

THE
GOOD,
THE BAD,
AND THE
UGLY

Fear



R. T. KENDALL

Best-Selling Author of *Total Forgiveness*

Fear

R. T. KENDALL

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FEAR by R. T. Kendall

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In memory of Dr. Gene E. Phillips (1902–1977)

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Foreword

IN 2005 I was browsing through a Christian Book Distributors catalog and spotted a book with an intriguing title, *In Pursuit of His Glory*, written by R. T. Kendall, a man I had never heard of. It ignited a curiosity in me, for that's exactly what my heart's desire is, to bring God glory by the life I live. I read the book and was impacted by RT's stories of being the pastor at prestigious Westminster Chapel in London. His raw honesty and integrity encouraged and inspired me. The things he learned and the things he would do again touched a nerve in my heart.

I decided that RT was someone I wanted to come and preach at Island Church, so I contacted him and invited him to come. His first visit, in 2005, was amazing when he preached on total forgiveness! So began a friendship with RT and his wife, Louise, that my wife, Jenni, and I treasure to this day. We have been blessed to welcome RT and Louise to Island Church every year since that memorable Sunday, July 17, 2005. Consequently, I have read all RT's books and always look forward to the insights and revelation he shares from the depth of his experience living the Christian life and his love for God and His people.

The fear of God has gone missing from the Western church. Churches that focus on programs rather than His presence don't know what you are talking about when you mention the fear of God. They assume you are talking about behavior modification rather than a heart response to the greatness of God. With churches lost in the blur of doing ministry instead of enjoying being in His presence, the awe and wonder of God have been relegated to a bygone era, the fear of God reduced to a God they don't know.

This book, *Fear*, is classic R. T. Kendall writing with thought-provoking accuracy, just as a surgeon precisely uses his tools of trade. RT is seeking to awaken the church to the wonder and awe of our majestic and holy God to help prepare us for the day we stand before Him. Using personal examples of his own failures and shortcomings and successes, this book is an invitation to go deeper in your walk with God—a God who longs for our relationship, who has spread a table for us to feast from, who has prepared more for us than all we could ask, think, or even imagine. Having a healthy fear of God will grow us up into a maturity that will open up the door to experience His glory and a revelation of His magnificent goodness.

Many of the books I have by RT are signed with John 5:44 as the encouraging scripture. RT has sought to live a life to bring God honor and glory. He seeks God's opinion (glory, *doxa*) over his life. God has appointed a day for every single human being where we will stand

before Him and give accounts of our lives and He will give His opinion of the lives we have lived. We all hope and pray that we will hear this opinion of God: “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master.”

The fear of man (bad fear) is a huge trap that many get ensnared by. In fact, it paralyzes people and renders them powerless, where they bow to the pressures of what others think. I have been such a victim, and I can assure you, it’s not a good place to live. Like RT, I used to go fishing for compliments, hoping someone would say something encouraging to me.

In our COVID-19 world, the fear of what others think has been escalated to new heights, capturing many in its snare. The fear of man manifests in so many different ways, causing its victims to succumb to lies that numb their hearts to the reality of God’s very great and precious promises. RT skillfully helps those trapped to escape and live on God’s promises by focusing on eternal realities.

We are at war! In March 2020 everything got ramped up. Jesus is coming again soon, and the devil is filled with such fury that he unleashed on the human race a level of spiritual warfare unseen before. His goal is to cause many to lose hope, faith, and love, and his mission is to steal, kill, and destroy.

Many have sadly bowed to his attacks, bowed to his fear, and walked away from the faith. Isolation is his objective, and that’s where the damage is done. Alone

FEAR

we lose hope. Alone our faith shrinks. Alone our love for God and others dries up. We need to gather together as the church without fear, to praise God and to love others. The devil fears the gathered church and is doing all he can to stop us being together.

Living in the fear of God now prepares me for the day when I will stand before our glorious Savior. May this book inspire you afresh to live for God's glory, just as it has me.

