

“The Pilgrims Progress”
“Reverence And Godly Fear”
(Hebrews 12:28)

Introduction:

1. Tonight:
 - As We Continue Our Series Through:
 - The Pilgrims Progress:
 - We Find Christian & Hopeful:
 - Still Walking Through:
 - The Sleepy Atmosphere Of:
 - The Enchanted Ground!
 - Where - To Help They Stay Awake:
 - They “Redeemed The Time” By:
 - Sharing Their Testimonies:
 - With Each Other - And:
 - With Another Pilgrim:
 - Named Ignorance!
2. Well - Last Week:
 - After Confronting Ignorance:
 - About His “Fantastical Faith” - It Was Mutually Decided:
 - That They Did Not Have:
 - The Same Faith:
 - That Is Necessary For:
 - Salvation & Assurance!
 - And So:
 - As We Head Back To:
 - *Page 94, Paragraph 4:*
 - Christian Again Speaks To Hopeful!
 - As Bunyan Wrote:
 - “Then Christian addressed thus himself to his fellow: Well, come, my good Hopeful, I perceive that thou and I must walk by ourselves again. So I saw in my dream that they went on apace before, and Ignorance he came bobbling after. Then said Christian to his companion, It pities me much for this poor man, it will certainly go ill with him at last!”
3. Now - Before We Go On:
 - I Want You To Know That:
 - We Are Going To Go Through This Passage:
 - A Bit Differently Than:
 - We Have Through The Others!
 - Because - As You Will See:
 - Its Almost As If Bunyan Wrote Out His Own Sermon:
 - On The Important Theme Of: “The Fear Of The Lord!”
 - And - Through Passages Like This:
 - We Can Even See What Doctrines & Lessons:
 - Were Of Most Importance:
 - To John Bunyan:
 - In The Time & Place He Lived:
 - In Old Puritan England!
 - And - I Believe This Lesson:
 - Is Even More Necessary Today:
 - Than It Was:
 - For Him!
4. Because - As We Find In:
 - Hebrews 12:28 - We Are Told:
 - “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: / For our God is a consuming fire!”
 - “Reverence And Godly Fear” Was:
 - One Of The Things:

- That Ignorance Lacked - And:
 - Which Caused Him To:
 - Trust In His Own Righteousness:
 - Instead Of Christ's!
- But - For True Christians:
 - "Reverence And Godly Fear" Is:
 - Equally Important!
 - Because - As John Bunyan Described It:
 - In Another One Of His Writings:
 - "The Fear Of The Lord Is The Pulse Of The Soul!"
- And So - We Are Going To:
 - Let Bunyan's Characters:
 - Preach The Importance Of:
 - "Reverence & Godly Fear" To Us:
 - This Evening!

* And - The First Thing We Learn About The "Fear Of The Lord" Is:

I. *A Necessity Of Godly Fear!*

- Let's Pick Up With Hopeful's Response:

- HOPEFUL. Alas! there are abundance in our town in his condition, whole families, yea, whole streets, and that of pilgrims too; and if there be so many in our parts, how many, think you, must there be in the place where he was born?

CHRISTIAN. Indeed the Word saith, "He hath blinded their eyes, lest they should see," &c. But now we are by ourselves, what do you think of such men? Have they at no time, think you, convictions of sin, and so consequently fears that their state is dangerous?

HOPEFUL. Nay, do you answer that question yourself, for you are the elder man.

CHRISTIAN. Then I say, sometimes (as I think) they may; but they being naturally ignorant, understand not that such convictions tend to their good; and therefore they do desperately seek to stifle them, and presumptuously continue to flatter themselves in the way of their own hearts.

HOPEFUL. I do believe, as you say, that fear tends much to men's good, and to make them right, at their beginning to go on pilgrimage.

CHRISTIAN. Without all doubt it doth, if it be right; for so says the Word, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Pro 1:7; 9:10; Psa 111:10; Job 28:28).

HOPEFUL. How will you describe right fear?

CHRISTIAN. True or right fear is discovered by three things;—

1. By its rise; it is caused by saving convictions for sin.
2. It driveth the soul to lay fast hold of Christ for salvation.
3. It begetteth and continueth in the soul a great reverence of God, his Word, and ways, keeping it tender, and making it afraid to turn from them, to the right hand or to the left, to anything that may dishonour God, break its peace, grieve the Spirit, or cause the enemy to speak reproachfully.

