

Has the Church Lost the Fear of the Lord?

When the word “church” is used, I’m referring to the church collectively, as a whole, rather than “all” churches.

A few years ago, I had a conversation with a liberal pastor who suggested that these articles are written from a position of fear. I agree ... I believe that these messages are timely and urgent for the vast majority.

The present condition of the church leaves one to wonder if the lack of the fear of the Lord is contributing to her spiritually dead condition: “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:15-17).

A healthy respect of God (fear) is what our culture, and the church, desperately need. (Watch, What Is a Good Minister, here: vimeo.com/28378093)

During our conversation, I asked myself, “Why don’t we agree on this important truth? The fear of the Lord is mentioned frequently throughout the Bible as the beginning of knowledge, wisdom and understanding.” Sadly, I’ve had similar conversation with emergent, postmodern and liberal pastors. My concern is that this view is coming from leadership. They feel that we should avoid mentioning the fear of the Lord because it makes people feel uncomfortable. Just writing that sentence makes me feel uncomfortable. “The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him” (Ps. 147:11). Joshua encouraged the people to “fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness” (24:14).

It's clear from Genesis to Revelation that we are to "serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling" (Ps. 2:11). Jesus said, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). Jesus spoke more on the fear of hell than on the glory of heaven. He thought it to be timely and urgent. "That makes me both love Him and fear Him! I love Him because He is my Savior, and I fear Him because He is my Judge" (A.W. Tozer).

The overall direction of the church away from the fear of the Lord is a sad reality. It is an indication that we may fear men more than God. Those who avoid teaching the fear of the Lord to soften the message are missing the balance. We are running from the very thing we need: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7). Acts 9:31 says that the early church walked "in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit." Did you catch that: the church was powerful and multiplied because they walked in the fear of God (not man), and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Anointing and fear go hand-in-hand. Paul reminds us in Philippians 2:12 that we should work out (not work for) our own salvation with "fear and trembling."

We must lovingly proclaim the fear of the Lord again in our pulpits if we are to experience genuine change. Fear often motivates a person to repent. The fear of the Lord will cause an adulterer to seek forgiveness. It will motivate the prodigal to return. It will cause pastors to spend extended time in prayer for anointed sermons. When the fear of the Lord is preached the world will repent: "Falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you" (1 Cor. 14:25). A true fear of the Lord saves man from himself. We should take His commands seriously ... not legalistically, but reverently.

Fearing the Lord isn't the type of fear one would have toward an abusive father, but rather, it's the type of fear that

involves respect and reverence for God. For example, we fear jumping off a 100-story building because we respect gravity. Fear, in this sense, is good and God-given; it protects us.

It is often through reverent fear that we come to Christ and redemption. The church cannot neglect, water down or avoid preaching the fear of the Lord in the hope of not offending, or securing an audience. The fear of the Lord offends, and rightly so. The goal of the church is faithfulness to God, not crowd appeal. The church, as a whole, may have forgotten the fear of the Lord, but it doesn't follow that we should.

Pockets of true revival are breaking out across America. Want to know more about the next great move of God? [Click here](#) to see Jennifer LeClaire's new book, featuring Dutch Sheets, Reinhard Bonnke, Jonathan Cahn, Billy Graham and others.

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