

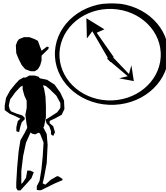
THE BATTLE CREEK BULLETIN

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Time of Assembly



Every other Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.

OR

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.
Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

The Rule of Fear

By Matthew W. Bassford

I suspect that the longer a preacher works with a congregation, the more the congregation gets used to the preacher and can identify his particular hobbyhorses. That being the case, I'm sure that some of you, at least, have figured out that I'm particularly interested in fear. In my time, I've seen a dismayingly large number of people give in to fear in their spiritual lives, and whenever they do, it never works out well. Fear is a much bigger spiritual problem than we commonly recognize!

In fact, I think it's fair to say that fear operates to destroy us in a particular way. This characteristic of fear is not an obvious one. Indeed, it leads to results that are the opposite of what we would expect. Nonetheless, it appears to me to be true.

What I see is this: whenever we give in to fear, we bring the thing that we fear upon us. When we sin because we are afraid of some outcome, we actually are inviting that thing to happen. I've seen this happen in real life, but it happens in the pages of Scripture too. This evening, then, let's consider some unhappy people who fell before the rule of fear.

SAUL

The first test case I want us to consider is Saul. Saul has a problem with fear throughout his lifetime, but we see him sin because of fear for the first time in [I Samuel 13:5-14](#). As I read this story, I honestly feel a fair amount of sympathy for Saul. He's in a terrible situation! Saul hasn't been king for very long at all, so he's still unsteady on his feet. The Philistines are invading with a massive army. Samuel has told Saul to wait for him to come and offer sacrifices, but Samuel is nowhere to be seen. The people are terrified, and with every day that Samuel doesn't show up, more of them desert.

Naturally, Saul is afraid, and because he is afraid, he does something that he knows is wrong. He offers the sacrifices himself. Is this understandable? Absolutely. Does that make it

right? Absolutely not! In fact, this is one of the characteristics of fear that we need to watch out for: it makes sin appear excusable. We think it's OK to do something we normally wouldn't do because we're afraid. However, God does not want us to show fear in doing wrong. He wants us to show faith in continuing to do right.

As Saul's faith would have been rewarded, his fear is punished. Samuel appears just as he finishes the burnt offerings. Remember how the rule of fear is that you bring the fear upon you? Look at it here. Saul offered the sacrifices because he was afraid of losing his kingdom. Now, Samuel tells him that because he offered the sacrifices, he will lose his kingdom. Because of his sin, Saul must face the very thing he was afraid of.

ZEDEKIAH

Our second illustration is Zedekiah. Here, turn with me to [Jeremiah 38:14-23](#). You know, it's interesting. We think of the books of Kings and Chronicles as books of history, and Jeremiah as a book of prophecy, but Jeremiah contains much more detail about the end of the kingdom of Judah than either II Kings or II Chronicles. This story is one of many that are recorded in Jeremiah and not elsewhere.

In any event, during the final siege of Jerusalem, at a point where Jeremiah already has been imprisoned for telling the truth, Zedekiah secretly summons him. He asks for a word from the Lord. Jeremiah tells him that if he wants to survive and wants the city to be spared, he needs to surrender immediately.

However, Zedekiah is afraid. He is concerned that if he surrenders to Nebuchadnezzar, the Jews who already have gone over to the Chaldeans will abuse him. Jeremiah tells him that won't happen, but he can tell that Zedekiah doesn't believe him, so he warns the unhappy king that if he does not surrender, he will be taken, the city will be burned, and his household will be destroyed. Sadly, this is the way things play out. As the next chapter of Jeremiah reveals, Zedekiah tries to flee but is taken. In punishment, the Babylonians kill his sons before his eyes and then blind him so that it is the last thing he will ever see.

The tragic story of Zedekiah illustrates a particular kind of fear: the fear of dealing with the unpleasant consequences of sin. Zedekiah was a wicked king, and Jerusalem was under siege in the first place because of his wickedness. It was time for him to face the music, to do what he could to make his peace with the Babylonians and with God. However, he was afraid to do that, so he lost everything that remained.

So too for us. There are times when we also must face the music. It can be really painful to work through the consequences of our sin, but if we refuse, the consequences will be even worse.

THE ONE-TALENT SERVANT

Finally, let's consider the one-talent servant. We see his story in [Matthew 25:14-18, 24-27](#). This is a familiar parable, and we're only considering the unpleasant part. Elsewhere, the five-talent servant and the two-talent servant work to earn more and are re-

warded. Here, rather than seeing an opportunity as they did, the one-talent servant sees only the prospect of failure. He is worried about being punished by his unsympathetic master, and his fear paralyzes him. He buries his talent, and when the master returns, he tries to argue that his failure is his master's fault because his master made him afraid.

What's the outcome? We should be starting to see the pattern by now. Saul was afraid of losing his kingdom, sinned, and lost it. Zedekiah was afraid of being tortured, sinned, and was tortured. Similarly, the one-talent servant was afraid of being punished, disobeyed, and was punished. He gave in to his fear and brought the thing he feared upon himself.

Today, we must beware of the fear of failure in serving the Lord too. How often do we see some spiritual opportunity before us, but we are afraid of failing, and so we don't take it? Let's think about this. Yes, if we take action for the Lord, we risk failure. However, if we never do anything, we guarantee failure. Nobody ever succeeds at what they refuse to attempt!

