

The Fear of God

Radio Broadcast

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Welcome to the Grace Abounding broadcast brought to you by the congregation of the Shreveport Grace Church that meets at 2970 Baird Road in Shreveport, LA. My name is Ken Wimer and it is my privilege to bring to you today a message that seeks to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious person and finished work of salvation accomplished for sinners at the cross. Please stay tuned.

I'm reading to day from Hebrews 4:1, we read, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." I want to speak to you from the scriptures about what is godly fear. I know in psychological terms today, there's a lot of discussion as to what causes fear and the effects that this has on people's emotions and livelihoods. But here, clearly, it is speaking of something that is different than a psychological or an emotional fear. This is the word of God and the Spirit of God caused the author to the Hebrews to warn his readers "to fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest." So, clearly he's writing to a specific people when he uses the word "us." And he says, "lest any of you should seem to come short of it."

Some might be confused when they consider other portions of scripture where the call is to rest. We're to rest in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, is this a contradiction? On the one hand to rest in him and what he's accomplished and yet here we're exhorted to fear? No, dear friend, the call here is to the Lord's people, those that God the Father has chosen and the Son has paid their entire sin debt and the Spirit of God has called. They're called, here, to fear, but this is not a slavish fear of God's wrath. This is a misnomer today that somehow Christ laid down his life for sinners that will never enter into the benefit of what he accomplished. You'll hear preachers say to you, their hearers, "Don't let Christ die in vain." Well, dear friend, Christ never did die in vain. His death accomplished everything that he came to do, everything that his Father sent him to do.

So, for one of the Lord's for whom he died, there is no reason to be in a slavish fear of God's wrath. There's no reason to fear that somehow Christ having died for me, yet I will, in the end, end up in hell anyway. That would be double jeopardy. No, that cannot be. So, the call here is not to live in some sort of legalistic fear as some do because their leaders, their preachers constantly crack the ten-prong whip over their head and try to keep them in line when, in reality, there's never been any life in them to begin with.

Where the Spirit of God has done a work of grace in the heart, there's a freedom, there's a desire after the Lord Jesus Christ. Not a legalistic fear. Those whose sin debt has been paid, indeed, they do rest in the work that the Lord Jesus Christ finished and accomplished because he paid that entire debt. There remains nothing but righteousness that God the Father imputed, attributed to the spiritual account, once for all upon completion of Christ's death.

In Hebrews, chapter 10, just a few chapters later in this epistle, in verse 14, we read this clear statement, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." In other words, when the Lord Jesus Christ died he accomplished all that God the Father required of those for whom he died. And, therefore, by that one offering, they have been forever perfected, forever sanctified, set apart in Christ and in his finished work. So that scripture declares that those who are the Lord's need not have a spirit of fear. They have not received a spirit of bondage again to fear.

In Romans, chapter 8, verse 15, the Apostle Paul made this plain. Beginning in verse 14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

But, coming back to the text here in Hebrews, chapter 4, then what is the writer exhorting these, his hearers, and us who hear today when he says, "Let us therefore fear?" Well, there's a call to godly fear that is in contrast with presumptuous profession. It is a Christ filled loving fear of ever putting any confidence in the flesh. A fear of having one's eyes being taken off of him, Christ, and his finished work by looking to the arm of the flesh or the will. These chapter divisions were put in by editors and so it's really a continuation of chapter 3, and the children of Israel that perished in the desert. "And God sware in his wrath that they would not enter into his rest."

It says in verse 19 of chapter 3 of Hebrews, "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." In their minds, perhaps, they thought that they were the Lord's simply because they had been brought out of Egypt. There are some that would presume that they are the Lord's because their sitting in a place of worship where the scriptures are read or, perhaps, even where the gospel is faithfully preached. And yet, it's only a profession. There's never been any work of grace done in their hearts.

You can see that this verse in Hebrews 4:1, "Let us therefore fear" is sandwiched between a verse that warns of unbelief and then verse 2 of Hebrews 4 that also warns of unbelief. "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." There was a hearing with the ears, but not with the hearts. That could only be through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, there are many who might be under the sound of the gospel, I may even be speaking to some here who would say with their lips, "Salvation is of the Lord and it's all by grace." And yet, their hearts have never been turned to the Lord Jesus Christ. Their

eyes have never been opened to behold him and to seek him and to rest in his finished work alone. There are many that give lip service to grace and to Christ and to his finished work and yet, somehow subtly believe that their works have something to do with their salvation or their will. I hear some say, "Yes, Christ is the Savior but we have to believe." And they speak in such a way as if they're believing has contributed to their salvation and is something that God honors and respects. It is true that where there has been salvation there will be faith. Faith comes by hearing. Hearing not just with the physical ears but the Spirit of God giving the hearing and hearing by the word of God.

