

## **The Necessary Fear of God**

Joseph Herrin (3-16-2001)

### **II Timothy 3:1-2**

- 1        But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.
- 2        For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy...

(NAS)

God has led me to look much at the signs of the last days of the church age. The scriptures say much about discerning the days we live in. Jesus told His disciples what signs would accompany the last days, and Paul instructed those to whom he ministered to recognize the signs of the last days. The church has spoken much about some of these signs, while largely overlooking another portion that is spoken of to an even greater degree in scripture.

If you ask most Christians what the signs of the end times are, they will mention earthquakes, famines, wars and rumors of wars, pestilence, the Jewish people returning to their land, knowledge increasing, many people going to and fro, etc.... These are all outward signs of the last days mentioned in various places throughout the scriptures. One must note, however, that not a single one of these signs has anything to do with the church. They all refer to activity occurring in the world. There are an even greater number of signs given in scripture that speak of the condition of the church and of the people who make up the church in the last days. The church says little about these signs, however, even though they are being fulfilled in the very day we live in. Why is this?

The signs of the last days that pertain to the church paint a very dismal picture of the church. It is understandable then, why pastors and ministers who are part of this church, and who make their living from this church, are reluctant to focus upon these signs. Many pastors simply do not want to believe that they are part of the church that is prophesied to exist in these days. Others who suspect the truth are loathe to offend the people of the church. Indeed, there is good reason for pastors to be shy about speaking the truth. The truth often offends. Jesus was the Truth, and He was also the Rock of Offense. The truth He spoke offended people regularly, and because He would not compromise the truth there was no acceptance of Him in the religious system of the day. Similarly, those who would proclaim the truth without compromise in this day will often find that there is no place for them within the Christian religious system. Their message is unwelcome.

What are some of the signs of the last days church?

### **II Timothy 3:1-8**

- 1        But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.
- 2        For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,
- 3        unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,
- 4        treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God;
- 5        holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and

avoid such men as these.

6       For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses,

7       always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

8       And just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected as regards the faith.

(NAS)

In just eight verses Paul has given us at least 24 signs of the last days church. Some may argue that they don't believe this describes the church, that it applies to those outside of the church. However, a careful examination reveals it is truly the church of which Paul speaks. He speaks of men holding to a form of godliness, but denying its power. He speaks of rebellious men opposing the leaders whom God has raised up, even as Jannes and Jambres did. He speaks of false religious leaders making captives of those who are weak and weighed down with sins. He speaks of the people of the church as loving pleasure rather than loving God. Paul is clearly speaking of the religious system of our day. He is not speaking of the world at large.

This is corroborated as we look at more of Paul's words concerning this last days church. The following passage closely follows the one we just looked at.

#### II Timothy 4:3-4

3       For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires;

4       and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

(NAS)

Paul is indeed speaking of the church here for he has just finished instructing Timothy to "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." Who is Timothy to preach to, but the church? Timothy was an ambassador to the church. Although he was instructed to do the work of an evangelist, most of the instructions Paul gave to him pertained to his duties as a minister of the church.

Paul has been telling Timothy that the last days would be perilous and difficult times. We have already seen more than twenty signs that Paul said would attend this last days church. Now he adds more. He says that the people of the church will not endure sound doctrine. They will desire to have their ears tickled in accordance with their own desires. They will turn aside from truth and embrace myth.

Does this seem incredible? Could this possibly describe the church of our day? The evidence doesn't end here, for Paul has yet more to say.

#### II Thessalonians 2:1, 3

1       Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him...

3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for the return of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy comes first...

Paul is giving another sign here of the last days before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is saying the apostasy will occur first. Strong's Dictionary of Greek words defines apostasy in this manner: 646 apostasia, feminine of the same as 647; defection from truth.

Looking further at this word we see that part of the root of apostasy implies a divorce. In this case the divorce is occurring in the church as they divorce the truth to be wed to fables, myths, and falsehood. Paul gives further insight into the reason for this apostasy and the means in which it is brought about.

#### II Thessalonians 2:10-12

- 10 because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be delivered...
- 11 for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false,
- 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

God Himself is the architect of the delusion that people are walking under in this late hour. The reason they have been sent delusion is that they preferred lies to the truth. They did not love truth. They wanted to hear the things that would tickle their ears, the things that would agree with their own soulish desires. They preferred falsehood, so God has sent them a great big dose of delusion and many are falling away from truth and embracing myths, fables, and error.

