

# **What is the Body of Christ Lacking Today???**

## **The Awe and Fear of the Lord!!!**

©2014 Simply Simple Worship/ Ray Tripi

Over the past thirty to fifty years we have seen many "moves of God" come and go. We have seen major "revivals" come and go. We have seen ministries grow and seemingly "flourish." Yet, as we look throughout the world we see a decline in the fundamental truths found within the Holy Bible. We see the decline of marriage, as well as, the changing of the "definition" of what marriage is and should be. We see the tremendous increase in crime. We see the value of human life decrease. We see the total disregard for a person's rights and property.

We are seeing a growing and ever increasing disdain for those things that are rooted in Godly principles such as morals and values. In a recent survey taken, over 60% of the general public does not consider abortion, homosexuality, divorce or fornication a moral issue any more. Every day that number is growing. They see these issues as the "norm" for today.

The unfortunate thing is that, as we see this growing trend in the world in general, we are seeing it within the Body of Christ, as well. Why might that be happening? One reason may lie in this next little tidbit. In that same survey they questioned pastors on the following: Do you think that God's definition of marriage is found in the Bible? Do you think God's view of homosexuality, adultery and fornication are found in the Bible? Do you think that God's position against abortion is found in the Bible? And so on.... The prevailing answer to those questions by these pastors was answered, "Yes." Then they were asked if they preached from the pulpit what the Bible says concerning these issues. The majority answered, "No."

The truth of the matter is that the Body of Christ, from its leadership to the congregations, are falling into the trap of "political correctness" as well as the fear of not "rocking anybody's boat." Unfortunately, many sitting within congregations are still actively engaged in many of the items and issues mentioned previously. Many sitting in the congregation (and unfortunately I must include some of those in leadership) are involved in pornography. Many are involved in relationships of fornication and even living together outside of marriage. Many are involved in adulterous affairs. Many, because of these types of relationships are conceiving and then going through with abortions.

Now, before we go any further I want to let everyone know that I totally believe in God's love, grace, mercy and forgiveness to those that might have fallen into these sins or others. Jesus paid the price for each of us so that we can be free from the guilt of sin. However, we must know also, that this does not therefore, give us license to then continue on with the sin just because we know that Jesus "paid it all" and the Father does not "see our sin anymore." This is true. However, we must check our heart as we go forward in this. If our heart is such that we have the idea that "Hey, it doesn't matter what we do so we can go ahead and do it because Jesus loves me," then our thinking is askew.

The bottom line in all of this is that somewhere along the line we have lost our fear and awe of a Holy, Mighty, Just, Loving and Faithful God. I believe that, not just the world and non-believers have lost this, but most unfortunately, many within the Body of Christ have lost their sense of fear and awe in the Lord, God. I know that many reading this already are in disagreement with where I may be going with this. However, I ask that you indulge me and just read on a little further.

Somewhere, over the last thirty to fifty years, somehow, somehow after all eternity, we have come to a place where Christianity has concluded that "God has changed." Even though the scriptures are clear that "God never changes and that He is the same, yesterday, today and forever," we have come to the wonderful conclusion that God has changed. He has changed to keep up with the world today, and to keep up with the society and culture that we are living in. We have made Him such an "understanding"

God. He "understands" when I sin. He "understands" that His commandments and statutes were for another time and that some of them are "out of touch" with the modern world and its society and culture. After all, He is my best friend, my buddy, my "Bro."

We have come to the place where we think some of the following... "He will do whatever I ask. Hey, wait a minute, why do I even need to ask Him? He gave me the power and authority to do things and make things happen. I know better than God does concerning what I need or what this world needs. He has given me the great power and authority to change His mind, His ways and the way He thinks. Thanks God but I can take it from here." Now, I pray that you understood that I was just writing that, "tongue in cheek" and with a whole lot of sarcasm.

Again, I reiterate that we lack and are in the midst of losing our "fear and awe of the Lord," even within the Body of Christ. I believe this has happened because we have come under a misconception of what the awe and fear of the Lord really is. We are in a time where we have relegated the concept of having the awe and fear of the Lord as being "religious," that it is "Old Testament," and "pharisaical." We have come to the place where we tell each other that we do not have to "fear" the Lord because He is a God of love, not fear. I agree whole heartedly that our God is a God of great, unconditional love, grace and mercy. He always was, is and will be. However, it is our misunderstanding of what being in "awe and fear of the Lord" is concerning all these attributes just mentioned (love, grace and mercy), as well as all of God's other attributes that He was, still is and always will be that becomes a problem.