—PASTOR GRANT BREWSTER
ISLAND CHURCH
BAINBRIDGE ISLAND, WASHINGTON

Preface

THE FILM *THE Good, the Bad and the Ugly* became a very popular movie. The star, Clint Eastwood, plays the role of one who was not in fact a very good man, but good only by comparing him to the bad man—played by Lee Van Cleef—and the ugly man, played by Eli Wallach. Although comparisons are onerous, I ask for your indulgence for my borrowing the famous movie title in order to demonstrate three kinds of fear: the fear of God (the good), the fear of man (the bad), and satanic fear (the ugly).

I want to say first of all that I have prayed for you. I have prayed that everyone who reads this book will have the protection that comes from the sprinkling of the blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:2; Heb. 12:24). I would like to think that the devil is unhappy with all of my books, but I can assure you that he will not like this one—especially the third section.

I thank Charisma Media for the privilege of writing another book with them. Steve and Joy Strang, owners of Charisma Media, have been special friends for over twenty-five years and have published more than twenty of my books. My warm thanks to Debbie Marrie, my editor, who has been an encourager and helpful critic

over the years—and has been terrific in helping me with this one.

I have prayed that God would enable me to write this book as if it were my only one—and last one. I admit my tendency is to think that my current book is the most important. But please understand that the subject of this book is most grave and very timely. I pray that you will be gripped as I have been.

I dedicate this book to the memory of Dr. Gene E. Phillips, my first pastor. As you will read below, his influence on me when I was a child was profound. It happens that his son, Dr. Gene C. Phillips, was my first friend and certainly therefore oldest as well. Following in his father's footsteps, he became a Nazarene pastor as well. We are both eighty-six. I had the privilege of reading the opening words of this book on the telephone to "Genie," as I called him. I trust this book will bless Genie and all of you who read what follows.

I thank Debbie Marrie for her encouragement and wisdom in her usual acute suggestions and for Steve Strang in allowing me to do another book with Charisma Media. Most of all, I thank Louise—my best friend and critic—for her encouragement.

—R. T. KENDALL
NASHVILLE
AUGUST 2021

Introduction

I HAD A HEAD start when it comes to the fear of the Lord. Between my parental background and my church background, I was given a double dose of the sense of the fear of God.

I am reminded too of the famous quote of William Booth (1829–1912), founder of The Salvation Army:

I consider that the chief dangers which confront the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell.

In the introduction to his book *God's Hell*, William Booth referred to his address to the first graduating class of The Salvation Army officers. He stated that perhaps he should apologize for keeping them for two years in order to teach them how to win a soul to Jesus Christ. It would have been better, he said, had they “spent five minutes in hell.”

My church in Ashland, Kentucky (Church of the Nazarene), was born in the kind of preaching that would have blessed William Booth. I cut my teeth on this kind of theology including the preaching on hell. Jesus had

more to say about hell than He did about heaven, and so too my old church. I have often wondered if the atmosphere of my old church in Ashland was the last vestige of the historic Cane Ridge Revival (which I will mention below), some one hundred miles away.

I vividly remember an event when I was seven or eight years old. We were coming out of church after our Wednesday night prayer meeting at First Church of the Nazarene in Ashland. Our pastor was the Rev. Gene Phillips. As far back as I can remember, every time I heard him preach a sense of the fear of God came over me. That Wednesday night as we were heading home I noticed that the full moon was red. My father then said, “When the moon is the color of blood it is a sign of the second coming.” He was referring to biblical verses such as “the moon became as blood” (Acts 2:20; Rev. 6:12). I feared that the second coming would come any minute, and I was afraid I wasn’t ready.