Paul was not the only one to portray the last days in this manner. Jesus spoke the same thing to His disciples.

#### Matthew 24:3-12

- 3 And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"
  - 4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you.
  - 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ [the Anointed One],' and will mislead many..."
  - 9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name.
  - 10 "And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another.
  - 11 "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many.
  - 12 "And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.
- (NAS)

The end of the age being spoken of is the church age. The end of the church age is marked by deception, multitudes being misled, false prophets arising, and lawlessness, that is, a failure to

submit to the rule of God. Why does the church not speak of these things as readily as she speaks of famines, wars, earthquakes, and other signs? Many are heralding that these natural signs in the world are taking place even now, so where is the preaching that the signs in the church are also occurring?

A church that lies in darkness and deception cannot and will not expose its own sins. When Christ returns He will first judge His own house, before He judges the world. He will expose the wickedness and carnality, the lust for the world and its possessions, the idolatry and every other form of wickedness that is present within the church. In this article, however, I wish to address one particular area of deception that has crept into the church and that is present even among those churches that are flowing in what is called “the river of God”. Many churches are open in this hour to some aspects of the spirit of prophecy, and they are flowing more and more in worship, and they are stressing intimacy with God, but still they are embracing terrible error that will lead to many forfeiting the high call of God on their lives.

God has called the church to holiness, but Paul said one sign of the last days church would be her lack of holiness (II Timothy 3:2). I would like to speak of how the church has fallen into this state of unholy living, while not discerning that this is her condition. To begin, I would like to tell of my own struggles to walk in a holy manner before God, for in my own struggles I have been brought to understand what things are necessary to bring forth holiness, and what things are insufficient.

My own struggles with sin have been horrendous and for many years of my life I felt I was a complete failure and a tremendous disappointment to God. During this period of darkness I would cry out for deliverance with great passion, yet I was left in my dark prison of bondage for well over a decade. I often complained to God about this, for I sincerely wanted deliverance, yet it eluded me. I at times would complain to God that He would not deliver me when I so wanted to be set free. How could He allow me to endure the bitterness of my failure for so many years when I was seeking the way of escape? Yet I have learned that God allows our struggles to shape and mold us for the message He wants to bring forth through us. I was allowed such a bitter and prolonged struggle so that when the light that leads to deliverance came, I would be a ready messenger to declare God’s salvation to others.

I was born again of the Spirit of God when I was just a young boy, being baptized at the age of ten. When I was eleven or twelve I had my first exposure to pornography as I would go over to a friend’s house whose older brothers had pornographic pictures on their walls. My flesh found a great attraction to this, and because I had very low self-esteem I was prone to fantasizing about being loved and accepted by others. The combination of fantasy and the exposure to pornography led to much sexual fantasizing, for in this way both my flesh and my soul were having their demands met.

At the same time I deeply longed to be pleasing to God. I grew in my zeal for God throughout my teen years and early twenties, yet I was constantly plagued by impure thoughts. I rode a desperate roller coaster of commitment to God, failure, condemnation, repentance, re-commitment, and failure again. For almost a decade of my life, beginning about the age of twelve, I thought that my failure was simply a case of not trying hard enough to please God. After each failure I would dedicate myself to trying harder, only to find myself failing again, to plummet to greater depths of despair.

It is hard to describe the agony of these years. I realized even at this age that God consumed a greater portion of my thoughts than most everyone else I knew from the churches I grew up in. I was zealous for God, and I desired to be used of Him in my life. This made my failure all the more acute. I simply could not remain faithful in the area of my thoughts, and at times I would view pornography, only to loathe myself immediately afterwards.

I became so despondent that I actually thought about castrating myself on a few occasions. I read Jesus' words where He said it was better to enter heaven halt or maimed, than to be whole and be cast into hell. He said, "If your right eye [or right hand] makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell" (Matthew 5:29). I took these words seriously, yet I could not keep from stumbling in this area of besetting sin.

