replaces the fear of dread and causes us to realize that God has brought peace between Him and us. So the Psalmist could write: “*But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared*” (**Psalm 130:4**). The fear of dread is gone but “*the fear of God*” remains. Because God has put His fear in our hearts that other fear, the fear of dread, is cast out.

In the Old Testament, the saints are typically characterized as those who “*fear the LORD*,” that is, Jehovah. The evidence that this fear was actually in them is a simple one, which is expressed in the well-known verse, “*Fear the LORD, and depart from evil*” (**Proverbs 3:7b**). As a matter of fact, this fear is often described by its activity, as in **Proverbs 8:13** – “*The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and*

the froward mouth, do I hate.” But this is not a characteristic that pertains only to the Old Testament saints.

In **Jeremiah 31:31-34**, God gave both the promise of a New Covenant and the substance of which it would consist. In this passage, God promised to put His law in the “*inward parts*,” and gave the covenantal blessing that He would be the God of all those under this covenant, who would know Him in the complete forgiveness of sin. Within the context of this covenant God gave a great promise, “*I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me*” (**Jeremiah 32:40b**). Quite possibly, this is the spring from which the Apostle Paul writes, “*(W)ork out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*” (**Philippians 2:12b-13**).

No one is saved unless God works in him or her, and it is clear that God puts His fear in those who are saved. True assurance can then only be in what God does and not what we do. This involves both the beginning of salvation and its outworking. We are never to trust our works but to trust Christ alone; and if we believe and trust Him, His fear has been put in our hearts and we shall not depart from Him. Salvation is not a one-time thing of the past but an ongoing process. It will not be completed until the redeemed are conformed to the image of Christ.

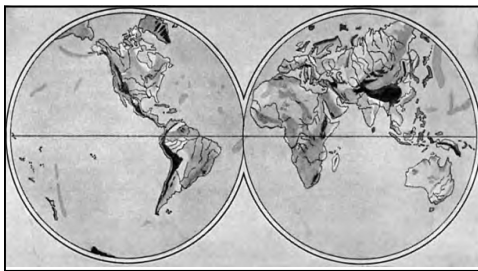
One popular method of modern evangelism is to appeal to the desire to gain assurance of going to heaven. The great problem here is that it centers one’s attention upon self and gives him an easy way to have “the assurance of salvation.” After a short appeal and a prayer one may be “saved, sure, and on the way to heaven.” Or so he is told!

Now it is for sure that there is a proper self-interest, since God has put within us the strong desire for self-preservation. After all, the Lord said, “*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*” But even in this context the Lord is teaching that if one would keep his soul he must lose his life for Christ’s sake. His life as it has been in this world must go (**Matthew 16:24-25**). Christ must become his all in all. Self-interest must give way to self-denial. But if one’s desire is simply to have assurance of going to heaven, while self-interest remains his rule of life, he fails to understand the real problem.

The penitent David expressed the problem clearly when he confessed, “*against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.*” The most horrendous thing about sin, and the reason for death and hell, lies not in what we have done to ourselves but what we have done against God. The only reason we are “*undone*” is because of what we have done God-ward. And “*the redemption that is in Christ*” does not stop with forgiveness of sin and the assurance of a home in heaven. Christ died for sinners in order to bring them to God (**1 Peter 3:18; Revelation 5:9**). To the forgiven and reconciled sinner, God gives His never-failing promise – “*I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*”

Thus, any so-called ‘salvation’ that promises assurance of heaven while leaving one to live a worldly life and follow a course of self-determination offers but a vain hope. Carnal security is the only proper term for that kind of self-assured, self-satisfied and self-centered ‘salvation.’

- Editor



Greetings from the Missions Editor

I am happy to have been asked to serve as the Missions Editor for *The Sovereign Grace Messenger*. I will be attempting to keep you updated on the missionaries about whom you have been reading in previous issues of the *Messenger* as well as new missionaries with whom I become acquainted. It will be my purpose to present only such men as might be considered for support by our member churches. This means that I will be telling you about individuals who share our common perspectives on the gospel, the Sovereignty of God, church order and such issues.

Obviously, my exposure to new individuals will be limited and I will have no way to know all of the details of their lives and no way to fully 'vet' them for your consideration. So please understand that, apart from those who have been endorsed by member churches of the SGBF, their inclusion here should in no way be considered an endorsement either by myself, *The Sovereign Grace Messenger*, or the SGBF proper. If I include at any point a missionary concerning whom you may have concerns or reservations, your comments and suggestions are always welcome.

You may reach me by e-mail at larrywdean@aol.com. Please include something about missions or *The Sovereign Grace Messenger* in the subject line so that your e-mail is read for sure. My phone number is **901-359-5320** and my address is:

Larry W. Dean
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Ups and Downs in Guyana

The work of John and Kathy Hunter



Our first update is from John Hunter, who is serving in Guyana, S.A. at the present time. John and his wife, Kathy, are ministering there for one year to give a sabbatical for Bro. Katryan, the missionary who has been serving there for a long time.

A synopsis of the past month

“This has been a month filled with ups and downs. The biggest down was a break-in at the Katryan's new home. At first when I entered the home it looked like the place had been torn to pieces but on closer examination as I helped the investigator, it became apparent that the mess was repairable and cleanable and losses less than expected. The break-in was apparently drug addicts with little sense of what was of real value. Another down included major power outages for up to 12 hours at a time that continued for about 2 weeks. The biggest up was a "Thanksgiving Service" at the Ricshaw Shampersaud's where the Lord allowed me to preach an evangelistic message to over 200 friends, family and acquaintances. All but one of the men from the Pastors' Training Class were present and four were involved in the service. We also had several Birthday Thanksgiving Services with lovely meals included with a brief time of thanksgiving for the birthday person.”

Bro. Hunter reports that the churches continue to do well but that he struggles with the prevailing apathy and casualness of the culture, which affects the churches as well. He continues to be encouraged with the men he is training in the pastor's school.

Bro. Hunter offers the following comments concerning the immediate future. “We have about 6 months left on our initial 15-month commitment and are looking for the Lord's direction. We have been asked to continue here but there are some real needs at home that need to be addressed. Kathy may have to have knee surgery--the years are catching up with us. Matthew and the girls are also anxious to have us return. Our home Church is still without a full-time Pastor. Please pray with us about all of these needs and the Lord's direction.”



John & Kathy Hunter

Contact Information

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Challenged but Progressing in Papua, New Guinea

A report on the work of T..... J.....



T..... J..... reports that the work on the new house among the Korowai is nearing completion. He writes: “The house is 80% finished and 90 % paid for. Building a house within an 8 month period in the middle of nowhere (a hard feat requiring heli and plane transport because the nearest open airstrip is 4 days hike through muddy trails) is a logistical nightmare – but is being steadily accomplished through your support.”

He and T..... are recovering from their recent illnesses although there are lingering effects, especially with T..... who is suffering joint aches and pains from the severe sickness she endured. “We are all healthier and T..... is almost healed. We are battling the feelings of missing home and longing to see leaves turn red and orange and all flamey...but, alas, green, more green and mud-colors predominate here (we got the Papua blahs)...”

The little girl they have temporarily ‘adopted’ is doing much better. “This week Pulong, the sick tribal baby (about 2 and ½ years old) waked for the FIRST TIME EVER! She was very unsteady at first and now goes all over the house and plays with Alethea, our 18 month old. She went from death’s door to being a playful little baby in about 4 months – PRAISE GOD for these small victories!” She has recently had surgery to hopefully correct some of the damage to her colon that her illnesses have caused. Pray for the little one that she might enjoy a full recovery.

T..... And T..... are still looking forward to a sabbatical break in 2009/2010 and are hoping that they can arrange to meet sponsoring churches in group meetings to avoid the grueling task of trying to meet each one separately. T..... has asked me (the editor) to help arrange such meetings. If you would like to host one of these, please contact me or T..... well in advance of the fall of 2009. Currently they are planning a trip to West Java in January and February for some important meetings there.

Here are some items from the last Missions letter from T.....

Guiding principles: “Reaching the Lost to Reach the Lost.”

This is one of World Team’s mottos. We are out to make disciples that will make disciples. More biblically, we want to follow the pattern of the Apostle Paul in **II Timothy 2:2**: “*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*” We merely do not want to pastor or plant solitary churches; the mission resources of the Western world are far too few to reach the world that way. As well, this fails to raise up local leadership in the way we would like to see. We want to engage in multiplication efforts that will pass the baton of leadership to others and enable them to take up the work as well.

The GIDI church

The indigenous vehicle that I am partnering with is the GIDI church. Gereja Injili di Indonesia, The Evangelical Church of Indonesia, consists of the following:

- 754 jemaat (congregations) among 58 klasis (church groupings) within 8 Wilayahs (regional districts),
- 970 pastors and 40,703 evangelists serving over 337,000 church members,
- 12 Bible schools in local languages and 4 Indonesian-language Bible schools,
- GIDI churches and evangelism posts now spreading across all of Indonesia to include Lampung, and Java,
- And even some international efforts in New Guinea, Australia and Israel.

The Korowai

One of GIDI’s top missionary efforts at present is the remote Korowai tribe. The GIDI efforts have faced many challenges and setbacks. GIDI has helped to open several villages, has placed evangelists in these villages and has begun the evangelization process among the Korowai. This has been hard work with short supplies, and many health and personnel setbacks have occurred. Evangelists have been medically evacuated due to sickness, have nearly died, have lost children, and have persevered under trying conditions. Just last month, one of our most faithful evangelists, Koiles Kogoya, almost died of untreated TB and then 3 weeks later his wife nearly succumbed to malarial symptoms as well.