I was terrified. I could not go to sleep that night until I confessed all my sins to God. I don’t remember what these sins were, but they were real to me then. When I confessed them, I had peace—and went off to sleep. The truth is, the moon on that Wednesday night had the color of blood because of the nearby Armco steel mill; the smoke of the furnaces changed the moon’s color to red for some reason. Even though there was nothing supernatural about the moon’s color, I am thankful that I had a tender conscience. Although I now have a full assurance of my salvation, I pray that I will never lose

the fear of displeasing the Lord. Paul admonished us to “try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord” (Eph. 5:10). Enoch had this witness before his translation to heaven that he “pleased God” (Heb. 11:5). I am *so* thankful that I have not (so far) outgrown that desire.

I still think a lot about my Nazarene background. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, one of my predecessors at Westminster Chapel, used to urge me, “Don’t forget your Nazarene background—it is what has saved you.” He had read the biography of Phineas Bresee (1838–1915), the founder of the Church of the Nazarene, and sensed a genuineness among Nazarenes. By saying, “This is what has saved you,” he was not referring to how I was saved but comparing me to so many reformed ministers who, he would say, were “perfectly orthodox, perfectly useless.” Here is one of the huge differences between old Nazarenes and some of the churches I have encountered: I grew up with a burning desire to please the Lord. I am not their judge, of course, but I fear that this desire to please God is absent in so many places today.

When I was fifteen, we had a guest evangelist at our church—Dr. W. M. Tidwell. He was a bit eccentric but also a legend in the Nazarene movement. (When I went to Trevecca Nazarene College a few years later, my dormitory was called Tidwell Hall, named after him.) On the final Sunday morning of the two-week meeting in Ashland, I was called out of the Sunday school class that preceded the main service. Dr. Tidwell wanted to see me. He said he planned to preach on the parable about

the man who did not have the wedding garment and was then bound “hand and foot” and cast into outer darkness where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 22:13). He wanted to use me as a visible illustration. At a certain moment in his sermon, he would motion for me to take a seat in front of the congregation. Then four men in the congregation that day, to illustrate the rest of the parable, had been designated to tie my hands and feet and then carry me up the center aisle and out of the church—as an example of the man in the parable who did not have the wedding garment and was sent to outer darkness.

People afterward spoke of the solemnity that came over the service. Except for possibly one person, a teen-aged girl—Patsy Branham. My mother, who sat near her, particularly remembered that Patsy was irreverent and disrespectful—even mocking during the preaching—and laughed at me as the four men were carrying me out of the church. While an invitational hymn was being sung, old Dr. Tidwell asked that the singing stop. “Someone here is getting their final call,” he said as the congregation stood. He refused to close the service but turned things over to the pastor, who also would not dismiss the service. People sat down and slowly got up and went to their homes.

The next day, as I came home from delivering the newspaper *Ashland Daily Independent*, which I did every day, my mother was waiting on the front porch for me.

“Did you hear about Patsy?” she asked with anxiety and tears.

“No, what do you mean?” I asked.

“Patsy was killed an hour ago as she was walking home from school.” A speeding car rammed into another car, which careened onto the sidewalk and hit Patsy, who was killed instantly.

I knew Patsy. I was stunned. She was only sixteen. Would God hold a sweet little teenaged girl responsible for her attitude and actions? Haven’t we all been guilty of the same sort of mockery at one time or another? Why would the Holy Spirit lead Dr. Tidwell to say, “Someone is getting their last call” (by which he meant last opportunity to respond positively to God’s invitation to be saved)? Was Patsy being singled out? Was God really telling all of us that someone present was going to be lost if they did not respond? I have asked questions like these many times since.

The answer is yes. Rather than quarrel with God, I bow to this truth:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

—ISAIAH 55:8–9

I would add: one’s last or final call implies that one had been warned previously.

A good number of people spontaneously went to the

church that Monday evening, just to be with each other. All were sobered and quiet. Everyone was thinking the same thing, recalling old Dr. Tidwell's warning, "Someone here is getting their final call."

That occasion had an effect on me to this day that I have never completely got over. Strange as this may seem, between the impact of that Sunday service led by Dr. Tidwell plus the preaching and influence of Gene Phillips, I have never lost a sense of the fear of the Lord. Whenever I return to Ashland, I make it a point to drive by 25th and Montgomery Avenue to have a look at the corner and spot where Patsy was killed.

