

THE FEAR OF THE LORD – PART 2

Tim Maurice, prepared for the Presbytery fellowship word, 02 October 2022
Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Introduction

Welcome to our second session on the subject of 'The fear of the Lord'. Last week we considered the theme of 'trembling at His word' – walking in fear and trembling – and understood that it is, as a God-fearer, our privilege, but also a *necessity*, to believe the proceeding word as it comes to us, and to join the fellowship of that word.

We understood that, as a result, we can *repent*.

The nature of our repentance

We considered nine points as we stepped through the nature of our repentance, and of our response in the fear of the Lord.

We considered that we can be *accountable* for our condition, and can confess our utter *incapacity* to join the Lord; to bridge the gap.

As the word polarises between ourselves and the Lord – His holiness and our uncleanness – we *cry out*; we learn to cry out.

As we learn to cry out, the Lord meets us in His mercy, and we *obtain mercy*. We considered this, and considered how some people who do *not* obtain mercy, actually become recipients, or even vessels, of the *wrath* of God and, in that way, become '*vessels of wrath*'. Equally, for those of us who have *turned* and are finding *life* in Christ, our testimony is that we have obtained mercy and that we are, indeed, '*vessels of mercy*'.

I will begin, today, by briefly considering 'the Spirit of counsel' as it comes – examining the nature of the word as it comes to us. Then I will consider *the message and its multiplication* – all in relation to 'the fear of the Lord'.

The Spirit of counsel – fellowship in the fear of the Lord

The man who does not 'stand in the counsel of the wicked' is blessed, because *his wisdom is found in a fellowship*, or counsel, where the words of the wise can be *shared and received*.

This counsel is *a fellowship that is established by the Spirit of the Lord, in the fear of the Lord*. We are returning to our subject of 'The fear of the Lord'.

We know these very famous Scriptures from the book of Isaiah. 'The Spirit of the Lord shall rest

upon Him [that is, upon Christ], the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' Isa 11:2.

The 'Spirit of counsel' is an initiative of *the sevenfold Spirit of the Lord* and sits within that 'sevenfold Spirit', as we have just read.

Through the ministry of the Spirit of counsel, the presbytery is able to establish the fellowship of the Father and Son as an administration in the body of Christ.

Each son of God can join *this* fellowship, and can find their full equipping by the Lord – or, by the Spirit of the Lord – personally. We can personally receive that Spirit of counsel and are able to be personally established by the full, sevenfold Spirit of the Lord.

Joining the fellowship of Yahweh – choosing the fear of the Lord

We note that the next verse in this passage is 'His delight is in the fear of the Lord'. Isa 11:3. The Lord Himself, who is our Fear, *delights Himself in the fellowship which His fear makes possible*.

The fear and preeminent 'counsel of the wise' is *the fellowship of Yahweh*. Together, They delight in the fear and reverence of Their name, which is a counsel, or a fellowship.

Every son of God must choose the fear of the Lord for themselves.

Having chosen the fear of the Lord, by personally receiving the ministry of His name to their hearts, they are *enabled to stand and walk in the words of the wise*.

As their delight is in the fear of the Lord, they will be able to discern between 'the counsel of the wicked', 'the counsel of fools', and 'the counsel of the wise'.

I am referencing the book of Proverbs here. As I recommended last week, go back and read the book of Proverbs. It is a very rewarding book, some of which we considered at the teenagers camp. Young people, teenagers, I hope that you have been reading it; and, if you haven't, then start today! And, equally, every other age group! Go to

the book of Proverbs; study 'the fear of the Lord'; choose it.

True counsel proceeds from fellowship in the Spirit of the Lord

Discerning between 'the counsel of the wicked', 'the counsel of fools' and 'the counsel the wise' is one of the themes of the book of Job.

Job's three friends established *a counsel of their own*, in order to justify the ways of God to man, and to bring comfort to Job. However, the Lord finally brought their discussion to an end.

Even though their words contained much wisdom, *the context* of their counsel was not one that the Lord could bless. The book of Job recorded, 'Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: "Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?"' Job 38:1-2.

