

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

Church of Christ
371 W. Main Street
Greenwood, IN 46142
(317)888-8288

www.churchofchristatgreenwood.org

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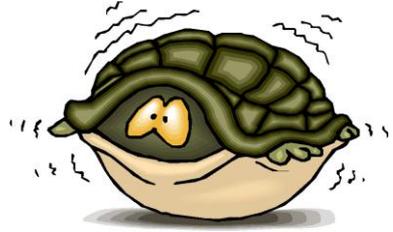
Fear and Fear

By Dee Bowman

Fear knows no boundaries. No matter who you are, how strong you are, or how reputed, there is something or someone you fear. Fear is part of the human psyche, part of what makes man what he is.

Fear takes different directions. It ranges from abject fright to total respect, and it has a part in all of man's activities. When we're small we fear lots of things. We don't like the dark. We don't like strange sounds in the night. We're afraid of some people who are bigger or more powerful than we are. We have lots of fears when we're little.

As we grow older the things we fear take on a new perspective, but the fears are just as real. We fear the possibility of failure, or we fear the rejection by our fellows, or we fear the testing of our abilities. Furthermore, as we mature, we begin to sense a new kind of fear, the need to



respect and regard certain people because of their power or reputation, or because we admire something special about them. We fear them in a different way, the way of respect. The things we fear, no matter the time in our lives, have essentially the same effect—they make us dread things that are dangerous or not in our best interests or, in the other direction, they make us respect and revere someone worthy of our admiration.

Then there's the fear of death. All men, no matter their station in life sooner or later come face to face with the fact of their own mortality. Man fears death more than perhaps any other thing in life. And with good reason. Dead is the pale rider, the deadly robber of life, the enemy of every person. It's

horrible to contemplate one's own demise. We dread it with a dread unlike any other. That's as it should be, for death spells the end of things here on the earth.

The Scriptures have a great deal to say about fear. They tell who and what to fear, and even how. For instance, we are told that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (**Prov. 1:7**). All that life has to offer—everything of any substance, that is—begins with respect for God. Knowing His will is the not only the beginning of knowledge, but it is the beginning place for a happy, profitable life. A lack thereof very often results in a shattered, unhappy life at the worst and an unsatisfied one at the best. We best begin at the beginning.

When Solomon had completed his grand experiment with life, he offered what he calls "the conclusion to the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." To respect God is to honor not only His person, but His commandments. His person is so connected to all that He said that it's actually impossible to honor Him without keeping His commandments. The wise man also concludes with another kind of fear to be

considered, for, says he, "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." (**Eccl. 12:13-14**). Now that's a good reason for fear, don't you think?

Worship is a vital part of reverential fear. Fear prompts worship by causing us to seek after the Creator, and His favor, so that He may imbue in us His wonderful grace. In fact, there is no such thing as acceptable worship without the foundation of godly fear. The Hebrew writer tells us that, "having received a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." We even show our respect for God when we fulfill the various roles He has assigned in our lives. Paul says, "submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God," (**Eph. 5:21**) after which he cites the various roles and their proper observance.

The coming of the day of judgment is reason for both fear and fear—fear and respect for God as not only the Judge—respect for Him as our Redeemer. Any time judgment is involved in a matter, fear is present—and should be. And nowhere is this more important than at the final judgment, for it is just that—final. That should send us scurrying as rapidly as possible toward proper deportment. The

Hebrew writer says it well: "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (**Heb. 10:26-27**).

Fear is good. Especially if it causes you to do what you ought, and be all you should. Let us exercise fear—both kinds.

The Door of Hope

By Randy Harshbarger

"And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope..." (**Hosea 2:5**). The story of Hosea is a sad one. It is a story of sin and apostasy. Hosea, the prophet of God, married a woman by the name of Gomer. In doing so, Hosea was obeying a commandment of the Lord. They had two sons and a daughter. Their names were special and provided lessons for the people of God. They were children of whoredom and Gomer was a daughter of the age. She had been influenced by the idolatry and immorality around her. It is out of this beginning that a story so shocking and horrifying was told by Hosea.

Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea. While sad, that story was not uncommon in an age of adultery

and fornication. The Lord told Hosea to take Gomer back; in doing so, he paid 15 pieces of silver for her. This was half-price for a slave. Hosea in effect, rescued Gomer from the auction block. Through this experience with Gomer, Hosea learned a lesson about God and His love for the apostate children of Israel. Through his own tear dimmed eyes, and with a broken heart, Hosea could then call Israel back from sin and ruin.

God suffers when His people are unfaithful. God does not delight in those who die in sin. All of earth's sorrows are upon the heart of God. Jesus Christ understands when we hurt (**Hebrews 4:14-16**). Since God is love (**1 John 4:7-8, 16**), He suffers when His "loved ones" suffer. God has chosen to love man and, when we sin, His heart is broken. Jesus wept for the people of Jerusalem (**Matthew 23:28**). Sin brings agony to the heart of God. He suffered because of what sin does to us.

Sin also defeats the purpose of God's love. Sin spoils, stains, and blinds man as he turns from God. If God could deal lightly with sin, He would not be God. To sin is to turn from what God desires of us as His children. When we sin, we must repent. To refuse is to say in effect that we do not care about God's efforts to save us.

God loves the sinner in spite of the sinner's sin. God hates sin, but it is in love that He appeals

to each one. Thank God for His loving kindness. In spite of Israel's sin, God still loved her.

The Lord wants us to be restored to Him. The ninety and nine are safe, but where is the one who is lost? God makes no compromise with sin. He longs for the sinner's return. God so loved to make it possible for one to be free of sin and as its condemning consequences. How hard it must have been for Hosea to take Gomer back. God loves us, but hates our sin!

Sin has no door of hope. Only the Lord can provide the way of salvation. Will we take it?

Back In London!

By Steve Niemeier

As you read this we should be back in London – worshipping with the saints in London and visiting the Biblical historical facts at the British Museum. When I mentioned this opportunity to the other three several months ago they were so excited! All of us started saving our personal funds to do this and having visited the museum before I knew it would be a good thing. The education one gets from a visit such as this is just amazing. Not to mention that after a long and grueling trip of teaching it is good for a short break to catch the breath before we come home.

We pray all is well and we look forward to being with you next Sunday!

Invite Night – Nov. 18st
“Do You Have An Achy
Breaky Heart?”

Our Next Gospel Meeting
March 3-8, 2013 David Lanius