The Challenges

The educational level of some of the evangelists represents a major challenge. Cultural blind spots occur as well and hinder the work (the GIDI evangelists are all Lani highland tribespeople, whereas the Korowai are lowland tribespeople with widely varying cultures). The Lani evangelists, too, experience culture shock and culture stress – it is not just something that T..... and I suffer from.

Pray for us as we try to bless the Korowai people through blessing GIDI.

Contact Information

Sending Church

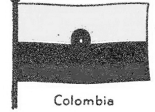
Picture, contact information and sending church removed for security reasons. For further information, contact the Missions Editor.

T..... & T..... J.....



Terrorism Scare Reminds of the Dangers Amidst Mission Work in Columbia

The Paris Family in Columbia



The Scare

Luis Paris writes: "We had a little scare Friday afternoon that put us on edge. The city of Manizales DAS (Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad) office, which is equivalent to the FBI in function, is one block from the study center, 2 and a half from our apartment, and 2 blocks from the kids' school. There have been several terrorist attacks using bombs and car bombs to these offices in different cities throughout Colombia in the last few weeks. A car bomb in Cali killed 4 people and injured 26 not too long ago. I had just finished praying with Javier and we were about to begin our Bible Study when we heard what sounded like a bomb go off. I ran to the back balcony with Javier to look toward the DAS building to see what was going on. Another bomb like sound went off with a couple of rounds going off as well and about 5 officers ran out on the roof top with automatic weapons and others posted themselves at the windows of the 5 story building and they cocked their weapons and positioned themselves in defense position. From the study center's balcony we had the best view of the whole thing. I quickly jumped back in the study center with Javier as we were sure bullets were about to fly all over the place. I called Angela who was at the apartment (just 2 blocks away) and she heard the noise as well and was pretty scared as the kids' school is also only 2 blocks from this government office and she could see kids playing outside the school building. We were both bracing for anything. Angela had a small view from the apartment since she was high enough to see the roof top of the DAS building. Javier and I watched and waited the whole thing out. No other noise was heard and everything seemed to be under control for the next 20 minutes. It turned out it was only a drill! It was a pretty realistic drill with blanks fired and controlled explosions going off. They did a similar drill in the Bogot DAS office last week to prepare for any attack and in that drill they did not even warn the office workers. A couple of people had to be hospitalized because they suffered panic attacks. Thank God we didn't suffer a panic attack but it was a very tense situation for about 30 minutes. God bless all of you and keep praying for the ministry here."

The Study Center

Luis reports that they have unpacked and moved into their new home. It is within walking distance of most things they need and is near the Study Center they have recently opened to the public. "We opened it Monday September 15th. We are very excited to finally have it open for inquirers and believers to come and get acquainted with us and the ministry project we have been led to start. There are still many things to do and buy but we thank the Lord that little by little we are able to get things done. We thank God for those who gave special offerings for the Study Center. We were able to buy some books and a large amount of Bibles which we hope will arrive within the next couple of weeks."

"Continue to pray that God will bless our efforts in His Name. At times it is easy to get discouraged as we wait for the fruit to appear."

By HIS Grace and for HIS Glory,
Luis Paris



Luis, Angela, Lydia and David

BLOG
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Support Address

Central Missionary Clearinghouse
PO Box 219228
Houston, TX 77218-9228
(281) 599-7511

Sending Church

Fair Grove Baptist Temple
(417) 759-9092
Pastor Al Garard
www.fairgrovebaptist.com

Return to the Caribbean

The Work of Daniel Parks

We have a note from a dear brother, Daniel Parks who is returning to a location where he ministered a number of years. After serving as pastor of Redeemer Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky he now returns to the Caribbean where he formerly served from 1979 to 1993.

He will be ministering in St. Croix (pronounced 'Croy'), teaching in the church for the time being, hoping to establish a pastor's school and a radio ministry. And he hopes to be able to do some writing for a local newspaper, a ministry which had good results in his previous time in the islands. His desire is to strengthen the Sovereign Grace work in the area. We hope to be able to give a fuller report in the next issue.

Currently he is attempting to sell his home in the states and awaiting the birth of his second grandchild, due December 31. Pray for him and his family.

Caribbean Mission

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New Church Planting Work in Malawi

The Burden of Victor Maxson



I (missions editor) recently made the acquaintance of Victor Maxson, a young man who is burdened for the people of Malawi Africa. He is from a Sovereign Grace church in Florida. Bro. Victor recently finished a deputation trip and is now preparing to head to the mission field. His father has served as a missionary to Malawi for some years and God has burdened the heart of this young man and his wife to return there to serve alongside his father in the work.

“We plan to join my parents in November 2008 and work with them as a ministry team in the city of Blantyre, where they relocated in September, planting a new work. Several college students in Blantyre have embraced God's sovereign grace and formed a fellowship. From this fellowship Chichiri Reformed Baptist Church has sprung. We are looking forward to serving in this context!”

“Our vision is to see the gospel of our sovereign Savior heralded in Malawi. We desire to plant churches where the cross of Christ is preached and the Biblical family is given its proper place. “



Victor, Bethany & Hannah

To contact Victor about the work in Malawi, please use the following email:

victorwmaxson@gmail.com

Donations may be made to their sending church:

Faith Baptist Tabernacle
P.O. Drawer A
Williston, FL 32696



India: Great Need from a Costly Stand

The Ministry of Joel Saripalli



Greetings to all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. My name is Joel Saripalli, a native born Indian, serving the Lord along with my wife, Gaynor, and our four boys, Conrad, Cameron, Christian and Carlton, in the country of India since 1991.

The Lord has been gracious to us in our ministry for the past 18 years in using us and allowing us to witness the salvation of thousands of repentant sinners from all walks of life, Hindus, Muslims, Nominal Christians, Witch Doctors, Black Magicians, Terrorists, etc. God's grace has also enabled us to start 17 local churches over the past 18 years in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Orissa.

India is the world's largest country with a population of over 1.2 billion and even if we put a million missionaries on the mission field in this country, there would still be room for more. You see, our people here have never heard of the Grace of a Sovereign God, whose love surpasses all their sins. People here are addicted to religion and superstition, struggling all their lives in order to find

release from their burden of sin. As did Pilgrim! In trying to find rest for their soul and forgiveness of sin, they go to extremes of even putting their bodies through physical pain. Their fatalistic religions have led them to fatal consequences.

By the awesome grace of God, the Lord saved me in 1980, when he opened my understanding to the fact that I was a sinner and that Jesus Christ became the supreme and sufficient sacrifice, in offering Himself for my sins upon the Cross and that He was buried and rose again. To come to the knowledge of an Eternal God and His Son Jesus Christ in a pagan land, is the greatest blessing I will ever know.

It was also by His grace that the Lord called me to serve Him in India in 1986. Soon thereafter, I went to Dallas, Texas, where I received formal training in Biblical Studies. After my graduation in 1991, we returned to India where we have proclaimed the Gospel, established churches, trained 20 native preachers, translated Scriptures and other Christian literature into various

languages in order to help the believers grow, broadcast the Gospel over a Hindu T.V. channel and reach some of the most remote parts and forgotten tribes of India with the name of Jesus.

Along with the blessings on the ministry, the Lord has also blessed our personal Spiritual growth through the years. I was trained at a freewill, dispensational college in Texas, but through the years the Lord had opened my eyes to understand that Salvation was wholly by His Grace and according to His Purpose alone. And also allowed me to see the dangers of Dispensationalism.

This led to my departure from Freewill Dispensationalism and I embraced the Doctrines of Grace, which brought my family and our ministry under severe criticism. This led to all of our former churches dis-fellowshipping with us. We had 40 churches who used to support us at \$ 3,500 - per month and over the past few years we've lost all of our support.

However, we praise the Lord in that He is a faithful God. In due course, the Lord brought the paths of Pastor Ovid Need and mine to cross. Pastor Need and the church he pastors, Providence Baptist Church, in Baker, West Virginia, were very burdened for the work in India, when they came to find out about all that transpired. This led to Providence Baptist Church becoming our sponsoring church. You may find out more details regarding this at www.biblicalexaminer.org.

If any of you would have me come and personally present our work in India to your church, kindly inform me at joelsaripalli@msn.com. Lord willing, I will be in the U.S. from December 2008 to February 2009 and I ask you my fellow brethren and churches to prayerfully consider our ministry here in India, as we are in great need of financial support. We are burdened to get the T.V. ministry back on its feet. The T.V. ministry reaches over 7 million homes.

We are also in desperate need of a four-wheel vehicle, which will allow us to go into the mountains and reach many other tribes and hill settlements. Thank you so much for your precious time. May God bless you and impress upon your heart the need we have in India in order to continue serving Him among our people.



Joel, Gaynor, Conrad, Cameron, Christian & Carlton

Prayer and Contact Information for Other Missions

Gospel Light Foundation for the Blind, Inc.

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Email: ministries@glfb.org Website: glfb.org

Paul Karstens in South Africa
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Gifts channeled from the U.S. through:
Grace Baptist Church
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Milton, PA 17847

Dr. Bob Doom and Global Baptist Mission

Russian Bible Society, Director
PO Box 6068
Asheville, NC

Bill and Jennifer Hale in Columbia

First Baptist Church
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Website: www.thechurchofmercy.org

Pat Horner in India

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Danny Roten in Mexico

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Prem Waghmare in India

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Kyle White, in support of struggling churches in Siberia

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MISSIO DEI

WHOSE MISSION IS IT ANYWAY?

T..... J.....*

The Bible's grand narrative is of a sending God, who has sent His Son and whose Son now sends us.

Missions is not merely something that God's people do. Hear this! It is not "all about us." Missions is something God does. It is the movement of God in history. It is His self-revealing in love to the world.