As for Patsy Branham's being taken suddenly after being warned in that church service, which seems strange and unfair to some, I have much the same sort of question regarding the sins of King Saul and King David. King Saul was punished for merely abusing the ceremonial law regarding burnt offerings, which he was not supposed to offer. God rejected him from that moment (1 Sam. 13:8–14). His life after that was horrible and ended in tragedy (1 Sam. 31:4–6). King David committed adultery with Bathsheba. She became pregnant. David then killed her husband, Uriah, to cover up his sin (2 Sam. 11). That to me seems a thousand times worse than Saul's sin. But David was forgiven and restored and forever regarded as Israel's greatest king.

I made a decision a long time ago not to question God's ways. I certainly don't understand many of them. But I bow to Him. I have never been sorry for this.

On the other hand, I have watched people who chose to question God's ways with anger and bitterness and denied the truth of the Bible. And then I have seen their end, nearly always ending in sadness. I have observed those who came to seminary believing the Bible but embraced existentialism. None of them that I know of succeeded in the ministry, and many left the ministry.

I HAVE CHOSEN THE FEAR OF THE LORD

The church today is generally losing its young people by the hundreds of thousands. The age they begin to desert the faith is around sixteen. Very few young people brought up in church these days remain there. Why? No fear of God. Were they to see how angry God is with their mocking and frivolity, it would result in a change of attitude.

I would also observe that the young people in my old church in Ashland who were of the same age and generation as Patsy *stayed in the church*. And continued to walk with the Lord. Most are now in heaven. I am the only one (that I know of) still alive. I can recall no one— young or old—who deserted the church owing to Dr. Tidwell's warning or Patsy's sudden death. It had the opposite effect. Furthermore, Patsy's sister followed the Lord and later married a man who became a Nazarene minister. Patsy's own father became a Christian after Patsy died.

While in high school in Ashland, part of our reading

included a section of Jonathan Edwards' (1703–1758) sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” Some of the students snickered as they read certain lines, such as, “It is by the mercy of God that you are not in hell now.” But no one was laughing in the congregational church in Enfield, Connecticut, on July 8, 1741. Taking his text from Deuteronomy 32:35, “Their foot shall slide in due time” (KJV), Edwards read his sermon from a manuscript. He had no oratory or charisma. But the people began to moan and groan. Edwards tried to get the people to be quiet, but by the time he finished many were holding on to the church pews to keep from *sliding* into hell. So great was the power of the Spirit that strong men were seen holding on to tree trunks outside the church to keep from sliding into hell.

News of the sermon and its effect went all over New England in days. It went all over England in weeks. Edwards tried preaching it again in his own church in Northampton, Massachusetts. No effect whatever followed. *God only did it once*. Once was enough to shake New England. It is what many think of when they think of the Great Awakening (1735–1750). Solid research has shown that the Great Awakening led to the Declaration of Independence (1776).

One can only wonder what it will be like when we stand before God at the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of our lives, including the deeds done in the body (2 Cor. 5:10). In fact, a Methodist lay preacher stood on a fallen tree on a Sunday morning—August 8,

1801—and took 2 Corinthians 5:10 as his text before fifteen thousand people. A sense of the fear of God was so strong that hundreds fell spontaneously to the ground. Nobody had prayed that people would fall, or “swoon” as it was referred to then. No one pushed them. Between that Sunday and Wednesday there were never fewer than five hundred people prostrate on the ground. But they would come out of it in hours shouting with assurance of salvation. Their voices could be heard a mile away. It was called “the sound of Niagara,” this—known as the Cane Ridge Revival—being America’s second Great Awakening. Both awakenings were characterized by an eschatological emphasis.

Louise and I have visited the spot in Enfield four times. We drove two hours out of our way just to stand or kneel on the vacant lot where the original church was located in Enfield, across from the Montessori school there, praying, “O Lord, do it again.”

