
The Fear of the Lord in the Latter-Day Church

By David Wilkerson

July 8, 1991 Most of the Old Testament prophets predict God will raise up a last-day church that will be full of glory and the fear of the Lord. And Scripture says this mighty church will arise during the world's worst hour of confusion and wickedness.

I believe hopelessness, confusion and despair best describe what most people feel today. In a May 6 letter to the editor of the New York Post one woman wrote:

"I am writing this letter because I am tired of all the abuse, lying and corruption. What are we doing to ourselves? Child abuse, drugs, murders, fraud, rising taxes, service cuts, homelessness, muggings! What else is there to life in New York City? What is going on? Where has our conscience gone? Where have basic human dignity and values gone? Cheating each other seems to be the order of the day. And people are being killed for fighting back! We seem to fall deeper and deeper into hopelessness. I continue to dream of leaving this city some bright day. Signed, Charlene, Voice of Despair."

Unbelievably, the same confusion, chaos and wickedness seen in the world now characterize the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. God showed the prophet Hosea that just prior to the latter-day awakening in the church, God's people would become spiritual harlots, turning to other lovers in spite of all the goodness and mercy He'd shown them.

The church is pictured as "a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress" (Hosea 3:1). Yet God said of this cheating adulteress, "I bought her" (verse 2). And indeed, the Lord Jesus has bought the church with His own precious blood. What a picture of unimaginable love!

In recent years I have denounced the iniquities and compromises that have swept into God's house. I believe it is scriptural to cry out against such spiritual harlotry. I have seen abominations in God's house that have so overwhelmed me that I wonder sometimes why He doesn't strike with heavenly lightning.

But we dare not lose sight of a great prophetic truth, one that was known and understood by all the Old and New Testament prophets. It is this: "This church may at present be a harlot, her heart given to others, divided, confused and unfaithful. She may be exposed as having a cheating heart, in love with the world, going astray in spite of the love shown to her by the Lord. Yet she still belongs to Him. He purchased her with His own blood. And He has promised to woo her back to Himself - to make her a faithful, worthy bride."

The Lord said to Israel, "Thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee" (verse 3). Then He declared, "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days" (Hosea 3:5).

When this prophecy was written, David had long been dead. The mention of him in this passage is instead a prophecy about Jesus, Lord of all. This is a double prophecy, speaking literally of Israel, yet also of the spiritual Israel of God, which is His church. And the prophecy in this verse is that the latter-day church will rise out of the chaos of harlotry and deception and return to seek only the Lord.

Right now, this last-day people are coming out from the harlot churches, out from all the sensuality,

hype and entertainment. They are not running to meetings to see men perform miracles. Instead, they are running after David - King Jesus - their Lord! They have no other desire but Him.

Yet, sadly, some believers are still "playing the harlot." Their eyes are not on Jesus. They want a celebrity gospel; they are lovers of men and pleasure. They relish the excitement, the crowds, the pomp and ceremony.

Why are so many caught up in this? Why aren't they grieving over the fleshly showmanship in God's house? Even sinners see the sham - but many Christians don't. It is because they are still man-centered, not Christ-centered. They travel all over America to hear their favorite teacher or preacher.

I believe most Christian television programs today are nothing more than spiritual harlotry. All the hype and silliness make truly godly people blush. The world is shocked, amused and dumbfounded by this incredible hypocrisy - but many Christians swallow it whole!

Yet as bad as Christian TV is, I believe dead, dry churches and equally dried-up pastors are just as adulterous. How can we expect sinners to go to churches that are so dead even believers can't stand them? Such churches are the joke of hell! But God promises us this is all going to change - because the fear of the Lord is going to be restored in the latter-day church:

"And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name" (Revelation 11:18). God's judgment is coming but first He's calling out those who serve Him wholeheartedly!

The last gospel appeal will be to "fear God and give Him glory"; "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth ... saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him" (Revelation 14:6-7).

"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" (Revelation 15:3-4).

Beloved, in these passages God is speaking of a special kind of fear. It is not the fear of His wrath, judgment or anger. The Bible says the church "shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days" (Hosea 3:5). Yet how is it possible to fear the goodness of the Lord?

Puritan writer Jeremiah Burrows wrote: "We are almost afraid to preach the goodness of God, because so many have vile hearts and abuse the message.

That is why the preaching of the goodness of God has damned so many souls. Yet God so loves His church He will not withhold the message from them, even at the risk of the damning of the souls who are hardened by it."

You see, the goodness of the Lord is a dangerous truth if your heart is not right. Many preach it and then relax spiritually, using it as an excuse for sin. Yet even so, God will not withhold the preaching of it from His church.

Let me suggest at least four reasons why the church will fear the goodness of God:

1. The Latter-Day Church Will Behold the Presence of Christ as No Other Church In History Has.

The church of our age is so wicked and undeserving. But God, in His great love, will fill the church in these final days with so much of His glory, goodness and mercy that we will experience the greatest manifestation of the presence of Jesus of any church in history. We will behold Him in such power and glory that a great, holy fear will come upon us: "He shall come to be ... admired in all them that believe" (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

Beholding Jesus in all His power will bring forth in us a tremendous fear of His goodness. Fearful amazement will grip us as we experience such undeserved manifestations of His presence. He will come suddenly to Zion and will walk wonderfully in our midst, and we will begin to fear the awesome revelation of who He is.