He is, after all, the one constant. Just read a missions history book. Man passes from the earth like grass. Like vapor. Walter C. Smith aptly summarizes the human condition this way, "We blossom and flourish like leaves on a tree...then wither and perish – but naught changeth Thee". We are but supporting actors.

We are extras called in to better display the character of the lead starring role. God, who is the author of the production, is Himself the main character. It is our purpose to magnify Him and His work. God is that main missionary. Our missionary God gets all the glory. **Revelation 7:10**, "*Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.*"

Two things I desire to write:

First, God is not following our lead, but is leading us. Let us not think we are doing grand things for God in going forth into the fields. God is doing grand things by leading us and allowing us a part.

Second, God is not a God who is merely engaging in missions. God is, on the contrary, a missionary God. Missions is not merely one activity that our God engages in; it is a characteristic of His very Being.

First, God is not following our lead in this thing. He is out front.

If missions depended upon us, what a pitiful state! What a pitiful God! If God were waiting for us to move, the situation would be hopeless.

*Removed for security reasons, see page 8

“Not only is God a God who does missions, God is a God who is missionary. The very being of God, after all, throbs with a missional pulse, a constant willful self-revealing of His glory. God delights in blessing the nations and in spreading his glory.”

I once heard a Baptist missionary proclaim that God needed us to save the heathen. He stated that the salvation of those who had never heard rested upon us. God actually could not fulfill His plans unless we went in obedience to his Great Commission command of "Go." Never mind that the main command of the Great Commission is not "go" at all. It is to "disciple" as we go. Never mind this man's bad exegesis, this man's theology made God an impotent fool.

God is not frail. He marches on. To His own drum. Generation after generation God's glory is being spread forth. His wonderful name is reaching the last jungles of Irian Java, and will yet reach the deserts of Arabia.

From the capable and rich pen of Isaac Watts (based on Psalm 72):

"Jesus shall reign wher'er the Sun,
doth its successive journeys run.

His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more."

When a church sends a missionary, God is

not in their debt. God is pleased when someone steps out in service to Him. God is not pleased, however, in the way that a losing general in wartime is pleased to have more reinforcements to bolster his failing defenses.

The church that sends a missionary is merely repeating what God has already done. God is the Sending God. "*Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*" (**John 20:21**). Worshipping this God, we become a sending people.

Second, missions is not activity but very being for God.

God is the first and greatest missionary. As one writer put it, it is not so much that God has a mission for His church. On the contrary, God has a church for His mission. God is the one who does mission. We are not even so much "doers" but "witnesses" (**Acts 1:8**) to what God is doing.

Not only is God a God who does missions, God is a God who is missionary. The very being of God, after all, throbs with a missional pulse, a constant willful self-revealing of His glory. God delights in blessing the nations and in spreading his glory.

Why else did God create the world? Out of loneliness? God forbid! His love bubbled over and could not be contained. He is the All-glorious. He created the universe as a stage to display that glory.

His being is also Trinitarian – a Trinity that sends and is sent. God the Father sent the Son and the Father and Son together sent the Spirit. Missionary work has a Trinitarian basis! God is a missionary who loved His people, incarnated Himself to pursue and even sacrifice His life for His People and now has sent His Spirit to indwell this same People.

Praise God! We can even participate!

Though it is God's mission, He gives us a part. He has won the victory, but allows us to tread Satan under our feet.

It is as if a parent has killed a snake loitering on his front door and then given the stick to his young child to take a few whacks at it. “Good job...” and that is how the child learns obedience. Though the parent is the one who has accomplished the final victory, that parent is pleased to include the child who is loved, for the pleasure of the parent and the furtherance of the teaching of the child.

God has conquered through the sending of his Son and now sends us to gather the spoil. God has done mighty works, and He is pleased to place us so that we may see his mighty works and even take part in them. Through God’s inclusion of us into His own mission, we learn more about Christ, the Sent one, as we are being sent out.

God has, by the death of His Son, reconciled the world unto Himself, and now sends us forth, having given to us the ministry of reconciliation. (**II Corinthians 5:19**)

Thank you Lord for allowing us to reap the fruit of your labors.



A Childlike Trust in God

(Excerpted from “What Early Christianity Was Like”)*

To the early Christian, trusting God meant more than a teary-eyed testimony about “the time I came to trust the Lord.” It meant believing that even if obedience to God entailed great suffering, God was trustworthy to bring a person through it.

“A person who does not do what God has commanded shows he really does not believe God,” Clement declared. To the early Christians, to claim to trust God while refusing to obey Him was a contradiction (**1 John 2:4**). Their Christianity was more than verbal. As one early Christian expressed it, “We don’t speak great things—we live them!”

One distinguishing mark of the early Christians was their childlike, literal obedience to the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. They didn’t feel they had to understand the reason for a commandment before they would obey it. They just trusted that God’s way was always the best way. Clement asked, “Who then is so irreverent as to disbelieve God, and to demand explanations from God as from men?”

They trusted God because they lived in awe of His majesty and wisdom. Felix, a Christian lawyer in Rome and a contemporary of Tertullian, put it this way: “God is greater than all our perceptions—He is infinite, immense. Only He truly understands His true greatness; our hearts are too limited to really understand Him. We are making a worthy estimation of Him when we say that He is beyond estimation.... Anyone who thinks he knows the magnitude of God, diminishes His greatness.”

The supreme example of their absolute trust in God was their acceptance of persecution. From the time of the Emperor Trajan (around A.D. 100) until the Edict of Milan was issued in 313, the practice of Christianity was illegal within the boundaries of the Roman Empire. Being a Christian was a crime punishable by death. But the Roman officials didn’t generally hunt out Christians. They ignored them unless someone formally accused a person of being a Christian. As a result, persecution was intermittent. Christians in one town would suffer horrible tortures and death while Christians in a nearby area would be untouched. It was totally unpredictable. Yet, every Christian lived daily with a death sentence hanging over his head.

The very fact that Christians were willing to suffer unspeakable horrors and to die rather than disown their God was, next to their lifestyle, their single most effective evangelistic tool. Few, if any, Romans would die for their gods. There had to be some substance to Christianity if it meant so much to those who practiced it. In fact, the Greek word for “witness” is martyr. Not surprisingly, this is also the Greek word for “martyr.” In many places where our Bibles use the word “witness,” the early Christians were reading “martyr.” For example, in our Bibles, **Revelation 2:13** refers to “*Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city.*” The early Christians were understanding the passage to say, “*Antipas, my faithful martyr.*” Although most Christians tried to flee local persecution when possible, they rejected any mass exodus from the Roman Empire. Like little children, they believed their Master when He said His Church would be built on a rock and that the gates of Hades could not overpower it.

They realized that thousands of them might die monstrous deaths, experience excruciating tortures, and suffer imprisonment. But they were absolutely convinced that their Father wouldn’t let the church be annihilated. Christians stood before the Romans with naked hands, letting them know that Christians would not use human means to try to preserve the church. They trusted God, and God alone, as their protector.

As Origen told the Romans: “When God gives the Tempter permission to persecute us, we suffer persecution. And when God wishes us to be free from suffering, even though surrounded by a world that hates us, we enjoy a wonderful peace. We trust in the protection of the One who said, ‘*Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world.*’ And truly He has overcome the world. Therefore, the world prevails only as long as it is permitted to by Him who received power from the Father to overcome the world. From His victory we take courage. Even if He should again wish us to suffer and contend for our faith, let the enemy come against us. We will say to them, ‘*I can do all things through Christ Jesus our Lord who strengthens me.*’”

Origen had lost his father to persecution when he was a teenager, and he himself eventually died from torture and imprisonment at the hands of the Romans. Yet, with unshakable confidence he told the Romans, “Eventually, every form of worship will be destroyed except the religion of Christ, which alone will stand. In fact, it will one day triumph, for its teachings take hold of men’s minds more and more each day.”



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Spiritual Idolatry

John Angell James

(1785-1859)



“The affections are a much more sincere and expressive homage than bodily attitudes and outward forms of devotion. Hence it is obvious that—whatever we love most, and are most anxious to retain and please—whatever it be we depend most upon for happiness and help—whatever has most of our hearts—that, in effect, is our God!”

The apostle John closes his first epistle with the following tender and solemn admonition—*“Little children, keep yourselves from idols!”* Those to whom he thus addressed himself had been converted from Paganism, and needed to be cautioned against relapsing into their former idolatry, and against every practice which would in the smallest degree seem to countenance it. There is no need that I should warn you against this sin in its literal import. You have never bowed the knee to a graven or molten image, and

never will—but is there no such thing as SPIRITUAL idolatry? The first commandment of the Decalogue says—*“You shall have no other gods before me.”* The meaning of this precept, which is the foundation of all religion, is not merely that we shall not acknowledge any other God besides Jehovah—but also that we shall *treat him as God!* That is, we must **love** him with all our hearts, **serve** him with all our lives, and **depend** upon him for our supreme felicity. It is obvious that all this, as well as prayer and praise, is the worship which God requires.

The bended knee, whether this be done to God or an idol, is of no value—but as the expression of the state of the mind and heart at the time. The affections are a much more sincere and expressive homage than bodily attitudes and outward forms of devotion. Hence it is obvious that—whatever we love most, and are most anxious to retain and please—whatever it be we depend most upon for happiness and help—whatever has most of our hearts—that, in effect, is our God!—whether it be Jehovah or Jupiter, or whether it be friends, possessions, or our own desires, or our own selves! Is it not, therefore, to be feared that the hearts of many professors are going too much after other objects of worship than God, and need the admonition, *“Little children, keep yourselves from idols?”* Of these objects of spiritual idolatry there are many classes.

