

November 25, 2012

FIGHTING FEAR WITH FEAR
Genesis 3: 6-10 and Jeremiah 32: 37-40

Of course, we have numerous fears (elaborate). **Oftentimes** fear is overcome with knowledge (darkness, water).

In the Spiritual realm the scriptures speak of two KINDS of ðfearö.

1. **There** is NATURAL/LEGAL fear. **This** is ðfearö of punishment.
2. **There** is REVERENTIAL ðfearö. **This** ðfearö gives REVERENCE to God's redemptive character. **It ALONE** overcomes LEGAL ðfearö.

FIRST, there is the ðfearö we are ALL born with. **This** ðfearö is NATURAL ðfearö. It is LEGAL ðfearö. **It is** ðfearö of punishment. **I.e. It is** ðfearö that we have done something **WRONG**; that we **DESERVE** to be punished; and that we **EXPECT** to be punished (or we ðfearö that we **WILL BE** or *could be* punished).

In our practical lives we experience (this) ðfearö when we run a red light. **And**, this ðfearö never (completely) goes away. **Even** though you are pretty sure you've done no wrong, when those blue lights come on, there is that moment.

Well, **THIS** ðfearö had a BEGINNING. **We can** see its BEGINNING all the way back to the garden; all the way back to man's **FIRST** ðwrong doingö; all the way back to the book of Genesis, immediately after the fall of man. **After** rebelling against God's decree, Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together to hide their ðnakednessö.

Look at Genesis 3: 6-7 “**And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.**

7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”

Adam and Eve ðknewö something they had not known before. **They** ðknew they were nakedö. **I.e. They** (now) **KNEW** that they were exposed to something they had not previously been exposed to. **They** were (now) **AFRAID** that God would inflict the punishment on them He warned them about, “**In the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die.**” **And** LEGAL ðfearö was born. **They** ðfearedö God. **They** ðfearedö His just punishment. **They** ðfearedö the death He had threatened.

But, their efforts to shield themselves from God's wrath were not enough. **The** ðfig leavesö Adam and Eve sewed together did not **OVERCOME**; they did not **DELIVER** them from their LEGAL ðfearö.

Look at Genesis 3: 8-10 “**And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.**

9 ¶ And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

Although Adam and Eve sewed öfig leavesö together to hide their exposure to Godø wrath, it was not enough. **They STILL** saw it necessary to hide when God came calling. **And**, you can see öfearö was their motivator. “**I hid** because I was afraid. **And**, I was afraid because I was not certain that the öfig leavesö covered my exposure to the punishment I now deserved.ö Adam sought his own SOLUTION.

How does all this play out to the fallen sons and daughters of Adam? **THIS** öfearö had its beginning there in the garden. **Adam** sought his own SOLUTION to the sin problem. **He** sewed öfig leavesö. **He** öhidö from God. **But**, God did not leave him there. **He came** and showed him (Godø) SOLUTION to fallen manø new problem. **He slew** an animal, and clothed Adam and Eve in its skin (Genesis 3:21).

But, it is the (LEGAL) öfearö born in Adamø rebellion that is passed on to every fallen son and daughter of Adam. **Just like** Adam, we THINK we can SOLVE our sin problem. **Just like** Adam, we THINK the solution to sin is in the DOING of the sinner. **It is THIS** öfearö that motivates every action of the unregenerate sinner, (although the unregenerate sinner is unaware that (this) öfearö is their motivator).

Before God delivers us from THIS öfearö, THIS öfearö is what MOVES us. **It is** what MOTIVATES us to DO everything we DO. **We desire** to AVOID punishment. **We** desire to be RIGHT with God. **So**, we DO! **We** worship. **We** reform our lives. **We** pray. **We** give. **We** öaccept Jesusö. **We** become zealously religious.

We (do) WHATEVER we can. **We DO** whatever we are told; whatever we are taught to DO. **We DO** whatever we think we need to do to avoid Godø wrath and be in His favor. **And** every act of DOING is an attempt to avoid the punishment we know we deserve.

Every act of DOING is an attempt to avoid the punishment Godø justice DEMANDS. **Every** act of DOING is an attempt to be RIGHT with God. **All** such acts of DOING are the products of LEGAL öfearö.

The scriptures declare that it is (this) öfearö (NATURAL/LEGAL) that causes sinners to seek and to see righteousness öin themselvesö like the Pharisees of Christø day.

Look at Luke 18: 9 “**And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:”**

Every facet of this worldø religion (Cain) is a promotion of just such self-righteousness (righteousness WITHIN the sinner; righteousness in the DOING of sinners).

Self-righteous religion promotes what comes natural to fallen man. **Self-righteous** religion promotes NATURAL/LEGAL öfearö that causes all without exception by nature in EVERY generation to ögo about to establish a righteousness of their ownö.