In my mid twenties I began to see a new aspect of relationship to God that I had previously not known. I began to actually long for intimacy with God, and rather than trying to please God out of a sense of obligation or duty, I began to really crave times of fellowship and communion with my Father. My prayer times were transformed from being mechanical and legalistic, to being joyful and much anticipated. I began to truly love God.

About this time, the churches I was involved with began to also awaken to the joys of true praise and worship and I experienced many occasions of oneness with the Father in moments of prayer and worship. For nearly another decade this area of relationship with God bloomed and flourished. I felt that surely this love and intimacy would be the secret to overcoming the lusts of the flesh that had plagued me for so long. I began to have many opportunities for preaching and teaching and I remember preaching a sermon on how the secret of obedience was love, for Jesus said, "If you LOVE Me, you will keep my commandments." I told the congregation that for many years I had sought obedience to prove that I loved God, but now I understood that I needed to pursue love, not obedience, for if I truly loved God I would obey Him.

I pressed into the love of God and weekly I would go and spend precious hours communing with my Father. I was driven to do so. These were not dry forced times, but times which my spirit man craved. Tragically, however, I found that what I had supposed would happen did not occur. As I drew closer to God I was not set free from my besetting sins. In fact, I could leave a time of great fellowship with God and just a short time later find myself wallowing in impure and unholy thoughts. This was very distressing. I was about to lose hope and write myself off as a lost cause who was simply too carnal to walk in a manner pleasing to God. I was convinced that, as much as I loved God, I simply loved my sins more.

During most of this time, from my early teens into adulthood, I was a very shy and introverted young man. I would rarely look someone in the eye when I spoke to them, for I felt deficient and lacking in some way. Despite my acute shyness, in desperation over my condition, I at times would approach a pastor, or elder of the church and share my struggles with them. In none of these times was I ever given anything that would help me. I wanted them to tell me a solution to my struggle. I wanted them to point out the way to victory, but none ever did. Some prayed with me, and others told me to just keep battling, perhaps one or two said they would be an accountability partner with me (although

they never followed through), but none ever gave me any real assistance.

I became convinced that the ministers and leaders of the church simply did not know the answer themselves to overcoming besetting sin, so I quit asking them for answers. No doubt many of them were struggling with similar issues, and had not achieved victory themselves. However, I persisted in asking God for an answer.

Over the course of time God opened my eyes to the answer. I began to experience greater and greater victory in this area. Even when indulging in this area of sin became so much easier, and so much more difficult for others to detect through the advent of the Internet and the free accessibility of every form of pornographic perversion in virtual privacy, even at this time when temptation was so much easier to satisfy, I found myself having a greater and greater freedom from this area of temptation. I found myself avoiding it and giving it no place in my life.

I suspect that some who have dealt with this very same struggle are saying now “What is the answer? How can I also experience victory over this, or a similar area of my life of which I am deeply ashamed?” The answer is: **I began to learn the fear of the Lord.**

Before I progress any further, let me say, what I will share with you will not just free you from sexual lusts, but from any and every form of besetting sin. It will deliver you from gossip. It will deliver you from excessive anger. It will deliver you from bitterness. It will set you free from covetousness. It will deliver you from every form of bondage and sin. If you truly learn the fear of the Lord, you will be set firmly on a course to experience true holiness in your life.

Why has the church of our day fallen to the depths in which it is mired? Why does it fit the description that Paul and Jesus and others gave of it? I am convinced that one of the greatest reasons is that there is no longer any fear of God before the eyes of man. The church has rewritten the image of God in a manner that allows for sin to be tolerated and for evil to be winked at. They have taught a grace that is cheap, and they have embraced fables and myths about heaven, judgment, and the following ages that leads to careless living. They have embraced the kindness of God, and rejected the severity of His character.

In the early days of the church God brought swift judgment on sin and it caused the body of believers to walk carefully for a season, knowing the fear of God. We read the following from the book of Acts.

Acts 5:4-5, 9-11

4        Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God."

5        And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; **and great fear came upon all who heard of it...**

9        Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out as well "

10      And she fell immediately at his feet, and breathed her last; and the young men

came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

11     **And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things.**

(NAS)

The effect of the great fear that came upon the church was that the church walked very carefully before God. The result of this holy walk was that the reputation of the church was very great, verse thirteen of this same chapter states that “the people held them in high esteem.” This is quite the opposite of the church today. Today the church is a laughingstock, a derision, and its reputation and esteem in the eyes of the world is very low. This is not because they fail to preach Christ. Rather it is because they hold to a form of godliness, but deny the power of true godliness.