1. There are the idols of the HEART! SELF is the great idol which is the rival of God, and which divides with him the worship of the human race. This is “the idol that disgusted the Lord and made him furious”—even in the temple of the Lord! It is surprising and affecting to think how much SELF enters into almost all we do. Besides the grosser form of self-righteousness, which leads many unconverted people actually to depend upon their own doings for acceptance with God; how much of self-seeking, self-valuing, self-admiration, self-dependence—there is in many converted ones! How covertly do some seek their own praise in what they professedly do for God, and their fellow-creatures! How

eager are they for the admiration and applause of their fellow-creatures! How much of self, yet how little suspected by themselves, is seen by One who knows them better than they know themselves, at the bottom of their most splendid services, donations, and most costly sacrifices! What admiration do some cherish of their pious experience, their painful conflicts, their deep sorrows, their lively joys, their full assurance! With what feelings complimentary to themselves do they secretly meditate on these exercises, or relate them to their friends! How much do some dote on their blameless conduct, their spotless character, and the estimation in which they are held by the church and the world—they make an idol of their reputation!

I knew a venerable man who attained to the age of seventy, in blameless conduct. He was esteemed for his sanctity by all who knew him, and then fell into odious immorality. On being asked if he could trace his fall to any ascertainable cause, he replied, “I was proud of my reputation, and Satan taking advantage of this state of mind, tempted me, and I was taken in the snare of my own pride!” In how many ways does self steal away the heart from God. How subtle are its workings, how concealed its movements, yet how extensive is its influence. How SELF perverts our motives, lowers our aims, corrupts our affections, and taints our best actions. How much incense is burned—and how many sacrifices are offered on the altar of this idol!

2. Next to these, come the idols of the HOUSE! Our relatives, next to God, demand and deserve our regard. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, are not only impelled by instinct, but commanded by God, to love one another. It is the law of nature and of revelation. These dear objects of our affection, and all the tender charities and kind offices which arise out of the ties that bind us to them—are the sources of the purest and most lawful enjoyments upon earth. The poet has beautifully said—*“Domestic happiness is the only true bliss that has survived the fall.”*

But then the love we bear our friends must be **subordinate** to that we cherish for God. *He* must have the **throne** of the heart—and all others must rise no higher than the **footstool**. If we depend upon these dear relations for happiness, more than upon God's favor; if in calculating our possessions, and adding up the sum total of our enjoyments, we naturally place them first; if in felicitating ourselves upon what we have, we turn to these before God; if we dread most the loss of these; if we feel that nothing could make us happy if these were removed; if we go daily and hourly to these alone for gratification; if they are enjoyed solely by themselves, and for themselves, apart from God; if instead of leading our hearts to God, they hold our hearts from God; if we are more solicitous to avoid what would endanger their continuance, than the continuance of God's favor; if the temporary interruption of their enjoyment affects us more than the loss of the enjoyment of God and holy privileges; if upon their removal we feel forlorn and desolate, as if we had lost our all, or imagine that such would be our state in the event of such a calamity—then is it but too plain, that these are our idols, and that we are worshipping them!

How evident is it to all but themselves, and at times suspected even by them, that many husbands and wives are to each other as God. Their reciprocal smiles are more to them than the light of God's countenance; and their reciprocal love more to them than the loving-kindness of their heavenly Father. And how many parents need the simple exhortation of the old writer, "Beware of the little idols in white frocks." I would not have parental affection diminished. Who would abate the vigilance, and tenderness, and ceaseless labors of maternal love? Who could interfere to arrest the care which is necessary to guard, and feed, and train those little helpless beings, who are so dependent on a mother's eye, and arm, and heart? But then I would remind that mother, that she has a God to love, and serve, and please, as well as a child—a God that is in himself, and ought to be to her, infinitely more than that lovely son. And if all her thoughts, and feelings, and purposes, and aims, flow in one undivided current to that child, is he not her idol? God will not be, ought not to be, forgotten and neglected, even for a husband or a wife, a parent or a child. Nor has he rendered it impossible to love him supremely, and at the same time our earthly relatives adequately. The two are

not incompatible with each other. Multitudes of husbands and wives have loved each other tenderly—and yet have loved God supremely. Multitudes of parents have loved their children judiciously, fondly, laboriously—and yet have loved God supremely. Accept, then, the word of exhortation; beware of allowing your hearts to be too much engrossed by these dear objects of your best earthly affection.

In some cases it is not so much any *one object* of home, but *the whole* that steals the heart from God—a comfortable home, made up of relatives, a commodious house, plenty, health; in short, a quiet and agreeable domicile. The pleasures of the domestic circle are some of the sweetest known on earth; and he who has a happy home, has to resist one of the most powerful rivals and competitors with God for his heart. To return from the scene of his daily toil—to a quiet home greeted by the smiles of a devoted wife and affectionate children, with plenty on his table, and ease in his mind, oh! what danger is he in, of feeling that he has little need of God's favor or heaven's glories to make him happy; of saying, or at least feeling, "This is my temple, my God, my heaven!"

In some cases, a splendid house and gardens, elegant furniture, and all the appendages of wealth—are the idols in which the heart delights, and the affections luxuriate. How vain is the owner of his beautiful domain—what a pride he takes in it. As he walks about his paradise, his spirit is elated within him; to keep it in order and beauty is the study of his mind, and the happiness of his life. Amidst all his prosperity, God is too little thought of, and less enjoyed. His possessions lead him not, as they should do—to the Giver, but detain his soul from her divine center and rest. It is a paradise, but it is also an earthly one, in which he rather communes with the visible world, than the invisible God! It is a scene where he looks not at unseen and eternal things—but at things seen and temporal. Such are the idols of the house.

3. There are also idols of the SHOP. Some religious people are blessed with a prosperous and thriving trade, or lucrative profession; they have, perhaps, acquired a name, an established reputation, an extensive credit; their profits are considerable; their property increases; their respectability rises; their neighbors look on, some with envy, others with surprise.

How dangerous to the soul is this state of things. Such a business often becomes a too successful competitor with God for the heart. These prosperous tradesmen are apt to embark their whole soul in their business; it is their happiness; their dependence; their one chief solicitude. They admire their success; value themselves on account of it; watch it with a most acute sensibility; tremble if anything looks like a symptom of change; see with distressing jealousy the incipient prosperity of others in the same line; felicitate themselves on the greatness of their returns; exalt themselves upon the solidity of their credit, and the esteem in which they are held by the world; go to the scene of their success with conscious pride; in short, their soul is bound up in their trade—it is their idol. They in effect say to it, "You are my God—save me." But where is their religion all this while? Did they ever possess any? If so, it is lamentably low, lukewarm, and feeble. "I assure you: It will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven! Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." Let such men know, they cannot serve God and mammon. The Spirit of God, like the glory of the Lord departing from the temple of Jerusalem, will retire from such a heart, for it has become the seat of an idol, which has his altar, and his service, and his worshiper there.

4. There are idols of the WORLD—idols which the children of this world worship, and in whose worship the children of light sometimes unite. What crowds are continually assembled in the 'temple of *fashion*'—that bright but graceful deity of taste and elegance. What costly sacrifices of modesty, sobriety, time, money, usefulness, are offered on this altar! The study, the solicitude, the happiness, of many are considerably made up of matters of fashion. A recognized defect of taste would more distress them, than a breach of truth or justice! A perceived lack of elegance be a far more serious matter, than a lack of piety or mercy! And to be behind some of their mirthful neighbors in some new mode of dress, furniture, or style of living—is far worse than to be lacking in honor, generosity or gratitude! Fashion is, in short, the God of their idolatry; before which, however frequently they go to church or chapel, or with whatever fervor they repeat their prayers, their hearts bow down, and pay their homage!

continued next page

And is there no undue devotion paid to this idol by professors of religion? Is there not a turning aside, at any rate, from God, to visit the shrine of this delusive goddess? How concerned are some good people about gentility, elegance, and fashion. See them in their dress, in their furniture, in their entertainments, in their late hours. Hear them in their conversation about what is new, tasty, splendid. Behold them even in their religion, choosing fashionable beliefs, churches, preachers, and regulating even their worship to God, by taste! And could you search their hearts as God does, and observe the solicitude, the contrivance, the plans and purposes—which are cherished in their bosom—to shine, to excel, to be admired, to be thought elegant and of good taste, to be admitted to be the first of their circle for what is fashionable—you would recognize, at once, the idol at whose altar they often bow with the multitude!

How much more concerned are they about these matters than about spirituality of mind, mortification of sin, the cultivation of the fruits of the Spirit, and fitness for heaven. The simplicity that is in Christ is gone from such minds. God is, **perhaps**, their God; but they linger so much, and so often, and so long, about the temple of fashion, that it is a doubtful matter whether their hearts are true to him or not. They are so anxious to get as near as possible to the people of the world in their general habits, as to leave it a question whether they do not belong more to them than to the people of God! Or, if they cannot give up the Lord, it is evident they want to serve him in the priestly dress, and with the rights of an idol.

Literature and *science* are among the idols of the world; and far more dignified are they than the one I have just mentioned; and yet they may be, and they are, with many, the supreme good, and thus are the gods of the mind and the heart. How many almost worship 'knowledge', and the means of obtaining it; not indeed the knowledge of the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent; but the knowledge of nature. Nature is their deity, and this globe the temple in which they adore her. Even some good men who have a thirst for information, a love for books, a taste for science, carry this too far, and are in danger of being more enamored by what is intellectual, than by what is moral; and of deriving their happiness too much from the seen and temporal things—amidst which they are led by the senses; than from

unseen and eternal things—which can be apprehended by faith alone.

