

The Absence of the Fear of the Lord Is Causing Too Many People to Drift

I remember as a child, learning to float on my back in the water at a beach we frequented in the summertime. After floating for a few minutes I'd look around and realize I had drifted quite a distance from where I first started. The gentle motion of the ocean waves had caused me to drift.

I find this concept to be true in the Christian life as well. There is a spiritual drifting that occurs when we don't maintain a strong and close communion with the Lord and feed on the full counsel of His Word. You will begin accepting what popular elevated teachers in the Christian marketplace teach you instead of what the Bible *actually* says. It will become easier for you to swallow erroneous teachings – fables, fads, and popular trends in Christendom. And worse of all, you'll slip into sin, worldliness, and compromise a little at a time, and before you know it, you'll be flirting with darkness and activities that you never thought you would engage in again.

The writer of Hebrews exhorts us:

“So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it” (Heb. 2:1, NLT).

The exhortation here is to listen very carefully to the truth and not to turn our ears away from it like many are doing today. What is the warning that is attached to this exhortation? It is the prospect of eternal punishment for our disobedience.

“For if the word spoken by angels was true, and every sin and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation, which was first declared by

the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him?" (Heb. 2:2-3, MEV).

Now the issue with the Hebrew Christians was the danger of reverting back to Judaism and the Law, so Paul appeals to them in that light. Apostasy was the big issue. Drifting away from the things we've heard is drifting toward apostasy, and we definitely don't want any part of what the Bible states will happen in these last days.

What the Lord Told Me in a Recent Dream

Recently, I shared the dream I just had where I was speaking passionately to someone about Jesus, and of Him not just being a Savior, but a Judge also. And then in the dream I heard myself say these words: "There are not enough judges in the church." I woke up knowing I'd heard a word from the Lord He wanted me to speak and write on.

The apostle Paul acted as a judge in the early church when he stated: "For indeed, though absent in body but present in spirit, I have already, as if I were present, judged him who has done this deed" (1 Cor. 5:3). A man was cohabitating with his father's wife (his stepmother), and Paul was disappointed that the church had not judged the matter: "For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?" (1 Cor. 5:12).

What was lacking in Corinth? Why did they fail to judge this matter? In a word, they did not have a healthy fear of the Lord operating in that community of believers and its elders. They did not know Jesus as the Judge. They did not consider the Lord's judgments or the eternal punishment the offender might receive. So what did Paul command the church to do? He told them to turn him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh so that he might repent before he drifts too far and receives the just penalty of eternal punishment. The purpose was not vindictive but redemptive, so his soul could be saved

(1 Cor. 5:4-5). They judged the matter, and later this man did repent and return to the Lord.

Eternal Judgment Is a Doctrine of Christ and a Major Theme

I have found that having this foundation of His judgments in your life is what cultivates the true fear of the Lord. Believers think it's deep when you speak about the Lord's judgments, but it's actually one of the principle doctrines of Christ (Heb. 6:1-2). The Word calls it milk (Heb. 5:12-13). It's one of the first things new believers are supposed to learn. Yet it's a missing theme in most of the church. Why? Because we have substituted our own contemporary gospel for the gospel that Jesus and the apostles preached. As a result, the church is full of false converts. We avoid such themes as God's eternal judgments, holiness, repentance and the like. Too many casual and carnal believers actually think those themes are too negative and that they minister death and condemnation. But the Bible is full of warnings and exhortations such as the aforementioned that need to be emphasized, especially in this day of such moral degradation that is nearing collapse.

Years ago the Lord dealt with me about writing and speaking more on what He called "lost themes," or discarded and understated important truths in the body of Christ (several books I've written since then major on this word). As one example, the Lord said there was a diabolical silence on true holiness that is causing many to fall back into sin and compromise and a lackadaisical walk with God. Well, what is it that works holiness into your life? It's the fear of the Lord. This is another understated theme that runs throughout the Bible.

"Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

The fear of the Lord is not a mere fear of His punishment for our disobedience, although that is a part of it, but a holy reverence and wholesome dread of displeasing Him. It is to be the controlling motive of the true Christian's life. It is the key component that perfects holiness in us. Holiness is an apostolic theme that runs through the entire New Testament and letters to the churches. How have we missed that?

And what is it that nurtures the fear of the Lord in your life? It's the eternal judgments of God. Can you see it? Let us pray and believe God for the restoration of these vital themes in the church today.