Their words were 'without knowledge', because they were *not proceeding from fellowship in the Spirit of the Lord*.

'The Spirit of knowledge' is another aspect of the Spirit of the Lord. We will *lack knowledge* if we do not fear the Lord, because we will be *unable to join the one-Spirit fellowship that is established in the fear of the Lord*.

In the book of Hosea we read, 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me'. Hos 4:6.

The people lacked knowledge when they corrupted into a sacramental treatment of the Lord's table – 'the Lord's table' being the *context of fellowship* that He Himself had established for Him and His people to meet; and, of course, for them to meet each other.

This is the lesson of prophets such as Malachi and Hosea. The people were destroyed because they *lacked the knowledge of the Holy One*. They became confused and, finally, had no effective priesthood through which they could find access to the *atonement work of blood in their lives*. Thus, they could find *no overcoming of sin*.

Apprehended to a conversation in the fear of the Lord – repentance found and sonship established

Returning to Job and his friends, we note that his friends' words 'darkened counsel', instead of bringing illumination.

What *did* bring illumination to Job was *allowing the Lord Himself to speak*. This caused Job to begin to see with his eyes. The fear of the Lord was 'before his eyes' in a very personal way. More than just *hearing about* the Lord, he now *saw Him for himself*, and could then *repent*. Job 42:5-6.

If we do not have the Lord before our eyes, and the *fear of the Lord* is therefore not before our eyes, we will not repent.

We may seek solace; we may seek deliverance; we may seek comfort, in our distress, but we will not *repent* and, therefore, we will not join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

This is the essential experience for every person who finds *deliverance from walking in their own way*.

Unless we can be *apprehended to a conversation in the fear of the Lord*, we will 'darken' and 'hide' counsel, and we will not find the blessing of Abraham, which is *our sonship*. Job 38:2. Job 42:3.

We must be able to be *entreated to this kind of conversation*. This is the conversation we need to be having. This is the *orientation* of our hearing.

If we eschew the counsel of fools and *choose* the fear of the Lord, we will begin to *hear*, then to *see*, and finally, to *handle* the Word of Life.

Of course, I am quoting from 1 John Chapter 1. We have heard it, we have seen it, and our hands have handled it. 1Jn 1:1.

This word will reveal the knowledge of God to our *hearts*, not in an intellectual way, but in the form of a deep and heavy burden, which is the deposit of our *knowing together with Him* that 'now we are sons of God'. 1Jn 3:2.

And that knowledge is a *burden*. It is a weight within us, that sits there as a wonderful and beautiful possession. But it also brings with it the *absolute fear of Him* 'with whom we have to do'.

In summary, then, 'the counsel of the wise' is the *context of fellowship* that every God-fearer *must* find, in order to be established as a tree, or fruit-bearing son of God.

That context is by the 'river of the water of life'. Rev 22:1.

This river flows *from the throne into the fellowship*, which the Lord establishes first in the *presbytery*, and then *among every household* whose statement of faith is, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord'. Jos 24:15.

Joshua's declaration of service came from the *faith* which comes from *the fear of the Lord*. Jos 24:14-15.

That is how we hear; that is how we join a conversation of counsel of the wise in the fear of the Lord.

THE MESSAGE AND ITS MULTIPLICATION

This now leads us to *the message and its multiplication*. I have a number of short headings here; we will 'unpack' some of these as we proceed.

A warning, to prepare the way

The first heading, 'A warning, to prepare the way'. We will read from the book of Matthew.

'But when he [John the Baptist] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore, bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

'And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire'." Mat 3:7-10.

John was sent 'in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children', and 'the hearts of the children to the fathers'. Luk 1:17. Mal 4:5-6. He was sent to *warn*, and he was sent to *prepare*.

In this instance, he was warning about *the wrath* that is to come. Every person who hears the message of the gospel must be *warned about the wrath that is to come*.

This is 'the wrath of the Lamb', from which no person will be able to hide in the time of the end. No-one will be able to escape the wrath of the Lamb. Rev 6:16-17. This is 'the wrath that is to come'. Mat 3:7.