Paul in writing to the Philippians warned of ever putting any confidence in the flesh. One of the hymns that I like to sing is that one which warns us, "Not to trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name, my hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness." Paul in writing to the Philippians in chapter 3, verse 2, said, "Beware of dogs." He's speaking there of wild dogs, ones that would come and endeavor to destroy the meat of the gospel, they're vicious. They're some with their works religion or so-called free will preaching who eat away at the message of the free and unconditional grace of God and salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ in his death.

And Paul compares them to dogs. He says, "Beware of evil workers." He's speaking there of men who profess to represent God and to whom congregations look as being supposed men of God and yet, Paul calls them evil workers much as Christ called the Pharisees evil workers, workers of iniquity because they did not exalt the Lord Jesus Christ alone. Christ said, "And I if I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself." Those that he draws, he draws unto himself but there are men who are evil workers that like the attention. They like to promote themselves. They justify themselves rather than justify God. They promote a righteousness that men work out and not a righteousness that the Lord Jesus Christ alone has worked out and for which he came in this world to earn, to establish and upon completion of his death for his Father, God the Father, to impute to the account of his people. Paul says, "Beware of evil workers."

Then he says, "Beware of the concision," Philippians 3:2. That's a play on words because the Jews boasted in their circumcision, in being Jewish, like many today who boast in their denomination. That's the first question they want to know in talking with you, "Are you a Baptist? Are you a Presbyterian? Are you Pentecostal? Are you Methodist? Are you Catholic? What are you?" There are many that boast in their profession, in their denomination. Just like these Jews that boasted in their circumcision and yet, Paul says, "Beware of the concision." That's a word that means mutilation. Those that preach another gospel or mutilators, those who preach ceremonies as necessary to salvation whether it be a decision that you make by walking an aisle or whether it be in the waters and what they call baptism. There really is only one baptism, one faith, one hope. But men have made something of the water that it should not be. There are some that believe that until that water either touches your face or you're plunged underneath it, that you cannot be a child of God. So they make a great deal of the ceremony just like the Jews did of circumcision.

As I was talking to one man who believed that water baptism was necessary to salvation, and I asked him to explain. He said, "Well, it's like salvation is out there on an island and you've got to go through the water to get to it." In blindness, men believe that somehow their going through something, their doing something is what brings them to salvation. Dear friend, the grace of God has brought salvation to the sinner and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into this world. And in his perfect and holy life that he lived out and his death whereby he shed his blood to satisfy a holy God and enable God to be just in declaring righteous those for whom Christ died.

So, Paul says that in verse 3, which is the sum of what I'm telling you. That we ought to fear any frame of mind, we ought to fear any thought, we ought to fear any doctrine that would in any way diminish the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and his death and make a hearer think that somehow something they do or did or must do will help them to either gain or maintain salvation. Paul said in verse 3, "For we are the circumcision which worshipped God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh." Here are the three qualities of one who is truly the Lord's, whom the Spirit of God has regenerated. They worship God in the Spirit. None can truly come to God in truth apart from the Spirit of God teaching that one, showing them their lostness and drawing them to God the Father through the Son. Secondly, it says, "And rejoice in Christ Jesus." He is all of their rejoicing, not just part of it but all of it. Thirdly, "Have no confidence in the flesh."

Notice it says "no confidence" in the flesh. This flesh will destroy whoever confides in it. One taught of the Spirit confides in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. And I believe that's the sense here in Hebrews, chapter 4, where the writer warns the hearers, warns the readers not to put any confidence in the flesh as did those of Israel of old. They presumed that because there was a tabernacle there, because there were priests, because there were sacrifices being offered that somehow they were safe. Like some who presume that if they're in a place of worship where the Bible is read and where Christ is preached, in centers appointed to Christ alone and his death, that somehow just being there and hearing with the physical ear that they're safe. No, dear friend, it takes the very work of the Spirit to cause the sinner's eyes to be off themselves and on Christ alone.

How often those in works religion or even in our own depraved nature, would have us look away from the exclusiveness that is in the Lord Jesus and his death. And would have us entertain other thoughts of even what's called means of grace. It could be a supposed good deed. How puffed up the flesh becomes whenever you do something that someone thanks you for and you feel good about yourself. Or a ceremony, as I mentioned. Whether its baptism or, for some, the laying on of hands or some other ritual, the bowing down, the standing up. Or even some supposed comfortable frame of mind whereby people have talked themselves into believing that they're not guilty when they are. All of these things we must not confide in but in the word of God and in the Lord Jesus Christ and his death alone.