So what is a proper understanding of the "awe and fear of the Lord?" The Hebrew word used in the scriptures translated into our English word, "fear" is "yare'." This literally means *"to stand in awe of, dread, to make afraid, terrify the Lord with the purpose to inspire reverence or godly fear or awe."* The Greek word used is "phobos" which means *"fear, dread, terror, that which strikes terror, a reverence for one's husband."* The Hebrew word for "awe" is *ragaz* which means *"to tremble, quake, rage, quiver, be agitated, be excited, be perturbed, to quake, be disquieted, be excited, be perturbed, to cause to quake, disquiet, enrage, disturb, to excite oneself."* Now you may be saying that within the above definitions it sounds as if the term "fear" and "awe" are harsh and strong words. It is true that they may be strong words, however, they are not meant to be harsh words. Our relationship with, and attitude towards, a Loving, Merciful, Holy and Just God must be a serious issue to us, not be taken lightly nor for granted.

Notice, however, in these terms the main purpose is to inspire an attitude of reverence, honor and respect that draws you nearer to God because you understand the fullness of His character. We are not to be "scared" or afraid of God. It is not a fear that will cause you to run away from God unless of course you do not know all of who He is. If you understand who God is in all of His wonderful characteristics, you tremble at His greatness but yet realize that it is only this God that you can run towards to be set free. This "fear" is having such a reverence for God that it will have a great impact on the way we live our lives unto Him. The fear of God is respecting Him, obeying Him, submitting to His discipline, and worshipping Him in awe and wonder because He is such a loving and merciful God. It brings me to a place where the attitude of my heart is that I desire nothing else but to live a lifestyle that "blesses the heart of my King." I am not afraid of God... I honor, respect and show great reverence to Him through, and with, my lifestyle.

Understanding this aspect really is what our salvation is based upon. In Matthew 5, 6, 7, we read of Jesus' first real in-depth teaching of what a true disciple of His really is. The very first thing He tells us is found in Matthew 5:3, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven."* What Jesus is telling us is that the very first step in truly becoming His disciple and restoring the relationship between a person and the Father is to first recognize that God is God and you are not. The person must recognize their need for a Savior sent by a loving Father God who is the only One who can save them from their destiny of damnation. The person must recognize that they are really nothing within themselves and come before a Holy and Just God and throw themselves upon His mercy.

The following scriptures tell it another way, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction"* (Proverbs 1:7) and *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."* (Proverbs 9:10) Being "wise" enough to recognize who God is and all that He is, truly becomes the first step for true salvation and for a true relationship with the Father and His son, Jesus Christ.

Let's look at another scripture. Deuteronomy 10:12, 13 tells us, *"And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?"* Many Christians get "hung up" on the word "require" in this scripture. We think that this "angry, taskmaster of a God" is commanding His people to fear Him and to walk in His ways and love Him and serve Him as a requirement that will "satisfy" His mean spirited heart. We look at it almost as a threat by God. However, that is not what God is saying.

The word "require" that is translated into our English is taken from the Hebrew word, *"sha'al"* which literally means "to ask, beg, and seek after." What this scripture is really telling us is that the Lord is "asking, begging and pleading" with His people, to fear, walk in His ways, love Him and serve Him. Can you hear the heart of God now in this scripture? Can you hear what He is asking, pleading and begging of each of us, His people to do?" He then goes on in verse 13 to give us the reason why He is begging and pleading with His people to "fear the Lord their God and to walk in all His ways... to love Him and serve Him with all their heart and soul." It is for *"our own good!!"* It literally is for our benefit so that we would be blessed!!