Here is the goodness of God that will flood our souls with both awe and fear: that God chooses to manifest Himself to the most adulterous church of all time, the one most deserving of His judgment. And as if that were not enough, He then places within us a heart that seeks after Him, and gives us clean hands, pure hearts and a holy fear. Who can take it all in?

Even those whose hearts already are set on Him, who walk in His tender love and holiness, have been called out of spiritual adultery and harlotry. Did you or I deserve to have a heart full of love for God? No!

Read the stories of the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11. They endured cruel mockings and whippings. They were bound, imprisoned, stoned, sawn in half, slain with the sword, hunted, hungry, naked and destitute. Yet they were full of faith, unflinching and unbending.

Do you think even for a moment that we measure up to them in devotion, faith and sacrifice? Today we panic if we miss a month's rent, or even a few meals. When we get a few stomach pains, we think we're dying!

What of Moses, who esteemed the reproach of Christ as greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt? He went without food for forty days in the presence of God, saying, "I'd rather die than have these people be without Your presence." What of Paul, who was stoned, shipwrecked, beaten and imprisoned? In this age of pampering the flesh, none of us come anywhere near this kind of abandonment to God!

I ask myself why Jesus is so real, so manifest among us at Times Square Church. Is it because He was drawn to us by an unbounded love for Him? Did He see in us some outstanding qualities of holiness and purity?

Not at all. The truth is that, like Israel, we all are bent on backsliding. Left to ourselves, the harlotry in our hearts is soon exposed. When we sit under red-hot preaching that convicts us, we repent and pray, becoming sober, sincere and faithful. But in just a short time, without a prophet or pastor holding up the mirror of the Word to our faces, we soon slip back into spiritual laziness.

Yet this is the reason there will be a people of God in the latter days who will greatly fear His goodness. They know their black hearts, they know their tendency to grow cold and indifferent. And yet God says of us, "An adulteress loved by a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

You see, God is going to wake up a holy remnant church that will never go back to the world. He will put in His church a heart that continually seeks Him, a heart wholly set on the Lord. He will stir us up to love only Him.

Ask Him now, "Lord, why am I reading this message right now? Why am I sitting among the godly?" I tell you - it is because of His goodness! How can your heart not be filled with holy fear when you consider how good He has been to you? Why is He flooding your soul with joy? Why is He exciting your soul with His love and presence?

What unfathomable goodness this is - and, beloved, the best is yet to come!

According to what God told Hosea, our seeking after God is going to grow more intense. Our longing for Jesus will increase. We will not turn away, and we will never need another King. We will turn to no other but Jesus for direction. No longer will another love come between us.

"I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness" (Hosea 2:19-20). He's saying, "I'm going to make you a faithful people!"

Yet this is not going to happen to everybody. When the Holy Ghost comes down and moves, we must respond to Him. It is only then that He brings us into the fullness He talks about. What an incredible thought: not only has He rescued us - He is going to keep us! And the love we have now is going to get hotter, brighter and stronger until Jesus comes or we go to be with Him.

2. This Church Will Witness The Promised, Final Shaking of All Things."Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken ... that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Hebrews 12:26-27).

More and more I see this as a prophecy of what Jesus is going to do in His church. Keep in mind, our battle is against spiritual wickedness in high places.

About five years ago I became disheartened when many pastors opened up their churches to rock concerts. Teenagers went wild, dancing in the aisles, going straight out of church and into the back seats of cars for sex. Parents wrote to me brokenhearted, saying, "My teenager was on fire for God. Then our pastor and youth pastor brought in these wild groups, and I lost my son. He is backslidden. He got an appetite for occult music, right in our own church. And the pastors ridicule our questioning!"

One time in Times Square Church we had the former president and owner of the three worst heavy metal "Christian" labels in America. The Holy Spirit woke him up one day and told him he was a purveyor of filth and was damning a generation. He has repented and has been warning pastors

and youth leaders ever since, saying, "I produced it, and I know what's in it!" Yet still many of these leaders will not listen. The devil has blinded them.

Thank God, He's promised to shake it all. When God begins to move among His people, the house of God will become a representation on earth of the war raging in the heavenlies. He is going to start walking into their meetings with powerful conviction - and they will turn white, their hearts failing them for fear!

A great moving of His Holy Spirit will occur, and multitudes of kids are going to see Jesus and be drawn to Him. They will totally reject anything that is not pleasing to Him! They won't have to say, "My parents begged me out of this," or "I was preached at and condemned out of it." No, I believe Jesus wants to come and walk among them, to manifest His presence, so they can say, "Look, Jesus appeared to me, and I experienced His presence. It changed me!"