Look at Romans 10: 1-3 **“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.**

2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

3 For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

öBeing ignorant of God’s righteousnessö is another way of saying that sinners are ignorant of God’s solution to the sin problem. **THAT** is the öknowledgeö all by nature are ignorant of. **Fallen** man **ALREADY** knows some things. **He knows** he is a sinner. **He knows** that sin deserves punishment.

But, he is öignorant of God’s righteousness. He is ignorant of God’s solution to his sin problem. **Therefore**, he **THINKS** that if he is to be free from God’s just punishment; he **THINKS** that if he is to be in God’s favor, **HE** must **DO** something. **That is** why all by nature are guilty of ögoing about to establish a righteousness of our ownö (in opposition to God’s righteousness).

öGoing about to establish a righteousness of our ownö is what the scriptures call öcommitting sinö. Look at John 8: 34 **“Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”**

“Committing sinö is walking in NATURAL/LEGAL öfearö. ö**Committing** sinö is trying to work out our OWN righteousness before God.

ö**Committing** sinö is trying to avoid the punishment we know our sin deserves. **It is** seeking the favor of God which we desire to have by OUR efforts.

“Committing sinö is NOT finding ALL of salvation in the doing and dying of Christ ALONE. A **sinner** öcommits sinö who imagines that (anything) IN THEM (even faith, even repentance, even reformation) makes up ANY PART of the CAUSE of God saving them. ö**Committing** sinö is failing to öabideö in Christ and His finished work ALONE for all of salvation.

NATURAL/LEGAL öfearö causes all of us by nature to ögo about to establish a righteousness of our ownö. **And**, ögoing aboutí ö is öcommitting sinö. **And**, öcommitting sinö is bondage.

Therefore, this öfearö holds ALL of us in bondage, (although we are ignorant of this bondage). **By nature** we are ignorant that our actions are motivated by LEGAL öfearö. **And by** nature we are ignorant that our actions are holding us in BONDAGE to the sin that deceives us ALL.

(This) LEGAL öfearö, therefore, is the öfearö that (all) need to be delivered from. **The** scriptures tell us that DELIVERANCE from (this) öfearö (and the BONDAGE it holds us in) is one of the MAIN reasons Christ came.

Look at Hebrews 2: 14-15 “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Sinners need to be delivered from the ðfear of death. **One** of the reasons Christ came was to ðdeliver (His sheep) from THIS ðfear. **He will** without fail deliver His sheep. **Until** He does, we are ðsubject to the bondage of THIS ðfear.

That is the first KIND of ðfear. **It is** NATURAL. **It is** LEGAL. **It is** ðfear of death; ðfear of punishment. **It is** the ðfear that causes us ALL to ðgo about to establish a righteousness of our own. **It is** the ðfear that holds us ALL in bondage. **It is** the (only) ðfear we have BEFORE we come to the knowledge of Christ.

It is the ðfear that ALL need to be delivered FROM. **It is** the ðfear that Christ came to (and will w/o fail) deliver His sheep from.

The scriptures speak of a second KIND of ðfear. **There** is REVERENTIAL ðfear. **There** is ðfear that REGARDS God’s redemptive character. **There** is ðfear that gives REVERENCE to the God who justifies the ungodly based on the imputed Righteousness of Christ ALONE.

God fights ðfear with ðfear. **He** fights LEGAL ðfear with REVERENTIAL ðfear. **REVERENTIAL** ðfear is what overcomes LEGAL ðfear. **It doesn’t** ELIMINATE it. **But**, it does OVERCOME it in those who are taught of God.

Let’s begin our understanding of this second KIND of ðfear by seeing that it is ABSENT in all of us by nature. **NONE** by nature have THIS ðfear (REVERENTIAL) in any degree. **Understand** first that Paul is writing about ALL without exception.

Look at Romans 3: 9 “What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;”

I mention this so that NONE can say, ðThat may be true of some. **But** it is not true of me. **What** is written here is true of ALL. **NO ONE** is the exception. **This** is the ðbottom line indictment on ALL the fallen sons and daughters of Adam.

Let me give you a summary of Romans 3: 10-18. ð**There** is none righteous. **There** is none that is seeking after God. **There** is none that is doing good. Here is the ðbottom line.

Look at Romans 3: 18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Now, I have already shown you that we (all) DO ðfear God. We (all) ðfear His wrath. **We (all)** ðfear His punishment. **We (all)** ðfear not being found in His favor. **But**, NONE have the ðfear that is mentioned here.

NONE have (any) degree of the ðfear that REVERENCES God redemptive character. **NONE** have ANY regard for what GOD has done to deliver sinners from His wrath and punishment.

NONE know God or regard Him as the just God and Savior He declares Himself to be. **ALL** by nature are ignorant of God's Righteousness. **NONE** by nature know what makes it RIGHT (Just) for God to show mercy to those who deserve nothing but His eternal wrath and judgment.

We have already seen the PROOF that THIS "fear" is ABSENT in all by nature. **What** is the PROOF?

ALL by nature are "going about to establish their own righteousness" in OPPOSITION to "the righteous of God" revealed in the Gospel. **ALL** are "committing sin". **ALL** are in "bondage" to the sin that deceives us. **And**, we go on here, although God always commands otherwise.