I wish I could testify that I have seen the evidence of the fear of God displayed throughout my ministry. I haven’t. For this reason, in some ways I feel like a fraud in writing this book. I would gladly step aside and welcome someone to write on this subject who has far more experience of this phenomenon than I have.

I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that the greatest need of the church today is a return of the fear of the Lord. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that the greatest absence in the church today is the fear of God.

The nearest I have come in my adult life to seeing the fear of God before my eyes was on two separate occasions at Westminster Chapel. Preaching on the life of David, I came to the story of Nabal and Abigail. Nabal, a wealthy man, refused to show mercy to David, who needed food for his men. David decided to get revenge, but Abigail, Nabal's wife, interceded and pleaded successfully with David not to go after Nabal. She waited for Nabal, who had been "merry" while holding a feast, to get sober. Then she told him what David had planned to do and how she stopped him. Nabal's heart "failed him and he became like a stone." And about ten days later "the LORD struck Nabal and he died" (1 Sam. 25:37–38, NIV, the translation I used then).

As soon as the service was over, an unmarried couple in their twenties came immediately to see me in the vestry. They were clearly shaken. The man was trembling in fear. They both prayed to receive the Lord then and there. A few weeks later they revealed that they had stopped living together. They asked me to marry them. I did. Later they were baptized and became staunch members of Westminster Chapel.

The second occasion was when a lady who had been reading my book *God Meant It for Good* came to hear me preach. At the beginning of the first service, she came to me, and I for some reason quoted 1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But

when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (NIV). The lady was converted the same evening. She said the fear of God came on her as I read that verse. She was convinced that I could see right through her. I did not see her at all! It was an effectual work of grace; that woman became one of the most godly I have seen throughout my ministry.

I do not believe that all those converted under my preaching were necessarily motivated by the fear of God. The preaching of the wrath of God is not the only way people are led to Christ. Peter talked about a wife winning her husband by her “conduct” (1 Pet. 3:1–2). Paul said much the same thing when he urged husbands and wives to stay together even if one is not saved. “For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?” (1 Cor. 7:16). These things said, the principal reason Paul gave for the gospel being the power of God for salvation is the wrath of God (Rom. 1:16, 18). Millions can sing the first verse of “Amazing Grace” from memory, but few can remember the words of the second verse:

’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

—JOHN NEWTON (1725–1807)¹

PART I

*The Good—
the Fear of God*

CHAPTER 1

The Eternal Gospel

Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

—REVELATION 14:6–7 (NIV)

The superstars in heaven will be people
we never heard of on earth.

—GRAHAM KENDRICK

MY FATHER TOLD me the following story many times. He and my mother, who was six months pregnant with me, were in a Nazarene church in Indianapolis. My dad was so gripped by the sermon that he put his hand on my mother’s tummy and prayed, “Lord, let my son preach like this man” (he was counting on my being a son!).

Almost twenty years later a visiting chapel preacher

at Trevecca Nazarene College (now university) preached a sermon based on Hebrews 11:5 (KJV): “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” It is the only chapel sermon during my entire time at Trevecca that I remember. I can still remember the main points. The focus in a nutshell: *Enoch pleased God, but not necessarily people*. I was so shaken and stirred by that sermon that I went immediately to my dormitory room, knelt at my bed, and prayed that somehow I might truly please God. I then phoned my dad to tell him about the sermon.

“Who was the preacher?” my father asked.

“A preacher called C. B. Cox.”

My father then replied, “C. B. Cox was the preacher I was listening to when I prayed for you in Indianapolis.”

The fear of God does not mean that God is afraid. Whereas the love of God refers to His love, the justice of God to His justice, and the wrath of God to His anger, the fear of God refers to *our fear of Him*. Does this mean we should be afraid of God? Partly, yes. We preachers nowadays are, first, not very prone to talk about the fear of God and, second, if we do, we want to say to the people: “But this does not mean we should be afraid of Him.” Really? I think we should when fearing God is properly understood. When we get to heaven and watch a video recording of the preaching of John the Baptist, it

would not surprise me to learn that many of his hearers were nearly scared to death from his preaching.