We note that John tied this warning to the necessity of *bearing fruit*. Mat 3:8.

Jesus later warned His disciples that they were to be joined in fellowship with Him, in order to bear fruit. Joh 15:4-5.

All of those who did *not* bear fruit would be gathered into bundles and burned. Joh 15:6.

This is His famous teaching about the vine and the branches. He is the Vine; they were the branches; and their purpose in life, *our* purpose in life, is to bear much fruit, which brings glory to the Father. Joh 15:8.

However, the picture of bundles that do not bear fruit, which have been gathered and are being burned, is a picture of wrath coming upon the disobedient.

John came as a messenger in 'the spirit and power of Elijah', in order to 'prepare the way of the Lord'. Luk 1:17. Luk 7:27.

Part of preparing the way was to *warn* the people about the impending *judgement* of the Lord, who would baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire, and whose winnowing fork was already in His hand. Mat 3:12. Luk 3:17.

This was essential to John's message. It is essential to our message. It is essential, firstly, to our *hearing*, so that it is the message that we can proclaim to other people.

It is essential that we are all warned that Jesus is our *Judge*, as well as our Saviour.

Salvation means nothing, if we do not need to be saved from something very dangerous.

Life without God is not bad only because we fall under the power of sin and the oppression of Satan. What is *worse* than that – let's hear this – is being judged and sent into the lake of fire by Jesus Christ.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Heb 10:31.

Eternal judgement into hell is far more serious than having a bad, or miserable, time in this life – as undesirable as those things are; and they are certainly *not* desirable; and we are not hoping that *anyone* has a miserable life.

We must all *heed this warning* for ourselves, and we must be able to *warn others* as well.

The message that 'God is light' must be attended by the knowledge that He is also 'a consuming fire'. 1Jn 1:5. Heb 12:29. This fire is 'the fire of offering', but it will also 'consume His adversaries'. Heb 10:27.

The warning of this reality is vital to our preaching of 'being reconciled with God'. We need to preach not only the *means* of being reconciled with God – we cannot preach about being reconciled with God unless there is, really, a compelling reason for that to be so. The compelling reason is this – that judgement and wrath are coming.

Persuading men

Our next heading is 'Persuading men'.

In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, he wrote, 'For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences'. 2Co5:10-11.

In his first letter, Paul said, 'I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.' 1Co 2:3-5.

Paul was at pains to explain to the Corinthian church that persuasion is not a function of cleverness, or of 'neat packaging' of the word.

There is no way of presenting or packaging judgement in a neat way, that comes in a pleasant, fragrant, and 'perfumey' fashion! Judgement is *judgement*.

And Paul did not come that way – attempting to 'adorn' his preaching with nice-sounding words or with philosophy.

He came 'in fear and much trembling', with the message of the cross.

He was not ashamed that this message appeared to be weak, according to the wisdom of men. On the contrary, Paul knew that persuasion based on anything *other than the fear of the Lord* would be a form of corruption.

This is a very big point, isn't it? In various traditions that we have grown up with – whether we read a lot of apologetics; or saw the way people could preach in a certain way, and use music in a certain way, as tools, not as part of a ministry of the Spirit – people could be manipulated and moved around like chess pieces, with persuasive words, not in the fear of the Lord.

Of course, that does not mean that someone should speak in a way that is incomprehensible or deliberately poor. Paul is not saying that, either.

But he is saying that the *foundation* of the message comes in *fear and trembling*, not through an attempt to persuade.

The 'persuasion' comes, as he says in his second letter to the Corinthians, *through the fear of the Lord*.

If we try to come in any way *other than* through the fear of the Lord, this produces *corruption*; and this corruption is a *false faith*, sourced in 'the wisdom from beneath'.

This 'wisdom' does not *begin* with the fear of the Lord. Pro 9:10.

This faith has 'a form of godliness', but denies the power of resurrection life. 2Ti 3:5.

The power of resurrection life is the power of God which Paul manifested through his ministry – the overcoming *exanastasis*, which is stronger than men and wiser than men.

We do seek to persuade people. But how is it? It is *through the fear of the Lord*.