God's commands sinners to "fear" Him. **But**, God's command is not to "be afraid" of Him. **It is**, rather, to REVERE Him. **It is** to REGARD His Redemptive glory. **It is** to know Him and to HONOR Him as He reveals Himself to be in Isaiah 45: 21, "**a Just God and Savior**". **God's** command is to give glory to Him as the God who justifies the ungodly based on the imputed righteousness of Christ ALONE.

"Fear" God because that is where (true) knowledge BEGINS.

Look at Proverbs 1: 7 "**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge:** but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

"Fear" God because that is where WISDOM begins and how it increases.

Look at Psalm 111: 10 "**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:** a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever."

"Fear" God because it adds UNDERSTANDING to wisdom.

Look at Proverbs 9: 10 with Proverbs 4: 7-8 "**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.**"

4: 7-8 "**Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom:** and with all thy getting **get understanding.** 8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her."

All that we UNDERSTAND from this Book (aright) is through the knowledge of how God can remain Just when dealing mercifully with ungodly sinners.

"Fear" God because it is the "whole" duty of man.

Look at Ecclesiastes 12: 13-14 "**Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments:** for **this is the whole duty of man.**

14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

The final judgment of every work will be in reference to whether it was done in the REVERENTIAL "fear" or LEGAL "fear". **What** is motivating the "work"? **Is it** a REGARD for a Just God and Savior? **Is it** resting in Christ ALONE? **Or**, is it the "fear" of a "god" who will punish you if YOU don't DO and DO (more)?

God commands ðfearö (a regard for His redemptive glory). **How** do sinners get this second KIND of ðfearö? **THIS** ðfearö is a gift of the Spirit. **THIS** ðfearö is GIVEN in regeneration. **None** have THIS ðfearö in any degree BEFORE then.

This is ðfearö we (begin) to have (only) AFTER we come to the knowledge of Christ. **This** is ðfearö we (begin) to have (only) after the Spirit ðshows us the things of Christö (i.e. causes us to value what CHRIST HAS DONE to ðsave His people from their sinsö). **This** is ðfearö we (begin) to have ONLY (after) The Spirit comes to us in power under the Gospel; ONLY (after) we are delivered to that form of doctrine that reveals a Just God and Savior.

Look at Romans 6: 17-18 **“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.
18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”**

Notice! **None** start out ðservants of righteousnessö.

One more scripture on how sinners ðgetö REVERENTIAL ðfearö. He delivers us to the Gospel. **And**, He ðputs His fearö in us.

Look at Jeremiah 32: 37-40 **“Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely:**

38 And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:

39 And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:

40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”

God ðputs His fearö in the hearts of His people. **I.e. He** reveals to them that the ONLY way He can be Just (doing right) in saving them and giving them all the benefits and blessings of His mercy and grace is by the finished work of Christ ALONE. **He brings** us to Himself through Christ crucified. **And**, He keeps us the same way. **“They shall not depart from me.”** **If you** ðfearö God, you can't leave.

Either, Christ died for **you** AND His death ENDED **your** punishment. (I.e. There is NO possibility that you can EVER be punished.)

“By His stripes you are healed.” **You** already have been and forever will be ðhealedö by Christ's death ALONE. **You** already are and forever will be (eternally) in God's favor; He declares you unchangeably righteous because of Christ's Righteousness imputed ALONE.

OR, you are facing the punishment you (justly) deserve without recourse (i.e. without any possibility of being delivered from that end).

Under a just God, there is no possibility that Christ died for you, yet, you are still facing the punishment He has already endured in your place. **In the** scriptures there is no such thing as Christ dying for a sinner and that sinner He died for being in any danger of punishment, any danger of eternal death.

In the Spiritual realm ðfearö motivates everything we do. **Question** is, ðwhich ðfearö? **Is it** the LEGAL ðfearö that if we have not DONE and don't continue to DO, we could end up under the eternal wrath of God? **Or, is** it the REVERENTIAL ðfearö that sees God just to save us, forgive us, and take us to heaven based on the merit of CHRIST'S work (HIS Righteousness) charged to our account (without ANY contribution from us)?

We all start out in LEGAL ðfearö. **We all** start out under the ðfearö of punishment. **We all** start out in the BONDAGE of ðgoing aboutí ö. **But**, Christ will not leave a single, one of His sheep there. **He** will fight THAT ðfearö and OVERCOME it with the ðfearö that REGARDS His Father's Redemptive glory.

"Fearö not little children. **God** will **"put His fear in your heart that you shall not depart from Him"**.

So, I close by encouraging you, (whoever you are), to seek. **Seek** to be found in Christ and His Righteousness imputed alone. **Seek** the God who is Just to save by the merits of Christ obedience unto death ALONE. **Seek** the God who (in a people of his choosing), and in a people that He calls by His Gospel will not fail to FIGHT FEAR WITH FEAR.

by Mark Pannell