THAT IS WHAT THIS BOOK IS LARGELY ABOUT

It seems to me that the preaching of the fear of God and Jesus' own teaching of eternal punishment have been largely avoided because we are afraid people won't come back to church. The truth is, the fear of displeasing people by camouflaging the fear of God is what is partly responsible for emptying churches.

It is easy to forget that the first sermon in the New Testament was by John the Baptist: "Who warned you to *flee from the wrath to come?*" (Matt. 3:7, emphasis added). People walked or came on camels' backs for twenty miles to be told about the fear of God.

My schoolteacher back in Ashland, Kentucky, when having to comment on Jonathan Edwards' aforementioned sermon (it was in the literature books of those days), denounced Edwards' sermon and said that we should concentrate on the *love* of God. Because John 3:16, the Bible in a nutshell, says that God "so loved the world" that He gave His only son, that whoever would believe in Him should not perish but have eternal life, people understandably head straight for the reference to the love of God. But they forget that those who don't believe will "perish"—a reference to God's wrath and justice. God loved us so much that He sent His Son so we would not go to hell.

GOD'S WAYS

A fair question is: If God does not want us to perish, why did He not simply destroy hell? He is the One who created it. Why did He not do away with hell? Could He not do that? Do you know the answer to that? I don't. Allow me to quote again these words:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

—ISAIAH 55:8–9

We are at an intersection right here. You have come to the end of the road and must turn to the right or left. This is not like Yogi Berra's famous advice, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it."¹ You have a clear decision to make: to choose God's ways or stick with your ways. Simple as that.

God has "ways." He lamented that ancient Israel did not know His "ways" (Heb. 3:10). Moses' most earnest request was to know God's "ways" (Exod. 33:13). The prophet Isaiah exhorted:

Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach
us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.

—ISAIAH 2:3

I must repeat: God has *ways*. These ways must be taught. “Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD” (Ps. 34:11). God’s ways, part of which is the fear of the Lord, must be taught. Why? Because *by nature* we have no sense of the fear of God. It is alien to us. This is why we naturally despise the notion of the fear of God.

None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God....there is no fear of God before their eyes.

—ROMANS 3:10–11, 18

JOHANNINE LITERATURE

Almost certainly the least understood book in the Bible is Revelation. But some verses are plain and clear—like Revelation 14:7. The first two words contained in what is called the “eternal gospel” are “fear God.”

Does this surprise you? It surprises me, to be honest. And yet all of Johannine literature (the Gospel of John, the letters of John, and the Book of Revelation) have this thread in common: the justice and anger of God; not only the need for someone to be saved but also to be obedient owing to the justice and wrath of God. What follows are some examples of this teaching.

And making a whip of cords, he [Jesus] drove them all [those selling oxen, sheep and pigeons and the money-changers] out of the temple....He poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who

sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.”

—JOHN 2:15–16

Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

—JOHN 2:24–25

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.

—JOHN 3:3

Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

—JOHN 5:28–29

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness [so people would not perish from poisonous snakes, which God had sent because of His anger], so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

—JOHN 3:14–15

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish [that is, go to hell], but have eternal life.

—JOHN 3:16

Whoever does not believe [in the Son] is condemned already...This is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

—JOHN 3:18–19

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

—JOHN 3:36

For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

—JOHN 6:40

Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

—JOHN 6:53

The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge: the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.

—JOHN 12:48

When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.

—JOHN 16:8

If we will confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

—1 JOHN 1:9

He is the propitiation for our sins.

—1 JOHN 2:2

He loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

—1 JOHN 4:10

We may have confidence for the day of judgment.

—1 JOHN 4:17

There is a sin that leads to death.

—1 JOHN 5:16

I will remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

—REVELATION 2:5

Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

—REVELATION 2:16

Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works.

—REVELATION 2:22

If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.

—REVELATION 3:3

I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie— behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet.