We will persuade others to believe the message of the gospel as *we walk in the fear of the Lord*, as God-fearers. We do not have to *tell* people that we are. We are!

And part of the evidence of that will be that we fearlessly testify to the *goodness* of the Lord, while also proclaiming the *severity* – there are two 'sides of this coin' – as we tremble at His word. Rom 11:22.

We will not persuade anyone to the truth, through 'coercion' on one hand,;

The persuasion of the fear of the Lord comes in *the spirit of meekness*.

It is through this means that everything which 'exalts itself against the knowledge of God' – which very much includes our 'other law' – will

be thrown down: as we minister in a spirit of meekness. 2Co 10:5.

This is how someone is rescued from a trespass: through our speaking in a spirit of meekness. Gal 6:1.

That spirit of meekness is then the *faith* that that person receives, so that they can 'receive with meekness the *engrafted* word', which will *save* their soul. Jas 1:21.

It is not through trying to coerce them. It is not by trying to prove that we are clever and can conquer them, forcing them into a corner, or some other thing; or by making them feel okay about their sin, in the hope that, somewhere 'down the track', they will repent.

It is through this ministry, *in the fear of the Lord*, that we will see people persuaded, in the *proper* way, to a *lasting* salvation.

Signs and wonders

My next heading is 'Signs and wonders'.

We read in Acts Chapter 2, 'Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need'. Act 2:43-45.

Signs and wonders are the evidence of the grace of God being poured out. A key aspect of these signs and wonders is a demonstration of Christ's dominion over death and mortality.

Those who *fear* the Lord *believe*, and are united in *one heart* together, sharing their lives in intimate community.

We see this in Acts Chapter 2, through those four aspects of church culture and life together – there is the one word, there is one fellowship, there is one table, and there is one fellowship of prayer.

This marks out the community of the body of Christ, which will be the recipient of miraculous provision in the time of the end, just as Israel was, when it was led out of Egypt, with signs and wonders.

When the economy of the world fails, built, as it is, upon the elemental principles of the world, the economy of the body of Christ will stand as a *beacon* and a *sign* to the nations.

However, this provision is not for *the satisfaction of the flesh*. Simon the Sorcerer was drawn to the miraculous power of God in 'the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity'. Act 8:23. There is no fear of the Lord in this kind of *presumption*.

The people of God must not seek signs and wonders for the express purpose of *avoiding suffering*. We do not *seek* signs and wonders; they are *a result*, as we see *the word* overcoming death and mortality, *according to the will of God*. He pours this out according to His *own* kindness and mercy.

The witness of judgement

Our next heading is 'The witness of judgement'. Remember that this content all pertains to the *message* and its *multiplication*.

The book of Acts recorded, 'And she [Sapphira] fell immediately at his feet and breathed her last; and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things'. Act 5:10-11.

The deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, needless to say, provoked much fear of the Lord among the people.

The dramatic nature of *judgement falling upon a household* in this way must have been extremely confronting for the whole Jerusalem church. This prominent household, well-known people, had identified themselves clearly as people who wanted to give, and who were perhaps known for that, in a very significant way.

But they clearly *did not fear the Lord*. They had *lied* to the Holy Spirit.

The Scripture recorded that 'great fear came over the whole church'.

We must be fully truthful

The impact of the fear of the Lord caused the people to be *united in heart* in their understanding of the wrath of God upon wickedness.

As we receive this understanding, we are delivered from lukewarm responses to the admonition of the word. We are motivated to be clear in our choosing, so that our 'Yes' is unequivocally 'Yes'; and our 'No' is a definite 'No' on all matters of sanctification and, indeed, on all matters of life.

We should not be people who tell half the truth or who make shallow promises.

The message of the witness of judgement to others

In the same passage, we also observe that others who heard these things also 'began to fear the Lord'. In this way, the witness of judgement became part of the message which was communicated to unbelievers.

We see instances of this in the Old Testament, under the Old Covenant. The rod of Aaron was placed in the ark of the covenant as a testimony against the rebels. We know that this was an instance where judgement came, and the Lord recorded this as a testimony against the flesh.