There are times when serving God demands that we step into the unknown. That's not easy or fun. I'm here to tell you, brethren, I'm a conservative soul. By nature, I hate taking risks like that! However, if we allow Satan to use our fears to keep us from acting, none of us ever will accomplish anything for God at all.

Correcting Misconceptions of Humility

By Sewell Hall

Once it is established that Jesus was the ultimate example of humility, several misconceptions are laid to rest.

Humility is not weakness

Even the enemies of Jesus testified to His power. It was demonstrated over Satan, over nature, and over every force that opposed Him. Yet in the exercise of His power He was humble, acknowledging that the works He did were the works of His Father (John 5:19). Humble individuals who recognize their own weakness and allow the power of God to work in them are the only ones who are truly strong. The Lord said to Paul, "My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9), causing Paul to respond, "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Humility does not preclude leadership

Jesus was "meek and lowly" (humble), but this did not prevent His exercising leadership. He is the great Shepherd of the flock, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Some individuals, citing humility as their reason, refuse to accept the responsibilities of leadership, especially as elders. The fact is that elders must be humble. They are to be sober-minded (1 Timothy 3:2), and this is defined in Romans 12:3 as not thinking more highly of oneself than one should. 1 Timothy 3:6 says that an elder should not be a novice, "lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil." Ra-

ther than hindering leadership, humility defines the style of leadership that pleases God. Christ-like shepherds are not lords over those entrusted to them but examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3).

Humility does not forbid rebuking sin

Jesus was just as humble when He was driving out the money-changers from the temple in Matthew 21 and rebuking the Pharisees in chapter 23 as when He was blessing little children in chapter 19. In each case He was expressing in His words and actions the will of God, not His own. Humility will, however, affect our manner of dealing with sinners and those in error. “A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition” (2 Timothy 2:24-25). “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1). Rebuking that is done from a spirit of self-righteousness and pride will never be effective in accomplishing God's purpose.

Humility is not inconsistent with personal initiative

The church needs the input of every spiritually-minded Christian in planning and, executing its work. A song we sing says, “Take my intellect and use every power as Thou shalt choose.” Yet some who have useful ideas fail to offer them, feeling that to do so would be inconsistent with humility. Of course, if one demands that his way be accepted and becomes angry if his suggestion is not taken, he does lack humility. Humility demands that “each esteem others better than himself” (Philippians 2:3), but it does not forbid our offering our wisdom on a subject for whatever it may be worth in the opinion of our brethren.

Humility does not require that we think of ourselves disdainfully, speak of ourselves disparagingly or grovel in the presence of others.

This is what many people think of as humility. However, this is the opposite of humility. Such a person is thinking too much of himself, however negative his thinking may be. When one is constantly thinking: “How inferior I am, how worthless I am, how useless I am, how poorly I do compared to others” he is thinking of himself all the time. Pride is his problem; he is too proud to be comfortable among those whom he considers superior to himself. Humility is not the cause of such negative thinking; it is actually the solution - not thinking of self at all. A Christian can rejoice in the superiority of his brethren. Furthermore, he can hold up his head in the presence of all men, not because he himself is so worthy, but because he is a child of the God of heaven, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. Jesus did not grovel before any man, yet He was not lacking in humility when He said to a Roman governor, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above” (John 19:11).

Conclusion

True humility replaces self-seeking with seeking first the kingdom of God

(Matthew 6:33), self-will with doing the will of God (Matthew 7:21), self-reliance with reliance upon God (2 Corinthians 3:5), self-confidence with confidence in God (2 Timothy 1:12), and self-exaltation with exaltation by God (1 Corinthians 4:3-6). These were the qualities that made Jesus humble and the qualities He seeks in us. May we bring ourselves to say truly, even as we sing: Lord, thy love at last has conquered: None of self, and all of Thee.

Are You Saved?

By Carrol R. Sutton

Are you saved? Of course, you are not saved eternally in heaven at the present time, but are you now saved from your past sins?

You are NOT saved just because you may desire salvation. The rich young ruler desired to be saved but he was not willing to pay the cost involved. So he went away from Jesus sorrowful (Matthew 19:16-22).

You are NOT saved just because you may think you are saved. Saul of Tarsus thought he was right while persecuting Christ but he was wrong (Acts 26:9).

You are NOT saved just because you may think you have had "an experience" with the Lord. Our "experiences" is not God's power to save.

You are NOT saved just because you may "feel like" you are saved! Feelings are not evidence of salvation! Feelings are produced by "belief" whether that "belief" is right or wrong. Saul felt like he was right with God while persecuting Christians unto death. He had a "good conscience before God" and "verily thought" he was pleasing God, but he was lost (Acts 26:9-11; 22:4; 23:1).

You are NOT saved just because you may be "happy." If you think you are saved, you will be "happy" although you are lost.

You are NOT saved just because some preacher may have told you that you are! Jesus warned of "many false prophets" who have gone out into the world. We are told to "believe not every spirit" but to "try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

You are NOT saved just because you are religious. Your religion may be in vain (James 1:26-27; Proverbs 16:25).

If you are dead in trespasses and sins, you are not saved! You need to be "quickened" by the gospel which is God's Word (Psalms 119:50; Hebrews 4:12; Romans 1:16; James 1:18-22; and 1 Corinthians 4:15).

If you are living in sin, you are not saved! You need to die to sin! This is accomplished by repentance (Romans 6:1-23; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Corinthians 7:10).

If you haven't believed in Jesus Christ, repented of your sins, confessed Christ and been baptized INTO Christ, YOU ARE NOT SAVED (John 20:30-31; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 10:9-10; Galatians 3:27; Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."