

THE FEAR OF THE LORD PREVENTS LYING

by Danny Tunnell

“By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil” (Proverbs 16:6). We are to pass the time of our sojourning (pilgrimage) here in fear (1 Peter 1:17). “The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them” (Psalm 34:7). “There is no want for them who fear the Lord” (Psalm 34:9). “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7). The things of God will seem as foolishness to you until you respect Him (1 Corinthians 1:18).

The fear of the Lord means “fear” if you are on the wrong side of God. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” without the blood of Jesus washing away your sins (Hebrews 10:31).

To fear God includes honor, respect, and how you value the things of God. The things of God should be precious to you. People who have no fear of God despise the things of God - His wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:7). To despise means more than to detest; it could be simply ignoring something, to treat it like it doesn’t matter. Those who despise the things of God are headed for destruction (Proverbs 13:13). If we honor the

things of God, He will bless us. God said, “They that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Samuel 2:30).

We read in Acts 4 about the early church, and how generous they were, selling lands and houses and giving the money to the church. Barnabas was one of these (Acts 4:36,37). Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold a property, too, and they gave part of it. That would have been fine, except they chose to lie about it and claimed to have given 100 percent (Acts 5:1-4). Why would they do that? Mainly, because they had no fear of God. The fear of God prevents lying.

Peter asked Ananias, “Why did you lie?” Satan had given them an idea - “You don’t have to give all the money, just say that you did. Just give a part of it, then you’ll have the money and the recognition too.” Satan is the “god of this world” and the father of lying (2 Corinthians 4:4; John 8:44). God delights when we tell the truth and nobody has to lie. There really are only two options for the Christian: say nothing, or tell the truth.

Ananias and Sapphira told a big lie. It was a matter of pride. They

wanted acclaim and recognition. But they didn’t have the heart to do what Barnabas and others had done. Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). Ananias fell down dead, and later his wife (Acts 5:5; 7-11). Everyone got the message: “Great fear came on all of them.” They must have thought, “I’m not doing that! My lying days are over!”

Another reason, besides pride, for their sin was that they were convinced that nobody would know. If they just kept things to themselves it would be their secret. A lack of fear of the Lord is when people act like God doesn’t know, or doesn’t see or hear (Psalm 94:7). But to God even the night is light; the light shines like the day, and no one can hide from God (Psalm 139:7-12). Those who have a proper fear of God live with this awareness, a consciousness that I am living before the Lord (Proverbs 13:3; Hebrews 4:13).

God knows all about us, and the great thing is He still loves us. He loves us enough to pay Jesus’ blood for our sins.

— Miami, OK

WHO WOULD DARE OBEY SATAN?

By Milton Smith

For all accountable adults, there exist two households upon earth. One belongs to Jesus Christ and the other belongs to Satan. Those who do the will of God belong to His household, but those who obey Satan belong to his. But who would dare “obey” Satan? In a very real way, those who refuse to obey God are obeying Satan. When a person knows what God expects of him but chooses rather to ignore such instructions, he is actually choosing to follow Jesus’ adversary. The Bible often emphasizes this fact.

When Eve chose to rebel against God’s clear instructions regarding the famous tree, whom did she choose to follow? When Judas made the decision to betray his Lord, who was behind that decision? John 13:27 tells us that Satan actually “entered” into Judas. But what does this mean? Obviously, Satan found a quick entrance into

this man’s corrupt heart and took full advantage of it. When Ananias and his wife Sapphira chose to lie to the church, who do you suppose was behind this evil decision? Acts 5:3 tells us that Peter told Ananias that it was Satan who had “filled his heart to lie to the Holy Spirit.” When Simon the sorcerer offered money to the apostles in an attempt to purchase the ability to give the Holy Spirit to others, Peter said to him: “Your money perish with you, because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money . . . your heart is not right in the sight of God, for I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” In other words, he was under the influence of the dark side. When Jesus said to Peter, “get behind me Satan,” it seems obvious that He knew who was influencing Peter’s words (Matthew 16:23).