The Lord's witness against our rebellion

The priestly ministry of a lampstand presbytery, and the authority that it carries, will be a *testimony* against other presumptions of authority, represented by a rod, which exalt themselves.

Likewise, the Lord instructed the book of Deuteronomy to be placed next to the ark of testimony as a witness against the people, because He knew their rebellion and stubbornness.

The witness against us all is the witness against *our flesh*.

Because we can fall back into carnality, the Lord has mercifully given us a witness against our tendency to rebel, and to be stubborn. This witness of judgement, then, is a stern reminder for us to *fear the Lord*, and to *be called back*, as it were, to our senses, so that we think clearly.

We note the examples of Nadab and Abihu, and of other men who challenged the authority that God had established - thoughtlessly, you would have to say - and who were then judged. This, in turn, caused fear to come on the people so that they *returned to the Lord*.

These points are *the witness of judgement* which communicates the message of the gospel.

The fear of Isaac enables us to lay down our life

Regarding *multiplication*, the fear of Isaac was the faith to go into the ground as a seed in order to spring up as a multitude. Isaac willingly offered himself to the Father in order to be the vessel

through whom the blessing of Yahweh would come to Israel, and to the nations.

This was the faith of Christ, as the Seed of the Father, when He offered Himself through the power of Eternal Spirit.

When 'the Fear of Isaac' - one of the Lord's names - comes upon us, we are enabled to *multiply the life of God* in our own contexts.

When this fear comes upon us, this happens, firstly, when a son of God has faith 'to lay down his life for his friends'.

The testimony in families

The first context where this takes place is *in a person's household*.

A person who has joined the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings will receive grace to offer themselves to the Lord, as a witness to the life and power of God to members of their family.

This is where it begins. This is where salvation comes first, as one member of the family bears witness, and shares testimony with others. This can happen around the *agape* meal.

When a husband and wife are joined together in this faith, they can establish a worthy house; one which receives the messenger in the fear of the Lord.

And, when other houses are likewise established, these houses can break bread together, from house to house, sharing the life of God, in one accord.

Conversion of our culture

We know that this took place in the early church, immediately after the people received the message of the apostles on the Day of Pentecost.

Fear and a sense of awe came upon the people, and they were quickly converted to a culture of the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer.

Conversion, when it comes in the fear of the Lord, is instant. But that does not mean there are not matters that take a long time to resolve as we walk out the recovery and regeneration that is daily coming to us.

But conversion from that culture to this culture is instant, in the fear of the Lord. You do not need to twist people's arms. You do not need to try and

convince them with arguments and rhetorical devices that this is so.

I do think that the Lord is really asking us to be a lot more prompt in being converted in all these different areas of life where He is speaking to us, specifically. And there are many, many different areas about which He is speaking to us.

People do not need to be persuaded by any means other than *the fear of the Lord*.

They have become accountable before God, and run to the safety of the body of Christ. And, if you have seen it, it is a wonderful thing to witness. And if you have done it, it is a wonderful thing to experience.

The word of the Lord grew and multiplied among the people because they continued steadfastly in a spiritual, as opposed to a carnal, pattern of life.

Summary points - the message of multiplication

By way of summary, I have four points.

1. We warn in the power and spirit of Elijah, warning that the Lord will strike the land with a curse if people reject the salvation and headship of Christ. This adds a *cultural* aspect.
2. We persuade in fear and much trembling, proclaiming the wisdom of God in a spirit of meekness.
3. We establish sons of God in one Spirit in the body of Christ, in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer.
4. Sons of God grow and multiply the word as they walk in the miraculous provision that attends those who walk after the Spirit.

That is the message and its multiplication.

Vessels of honour or vessels of dishonour

As I said last week, we will consider the subject of 'Vessels of wrath, and vessels of mercy'.

'Or does the potter not have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honourable use, and another for common use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

'And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not only from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.' Rom 9:21-24.

'Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honour and some to dishonour. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.' 2Ti 2:20.

Those who believe the word have the right to become the vessel of honour whom the Lord predestined them to be from before the foundation of the world. Those who *believe the word* - what do they have? They have the right to become that vessel of honour.