5. There are the idols of the SANCTUARY. Even in God's house, as in the temple of old, there are other objects set up for worship beside himself—and above himself. There, where God should be supreme and alone—are to be found altars raised, and offerings presented to his rivals! What subtle homage is paid to human names, and human theological systems; and how much do we hear from some about the Fathers, and from others about Luther and Calvin, Wesley and Whitefield. What a cry is raised by multitudes in this day about **the church**. We hear more from some about 'the church', which is but the body, than about Christ, who is the Divine Head. The church is with them Christ **visible**; and the visible Christ seems to be more thought of, and spoken of, than the **invisible Christ**. The influence and authority of the latter is by these people delegated to, if not supplanted by, the former. The church is the great object of their faith and confidence, and hides from their view, or goes far towards hiding, the Redeemer of the world himself. **The sacraments** are more talked of than the gospel, more relied upon, more inculcated, more exalted—than justification by faith. **A human priesthood**, though in their view designed to reflect, eclipses the luster of—that which is divine. Human standards of opinion and faith are raised to all but an equality with the only perfect, infallible, and authoritative one. In short, on arriving at the house of God, instead of finding God alone presented to their attention in the simplicity of his own truth and worship; instead of making him the Alpha and Omega, before which the mind and heart are to lie prostrate, they bow before various other objects, all pretending to lead to him, but which in fact interpose between him and the soul, to turn away the attention of the worshiper from Jehovah Jesus, and share the throne with him!

Others again convert the **preacher** into an idol. Ardently attached to some favorite minister, they can relish the truth only as dispensed by him; and all others are neglected, if not despised. No prayers excite their devotion but his; no sermons instruct, please, or edify but his. When *he is not* in the pulpit, they will listen to no other. Their religion and their religious comfort depend all on him. The clearest elucidation of truth, the grandest views of the Divine character, the fullest exhibitions

of Christ, the most consoling manifestations of heavenly glory, are nothing except from his lips; in this case the preacher is converted into an idol, and it is he that is worshiped, and not God.

Alas, alas, in how many ways does the heart of man go astray from God! And out of what materials does it construct its idols! It aggravated the sinfulness of the idolatry of the ancients, that they paid their worship to such low objects, and changed the glory of God into creeping things. And how does it increase *our* folly and guilt that we do the same.

My dear friends, let me admonish you to worship God alone. Give your heart, your whole heart to him. Is it not your sin, and ought it not to be your shame and your sorrow—that you bestow so much of your affection upon other objects, and so little upon him—that you treat him so little as such a God deserves, and claims to be treated? Recollect he is God, God in Christ; God reconciled, your Father, your portion; all glorious and all gracious. Think how you ought to love him, with what entire, ardent, constant, devoted affection. It would seem, when we consider his glory, as if it would be the easiest thing in the world to love and serve him, and the hardest thing in the world to love any other objects; as if it would be impossible so to get out of the sight, and beyond the attraction of his glory, as to have time, inclination, or ability to take an interest in anything else than in his favor, which is life, and his loving-kindness which is better than life; as if with the hope of his favor through Christ as our portion, we should really no more desire any other object or source of delight, than the condemned criminal does besides the royal pardon, or the starving man the supply of food. Amazing baseness, that with an infinite God to love, we should be so taken up with the finite, and many of them the really minute objects of this world; and that with his love to us as our river of pleasure, we should be so dependent for bliss upon the 'drops of earthly enjoyment', which ooze and trickle out from created good!

How offensive this must be to God, who knows, and who alone knows, the ineffable glories of his own nature! How ungrateful must it appear to him when he has opened this fountain of living waters for us, to see us turn away from it, to hew out broken cisterns that can hold no water! How insulting to him to see a relative, a trade, a

house, a minister—exalted into a rival claimant for the heart, and receiving that affection, confidence, and devotedness which are due to him alone! Remember he is a jealous God—and as among men jealousy is inflamed to the highest pitch by seeing an unworthy and insignificant object preferred, so God will, and must, resent our preference, to him, of such objects as this world at best can present.

Our sin in this matter is our punishment. *"They forsake their own mercy,"* said the prophet, *"who observe lying vanities."* This is as true of spiritual idolatry as it is of that which is literal. *"Those who forsake the Lord shall be ashamed."* To turn from God to the creature; to place our dependence upon, and seek our happiness in, the creature instead of the former, is only to prepare for ourselves the bitterness of disappointment, vexation, and self-reproach! It is to turn from the sun to the dim candle, whose light soon expires in smoke and offensive odor! It is to turn from the full and flowing fountain to the clouds without rain, and the wells without water. The experience of others, as well as our own, demonstrates that, generally speaking, our severest trials, our most painful inflictions, come from those objects which we have loved and served at God's expense. It is just and wise in God, as a salutary warning to us in future, and as a caution to others—that our idols should become our scourges!

Creature love, when excessive and indulgent, to the neglect of God, must draw away the strength of a renewed heart, and impoverish the soul of her spiritual wealth and prosperity. To many it is perfectly evident that their religion, under the weakening and withering influence of this undue regard to some worldly object, has sunk to a mere form; they have a name to live, but are dead; and if they reflect at all, it is in some such strain as the poet's—

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.

Through the deceitfulness of the heart, we are very apt to be imposed upon by the pure and lawful objects which, in some cases, are thus idolized. Lawful I mean in themselves, and sinful only in the excessive degree in which they are regarded. As professors of true religion, you do not and cannot love and worship **sin**. The children of this world may do this, and exalt their vices into gods. But many of your idols are virtues—or objects in themselves quite innocent. You may, and ought to love your relatives; you may and ought to value your business, home, ministers, and ordinances of religion; and these things become sinful, only when loved **more** than God. Here lies the difficulty—to keep them in due subordination to God. Yet the deceitfulness of the heart takes advantage of this difficulty, to blind us to the distinction between lawful and unlawful love, and to hurry us over the line of demarcation.

Let me, my dear friends, earnestly admonish you to give this subject a deep and due consideration. Examine your hearts. Does not the charge of spiritual idolatry appertain to **you**? Is there not some object, or class of objects, that have come between God and your souls? Have you no idols? Has your heart departed from the Lord? Search the mind, the house, the shop, the sanctuary, the world—and see *where* it has gone, and what you have exalted into a competitor with God. Be faithful to yourself. Is there not something for which God has a controversy with you? Ask yourself what it is you trust in, look to, depend upon, for happiness. Do you indeed look through and above all—to God? Is God your center, rest, and dwelling place? Is Christ more to you than everything else?

Is it **he** that is precious? Is **he** the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely one? Is **he** the sun that makes the day of your prosperity, the moon that enlivens the night of your adversity? Is **he** your riches, your friend, your home, your pearl of great price? Say, dear brethren, is God really God to you—loved and treated as God should be?

Ask yourselves if while you are praying for the downfall of idols in heathen countries—are there are none to be pulled down in your own hearts and houses? If while you are seeking the conversion of the worshipers of the Hindu deities, have **you** not need to be converted from the worship of self and mammon? Be humbled, deeply humbled—for this your sin!

How low many live, as Christians. Seek for more grace to give your heart, your whole heart to God. He demands it, will take no denial, and allow of no excuse for the refusal. In his sight, it is of little consequence by what object this demand is set aside; there is not so much variety in the shades of criminality as many are led to suppose—the object may be more decent, and more lawful in itself, but the affection with which it is loved is still an illicit one.

In conclusion, I say to you, adopt the language of the poet in another part of the hymn already quoted—

The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from your throne,
And worship only thee!

So shall my walk be close with God.
Calm and serene my frame,
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb!



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A Fear to Be Desired

C. H. Spurgeon

“And shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.”—Hosea 3:5



Charles Haddon Spurgeon
(1834-1892)

Still one of the most influential of Baptist preachers C.H. Spurgeon, during his ministry, preached nearly thirty-six hundred sermons and published forty-nine volumes of commentaries, sayings, anecdotes, illustrations, and devotions.

A Distinction to be Observed

Human language is necessarily imperfect. Since man's fall, and especially since the confusion of tongues at Babel, there has not only been a difference in speech between one nation and another, but also between one individual and another. Probably, we do not all mean exactly the same thing by any one word that we use; there is just a shade of difference between your meaning and mine. The confusion of tongues went much further than we sometimes realize; and so completely did it confuse our language that we do not, on all occasions, mean quite the same thing to ourselves even when we use the same word. Hence, "fear" is a word, which has a very wide range of meaning. There is a kind of fear which is to be shunned and avoided, that fear which perfect love casts out, because it hath torment. But there is another sort of fear which has in it the very essence of love, and without which there would be no joy even in the presence of God. Instead of perfect love casting out this fear, perfect love nourishes and cherishes it, and, by communion with it, itself derives strength from it. Between the

fear of a slave and the fear of a child, we can all perceive a great distinction. Between the fear of God's great power and justice which the devils have, and that fear which a child of God has when he walks in the light with his God, there is as much difference, surely, as between hell and heaven.

In the verse from which our text is taken, that difference is clearly indicated: *"Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord;"* so that this fear is connected with seeking the Lord. It is a fear, which draws them towards God, and makes them search for him. You know how the fear of the ungodly influences them; it makes them afraid of God, so they say, *"Whither shall we flee from his presence?"* They would take the wings of the morning if they could, and fly to the uttermost part of the earth, if they had any hope that God could not reach them there; at the last, when this fear will take full possession of them, they will call upon the rocks and the hills to hide them from the face of him who will then sit upon the throne, whose wrath they will have such cause to dread. The fear of God, as it exists in unrenewed men, is a force which ever drives them further and yet further away from God. They never get any rest of mind until they have ceased to think of him; if a thought of God should, perchance, steal into their mind, fear at once lays hold upon them again, and that fear urges them to flee from God.