It has been recently reported in America that the divorce rate is 60% WITHIN the church. This is a higher percentage than outside the church. This is the result of a message of cheap grace that says “God wants you to be happy. Even if you divorce your spouse, God will forgive you. You need not be concerned about this being sin.” It is a result of the church not fearing God. If a few people who espoused this cheap grace suddenly dropped dead, I guarantee that things would change quickly. Such was the atmosphere of the early church in Jerusalem.

I can state without equivocation that there is no holiness apart from a fear of God. I can say this not only from my own experience, but from the scriptures. ***It may be the kindness of God that leads men to repentance, but it is the fear of God that makes them holy.*** The fear of God is just what it says, it is FEAR of God. It is not just a reverent respect as some teach. A reverent respect will not cause men to turn away from sin, but a real holy terror of the awesome and righteous nature of God will lead men to holiness. Does such a feeling of fear and terror have a place in the church of the New Testament? Examine the following verses.

**II Corinthians 7:1**

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, **perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

(NAS)

**II Corinthians 5:10-11**

10     For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

11     **Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...**

(KJV)

**Romans 11:20-22**

20     Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. **Do not be conceited, but fear;**

21     for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you.

22     **Behold then the kindness and severity of God;** to those who fell, severity, but

to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

(NAS)

Hebrews 10:26-31

26 For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

27 **but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.**

28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

29 **How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?**

30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge His people."

31 **It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**

(NAS)

These things were written to the church, not the lost. Some may ask, "Why then does John say that perfect love casts out all fear?" The answer should be plain. If we walk in obedience we have no reason to fear, but if we walk in disobedience we have much to fear. John said this was his meaning when he stated,

I John 4:18

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment...

(NAS)

If you are perfected in love then you will not sin and you will have no reason to fear any punishment. In the very next chapter John states, "We know that no one who is born of God sins" (I John 5:18). Is John teaching sinless perfection? He is stating that living a sinless life should indeed be the goal of every believer. We should not make any provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). What does this mean? If you develop a mindset that says, "It is no big deal if I sin. I can just confess my sin and receive forgiveness," then you have made a provision for the flesh. You have made a way for the flesh to do what it desires without any repercussions. This is simply delusion, no matter how many pastors are preaching it. The word of God says,

Galatians 6:7-8

7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

(NIV)

Yes, if we do stumble and sin then we do have an advocate with the Father. We can confess our sin to God and He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). But let us never make this a license to sin. God judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart and He will not be mocked. He will not tolerate one of His children trampling under foot the Son of God, or treating as unclean the blood of the covenant, or insulting the Spirit of grace. Yes there is great grace, but we can also insult, or offend the Spirit of grace. We do this by carelessly sinning with no fear of the consequences. We do this by thinking sin in our life is of no, or very little, consequence.

Did you note the scriptures above that said, "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries?" Where is this preached today? What does this mean, "a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries?" Will Christians experience the lake of fire? The scriptures show plainly that many of them will.

Luke 12:45-46

45        "But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk;

46        the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him, and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

(NAS)

Perhaps you cannot identify too well with what is being said here. When Jesus speaks of a servant beating the slaves, He is speaking of someone who does not treat his brother and sister with love. When He speaks of them eating and drinking and getting drunk, He is speaking of a person who has given themselves over to a pursuit of pleasure. We could easily rewrite this scripture in the following manner.

But if that servant of mine says in his heart, 'My master's appearing will certainly not be anytime soon,' and begins to treat others unkindly and abusively, both men and women, and to pursue those things that bring him or her pleasure...

What is it that brings some people pleasure. Some do find it in food and drink and drunkenness. Others may find it in putting away a spouse that is difficult to live with and finding one whom they find to be more pleasant. Some may find it in accumulating new cars and a big house, boats and golf clubs and all manner of things that please the flesh. Again, God weighs the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. It may be quite alright for a man to fish, but if his fishing becomes an idol in his life, then it will bring judgment. You may ask, "How can I tell if it has become an idol?" One good answer I heard is, "If it causes you to react desperately at the thought of giving it up, then it has become an idol." One must let God's Spirit lead us into such a determination. The Spirit can use the Word of truth to divide between soul and spirit and to reveal the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

But what does this scripture mean when it says that the wicked servant will be assigned a portion with the unbelievers? Again, the scriptures reveal the answer.