Those who believe in His name receive the right to become sons of God, which is to be a vessel of honour.

As sons of men, we have all been fashioned from the clay, which is the dust to which every person's body returns. From this lump of clay, we can be fashioned into one kind of vessel or another; either a vessel of honour or a vessel of dishonour.

A vessel of honour is a vessel of *mercy*.

And a vessel of dishonour is a vessel of *wrath*.

A day of mercy

It is according to the mercy of God that He appoints a day which reveals what kind of vessel we are becoming.

You would agree that, if we have come to Christ at a certain point in life - and all or most of us have come to Him - we are still *becoming* 'something'.

And sometimes it is quite beyond our capacity to see what we are becoming until the Lord visits us on a day that He has again appointed and called 'today'. 'The day' then reveals what kind of vessel we are becoming.

And sometimes that is a bit of a shock!

Now, fortunately, for those in the body of Christ, that 'day' is whenever the word is proclaimed to our hearts, and we hear what the Spirit is saying to us. So we don't have to go for years and years

and years without knowing what He is saying to us.

I used an example because I think that, in this season, we have found, as the gospel has been restored to us, that we had spent perhaps a lot of years believing things that were causing us to become quite unfruitful.

And, praise the Lord, in His mercy, He has come to us and revealed - the day has revealed - what that was producing.

But now, in the ordinary course of life, He appoints a day, which is *every day that the word comes to us*, and we choose to hear what the Spirit is saying to us.

A day of judgement

Of course, for a person who is outside of the body of Christ, that day is the day of their *judgement*.

That will be a terrible shock to many people who have rejected the warning, and the persuasion, that the Lord has been trying to send to them, in His mercy.

If we are in Christ, we are not being condemned along with the world. We are not coming to a day of judgement that is coming upon us 'like a thief'.

Finding mercy as we offer ourselves to the Lord

For 'a little while', we have the opportunity to avail ourselves of the mercy of God, and to be conformed to the image of sonship which has been appointed for us by the Father. Ezr 9:8.

We find *mercy* as we offer ourselves to the Lord, daily, as a living sacrifice, *by the mercies of God*.

In this way, we are inviting the fire of God to test the purity of our offering, and the integrity of our testimony.

And I don't mean our own, self-righteous integrity. I simply mean, is it *true*? Is it what we think it is?

It is possible for us to bring a testimony, thinking that we are clear in what we are achieving. And then the Lord comes and says, 'That was not quite what you thought it was.'

So can you actually adjust your thoughts about what has taken place.

Our works tested by fire

He does test these things, and we should not be dismayed when we find that we have been awry in our thinking.

When we offer ourselves in this way, the word has free access to our heart. As we humbly present ourselves before the Lord, each man's work will become evident.

'For the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.' 1Co 3:13-15.

If you have ever had that experience, you will know that the fire comes and tests the work that you have done. And you may be a little shocked, because you thought that you had done rather a good job, and the Lord said, 'Well, nothing there survived. But, anyway, you have learned your lesson.'

We don't have to be too dismayed by that, even if we are a little surprised. And sometimes it is surprising to see our works *consumed*.

Receiving the mercies of God each day

Equally, sometimes it is quite surprising to see what the Lord is pleased with, and how simple and basic it is. I think and I hope that we are all learning that.

'If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will *receive a reward*. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet only so as through fire.'

Each day for us is an opportunity for the fire of God to expose the nature of our works, without our feeling ashamed. It is important that we understand this point.

As Christians, we have not arrived at 'a fixed state of righteousness', which we must now defend as proof of our integrity.

Instead, we must be reminded that we are sinners who are *being shown mercy each day*.

These daily mercies are *the manifold mercies of God*, which are saving us from the wrath of God.

We are being saved each day, even though we have a testimony of having passed from death to life, at a certain point. It is not that we can never refer to that.

However, our testimony *today* is that this word is coming to save us 'today'.

And, if I do not heed it, I begin to turn away. I begin to draw back, and I am then on the way to going out and becoming carnal. That, of course, is a dangerous thing.