But the fear mentioned in our text draws to God. The man who has this fear in his heart cannot live without seeking God's face, confessing his guilt before him, and receiving pardon from him. He seeks God because of this fear. Just as Noah, *"moved with fear,"* built the ark wherein he and his household were saved, so do these men, *"moved with fear,"* draw nigh unto God, and seek to find salvation through his love and grace. Always notice this distinction, and observe that the fear which drives anyone away from God is a vice and a sin, but the fear that draws us towards God, as with silken bonds, is a virtue to be cultivated.

This appears even more clearly in the Hebrew, for they who best understand that language tell us that this passage should be read thus, *"They shall fear toward the Lord, and toward his goodness."* This fear leans toward the Lord. When thou really knowest God, thou shalt be thrice happy if thou dost run toward him, falling down before him, worshipping him with bowed head yet glad heart, all the while fearing toward him, and not away from him. Blessed is the man whose heart is filled with that holy fear which inclines his steps in the way of God's commandments, inclines his heart to seek after God, and inclines his whole soul to enter into fellowship with God, that he may be acquainted with him, and be at peace. It is also worthy of notice that this fear is connected with the Messiah: *"They shall seek the Lord their God, and David their King,"* who stands here as the type of Jesus the Messiah, the King of Israel; and further on it is said, *"They shall fear the Lord and his goodness;"* and I should not do wrong if I were to say that Christ is Jehovah's goodness, that, in his blessed person, you have all the goodness, and mercy, and grace of God condensed and concentrated. *"In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."* So, that fear which is a sign of grace in the heart, that fear which we ought all to seek after, always links itself on to Christ Jesus. If thou fearest God, and knowest not that there is Mediator between God and men, thou wilt never think of approaching him. God is a consuming fire, then how canst thou draw near to him apart from Christ? If thou fearest God, and knowest not of Christ's atonement, how canst thou approach him? Without faith, it is impossible to please God, and without the blood of Jesus there is no way of access to the divine mercy-seat. If thou knowest not Christ, thou wilt never come unto God. Thy fear must link itself with the goodness of God as displayed in the person of his dear Son, or else it cannot be that seeking fear, that fear toward the Lord, of which our text speaks. It will be a fleeing fear, a fear that will drive thee further and yet further away from God, into greater and deeper darkness, into dire destruction, in fact, into that pit whose bottomless abyss swallows up all hope, all rest, and all joy for ever.

**The Grace Which is to be
Cultivated:
“they shall fear the Lord and his
goodness.”**

*“They shall fear
the Lord and his
goodness;’ and I
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Christ is
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goodness, that,
in his blessed
person, you
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goodness, and
mercy, and
grace of God
condensed and
concentrated.”*

We will divide the one thought into two; and, first, I will speak about that fear of God, which is the work of the Holy Spirit, a token of grace, a sign of salvation, and a precious treasure to be ever kept in the heart. What is this fear of God? I answer, first, it is a sense of awe of his greatness. Have you never felt this sacred awe stealing insensibly over your spirit, hushing, and calming you, and bowing you down before the Lord? It will come, sometimes, in the consideration of the great works of nature. Gazing upon the vast expanse of waters, looking up to the innumerable stars, examining the wing of an insect, and seeing there the matchless skill of God displayed in the minute; or standing in a thunderstorm, watching, as best you can, the flashes of lightning, and listening to the thunder of Jehovah’s voice, have you not often shrunk into yourself, and said, “Great God, how terrible art thou!” not afraid, but full of delight, like a child who rejoices to see his father’s wealth, his father’s wisdom, his father’s power, happy, and at home, but feeling oh, so little! We are less than nothing, we are all but annihilated in the presence of the great eternal, infinite, invisible All-in-all. Gracious men often come into this state of mind and heart by watching the works of God; so they do when they observe what he does in providence.

Dr. Watts truly sings,
“Here he exalts neglected worms
To sceptres and a crown;
Anon the following page he turns,
And treads the monarch down.”

The mightiest kings and princes are but as grasshoppers in his sight. *“The nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance,”* that has not weight enough to turn the scale. We talk about the greatness of mankind; but *“all nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.”*

Again Dr. Watts wisely sings,
“Great God! how infinite art thou!
What worthless worms are we!”

When we realize this, we are filled with a holy awe as we think of God’s greatness, and the result of that is that we are moved

to fall before him in reverent adoration. We turn to the Word of God, and there we see further proofs of his greatness in all his merciful arrangements for the salvation of sinners, and especially in the matchless redemption wrought out by his well-beloved Son, every part of which is full of the divine glory; and as we gaze upon that glory with exceeding joy, we shrink to nothing before the Eternal, and the result again is lowly adoration. We bow down, and adore and worship the living God, with a joyful, tender fear, which both lays us low, and lifts us very high, for never do we seem to be nearer to heaven’s golden throne than when our spirit gives itself up to worship him whom it does not see, but in whose realized presence it trembles with sacred delight.

It is the same fear, but looked at from another point of view, which has regard to the holiness of God. What a holy being is the great Jehovah of hosts! There is in him no fault, no deficiency, no redundancy; he is whole, and therefore holy; there is nothing there but himself, the wholly perfect God. *“Holy! holy! holy!”* is a fit note for the mysterious living creatures to sound out before his throne above; for, all along, he has acted according to the principle of unsullied holiness. Though blasphemers have tried, many times, to

“Snatch from his hand the balance and the
rod,
Rejudge his judgments, be the god of
God,”

they have always failed, and still he sits in the lonely majesty of his absolute perfection, while they, like brute beasts, crouch far beneath him, and despise what they cannot comprehend. But to a believing heart, God is all purity. His light is *“as the color of the terrible crystal,”* of which Ezekiel writes; his brightness is so great that no man can approach unto it. We are so sinful that, when we get even a glimpse of the divine holiness, we are filled with fear, and we cry, with Job, *“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”* This is a kind of fear which we have need to cultivate, for it leads to repentance, and confession of sin, to aspirations after holiness, and to the utter rejection of all self-complacency and self-conceit. God grant that we may be completely delivered from all those forms of pride and evil!

continued next page

The fear of God also takes another form, that is, the fear of his Fatherhood, which leads us to reverence him. When divine grace has given us the new birth, we recognize that we have entered into a fresh relationship towards God; namely, that we have become his sons and daughters. Then we realize that we have received *“the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”* Now, we cannot truly cry unto God, *“Abba, Father,”* without at the same time feeling, *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”* When we recognize that we are *“heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,”* children of the Highest, adopted into the family of the Eternal himself, we feel at once, as the spirit of childhood works within us, that we both love and fear our great Father in heaven, who has loved us with an everlasting love, and has *“begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”*

In this childlike fear, there is not an atom of that fear which signifies being afraid. We, who believe in Jesus, are not afraid of our Father; God forbid that we ever should be. The nearer we can get to him, the happier we are. Our highest wish is to be for ever with him, and to be lost in him; but, still, we pray that we may not grieve him we beseech him to keep us from turning aside from him; we ask for his tender pity towards our infirmities and plead with him to forgive us and to deal graciously with us for his dear Son’s sake. As loving children, we feel a holy awe and reverence as we realize our relationship to him who is our Father in heaven, a clear, loving, tender, pitiful Father, yet our Heavenly Father, who *“is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.”*

This holy fear takes a further form when our fear of God’s sovereignty leads us to obey him as our King; for he, to whom we pray, and in whom we trust, is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and we gladly own his sovereignty. We see him sitting upon a throne, which is dependent upon no human or angelic power to sustain it. The kings of the earth must ask their fellow men to march in their ranks in order to sustain their rulers, but our King “sits on no precarious throne, nor borrows leave to be” a king. As the Creator of all things, and all beings, he has a right to the obedience

of the entire creature he has made. Again I say that we, who believe in Jesus, are not afraid of God even as our King, for he has made us also to be kings, and priests, and we are to reign with him, through Jesus Christ, for ever and ever. Yet we tremble before him lest we should be rebellious against him in the slightest degree. With a childlike fear, we are afraid lest one revolting thought or one treacherous wish should ever come into our mind or heart to stain our absolute loyalty to him. Horror takes hold upon us when we hear others deny that *“the Lord reigneth;”* but even the thought that we should ever do this grieves us exceedingly, and we are filled with that holy fear, which moves us to obey every command of our gracious King so far as we know it to be his command. Having this fear of God before our eyes, we cry to those who would tempt us to sin, *“How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”* It is not because we are afraid of him, but because we delight in him, that we fear before him with an obedient, reverential fear; and, beloved, I do firmly believe that, when this kind of fear of God works itself out to the full, it crystallizes into love. So excellent, so glorious, so altogether everything that could be desired, so far above our highest thought or wish, art thou, O Jehovah, that we lie before thee, and shrink into nothing; yet, even as we do so, we feel another sensation springing up within us. We feel that we love thee; and, as we decrease in our own estimation of ourselves, we feel that we love thee more and more. As we realize our own nothingness, we are more than ever conscious of the greatness of our God. *“Thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged,”* says the prophet Isaiah, and so it comes to pass with us. The more we fear the Lord, the more we love him, until this becomes to us the true fear of God, to love him with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. May he bring us to this blessed climax by the effectual working of his Holy Spirit!

Now I want to dwell, with somewhat of emphasis, upon the second part of this fear: *“They shall fear the Lord and his goodness.”* It may at first seem, to some people, a strange thing that we should fear God’s goodness; but there are some of us who know exactly what this expression means, for we have often experienced just what it describes. How can we fear God’s goodness? I speak what I have often felt, and I believe many of you can do the same as you look back upon the goodness of God to you, saving you from sin, and

making you to be his child; and as you think of all his goodness to you in the dispensations of his providence. You may, perhaps, be like Jacob, who left his Father’s house with his wallet and his staff; and when he came back with a family that formed two bands, and with abundance of all that he could desire, he must have been astonished at what God had done for him. And when David sat upon his throne in Jerusalem, surrounded by wealth and splendor, as he recollected how he had fed his flock in the wilderness, and afterwards had been hunted, by Saul, like a partridge upon the mountains, he might well say, *“Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?”*

“It may at first seem, to some people, a strange thing that we should fear God’s goodness; but there are some of us who know exactly what this expression means, for we have often experienced just what it describes.”