—REVELATION 3:9

So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

—REVELATION 3:16

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline.

—REVELATION 3:19

Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

—REVELATION 6:15–17

He will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night.

—REVELATION 14:10–11

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened. Then another book was opened which is the

book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done....And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

—REVELATION 20:12, 15

I do not claim to understand all these verses. But the link that holds them together is the justice of God. Like it or not, God is just. It should be noted that God is faithful and *just* to forgive our sins. Why “just”? Because God is a God who demands justice and needs to be propitiated. The word “propitiation” in 1 John 2:2 and 1 John 4:10 means that the blood of Jesus has turned God's wrath away from our sins. In other words, God's justice was *satisfied* by the life and death of His Son Jesus Christ. That is why God can forgive our sins and be true to Himself.

THE GOSPEL

The word *gospel* is used seventy-seven times in the New Testament but only once in Johannine literature. And it is there called the “eternal gospel” and with an angel crying with a “loud voice,” saying:

Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.

—REVELATION 14:7

The Book of Revelation is “the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:1). Not revelations, plural, but revelation. The book reveals the *true Jesus*—past, present, future; His person and His work. The word *eternal*, or *everlasting*, means that it is never-changing and there is only one gospel. It would likewise be the “same” Jesus as in the four Gospels. It is noteworthy that the first thing the angel crying with a loud voice says is “Fear God.”

Think about that: “fear God.” The eternal gospel is a command to fear God.

Does this surprise you? And yet, as I said, it does me! But it shouldn’t. When the gospel of the kingdom is first unveiled in the New Testament, Jesus’ words are “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). The word *repent* in the New Testament implies one should change their ways because of the nature of God. He is a holy, jealous God. Changing our ways comes to this: fear God.

Indeed, the first message of John the Baptist was “flee from the wrath to come” (Matt. 3:7). The first word of Jesus’ preaching was “Repent” (Matt. 4:17).

Never forget that Jesus never—ever—apologized for the God of the Old Testament. The God of the Old Testament was His Father. The God of the Old Testament is a jealous God. God unashamedly said that His name is “Jealous” (Exod. 34:14).

The only reference to the gospel in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 14:6–7) is to *fear God*.

THE GLORY OF GOD

There is more: give glory to Him. The word *glory* comes from the Greek *doxa*, meaning “praise” or “honor.” John’s use of *doxa* is best understood by Jesus’ words in John 5:44: “How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” If you have read many of my books, you will know that I have sought to let this be my governing verse in life, beginning over sixty years ago.

The glory of God and the jealousy of God may often be used interchangeably. God is jealous and will not allow us to worship any other god but only Him. This is one of His ways; that is the way He is. Furthermore, He wants *all* the praise, honor, and glory for saving us. The same God who said to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy” (Exod. 33:19; Rom. 9:15) is the same God who has saved us. He did not have to save us. He could have passed us by and been equally just. The hymn writer Fanny Crosby (1820–1915) knew this very well. This is why she penned the hymn:

Pass me not, O gentle Savior, hear my humble cry;
While on others Thou art calling, do not pass
me by.²

The carnal mind does not like this aspect of God’s ways. When I was studying in a theological seminary many years ago, I was surprised to hear of so many students objecting to a God who wanted praise and glory.

This is why Jonathan Edwards said that the one thing the devil cannot produce in us is a love for the glory of God. That means if you love the glory and honor of God, be encouraged to know that *only God* could have put it there! This means that you are truly saved.

And yet, as Detective Columbo might say, “Oh, there is one more thing”: the eternal gospel is a command not only to fear God and give Him glory, but also to “worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Rev. 14:7). God wants our worship. He wants our praise. He wants us to keep our eyes on Him, to set our affection on things above, not on things of the earth (Col. 3:1). It means a lifelong commitment to praise Him, thank Him, and put Him first in our lives. As we have been noticing, He is a jealous God.