It is easy for a person to know which household he belongs to simply by observing whom he chooses to follow. All faithful Christians are heirs with Christ. His riches become our riches and His joy becomes our joy. In the same manner, His character should become our character. But to follow Satan is to develop his characteristics. To secure eternal life we must remain faithful to the Lord. Those who reject eternal life are choosing to remain faithful to Satan. The promise of eternal hope belongs only to those who make the personal choice to remain faithful members of Jesus’ household. To those who make this wise choice, the death of the physical body is merely the beginning of life eternal.

— Tulsa, OK

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

HOSTILE WITNESSES

By Danny Boggs

Some people praised him; he deserved it. Some people were puzzled by him; they had never seen anything like him. Some people pushed back against him, but even in their pushback they often uttered wonderful truth about Jesus.

They spoke the truth about him in calculated, patronizing flattery. “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances” (Matthew 22:16, ESV).

Demons - whoever, whatever they are - always seemed to identify Jesus accurately. “I know who you are - the Holy One of God” (Mark 1:24). “And Demons came out of many crying, ‘You are the Son of God!’” (Luke 4:41). “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?” (Luke 8:28).

His opponents knew that Jesus was casting out demons, but they crafted the most sinister of explanations: “He casts out demons by the prince of demons” (Matthew 9:34). That was nonsense (Matthew 12:22-32). But their smear campaign caught on with some people (John 10:19-21).

When they meant to accuse Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees gave us a vocabulary that warms us to him. “He eats with tax collectors and sinners” (Matthew 9:11). “He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner” (Luke 19:7). “This man receives sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:2). “A friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Matthew 11:19).

They would not believe and obey Jesus, but they could not deny: “This man performs many signs” (John 11:47).

“It is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish” (John 11:50). Little did Caiaphas know how God was using his incendiary words. “He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad” (John 11:51,52).

At his trials and crucifixion, Jesus’ enemies and persecutors mocked him with words that in themselves were totally true. “Behold your king” (John 19:14). “Hail, King of the Jews” (Matthew 27:29). “Let the Christ, the King of Israel come down now from the cross that we may see and believe” (Mark 15:32). “He saved others” (Luke 23:35). “He trusts in God” (Matthew 27:43).

As the plot to kill Jesus unfolded, Judas lamented, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood” (Matthew 27:4). Pilate’s wife dreamed about him and told her husband, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man” (Matthew 27:19). Pilate did not stop to rush the execution, but admitted, “I find no guilt in this man” (Luke 23:4, 14-15). When it was all over, the centurion in charge at Golgotha could only admit, “Truly, this was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39).

People who didn’t believe, receive, or love Jesus said plenty to justify believing, receiving and loving him. If only the Pharisees had been right as their frustration boiled over: “Look! The whole world is following him!” (John 12:19).

— Neosho, MO

I’LL PUT MY FAITH IN GOD

By Dalton Key

For those of you old enough to remember . . .

. . . It’s been 26 years since the Y2K panic, when we were told the world was sure to collapse due to unprepared technology.

. . . It’s been 50 years since the gas shortages and accompanying long lines at the gas pumps, when we were told the world was just a few years away from depleting its reserves of fossil fuel.

. . . It’s been over 60 years since the Cuban Missile Crisis, when we were told the world was on the very brink of a looming nuclear holocaust.

. . . It’s been far longer than many of us can remember that we have been warned of impending disaster due to a population explosion, global cooling, global warming, income inequality, and a host of other ecological or societal bugaboos.

And now we’re told the AI revolution is likely to bring about a global recession; or in a worst case scenario, the extermination of the human species.

The point? Many of us have lived our entire lives, scuttled by scare-mongers from one promised peril to the next, always assured that our best days were behind us and our worst nightmares were lurking just around the next corner.

And yet, somehow, by some means, we have survived.