Revelation 21:8

"But for the cowardly **and unbelieving** and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

(NAS)

Here we see clearly what the portion of the unbeliever is. They will be cast into the lake of fire that will burn away all that is not of God. The scriptures reveal that many saints will share this portion with the unbelievers. (For further study of the purpose of the lake of fire please read ‘God’s Plan of the Ages’, found at the website <http://heart4god.8k.com> ). The following scripture is written to the church, and it says that it is the overcomer, not all saints, who will be spared from this judgment.

Revelation 2:11

'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.'

(NAS)

According to the gospel of cheap grace, the gospel being widely proclaimed today, no saints will experience the purging of the lake of fire. If Jesus meant to say that all those who named His name would not be hurt by the second death, which is the lake of fire, He would have said so plainly. He did not say this, however, even when He was addressing the church of Smyrna. No, He said “He who **overcomes** shall not be hurt by the second death.” This is quite different than “all believers”. Looking further in the book of Revelation, we read:

Revelation 20:4-6

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

(NAS)

Who has a part in the first resurrection, over whom the second death (the lake of fire) has no power? It is those who are blessed and holy. Who are the blessed? A reading of the sermon of the mount will reveal many of those who are blessed. It is those who suffer for the name of Christ. It is those who are persecuted for His name. It is those who are poor and hungry and who suffer shame for His name. It also says “holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection.” Need we ask who the holy

are? They are those who are holy. They have separated themselves from the world and the pursuit of it. They have taken up the cross, dying to the desires of the soul. They are the ones who have crucified the flesh with its lusts and desires. Is this all Christians? Absolutely not.

Matthew 8:11-12

11 "And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven;  
12 but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

(NAS)

Matthew 22:13-14

13 "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'  
14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."

(NAS)

Matthew 25:30

"And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.  
(NAS)

Who are the servants and slaves of God and Christ? They are not the lost, but those of God's own household. Paul identified himself as a bond servant of Jesus. It is these who are here being spoken of, not the lost. There are many of God's own children who will be found to be lacking in the hour that God inspects His servants and asks for an accounting of them. Many will experience weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Do not think that because you have been born again and you name the name of Christ that this alone is sufficient and you can live any way you please. God will not be mocked. We will all reap according to what we have sown. Jesus said, "Behold, I come quickly and My reward is with Me to render to every man according to what he has done."

There will be no universal reward. Each man will receive according to what HE has done. Our reward will not even be based upon what Christ has done. It is based upon what we have done. Paul tells us that each man's work will be tested by fire to see if he has built with gold, silver, and precious stones, or if he has built with wood, hay, and stubble. The fire will test the quality of each man's work. Many will suffer great loss.

I Corinthians 3:15-17

15 If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.  
16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?  
17 If any man defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

Does any saint desire to be saved in this manner, suffering the loss of all reward? Does any saint want to experience what is spoken of here as a just reward for defiling the temple of God? These words should make the saint of God pause and take note. Paul said that “knowing the terror of God, we persuade men.” Where is this preached today? Because this severe side of God is not preached, the church has become corrupt and full of defilement. The saints of God lead unholy and sensual lives without regard for the consequences. But the scriptures state that there will be consequences, and they will be severe.

How does a saint defile or destroy the temple of God, which temple they are? They do it by bringing that which is unholy into the temple. Can you picture the temple of Solomon or the Tabernacle of Moses. Two of Aaron’s sons were destroyed for offering unholy fire on the altar. If God was this zealous for a temple made by the hands of man, how much more zealous is He for the temple He has constructed of living flesh?

In the gospels we see that the greatest emotion and anger that Christ displayed was when He entered the Temple and found it defiled. It was spoken of Him, “Zeal for My Father’s house will consume Me.” Was Jesus concerned about a physical building? Absolutely not. He was concerned for what it represented. We are the true temple of God. We are the temple in which the Spirit of God dwells. Jesus is consumed with a zeal for these temples of our bodies and He will act with great zeal to cleanse them. If any man has defiled the temple, he will be destroyed.