As Deuteronomy 12 tells us, the very first thing God tells us is to *"fear the Lord thy God."* It goes along with the scriptures in Proverbs we read previously, as well as what Jesus taught in Matthew 5:3. God continues to tell His people to "walk in all of His ways" which simply means to follow His commandments. We can now do this through accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior who then gives us the Holy Spirit to help us to walk in the same lifestyle pattern that Jesus walked in upon this earth. His lifestyle pattern was based upon the precepts and principles found within the commandments of God. Notice that it is only after we grasp and fully recognize who God is and revere, honor and respect His ways can we truly say that we "love Him" and then can "serve Him with all of our heart and soul." We love Him and serve Him through a lifestyle of moral excellence as found in His Word.

As a disciple of Jesus, we must believe that God is the One and only true God. We must believe that He is a Holy and Just God as well as a Loving and Merciful God. We must have a balanced understanding of the full character of God. We must honor, respect and have a reverence for **all** that God truly is; not just what we want to pick and choose.

A Biblical "fear and awe" of a Holy, Just and Loving God, for the believer, includes understanding how much God hates sin, disobedience and rebellion. It is totally opposite of who God is and opposite of His character and nature. As a child of God, as His son or daughter through what Jesus has done, we must "fear" or grasp the understanding of how much God detests sin and recognize the consequences and God's judgment on sin—even in the life of a believer.

A problem that I have seen within the Body of Christ has been the misuse and misunderstanding of the powerful statement of 1John 1:9 which says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* This statement is very true. However, we have taken it out of its context within the letter that John is writing and we have made it a "stand alone" topic which it was never meant to be. In its context, this scripture is saying that as a true disciple of Jesus we must desire to always *"walk in the Light as Jesus is in the Light."* 1John 1:6, 7 tells us, *"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."* This must be the desire and attitude of my heart.

If this is the true attitude of my heart, then, if I do sin, and if my heart was not to willfully sin, I choose to "own up" to my sin and confess my sin. As I do this with the correct attitude of heart, then God is, yes, "*faithful and just to forgive my sin*" because He already has.

The next item is vital when it comes to having the correct attitude of heart in this matter. After I confess and receive His forgiveness then I am to heed the words that Jesus always said when he dealt with sinners that He forgave, "**...go and sin no more...!!!**" As a son or daughter of a Holy, Just, Loving and Merciful Father, I no longer am afraid of Him when I "mess up" because I know that He knows that the real desire of my heart was to not intentionally sin. I revere and respect His ways in that I do not want to displease Him. But, if I do, I know that He is so loving and merciful that I run to Him to set our relationship in order.

It is only when I willfully disobey, rebel and intentionally do what I want to do no matter what God says; or we twist God's Word and begin to change who God always was and is, is when we need to truly start to be afraid of God. However, the ironic thing is that when we are in this rebellious state and way of thinking we do not have that fear of God because all of a sudden we have made God to be in our own image and He is just the way we need Him to be. God all of a sudden "thinks like me and has changed to keep up with me and the society and culture that I am living in today." Do you know what I say to that kind of thinking... "Hogwash!!!"

For those of us who would say that this is "Old Testament" I would like to just add what the Apostle Paul thought concerning what we are discussing. "*Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let **us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**" - 2 Corinthians 6:13- 7:1*

In concluding our discussion, I believe that God, in this hour, is speaking to many whose hearts are open to His truth concerning being a true disciple as well as being a true son or daughter of the most high God. There will be a great "falling away." There will be a great time of "apostasy" found within those that call themselves a part of the "church." However, the Bible always declares that there is going to be a "remnant," His Bride, that is preparing herself through the promptings of the Holy Spirit, by getting back to understanding the fullness of the character of the Lover of our Soul, the Bridegroom (Jesus), and also the fullness of the character and nature of their Father, God.

Our God is Loving, Merciful and so, so Kind. His "*mercy endures, forever.*" Our God is also a Holy and Just God who must keep His own Word and Precepts. As a true believer we must be **balanced** with a good understanding of **all** the characteristics of our God. The "pendulum" has swung to the extreme (only God's grace). It should not swing back to the other extreme (only God's wrath and judgment). The Body of Christ needs to walk in a "**balanced**" understanding of who our God is and **all** that He is. He never changes. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. As we desire to see the Kingdom of God come forth in a greater way upon this earth, I believe, one of the "keys" is walking in and having a correct understanding of the "awe and fear of the Lord."