It is no accident that we are commanded to worship the God of creation “who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.” Our generation has shown great contempt for God our Creator. First, we by nature resent a God who made us by His own will and created humankind from dust (Gen. 2:7; Ps. 103:14). Second, many resent that we were created male and female and that heterosexual monogamous marriage was His way of populating the earth (Gen. 1:27). This is an implicit way of bringing us to affirm the Bible; otherwise, how would we know about God the Creator?

JUDGMENT AND THE FRINGE BENEFITS

I am not prepared to explain the full meaning of the words “The hour of his judgment has come” (Rev. 14:7), but it obviously points to the fact and truth of God’s justice. “For the LORD is a God of justice” (Isa. 30:18). Those who have been saved must never forget that it is the gospel alone that prepares us for God’s final judgment. It is appointed for all people once to die but “after that comes judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Whereas the gospel changes lives, gives us peace, shows us how our needs are supplied, enables us to enjoy God’s guidance and providence, points to the way to live our lives, and lets us enjoy Jesus as a friend and brother, the main reason God sent His Son to die was to change our final destiny.

The gospel is preached to us that we *not perish but have eternal life* (John 3:16). It is my opinion that the passage in Revelation 14:7 shows what the gospel is like when it is proclaimed with great power. A sense of the fear and awe of God should accompany the preaching and reception of the gospel. I am sure it is what the gospel will do when the cry in the middle of the night awakens the church just before the second coming of Jesus (Matt. 25:6).

To put it another way, the gospel has fringe benefits: the privilege of prayer, the Bible, the promise of the Spirit in power, the gifts of the Spirit, the possibility of the healing of our bodies, and the privilege of casting all our anxiety on God (1 Pet. 5:7). But fringe benefits they

are. The main benefit of the gospel is to get us ready for eternity: to be ready for the judgment that follows dying.

This is why a sinner's prayer would be, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" (Luke 18:13). We ask for mercy when we have no bargaining power. My own suggested prayer for one coming to Jesus is that they include the words: "I am sorry for my sins; wash my sins by Your blood."

The gospel is mainly about judgment and the fact that receiving the gospel prepares one for the judgment to come.

The judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10) has two dimensions: (1) Christ the righteous judge will determine whether a person is saved or lost; and (2) the saved person will be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ—that is, whether one will receive a reward or be saved by fire (1 Cor. 3:14–15).

The person who receives a reward, having come into their inheritance on earth by their unashamed yet quiet honor of God, will receive Christ's "well done." It doesn't get better than that! Don't expect them to be among the famous we may have heard of. I believe Graham Kendrick got it exactly right. He said the superstars in heaven will be people we were never aware of here on earth. It is like those described in Hebrews 11. Many of those men and women referred to in Hebrews 11 did not get vindication in their own day. It came after they died. You and I must expect this. I dare say that I have very likely described *you*, dear reader. If vindication comes here below, good. If not, what is coming is worth waiting for.

What strikes me most about John's revelation of the

YOU OVERCOME THE FEAR OF PEOPLE WHEN THE FEAR OF GOD BECOMES YOUR PRIORITY.

The Bible says, “The fear of man lays a snare” (Prov. 29:25). Caring more about what people think than what God thinks is dangerous. It can get you into all kinds of trouble, and the enemy skillfully uses this weapon to keep you from fulfilling God’s purpose for your life. It can silence you when you should speak or paralyze you when you should take action. It affects far more Christians than you might think, but it doesn’t have to rule your life anymore. So how can you be freed from this trap?

You are released from the clutches of the fear of man when your greatest priority becomes the fear of God. The fear of God leads to wisdom and worship, and there are two ways it comes to you: it can be taught through the study of Scripture or “caught,” as it was on the day of Pentecost and during the Great Awakening. The ugly fear—fear of the devil—can be released as you step out in courage and choose to trust what God says despite what people or the enemy says. No longer can fear hold its power over you. In this book you will discover empowerment through the Holy Spirit to break free from the enemy’s trap and live boldly, unafraid to trust God and His promises.



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