HOPEFUL. Well said; I believe you have said the truth. Are we now almost got past the Enchanted Ground?

CHRISTIAN. Why, art thou weary of this discourse?

HOPEFUL. No, verily, but that I would know where we are.

CHRISTIAN. We have not now above two miles further to go thereon. But let us return to our matter.

- Before We Go On - We See That:
 - One Of The Major Obstacles To The Faith Of Ignorance:
 - Was The Necessity Of:
 - Godly Fear!
 - When He Experienced:
 - The Frightful Conviction Of Sin:
 - He Did Not See That:
 - It Was A Good Kind Of Fear & A Right Kind Of Fear:
 - That Was Leading Him:
 - To Life & Hope In Christ!
 - But - If He Only Had Responded:
 - To The Fear Of The Lord:
 - He Would Have Seen:
 - The Great Value Of It:
 - In His Life!
 - After All:
- As We Find Countless Times In Scripture:
 - The Fear Of The Lord:
 - Is The Beginning Of Knowledge & Wisdom!
 - Proverbs 1:7 - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge!"
 - Proverbs 9:10 - "The fear of the LORD [is] the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy [is] understanding!"
 - There Is Great Value In:
 - "Reverence & Godly Fear!"
- We Also Find That:
 - The Fear Of The Lord:
 - Leads To True Blessing!
 - Psalm 128:1 - "Blessed [is] every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways!"
 - Again - There Is Great Value In:
 - "Reverence & Godly Fear" Before The Lord!
- We Also Discover That:
 - The Fear Of The Lord:
 - Brings Assurance & Confidence:
 - To The Believer - Proverbs 14:26 - "In the fear of the LORD [is] strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge!"
 - Once Again - There Is Great Value In:
 - "Reverence & Godly Fear!"
- But - When Many People
 - Experience That Fear For The First Time:
 - Through The Conviction Of Sin:
 - They Seek To:
 - Flee From It Instead Of:
 - Embracing It:
 - And Seeing The Kind Of Treasure It Really Is!
- As We Are Told In:
 - Isaiah 33:6 - "The fear of the LORD [is] his treasure!"
- It Is A Treasure:
 - Because It:
 - "Driveth The Soul To Lay Fast Hold Of Christ For Salvation!"
 - And - It Keeps Our Souls:
 - Tender Before The Lord!
- As We Find In:
 - Proverbs 16:6 - "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD [men] depart from evil!"
 - Never Forget The Necessity:

- Of Godly Fear!
- Because - It Can Be Easy For Us:
 - To Be Like Hopeful - And:
 - Try To Change The Subject:
 - To Something That Seems To Be:
 - More Positive - Like When He Asks Christian:
 - “Are We Now Almost Got Past The Enchanted Ground?”
- You See - Even For Us:
 - There Can Be:

2. ***A Nuisance To Godly Fear!***

- This Is What Most People Do:
 - When Confronted With The Truth That:
 - God Is & Will Always Be:
 - A Holy “Consuming Fire!”
 - They Try To Stifle His Fear!
- Even As Christian Continues To Describe To Hopeful!

- CHRISTIAN. But let us return to our matter. Now the ignorant know not that such convictions as tend to put them in fear are for their good, and therefore they seek to stifle them.

HOPEFUL. How do they seek to stifle them?

CHRISTIAN. 1. They think that those fears are wrought by the devil (though indeed they are wrought of God); and, thinking so, they resist them as things that directly tend to their overthrow.

2. They also think that these fears tend to the spoiling of their faith, when, alas for them, poor men that they are, they have none at all! and therefore they harden their hearts against them.

3. They presume they ought not to fear; and therefore, in despite of them, wax presumptuously confident.

4. They see that those fears tend to take away from them their pitiful old self-holiness, and therefore they resist them with all their might.

HOPEFUL. I know something of this myself; for, before I knew myself, it was so with me.

CHRISTIAN. Well, we will leave, at this time, our neighbour Ignorance by himself, and fall upon another profitable question.

HOPEFUL. With all my heart, but you shall still begin.