No more will we stand by grieving, hurting, weeping and crying out, "Oh, God, strangers have been brought into Your sanctuary and have polluted it!" Instead, we will thrill as multitudes testify, "Jesus came to me! He put a new love in my heart for Him. Nobody had to condemn me but the Holy Ghost; nobody had to tell me to clean up my act. It was all Jesus - and I'm beginning to seek after Him with all my heart!"

We are going to see many strange and wonderful things during this great shaking. Already a new belief in an actual hell has gripped America. U.S. News and World Report called it, "Hell's Sober Comeback." According to the cover story, three out of five Americans now believe in hell and damnation.

Watch what happens when the Lord begins to really shake things up - in the economy, in nature, in government, in leadership. Not long ago, The New York Times ran a big story on multi-million-dollar sports figures who are turning to Jesus. In football, baseball, basketball and other sports, athletes are getting saved left and right. Many are discovering that big money has brought them only misery, drug addiction or alcoholism. Now they're having prayer meetings in their clubhouses!

Wait till this move hits Broadway, and then Congress. Wait until some statesman gets up on the congressional floor and preaches and nobody walks out!

This stirring is going to be so widespread and awesome, it will ignite fear in all who know how significant it is. We will cry out, "Lord, You said this shaking would take place just prior to Your coming. You must be right at the door!"

3. There Will Be Such a Pure and Holy Awe in Worship, It Will Strike Fear In Saint and Sinner Alike. "O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places" (Psalm 68:35). God is going to do before our eyes what He did for Moses. He is going to cause all His goodness to pass before our eyes (see Exodus 33:19). But it will be a greater glory than Moses beheld. In fact, what he saw will be gloomy compared to the glory ahead.

When Moses got this revelation of the goodness of God - of His justice, mercy and truth - he rushed to

worship Him: "Moses made haste ... and worshipped" (Exodus 34:8). And so will we! Every day will bring forth a new revelation of His goodness. Sinners and family members will turn to the Lord, and the most unlikely people will be testifying and preaching. There will be no sleeping, no boredom, no mind-wandering in His presence. We will make haste to fall in awe and worship.

A revival of praise and worship is now being proclaimed among many charismatics and evangelicals. Yet something has been missing from all this talk of praise and that is the sobering fear of God. "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises" (Exodus 15:11).

David shows us clearly what has been missing: a trembling in His presence! "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Psalm 2:11). This last-day church will come before Him, hearts cleansed and repentant - and like Moses they will make haste to worship.

The Puritans had this saying: "Joy commonly turns to vanity in the heart." This is true when our joy does not spring forth from repentance. We want the gladness without the awe, fear and seriousness.

I have witnessed what some have called "joy celebrations" - flying banners, marching, and loud, happy singing. But underneath, it had no foundation of the glory of His holiness. It was fleshly, not at all the spontaneous outpouring of a work of God in the soul. It was more of a cheering session - cheering for a Jesus who was not feared.

True, we are commanded to serve Him with joy and gladness; this appears throughout the Word. But there is also a tendency in the church to spill over into lightness, vanity and silliness, and to lose the fear of God by not wanting to be serious or tremble before Him. I believe what is coming, though, is a worship so pure, so full of Jesus, it will smite all with conviction for any hidden sin!

4. There Will Be a Holiness In The Countenance of God's Servants - and It Will Be a Rebuke to Those Living in Sin."God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him" (Psalm 89:7). A holy man of God once wrote: "Surely, when the saints shall be exalted in their holiness, when every one of them shall have their hearts filled with God, it will cause abundant fear in the hearts of those who shall even talk with them." In other words, when you are full of Jesus, you automatically become a rebuke and reproof to anyone who has secret sin in his heart!

A guilty conscience cannot endure the gaze of a holy child of God. Centuries ago, a righteous servant of God named Basil was to be imprisoned. Officers were sent to apprehend him. But when they entered his room and he turned to face them, his countenance was so full of Christ that the officers fell backward to the ground. They could not lay a hand on him!

I have a young pastor friend who is so full of Jesus that his face radiates. Recently, he was in a restaurant with a few other young preachers who also love the Lord. They heard that a very famous evangelist was in the restaurant as well, and they wanted to meet him. This man was in the process of being restored from an exposure of sin in his life - and my young friend wanted to bless him.

When the young man met him, the evangelist didn't look him in the eye; instead, he began joking around. Finally, the evangelist turned to the young man's friends nearby and said, "You fellows have been hanging around this preacher boy too long. You all have that holy look of his!" They left the man's presence deeply grieved.

A truly godly person is a rebuke to those living in secret sin. His look is not sad - red-eyed, weeping and sorrowful - but rather is full of peace, with God shining through. It is a look of assurance that says, "All is right between God and me." This type of bright, peaceful holy countenance is piercing a beacon light of conviction to a dark and sinful world.

Beloved, I tell you again with all assurance: In the last days a church is coming forth that will be full of the fear of God - and it will be the righteous fear of His goodness. And that glorious revelation of His goodness and glory will keep them from the power of the wicked one!