Jesus said, "It is written, 'And My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a robbers' den" (Luke 19:46). It is the temples of our bodies that are to be houses of prayer. Our bodies are to be places of communion with God. The anger of God is unleashed against those who treat the temple of God as an unholy thing.

In this account from the gospels we also discern that men defile the temple through traffic, commerce, and trade. Man was created for fellowship and communion with God, but man has taken the temple of his body which was to be a meeting place between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God and he has filled it with the traffic of the merchandise of the world. The temples of flesh which were designed to be houses of prayer have become houses of merchandise.

It is not by accident that the living temple of God has become full of the noise and traffic of commerce. Satan has duplicated his own error in the lives of mankind. Ezekiel chapter 28 describes the fall of Satan in this way:

Ezekiel 28:18

"You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading..."  
(NKJ)

Ezekiel 28:18

By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries...  
(NIV)

Ezekiel 28:18

Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity  
of thy traffick...  
(KJV)

Yes, Satan brought traffic and trading into the sanctuaries of God and thereby profaned and defiled them. What was to be a place of worship and prayer became full of the commerce of the world. Even so, our bodies are the temples of God and they are to be places of prayer and communion with the Father. However, the majority of the saints of God have also profaned and defiled their sanctuaries. Their lives are lives of traffic and trading as they pursue the things the world has to offer. Rather than being still and knowing the God who has created them, they rush about trying to acquire the latest toy or trendy piece of merchandise. In all of their activity, prayer and communion with God has been neglected.

Will not Jesus deal as severely with these violators of their temples as He did in driving the merchandisers out of the Temple 2000 years ago? Jesus is still consumed with a zeal for His Father's house and He still longs to see it function as a house of prayer. This speaks of you and I, the children of God.

The day is coming very soon when God's judgment will fall on this world and its system of merchandise and trade. Many will be caught unaware, including the majority of those who are of the household of God. Jesus prophetically foretold of the suddenness of which His appearing would come on the world and the lack of readiness of even those who are called by His name.

Luke 17:26-30

26 "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man:

27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

28 "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;

29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

30 "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.

(NAS)

What was the focus of the people in Noah's day and Lot's day? They were focused on the pursuit of the things of the world. Missing from the description is any indication that they were praying, or communing with God, or pursuing the righteousness without which none shall see God. No, they were marrying, they were eating and drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building.

This describes the lives of those who are found in the churches that bear Christ's name today. The children of God are looking forward to the next food fest. They are focused on their next acquisition

of the merchandise of this world. They are focused on selling their wares that they might generate more money to spend on their pleasures. They are focused on the next building project, whether in their own home or in the church itself. The house of prayer has become a house of merchandise.

And Jesus is soon to return.

Many of the saints of God are anticipating Jesus coming back to take them from the pursuit of the pleasures here on Earth and to transplant them into the realm of heaven where they will know uninterrupted pleasure forevermore. When Jesus came the first time He was anticipated to appear in a manner altogether different from the way in which He came. For this reason we are told that "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11). I am convinced that His second appearing will be no different.

The saints of God are anxiously awaiting the appearing of Christ, but they have not discerned that His appearing will be to the sorrow of many.

#### Amos 5:18-23

18 Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, for what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light;

19 As when a man flees from a lion, and a bear meets him, or goes home, leans his hand against the wall, and a snake bites him.

20 Will not the day of the LORD be darkness instead of light, even gloom with no brightness in it?

21 "I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies..."

23 "Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps."

(NAS)

#### Joel 1:15-16

15 Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and it will come as destruction from the Almighty.

16 Has not food been cut off before our eyes, gladness and joy from the house of our God?

(NAS)

#### Joel 2:1-2

1 Blow a trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; surely it is near,

2 A day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness.

(NAS)

Many today are saying that they long for the Lord's appearing, but they do not understand that He will come as a thresher of wheat to separate out the chaff; to make a distinction between the holy and the vile. Jesus will come back and He will steal away those who have made themselves ready, those who have allowed Him to purify and refine them and clothe them in garments of righteousness.