- When It Comes To Fear:
 - The World Will Embrace All Kinds Of Fear:
 - Except The Fear Of The Lord!
 - Just Think About What Tonight Means:
 - To Most People In Our Country!
 - Halloween! Trick Or Treat! Ghosts & Goblins! Horror Movies! Darkness!
 - But - When God Starts To:
 - Bring Fear Into Their Hearts:
 - Of Him & Of Their Sin:
 - They Will Do All They Can:
 - To Stifle It & Suppress It!
 - They May See It As:
 - A “Psychological” Problem:
 - Instead Of A Spiritual Problem!
- And Yet - Isn’t This What:
 - The Lord Sent His Spirit Into This World:

- To Do?
 - John 16:8 - “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment!”
- And - When Rightly Understood:
 - All Of These Things Should Invoke:
 - “Reverence And Godly Fear!”
- And When That Happens:
 - It Is An Indication That:
 - God Is Making A Move:
 - Upon Your Heart!
- “Reverence & Godly Fear” Is Never:
 - A Nuisance!
 - Because It Can Lead You - As It Did To Hopeful:
 - To Truly “Know Yourself” And:
 - Your Need Of The Lord!

* But Then - We Also See What Can Happen When There Is:

3. ***A Neglect Of Godly Fear!***

- Both Christian & Hopeful:
 - Had Been Acquainted With:
 - Another Character In The Story:
 - Whose Name Was “Temporary!”
 - And Through His Example:
 - We Can See What Can Happen:
 - When You Neglect:
 - The Fear Of The Lord!
 - So - Christian Continues:

CHRISTIAN. Well then, did you not know, about ten years ago, one Temporary in your parts, who was a forward man in religion then?

HOPEFUL. Know him! yes, he dwelt in Graceless, a town about two miles off of Honesty, and he dwelt next door to one Turnback.

CHRISTIAN. Right, he dwelt under the same roof with him. Well, that man was much awakened once; I believe that then he had some sight of his sins, and of the wages that were due thereto.

HOPEFUL. I am of your mind, for, my house not being above three miles from him, he would oftentimes come to me, and that with many tears. Truly I pitied the man, and was not altogether without hope of him; but one may see, it is not every one that cries, Lord, Lord.

CHRISTIAN. He told me once that he was resolved to go on pilgrimage, as we do now; but all of a sudden he grew acquainted with one Save-self, and then he became a stranger to me.

HOPEFUL. Now, since we are talking about him, let us a little inquire into the reason of the sudden backsliding of him and such others.

CHRISTIAN. It may be very profitable, but do you begin.

- Before We Continue:
 - We Need To Understand What Hopeful Means By:
 - “Backsliding!”
 - He Is Not Talking About:
 - Someone Who Truly Knows Christ:
 - And - Temporarily:
 - Follows After His Flesh:
 - Before He Returns To The Lord!
 - Here He Is Talking About:

- Someone Who Never Actually Knew Christ:
 - And - Only Temporarily:
 - Followed Christ:
 - Before He Returned To His Life Of Sin!
- The Backslider Here:
 - Is The Same Kind Of Person:
 - That Jesus Described In His Parable Of The Sower:
 - In Matthew 13:5-6!
 - “Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: / And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away!”
 - But:
- Why Would A Person:
 - Who Was Awakened To His Sinful Condition:
 - Ever Go Back:
 - To His Sin?
 - The Answer Is:
 - Because He Never Embraced The Fear Of The Lord!
- This Is How Hopeful Explains It:

HOPEFUL. Well then, there are in my judgment four reasons for it:

1. Though the consciences of such men are awakened, yet their minds are not changed; therefore, when the power of guilt weareth away, that which provoked them to be religious ceaseth, wherefore they naturally turn to their own course again, even as we see the dog that is sick of what he has eaten, so long as his sickness prevails, he vomits and casts up all; not that he doth this of a free mind (if we may say a dog has a mind), but because it troubleth his stomach; but now, when his sickness is over, and so his stomach eased, his desire being not at all alienate from his vomit, he turns him about and licks up all, and so it is true which is written, “The dog is turned to his own vomit again” (2Pe 2:22). Thus I say, being hot for heaven, by virtue only of the sense and fear of the torments of hell, as their sense of hell, and the fears of damnation, chills and cools, so their desires for heaven and salvation cool also. So then it comes to pass, that when their guilt and fear is gone, their desires for heaven and happiness die, and they return to their course again.
2. Another reason is, they have slavish fears that do overmaster them; I speak now of the fears that they have of men, for “the fear of man bringeth a snare” (Pro 29:25). So then, though they seem to be hot for heaven, so long as the flames of hell are about their ears, yet, when that terror is a little over, they betake themselves to second thoughts; namely, that it is good to be wise, and not to run (for they know not what) the hazard of losing all, or, at least, of bringing themselves into unavoidable and unnecessary troubles, and so they fall in with the world again.
3. The shame that attends religion lies also as a block in their way; they are proud and haughty, and religion in their eye is low and contemptible; therefore, when they have lost their sense of hell and wrath to come, they return again to their former course.
4. Guilt, and to meditate terror, are grievous to them. They like not to see their misery before they come into it; though perhaps the sight of it first, if they loved that sight, might make them fly whither the righteous fly and are safe. But because they do, as I hinted before, even shun the thoughts of guilt and terror, therefore, when once they are rid of their awakenings about the terrors and wrath of God, they harden their hearts gladly, and choose such ways as will harden them more and more.