An evangelical fear is one of ever looking anywhere but to him and that work that he accomplished for salvation and that it would so grip our heart and arrest our heart. We're

not just talking about the mind here, knowing some facts, but the heart being arrested by the word and by the Spirit to keep us from going down a path of works and self-justification rather than look to Christ alone.

Let us ever fear questioning the singularity of the death of the Lord Jesus and what he accomplished to put away sin. Faith has but one eye that looks to the Lord Jesus even as the Spirit's work is none other than to lead the sinner to the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us fear trusting in anything or anyone other than the Lord Jesus and what he accomplished at Calvary. Let us ever fear of resting in anything other than that rest which the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished on behalf of God's children.

In Matthew, chapter 11, we come full circle now, because in the beginning I mentioned to you this seeming quandary that's in the minds of some who ask, "Well, are we to rest or are we to fear?" The answer is, both. We rest in the Lord Jesus Christ but we ever question that rest against the word of God to make sure that the rest is in Christ alone and not in any profession or any performance that we have thought to accomplish. Here in Matthew, chapter 11, a lot of people like to quote verse 28 that says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." And I've heard some say, "Here's the gospel invitation." Well, no, dear friend, this is not an invitation. And this is not an open ended call. Notice, it begins with "Come unto me." That's very specific, that's a command, that's an imperative. But, who is that addressed to, everybody? No. He says, "All ye that labor and are heavy laden." There are some that are not yet tired of their works. They still think that something they do or think, how they behave. You hear today about walking the walk and talking the talk. They think that somehow they're earning Brownie points with God and in some way, then, ensuring their rest. Those have not yet given up and that is not the ones to whom this word is addressed.

He says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden." Not in a physical sense, but in a spiritual. In other words, the heart made to be poor. The Spirit of God showing you just how lost you are without the Lord Jesus Christ. Your entire way shut up, unable to move, without strength, without hope. The call, here, is to come to Christ. And he says, "I will give you rest." That rest is in him. It's in what he has accomplished.

With that command, if that is addressed to you, dear sinner, comes the power to come. It's just like the one man to whom the Lord addressed the word to stretch out his hand. Well, it was dead, it was withered. How could he stretch out that hand? Well, the Lord strengthened him. The Lord empowered him to stretch it out and gave him the life to do so. It's like our Lord is standing there at the tomb of Lazarus and crying, "Lazarus, come forth!" There are a lot of other dead people around but it was Lazarus who came forth. It's because the Lord knows those that are his. And with the command comes the power. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden." If you continue to endeavor to work your way into favor with God, clearly you've not heard this word. This is addressed to those that the Lord himself has completely knocked the props out from under. And they know that there's not hope in themselves, that as sinners they are justly condemned were it not for the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he says, "I'll give you rest."

Those to whom he has given that rest fear, then, ever trusting any other frame of mind or heart or ever trusting the works of their flesh. And this is clearly what we find in the context because our Lord was facing a very rebellious generation. These are the ones who had the scriptures. They were read in the synagogues and yet, our Lord pronounced condemnation upon them. This is why it's important to read the context of scripture.

Here in Matthew 11, a lot of people like 28, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden," but they miss verse 21, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon." Tyre and Sidon were completely outside of the boundaries of Israel. He said, "They would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." So, he's condemning the Jewish nation. He's condemning their synagogues, their leaders because here was Christ himself in their midst and yet they turned thumbs down on him. He says, "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you."

Verse 23, "And thou, Capernaum." This is where our Lord was raised in his youth and spent much of the time of his ministry. He said, "Which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom." You think about Sodomy. "It would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." Those that profess a self-righteousness will suffer eternal condemnation right along with those of society that they condemn.

And yet, the Lord is not complaining here. He says in verse 25, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." Many people complain about God's distinguishing grace. They want to make it available to everybody but God could plop his grace right down in the middle of a highway and people would drive right around it, or through it or over it, never stop. No, they would never recognize what grace is unless the Lord taught them first who they are and their need of it. And that's what he does for those that he calls babes here. A babe is somebody that's totally dependent upon the parent for sustenance. So, we are totally dependent upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

It says, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." This is God's prerogative to reveal the Son in whomsoever he will. And it's to such that he says, "Come unto me." And any that he had so taught, they do fear.

They fear, as it says there in Hebrews 4, "Lest the promise being left us of entering into his rest," of which I've just spoken. "Any of you should seem to come short of it." It's not saying that they will but it's that fear that causes them ever to look to Christ and never to look back. We don't look back to even what we feel are good accomplishments in our life. No, we press on looking to Christ alone.

Here is a call to a constant fear. Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long. If at any time this fear is cast off, it is at that very moment that we have fallen and need again to be drawn to the Savior. In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence and his children ever have in him and in his blood and righteousness accomplished a sure refuge. Why would we look anywhere else but to him?

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