Having a testimony of salvation, but being saved each day

So there is no contradiction about having a testimony of salvation, and knowing that you are being saved each day. These things are not contradictory.

In fact, it is *because* we have a testimony of being rescued from the wrath of God, that we can now *find mercy* each day.

We have the right to become, and to go on becoming, a son of God. We exercise this right by *believing the word* that He sends to us via His messengers; and by joining the fellowship that is *proclaimed* in the message of the gospel.

In this way, the engrafted word is saving our souls day by day, delivering us *from* the wrath of God, *to* the glory and honour of our predestined sonship.

'But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God, who will render to each person according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; [on one side] but to those who are selfishly ambitious [we know that James indicates that 'selfish ambition' multiplies every evil thing] and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, [they will receive wrath and indignation].

'There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honour and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.' Rom 2:5-11.

There is no partiality with God - none at all; not for you; not for me. That is why we are not *entitled* to anything - not even to salvation.

Forsaking the comfort of Christian tradition

We *inherit glory and honour* as we obey the truth.

The Galatians were hindered from obeying the truth, by giving ear to *another* word. They used their freedom as sons of God as 'an opportunity for the flesh'.

They had been given the freedom through the grace of God coming to them. Having become free to choose to obey the truth, however, they chose instead to revert to sacramental circumcision, and to justification through loyalty to rituals.

Certainly, in this last season, we have been understanding that ritual observance is the misplaced safety that we derive from theological or denominational loyalties. Many people feel safer in their Christian walk if they can find agreement, or so-called 'common ground', with certain kinds of other believers or by maintaining a warm and vague connection with historical Christianity, whatever that might actually be.

And there are many, many versions of that, whether it be the Reformed version, or the Roman Catholic one, or an Orthodox one; or whether you have borrowed variants from the Reformation, with an Episcopal version, an Anabaptist one, a Pietous one, a Methodist one; or whether it is a Calvinist hybrid of all of those.

Whatever it is, there are many, many connections that we can lay claim to as being some version of historical Christianity. Many people feel comfortable with that.

But, when the word comes and shatters that, they are not sure that they feel safe any longer. And that can be a massive deception.

Sadly, this results in an inability to obey the truth, today.

There is no 'spectrum' of truth; the word of God is truth

We cannot employ the word of God at the behest of our 'whims'.

The word of God searches our hearts, shining a light on any wicked way within us, commanding our *obedience*.

We obey it *in the fear of the Lord*. We obey it as the absolute truth, not as one truth among a suite of truths, which we are free to accept or reject.

The idea that there is some kind of 'spectrum' of truth, something that we can stretch, is a lie that is propagated by Satan. It maintains that the

multiplication of differences of opinion is good and is healthy.

I grew up according to a tradition where people would sit in their homes together in Bible studies, and disagreement was what people called 'fellowship'. In this scenario, *not* being of one Spirit was the determinant of whether you were actually meeting.

If you agreed together, people thought that there was something wrong. You actually had to have a fight in order to prove that you were all sentient, Christian beings.

Some people continue to live that way and, therefore, will not be entreated to humble themselves or to join fellowship in one Spirit.

A gospel with a truth spectrum is accursed

The apostle Paul had to withstand the opposition produced by this lie that there is a 'spectrum' of truth - and so must we all!

Any word which proclaims that a son of God does not need to obey the word of truth, which the Lord is speaking to them, personally, today, is a lie.

The apostle Paul said, 'If anyone preaches another gospel, let them be accursed.' Gal 1:8.

That word is *anathema*. 'Let them be accursed.' When Paul referred to 'curses', he was referring to what happened on Christ's journey out from the cross when He became sin, and He left our sin there. He *left* the judgement, or He *expended* the judgement, for us.

And He has now deposited it, as it were, as far as the east is from the west. It is not part of our lives if we are now joined to Him who is risen.

We are accursed, in that way, with what has gone out in order to be burned. That is a fearful thing. Paul was saying that if we preach another gospel, we are accursed.

We are accountable to receive the engrafted word, today

Each person is *accountable* for their personal response to Christ, *each day*.