CHRISTIAN. You are pretty near the business, for the bottom of all is, for want of a change in their mind and will. And therefore they are but like the felon that standeth before the judge, he quakes and trembles, and seems to repent most heartily, but the bottom of all is the fear of the halter; not that he hath any detestation of the offence, as is evident, because, let but this man have his liberty, and he will be a thief, and so a rogue still, whereas, if his mind were changed, he would be otherwise.

- These Are Some Of The Reasons:
 - Why A Person Will Go Back:
 - From Following Christ!

- But Then - Christian Adds:
 - Some Of The Ways:
 - How A Person Will Go Back!
- But - At The Root Of It:
 - Is Their Neglect Of:
 - The Fear Of The Lord!
 - Hopeful Continues:

HOPEFUL. Now, I have showed you the reasons of their going back, do you show me the manner thereof.

CHRISTIAN. So I will, willingly.

1. They draw off their thoughts, all that they may, from the remembrance of God, death, and judgment to come.
2. Then they cast off by degrees private duties, as closet prayer, curbing their lusts, watching, sorrow for sin, and the like.
3. Then they shun the company of lively and warm Christians.
4. After that, they grow cold to public duty, as hearing, reading, godly conference, and the like.
5. Then they begin to pick holes, as we say, in the coats of some of the godly; and that devilishly, that they may have a seeming colour to throw religion (for the sake of some infirmity they have espied in them) behind their backs.
6. Then they begin to adhere to, and associate themselves with, carnal, loose, and wanton men.
7. Then they give way to carnal and wanton discourses in secret; and glad are they if they can see such things in any that are counted honest, that they may the more boldly do it through their example.
8. After this, they begin to play with little sins openly.
9. And then, being hardened, they show themselves as they are. Thus, being launched again into the gulf of misery, unless a miracle of grace prevent it, they everlastingly perish in their own deceivings.

- As We End Our Reading There:

- We See Just How Easy It Can Be:
 - For A Person To Become:
 - Like Temporary!
- It May Not Happen All At Once!
 - But - By Degrees:
 - The Fear Of The Lord:
 - Is Neglected - Until:
 - "There Is No Fear Of God Before Their Eyes!" (Romans 3:18)

- In Another One Of John Bunyans Writings:

- He Quotes The Devil As Saying:
 - To Those Who Would Become:
 - Like Temporary:
 - "I Will Cool You Insensibly, By Degrees, By Little And Little! What Care I (Saith He), Though I Be Seven Years In Chilling Your Heart If I Can Do It At Last? Continual Rocking Will Lull A Crying Child Asleep . . . Though You Be Burning Hot At Present, Yet, If I Can Pull You From This Fire, I Shall Have You Cold Before It Be Long!"

Conclusion:

1. And This Is Bunyan's Message:
 - About "Reverence & Godly Fear!"
 - Which Is:
 - "The Fear Of The Lord!"

- Do Not Forget:
 - The Ongoing Necessity:
 - To “Fear The Lord & Depart From Evil!”
 - Because If You Do:
 - If It Becomes:
 - A Nuisance To You:
 - Soon Enough:
 - You Will Neglect It:
 - Until “Being Hardened” - You Too Will Show Yourself As You Are!
2. Instead - Remember That:
 - The Fear Of The Lord:
 - For The Christian:
 - Becomes - As Bunyan Also Describes It:
 - “The Highest Duty” - And:
 - “The Salt That Seasoneth Every Duty!”
- And So:
 - “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear!” (Hebrews 12:28)

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