In this way, God’s goodness often fills us with amazement, and amazement has in it an element of fear. We are astonished at the Lord’s gracious dealings with us, and we say to him, “Why hast thou been so good to me, for so many years, and in such multitude of forms? Why hast thou manifested so much mercy and tenderness toward me? Thou hast treated me as if I had never grieved or offended thee. Thou hast been as good to me as if I had deserved great blessings at thy hands. Hast thou paid me wages, like a hired servant, thou wouldst never have given me such sweetness and such love as thou hast now lavished upon me, though I was once a prodigal, and wandered far from thee. O God, thy love is like the sun; I cannot gaze upon it, its brightness would blind my

eyes! I fear, because of thy goodness.” Do you know, dear friends, what this expression means? If a sense of God’s goodness comes upon you in all its force, you will feel that God is wonderfully great to have been so good to you. Most of us have had friends who have become tired of us after a while. Possibly, we have had some very kind friends, who are not yet tired of us; but, still, they have failed us every now and then at some points; either their power could not meet our necessity, or they were not willing to do what we needed. But our God has poured out his mercy for us like a river; it has flowed on without a break. These many years he has continued to bless us, and has heaped up his mercies, mountain upon mountain, until it has seemed as though he would reach the very stars with the lofty pinnacles of his love. What shall we say to all this? Shall we not fear him, and adore him, and bless him for all the goodness that he has made to pass before us; and, all the while, feel that, even to kiss the hem of his garment, or to be beneath his footstool, is too great an honor for us?

Then there will come upon us, when we are truly grateful to God for his goodness toward us, a sense of our own responsibility; and we shall say, *“What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?”* We shall feel that we cannot render to him anything compared with what we ought to render; and there will come upon us this fear, that we shall never be able to live at all consistently with the high position which his grace has given to us. As God said concerning his ancient people, we shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that he has procured for us. It will seem as though he had set us on the top of a high mountain, and had bidden us walk along that lofty ridge; it is a ridge of favor and privilege, but it is so elevated that we fear lest our brain should reel, and our feet should slip, because of the height of God’s mercy to us. Have you never felt like that, beloved? If God has greatly exalted you with his favor and love, I am sure you must have felt like that many a time.

Then, next, this holy fear is near akin to gratitude. The fear of a man, who really knows the love and goodness of God, will be somewhat of this kind. He will fear lest he should really be, or should seem to be, ungrateful. “What,” he asks, “can I do? I am drowned in mercy. It is not as though my ship were sailing in a sea of mercy; I have been so loaded with the favor of the

Lord that my vessel has gone right down, and the ocean of God’s love and mercy has rolled right over the masthead. What can I do, O Lord? If thou hast given me only a little mercy, I might have done something, in return, to express my gratitude. But, oh! thy great mercy in electing me, in redeeming me, in converting me, and in preserving me, and in all the goodness of thy providence toward me, what can I do in return for all these favors? I feel struck dumb; and I am afraid lest I should have a dumb heart as well as a dumb tongue; I fear lest I should grieve thee by anything that looks like ingratitude.”

Then the child of God begins, next, to fear lest he should become proud; “for,” says he, “I have noticed that, when God thus favors some men, they begin to exalt themselves, and to think that they are persons of great importance; so, if the Lord makes the stream of my life flow very joyously, I may imagine that it is because there is some good thing in me, and be foolish enough to begin to ascribe the glory of it to myself.” A true saint often trembles concerning this matter; he sometimes gets even afraid of his mercies. He knows that his trials and troubles never did him any hurt; but he perceives that, sometimes, God’s goodness has intoxicated him as with sweet wine, so he begins to be almost afraid of the goodness of his God to him. He thinks to himself, “Shall I be unworthy of all this favor, and walk in a way that is inconsistent with it?” He looks a little ahead, and he knows that the flesh is frail, and that good men have often been found in very slippery places, and he says, “What if, after all this, I should be a backslider? Thou, O Lord, hast brought me into the banqueting house, and thy banner over me is love; thou hast stayed me with flagons, and comforted me with apples; thou hast laid bare thy very heart to me, and made me know that I am a man greatly beloved! Shall I, after all this, ever turn aside from thee? Will the ungodly ever point at me, and say, Aha! Aha! Is this the man after God’s own heart? Is this the disciple who said he would die rather than deny his Master?” Such a fear as that very properly comes over us at times, and then we tremble because of all the goodness which God has made to pass before us.

I think you can see, dear friends, without my needing to enlarge further upon this point, that, while a time of sorrow and suffering is often, to the Christian, a time of confidence in his God; on the other hand, a time of prosperity is, to the wise

man, a time of holy fear. Not that he is ungrateful, but he is afraid that he may be. Not that he is proud; he is truly humble because he is afraid lest he should become proud. Not that he loves the things of the world, but he is afraid lest his heart should get away from God, so he fears because of all the Lord’s goodness to him. May the Lord always keep us in that state of fear for it is a healthy condition for us to be in. Those who walk so very proudly, and with too great confidence, are generally the ones who first tumble down. My observation and experience have taught me this; when I have met with anyone who knew that he was a very good man, and who boasted to other people that he was a very good man, he has generally proved to be like some of those pears that we sometimes see in the shop, very handsome to look at, but sleepy and rotten all through. Then, on the other hand, I have noticed a great many other people, who have always been afraid that they would go wrong, and who have trembled and feared at almost every step they took. They have feared lest they should grieve the Lord, and they have cried unto him, day and night, *“Lord, uphold us;”* and he has done so, and they have been enabled to keep their garments unspotted to their life’s end. So, my prayer is, that I may never cease to feel this holy fear before God, and that I may never get to fancy, for a moment, that there is, or ever can be, anything in me to cause me to boast or to glory in myself. May God save all of us from that evil; and the more we receive of his goodness, the more may we fear, with childlike fear, in his presence!

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“And if ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here with fear.”—1 Peter 1:17

“He resolves this willingly, I will not sin, because my Father is this just Judge; but for my frailties I will hope in mercy, because the Judge is my Father.”

- Robert Leighton

The Wrath of God

Arthur W. Pink



Arthur W. Pink
(1886-1952)

During his ministry, A. W. Pink served as a pastor, evangelist and became a prolific writer. His writings helped spark a renewal of expository preaching.

It is sad indeed to find so many professing Christians who appear to regard the wrath of God as something for which they need to make an apology, or who at least wish there were no such thing. While some who would not go so far as to openly admit that they consider it a blemish on the divine character, yet they are far from regarding it with delight; they like not to think about it, and they rarely hear it mentioned without a secret resentment rising up in their hearts against it. Even with those who are more sober in their judgment, not a few seem to imagine that there is a severity about the divine wrath that makes it too terrifying to form a theme for profitable contemplation. Others harbor the delusion that God's wrath is not consistent with His goodness, and so seek to banish it from their thoughts.

Yes, many there are who turn away from a vision of God's wrath as though they were called to look upon some blotch in the divine character or some blot upon the divine government. But what saith the Scriptures? As we turn to them we find that God has made no attempt to conceal the facts concerning His wrath. He is not ashamed to make it known that vengeance and fury belong unto Him. His own challenge is: "*See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me: I kill, and*

I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand. For I lift up My hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet My glittering sword, and Mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to Mine enemies, and will reward them that hate Me" (**Deut 32:39-41**). A study of the concordance will show that there are more references in Scripture to the anger, fury, and wrath of God, than there are to His love and tenderness. Because God is holy, He hates all sin; and because He hates all sin, His anger burns against the sinner (**Psa 7:11**).

Now the wrath of God is as much a divine perfection as is His faithfulness, power, or mercy. It must be so, for there is no blemish whatever, not the slightest defect in the character of God; yet there would be if "*wrath*" were absent from Him! Indifference to sin is a moral blemish, and he who hates it not is a moral leper. How could He who is the Sum of all excellency look with equal satisfaction upon virtue and vice, wisdom and folly? How could He who is infinitely holy disregard sin and refuse to manifest His "*severity*" (**Rom 11:22**) toward it? How could He, who delights only in that which is pure and lovely, not loathe and hate that which is impure and vile? The very nature of God makes Hell as real a necessity, as imperatively and eternally requisite, as Heaven is. Not only is there no imperfection in God, but there is no perfection in Him that is less perfect than another.

The wrath of God is His eternal detestation of all unrighteousness. It is the displeasure and indignation of divine equity against evil. It is the holiness of God stirred into activity against sin. It is the moving cause of that just sentence which He passes upon evildoers. God is angry against sin because it is a rebelling against His authority, a wrong done to His inviolable sovereignty. Insurrectionists against God's government shall be made to know that God is the Lord. They shall be made to feel how great that Majesty is which they despise, and how dreadful is that threatened wrath which they so little regarded. Not that God's anger is a malignant and malicious

retaliation, inflicting injury for the sake of it, or in return for injury received. No, though God will vindicate His dominion as the Governor of the universe, He will not be vindictive.