Fear sells. Fear is contagious. For some, fear is even fun. But fear was never intended to be the default setting for those created in the image of the Almighty.

Open the Bible at random. You’ll be just a short distance from one of God’s admonitions, one of His invitations, to leave our fears at the feet of the One who made us. “Fear not,” is a message permeating both Testaments and spanning all three Bible dispensations.

What did God tell Abram? “Do not be afraid” (Genesis 15:1). What did he tell Isaac and Israel and Moses and Joshua and Gideon and Isaiah and Jeremiah? “Do not be afraid,” “do not fear,” “fear not” (Genesis 26:24; 46:3; Numbers 21:34; Joshua 1:9; Judges 6:23; Isaiah 41:10; Jeremiah 1:8). What did Jesus tell his disciples? “Do not be afraid” (Matthew 10:28, 31; John 14:27).

One unbreakable law of the universe is as follows: As faith grows, fear recedes; as fear grows, faith recedes. Jesus understood this reality as he admonished the fearful among his hearers with the words “O you of little faith” (Matthew 6:30).

The world promises calamity. It always has. In contrast, God promises - and provides - spiritual peace and inner calm.

I think I’ll put my faith in God.

LOYALTY TO THE KING

By Bobby Key

“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17).

If Christ is not our king there can be no kingdom. As subjects of the king we must respect and obey Him. To the king belongs all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). At times it appears the citizens of the kingdom have deposed the king and taken matters into their own hands. When we refuse to allow Christ to be our king, every man does that which is right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25). In that instance, the kingdom no longer belongs to Christ; it belongs to the people.

The cardinal fault with modern religion is to call, “Lord, Lord,” and not do the things which the Lord says (Luke 6:46). The human mind, equipped by God, is capable of receiving and understanding orders from the king.

Truth is objective and attainable.

Too many people assume their own way is as good as that of the Lord. Their faith rests upon assumptions. The human mind assumes baptism for remission of sins is not necessary; that the Lord’s Supper may be observed on any day of the week, or no day; that women may take the lead in worship; or that instrumental music in worship must please the king because, after all, it pleases us.

When our faith rests on assumptions, we no longer need a king. We become a law unto ourselves.

Men can do no better than to walk humbly with their God. To do this one must respect His authority and freely confess a willingness to change.

It is dangerous to set aside the law of the king. It is only by the king’s law that we can be thoroughly furnished unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:17). Everything must be done in the name of the Lord (Colossians 3:17). When something is done in the name of the Lord, it is done by the authority of the Lord. All authority belongs to the king. He has the authority to tell people what to do and how to do it.

Every person who has been born again is a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. As citizens it is our duty to show loyalty to the king. (1929-2018)

EDITORIAL . . .

DISCIPLES FOLLOW

By Dalton Key

The words of Jesus could not be any clearer: “He that rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). Jesus viewed a rejection of His words as tantamount to a rejection of Himself. In His story of the wise and foolish builders, the wiser of the two was shown to denote those both hearing and doing what Jesus taught (Matthew 7:24).



That’s what disciples do they follow. Disciples don’t go their own way. They don’t make it up as they go along. They don’t tune their ears to other, opposing voices. They listen to their Master, they heed what Master instructs, and they follow where the Master leads.

The inspired John clearly taught that our fellowship with both the Father and the Son depends upon our abiding “in the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9). And this “doctrine of Christ” is not meant to describe only those red-lettered words found in the four gospel accounts or the singular conviction that Christ has come in the flesh. Paul declared that the inspired words he wrote and spoke had been received “by the revelation of Jesus Christ,” and affirmed such words to be “the commandments of the Lord” (Galatians 1:11,12; 1 Corinthians 14:37).

Nothing is more oxymoronic than the image of disciples attempting to embrace a Master wholly excised from his own teachings. Disciples are expected to heed the words of their master. Didn’t Jesus once say, “If you love me, keep my commandments?” (John 14:15).