We are not saved by association with people, by creeds or doctrines; nor by our history.

We are saved today *because we have received the engrafted word, today*.

This word is the faith of our sonship, and the foundation of our fellowship.

The Lord is drawing a line on accursed 'gospels'

The Lord is 'drawing a line' on all 'gospels' which lead us to being accursed. This is His mercy. It is wonderful! In His mercy, He is 'drawing a line'.

He is not drawing a line because He does not like us. He is drawing a line because He *loves* us.

He wants us to obey the truth; not to obey a lie.

He does not want us to obey what is *comfortable* to us, for all kinds of strange reasons to do with our heritage and our history and so on, which do not hold up under the scrutiny of the Spirit, but which we may attempt to defend. And we may choose to defend them because we are invested in those things.

The Lord is coming and saying, 'Enough! Drop them!'

The Lord is drawing a line on all gospels which lead us to being accursed. This is His mercy.

Vessels of mercy with a testimony of life out of weakness

His desire is for us to be *vessels of mercy* who demonstrate the surpassing greatness of His power as we bring forth a *testimony of life out of weakness*.

This is the testimony of one who is joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

A vessel of wrath - believing in a spectrum of truth

A vessel of *wrath* is one who is being *beguiled from the simplicity of obeying the truth*.

They presume to be saved on the basis of existing, or by deriving their faith from the full 'spectrum' of truth that permits the inclusion of the ungodly, and offers comfort to the unclean.

In this belief system, ungodly people can be *included*; and the unclean can be *comforted*.

And God is drawing a line on this. We may not do that any longer. We need to fear the Lord in relation to these matters. This is a false position.

Inviting the wrath of God on our life

The wrath of God has been poured out upon the ungodly and the unclean.

So, if we associate with them, and include them, and comfort them, we are also recipients of wrath – and we are justifiably so!

By associating with these people and these practices, in the many ways that we do, a person ‘invites’ the wrath of God. We *can* invite the wrath of God upon ourselves.

The righteous man has been delivered from this wrath. By believing the word, today, he finds mercy.

Separation from what is unclean

A person who is becoming a vessel of wrath, however, fails to heed the *warning* that comes to them in the power and the spirit of Elijah.

This is John’s ministry – to warn!

They choose, instead, to go on ‘touching what is unclean’, and to be yoked with unbelievers. Unless they make a separation from these things, the Father will not be the Father to them.

Their sonship will be lost.

Receiving the promise of the welcome and the fatherhood of God

However, if they abandon the unbelievers, and let go of what is unclean, the promise of Scripture is available to them. What is that promise?

‘Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,’ says the Lord.’ 2Co 6:1.

He says this to each son of God. If we belong to Him, we will be separate from the sinful, and from the unclean.

‘And do not touch what is unclean, and *I will welcome you.*’

I have noticed, over the years, that people who say, ‘I don’t feel included’, are saying, ‘I don’t feel welcome.’ This is because they continue to touch what is unclean.

They may say, ‘I don’t feel as though I belong.’ Well, of course, they don’t. They are rejecting the spirit of grace, and are calling the blood of Christ unclean by touching what is unclean, and calling it ‘clean’ or ‘good’. It is included on their spectrum of truth.

We need to come out from these things and to let go of them. Then He will welcome us. We will know *the welcome of the Father.*

And then He says, ‘I will be a Father to you.’

You will have assurance in your sonship; you will know that He is your Father; you will know, in your heart, that you belong to Him.

He went on to emphasise that ‘“You shall be *sons and daughters to Me,*” says the Lord Almighty.’

There is no partiality in God

A vessel of honour will experience glory and honour and peace on the day of judgement.

A vessel of dishonour will experience tribulation and distress.

There is *no partiality* in the dispensation of these outcomes.

Our comfort and testimony as a son of God

Accordingly, we read, ‘The judgements of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.’ Psa 19:9.

Our *comfort* today is in *knowing that we are the sons of God.*

The *testimony* of this in our hearts is *the witness of the Spirit*, confirming to us that we have *found mercy*, and that we are *manifesting the life of God* as a vessel of honour in the Lord’s house.