That divine wrath is one of the perfections of God is not only evident from the considerations presented above, but is also clearly established by the express declarations of His own Word. "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven*" (**Rom 1:18**). Robert Haldane comments on this verse as follows: "It was revealed when the sentence of death was first pronounced, the earth cursed, and man driven out of the earthly paradise, and afterwards by such examples of punishment as those of the Deluge, and the destruction of the Cities of the Plain by fire from heaven, but especially by the reign of death throughout the world. It was proclaimed in the curse of the law on every transgression, and was intimated in the institution of sacrifice, and in all the services of the Mosaic dispensation. In the eighth chapter of this epistle, the Apostle calls the attention of believers to the fact that the whole creation has become subject to vanity, and groaneth and travaileth together in pain. The same creation which declares that there is a God, and publishes His glory, also proves that He is the Enemy of sin and the Avenger of the crimes of men...But above all, the wrath of God was revealed from heaven when the Son of God came down to manifest the divine character, and when that wrath was displayed in His sufferings and death, in a manner more awful than by all the tokens God had before given of His displeasure against sin. Besides this, the future and eternal punishment of the wicked is now declared in terms more solemn and explicit than formerly. Under the new dispensation, there are two revelations given from heaven, one of wrath, the other of grace."

Again, that the wrath of God is a divine perfection is plainly demonstrated by what we read in **Psalm 95:11**: "*Unto whom I swear in My wrath.*" There are two occasions of God's "*swearing*": in making promises (**Gen 22:16**), and in pronouncing judgments (**Deut 1:34ff**). In the former, He swears in mercy to His children; in the

latter, He swears to deprive a wicked generation of its inheritance because of murmuring and unbelief. An oath is for solemn confirmation (**Heb 6:16**). In **Genesis 22:16** God says, "*By Myself have I sworn.*" In **Psalms 89:35** He declares, "*Once have I sworn by My holiness.*" While in **Psalms 95:11** He affirms, "**I swear in My wrath.**" Thus the great Jehovah Himself appeals to His "wrath" as a perfection equal to His "holiness": He swears by the one as much as by the other! Again, as in Christ "*dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*" (**Col 2:9**), and as all the divine perfections are illustriously displayed by Him (**John 1:18**), therefore do we read of "*the wrath of the Lamb*" (**Rev 6:16**).

“If we do not truly rejoice in God, for what He is in Himself, and that because of all the perfections which are eternally resident in Him, then how dwelleth the love of God in us? “

The wrath of God is a perfection of the divine character upon which we need to frequently meditate. First, that our hearts may be duly impressed by God's detestation of sin. We are ever prone to regard sin lightly, to gloss over its hideousness, to make excuses for it. But the more we study and ponder God's abhorrence of sin and His frightful vengeance upon it, the likely are we to realize its heinousness. Secondly, to beget a true fear in our souls for God: "*Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire*" (**Heb 12:28-29**). We cannot serve him "acceptably" unless there is due "reverence" for His awful Majesty and "godly fear" of His righteous anger; and these are best promoted by frequently calling to mind that "*our God is a consuming fire.*" Thirdly, to draw out our souls in fervent praise for our having been delivered from "*the wrath to come*" (**1 Thess 1:10**).

Our readiness or our reluctance to meditate upon the wrath of God becomes a sure test

of our hearts' true attitude toward Him. If we do not truly rejoice in God, for what He is in Himself, and that because of all the perfections which are eternally resident in Him, then how dwelleth the love of God in us? Each of us needs to be most prayerfully on his guard against devising an image of God in our thoughts which is patterned after our own evil inclinations. Of old the Lord complained, "*Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself*" (**Psa 50:21**). If we rejoice not "*at the remembrance of His holiness*" (**Psa 97:12**), if we rejoice not to know that in a soon-coming Day, God will make a most glorious display of His wrath by taking vengeance upon all who now oppose Him, it is proof positive that our hearts are not in subjection to Him, that we are yet in our sins, and that we are on the way to the everlasting burnings.

"Rejoice, O ye nations [Gentiles] with His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries" (Deut 32:43). And again we read, "*I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are His judgments. for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia" (Rev 19:1-3).* Great will be the rejoicing of the saints in that day when the Lord shall vindicate His majesty, exercise His awful dominion, magnify His justice, and overthrow the proud rebels who have dared to defy Him.

"If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark [impute] iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psa 130:3). Well may each of us ask this question, for it is written, "*the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment*" (**Psa 1:5**). How sorely was Christ's soul exercised with thoughts of God's marking the iniquities of His people when they were upon Him! He was amazed and very heavy (**Mark 14:33**). His awful agony, His bloody sweat, His strong cries and supplications (**Heb 5:7**), His reiterated prayers ("*If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me*"), His last dreadful cry ("*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*") all manifest what fearful apprehensions He had of what it was for God to "*mark iniquities.*" Well may poor sinners cry out, "*Lord, who shall stand,*" when the Son of God Himself so trembled beneath the weight of His wrath. If thou, my reader, hast not "*fled for refuge*" to Christ, the only

Savior, "*how wilt thou do in the swelling of the Jordan?*" (**Jer 12:5**).

When I consider how the goodness of God is abused by the greatest part of mankind, I cannot but be of his mind that said, "The greatest miracle in the world is God's patience and bounty to an ungrateful world. If a prince hath an enemy got into one of his towns, he doth not send them in provision, but lays close siege to the place, and doth what he can to starve them. But the great God, that could wink all His enemies into destruction, bears with them, and is at daily cost to maintain them. Well may He command us to bless them that curse us, who Himself does good to the evil and unthankful. But think not, sinners, that you shall escape thus; God's mill goes slow, but grinds small, the more admirable His patience and bounty now is, the more dreadful and unsupportable will that fury be which ariseth out of His abused goodness. Nothing smoother than the sea, yet when stirred into a tempest, nothing rageth more. Nothing so sweet as the patience and goodness of God, and nothing so terrible as His wrath when it takes fire" (William Gurnall, 1660). Then "*flee,*" my reader, flee to Christ; "*flee from the wrath to come*" (**Matt 3:7**) ere it be too late. Do not, we earnestly beseech you, suppose that this message is intended for somebody else. It is to you! Do not be contented by thinking you have already fled to Christ. Make certain! Beg the Lord to search your heart and show you yourself.

A Word to Preachers--Brethren, do we in our oral ministry, preach on this solemn subject as much as we ought? The Old Testament prophets frequently told their hearers that their wicked lives provoked the Holy One of Israel, and that they were treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath. And conditions in the world are no better now than they were then! Nothing is so calculated to arouse the careless and cause carnal professors to search their hearts, as to enlarge upon the fact that "*God is angry with the wicked every day*" (**Psa 7:11**). The forerunner of Christ warned his hearers to "*flee from the wrath to come*" (**Matt 3:7**). The Savior bade His auditors, "*Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him*" (**Luke 12:5**). The Apostle Paul said, "*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*" (**2 Cor 5:11**). Faithfulness demands that we speak as plainly about hell as about heaven. ◆ ◆ ◆



What Happened at the Springfield, Missouri Meeting of the SGBF?

Some Highlights of the Day

The annual meeting, on September 10, 2008, was hosted by Pastor Gary Long and the Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Springfield, Missouri. Brother Long is also the current chairman of the SGBF. The meeting was well attended and the Fellowship heartily thanked the church for their kind hospitality.

We enjoyed a challenging ministry of the Word during the Bible Conference held in conjunction with the annual meeting. The speakers were Pastor Bobby Amos of Southside Baptist Church, Fulton, Mississippi; Pastor Al Garard of Fair Grove Baptist Temple, Fair Grove, Missouri; and Dr. Michael Haykin who is Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

The messengers heartily approved and accepted into the Fellowship the Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Joplin, Missouri and Pastor Mikal Smith. The acceptance was unanimous.

During the afternoon business session, some exciting new proposals were made and approved (see next section, "Future Prospects"). Reports were made on the work of missionaries T.....J..... in Papua, New Guinea, Luis Paris in Columbia, Joel Saripalli in India, Will Carter, an American Indian laboring among native Americans and Pat Horner in India (See further reports on missions in "World Missions" in this publication).

The current Executive Committee was re-elected for the next term. They are Gary Long, Chairman, Tom Henry, Vice-Chairman, Larry Dean, Secretary and Ron Staley, Treasurer.

Future Prospects

Since the churches of the SGBF are geographically distanced in various parts of the U.S., the Fellowship approved and authorized a proposal for local fellowships of churches of like faith. The name "Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship" may be used by a member pastor and church sponsoring a local meeting even with churches who are not officially part of the SGBF.

Appreciation was made for the fine work of the Sovereign Grace Youth Camp, held annually in Missouri. An appeal was then made for the establishment of a "singles camp," where committed single Christians from our churches could be introduced to one another. Many of the churches are small and this could serve a great need.

A three-day joint meeting of the "Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship" and the "Sovereign Grace Baptist Association" was proposed and accepted for summer, 2010. The SGBA had already approved such a meeting. This is not a joining together of the two but only an opportunity for fellowship. The business sessions of both will remain separate. The Fellowship believes we should be willing to show our oneness with others of "*like precious faith.*"

The next annual meeting of the Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship is scheduled for September 7, 2009. It is to be held at the invitation of Pastor Ron Staley and the New Hope Baptist Church of Mechanicsville, Virginia. We are hoping for a good turn out again next year and with other churches of the sovereign grace persuasion in attendance as well. The next meeting will include the election of new officers. All are encouraged to attend.

Information Available Concerning The Sovereign Grace Baptist Fellowship

You may obtain a brochure containing the "Articles of Faith" and "Constitution and By-Laws" of the SGBF by writing to the address below or contacting any of the officers of the Fellowship listed on page 17.

Check out our website: www.sovereigngracebaptistfellowship.org

If you are not on the mailing list and desire to receive *The Sovereign Grace Messenger*, add another recipient to the list, have a change of address, or would like your name removed, please send your name and address to:

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New Hope Baptist Church
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