Those who were sleeping and who were pursuing the things of the world, those who have allowed the traffic of the world to defile and profane their sanctuaries will receive the scourging of the Lord. They will be left behind and endure the day of the Lord's wrath as He cleanses the temple once again. As it was in the days of Noah and the days of Lot, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

The church of the last days has embraced many myths and fables whose effect has been to remove the fear of God from before their eyes. The teaching of a universal rapture is one such fable. It has led many saints to mistakenly believe that no matter how they are living their lives now, when Jesus comes for the saints they will all instantly be caught up to be with Him and they will spend eternity with Him in heaven. Nowhere is such a concept found in scripture. We have read clearly that it is the saint who overcomes who will not be touched by the second death, which is the Lake of Fire. Many saints will indeed share a portion with the unbelievers and they will taste the second death. Because they have not allowed God to purge, purify, and refine them in this life, they will have to endure the purifying of the lake of fire. (Again, I would direct the interested saint to read the article "God's Plan of the Ages" found at <http://heart4god.ws> to gain an greater understanding of the Lake of Fire and its function of purification).

The church has heaped up to itself teachers in accord with her own desires in this day. This was clearly a sign that Paul said would attend the last days. The church wants to pursue the things of the world. The church wants to be allowed to sin and find a cheap grace to atone for it. The church wants to believe that there will be no repercussions to those who fail to sanctify themselves and walk in holiness before God. For this reason she has gathered teachers to herself who will tell her these things. We are truly in the last days and this is what is occurring.

The church has failed to walk holy before God. She has embraced false doctrines that say God wants to fulfill the lusts of man, that God wants to satisfy every man's desire for monetary prosperity and to be increased with the goods of the world. They have embraced the lie that says that God exists to bless them and fulfill their selfish longings. Multitudes of ministers today are equating worldly gain with godliness. They equate prosperity with faith, and poverty with unbelief. This is simply a demonstration of carnal doctrines devised to support man's love of the world. The scriptures teach no such thing.

It is because there is no fear of God before the eyes of the church that she has embraced so many errors. If the church truly feared God she would be much more careful to discern the difference between truth and falsehood. Because the church has little fear of God and of the consequences of failing to walk in truth, there has been little resistance to keep deception out of her midst. In the same way, in the lives of individual believers, a very real fear of God is necessary to keep them from carelessly engaging in sin or drifting into error. A love for God is not sufficient. It must be attended by a fear of God as well.

As a case in point, one can look at the life of King David. David truly loved God and had a heart after God. David was the King who established the Tabernacle of praise and worship that went on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. David wrote numerous Psalms of praise and he is often referred to as the sweet psalmist of Israel. But even with all of his love for God, David was at times not careful

to show proper honor to God and his love for God was insufficient to keep him from falling into gross sin. It required David learning a fear of God to deliver him from these errors and failings.

We read in scriptures where David desired to bring the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem. David loved God and desired for His presence to be near to him. As the Ark was being brought up to Jerusalem David was greatly rejoicing and praising God. However, David had failed to show proper respect for God's holiness even in the midst of his praise. God had given instructions through Moses as to how the Ark was to be transported. It was to be carried on poles on the shoulders of Levite priests. David had been transporting it on a new cart built specifically for the occasion.

God was displeased that He was not be honored with obedience. Even though all the people were praising God, God was not being honored for His instructions were not being carried out. When the oxen pulling the cart nearly turned it over at one point, Uzzah the priest reached out his hand to steady the cart, and as he did so God immediately killed him. It was forbidden to touch the Ark in such a manner.

How often do such things occur today? How many times even in the midst of praise and worship does the church fail to sanctify God and show Him the proper honor? I think the church would be amazed if they understood how detestable much of their activity is to him, activity that is intended to show our love for Him. As Amos recorded God's words, "I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies... Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps."

It was not acceptable unto God for David and all Israel to praise God and to show such delight in His presence, but to do so according to their terms. David did not discern God's holiness. He did not have a proper fear of God. We are told that when God killed Uzzah that David became angry with God. David could not understand why God had rejected their sincere, but disobedient efforts. Was it not enough to God that David and the people loved God? Was it not enough that they were praising Him with all sincerity? Evidently it was not.

David refused to carry the Ark any further. He left the Ark where it was at the home of Obed-Edom. We read an enlightening thing here.

#### II Samuel 6:8-9

8        And David became angry because of the LORD'S outburst against Uzzah, and that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day.