Whether the matter before us concerns salvation from sin, personal conduct, pure and proper worship, or any one of the myriad spiritual concerns with which we grapple day by day, we who voice allegiance to Christ submit to His word.

And why? Because Christ is Master and we are His disciples.

“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free’” (John 8:31,32).

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me’” (Matthew 16:24).

PREACHING AND THE NEED FOR PATIENCE

By Joshua Ortiz

Be patient when someone preaches to you. Have you ever heard the saying, “Don’t kill the messenger?” Well, that’s true when it comes to the preacher. As long as the preacher is using Scripture and using it correctly, then the message originated from God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). If you’re upset with the message, then you’re upset with God. Patience is needed in listening. Consider the reaction of the Bereans when they heard Paul preach. Acts 17:11 says, “. . . they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” When they found Paul’s words to be true, they followed Christ (Acts 17:12). Most of them listened to the whole message without quickly and impatiently rejecting it. Rather, they took time every day to test Paul’s preaching. And it helped them turn their lives to Christ. Sometimes the truth is meant to hurt in order to build up. Paul said, “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death” (2 Corinthians 7:10). A true friend will

always tell you the truth to help you stay on the right path (Proverbs 27:17).

Be patient when you preach to someone else. Paul told the young evangelist Timothy, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:2). Timothy, the preacher, needed patience. Notice that having patience doesn’t mean we don’t preach; rather, our preaching needs to be done with patience. And it’s not just the pulpit preacher’s job to preach with patience. In 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Paul told the Christians, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.” We shouldn’t be verbally attacking other people. Study how Jesus taught. He did good deeds for people along with preaching to them (Acts 10:38). Also, don’t get impatient or frustrated when someone isn’t converted right away. When you go out and evangelize, you are planting the seed in people’s minds (Luke 8:11). When

someone plants an apple seed, does he instantly get an apple tree? No, it takes time for that seed to sprout. It may be years before someone is converted. When a person is converted, he still needs to be taught with patience. All Christians are always to be growing in knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, we all need to have patience with each other, especially new converts.

Remember God has shown His patience with you.

— Warrensburg, MO

Saved

by Joe Slater

Some folks think it is arrogant to say, “I am saved.” Let’s see if we can clear the air a bit.

First, saying “I am saved” acknowledges my need to be saved. Suppose I was snatched from the sea by the crew of a rescue ship. By saying, “I am saved,” I would be admitting that I had been in the sea, in danger of drowning, freezing, or being eaten by sharks. Likewise, Jesus came to “save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). In essence, then, when I say, “I am saved,” I am admitting that I was lost because of my own sinfulness. That’s hardly arrogance!

Second, saying “I am saved” acknowledges that I couldn’t do it myself. If I, by myself, could be right with God, then I would not need to be saved. As Paul wrote, “If righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain” (Galatians 2:21).

When we comply with the terms of pardon God has revealed in His

word, we “save ourselves” (Acts 2:40 KJV; also 1 Timothy 4:16). But in no sense do we earn or merit anything from God. It certainly is not arrogant to acknowledge that I was lost in sin and could not remedy the situation myself.

Third and finally, saying “I am saved” does not imply that “I am better than you.” Being “saved” says nothing whatever about how good someone is. If I was saved from drowning, am I claiming to be a better swimmer than others in the sea? Hardly! I might be the poorest swimmer of all. But imagine someone angrily shouting, “How dare you claim to be saved while saying that other fellow is drowning! He’s ten times better at swimming than you are! If you are saved, then surely he is saved also!”

I might try to explain that being a good swimmer won’t save you – being saved depends on getting into the rescue ship. No matter how good a swimmer you are, you’ll drown if

you don’t get into the ship! Likewise, salvation from sin is not based on how “good” you are. Yes, God requires that we repent, obey, and live faithful lives. But in the final analysis, all of us are imperfect. Our salvation depends on being in the right relationship with Christ.

Thus, it is not arrogant to say, “I am saved.”

— Springfield, IL

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