9        **So David was afraid of the LORD that day;** and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?"

(NAS)

Although David did not understand the Lord's outburst against Uzzah, David learned the fear of God that day. This fear led to David correcting his disobedience and walking obediently before God in this matter. David's love of God led him to praise God, but David's fear of God led to obedience. After a period of time the report came to David that God was blessing the household of Obed-Edom,

so David was encouraged to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. This time, knowing the fear of God, he acted in obedience.

I Chronicles 15:1-2, 11, 13

1 Now David built houses for himself in the city of David; and he prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched a tent for it.

2 Then David said, "No one is to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for the LORD chose them to carry the ark of God, and to minister to Him forever..."

11 Then David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab,

12 and said to them, "You are the heads of the fathers' households of the Levites; consecrate yourselves both you and your relatives, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel, to the place that I have prepared for it.

13 "Because you did not carry it at the first, the LORD our God made an outburst on us, for we did not seek Him according to the ordinance."

(NAS)

A tremendous revelation can be gleaned from this passage. *Without the fear of God, people will not be careful to discern what God's will is, and they will fail to walk in a manner acceptable to God.* Having a heart after God and a love for God is not enough. David had to learn a fear of God in order to come to the place where he would diligently seek to know God's mind in a matter. His lack of fear led to carelessness and resulted in death.

This is true of the church today. Because there is little fear of God among the body of Christ, people are not pressing in to discern what God's will is for their lives and they have a very casual attitude towards walking obediently before God. Even though the saints may love God, their love is insufficient to lead them to walk in a manner that is pleasing to God. Even in the midst of praise and worship they can be found to be deficient and displeasing to God.

Again, in another incident in David's life, we find that he lacked a proper fear of God and it led him to sin, committing both adultery and murder. God's discipline of David for this breach was most severe, and only as David learned to fear God's holiness and righteous anger was he delivered and set free.

In a similar way, believers today need to discern the fear of God in order to turn away from sin. Paul instructs us in II Corinthians 7:1, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, **perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**" It is the fear of God that leads us to holiness.

If you are dealing with a besetting sin, if you have struggled to have victory in an area of your life, and you have cried out to God over and over for deliverance, then you most likely have not learned the fear of God in your life. You can sincerely love God and yet find that victory and deliverance eludes you. It is when we experience God's judgments and learn His fear that righteousness is produced in our lives.

Isaiah 26:9

With my soul I have desired You in the night, yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early; for when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

(NKJ)

If you desire to walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord, then the greatest thing you can do is to ask for His judgments in your life. In receiving His judgments you will learn righteousness. It may require that God bring discipline to your life to teach you to properly fear Him, but the end result will be the peaceful fruit of righteousness upon your life. David learned to love God's judgments and to seek them. Psalm 119 is a wonderful testimony of this righteous man's love of God's judgments in his life. David also prayed,

Psalms 139:23-24

23     Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties;  
24     And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

(NKJ)

Many saints fail to recognize God's judgments in their lives. They walk in oblivion, ignorant of the hand of God upon them. They therefore do not respond to the discipline they receive and they have no fear of God. In the book of I Corinthians Paul spoke to the saints about taking the Lord's supper in an improper manner. He said because they partook of it improperly many had fallen ill and some had even died. I am sure that some failed to make the connection between these deaths and illnesses until Paul pointed it out. In the same way, many saints today are experiencing such things without a clue as to why. They need to discern God's chastening hand upon them.

Paul gives us these words, "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives" (Hebrews 12:6). In receiving the discipline of the Lord we learn righteousness. No discipline for the moment seems joyful, but for those who truly desire holiness, it is the only course set before them. It will always be better for the saint to ask God to correct them and to make them holy, than for them to have God's correction forced upon them. There is mercy and great grace for those who seek God's discipline and correction in their lives.

What the world needs in this hour is to see the sons of God walking in righteousness and holiness. I am convinced that there is no more pleasing request that a son or daughter can make in this hour than to ask for God to teach them His fear, and to ask for God to establish their walk in holiness. What a delight it is to our Father's ears to receive such a request from His children.

The fear of God is necessary in our lives. It is not enough to love God, even if you love Him passionately. You must also learn to fear Him that you might turn away from sin. It is in the fear of God that we are perfected in holiness.

Selah