

# The Root Cause of Americas Moral Collapse

by John Franklin

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*John Franklin's sermon addresses the root cause of America's moral collapse as a loss of the fear of God among its people.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 20:20, Numbers 14:18, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 36:1, Proverbs 8:13, Proverbs 16:6, Malachi 3:6, Matthew 5:13, Acts 10:34, Romans 3:18, Hebrews 4:13, Revelation 19:15

**Topics:** "Moral Accountability", "Fear Of God"

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## Description

John Franklin emphasizes the importance of fearing God in a society plagued by immorality and a lack of accountability. He highlights how the fear of God serves as a deterrent to sin, as seen in various biblical passages, and how a rediscovery of this truth can lead to a moral and spiritual turnaround in the nation. Franklin challenges Christians to evaluate their discipleship and question why so many continue in wickedness despite claiming to follow Christ. He points out the societal consequences of Christians losing their fear of God, leading to a deluge of immorality and a lack of distinction between believers and non-believers.

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## Transcript

I contended in the last article that the trial of President Clinton was not as much about his morality as it was about that of the nation's. I cited several biblical passages proving that God either orchestrates or allows circumstances to be such that they test the heart to reveal its condition before Him. Furthermore, I argued that the reason God does it is for our benefit, that we might come to our senses and wake up before He renders a final judgment against us.

And the need to wake up has never been clearer. The seething cauldron of national ills continues to periodically boil over in events like Littleton. The country deplores such shocking tragedies all the while persisting in stoking the fire with the wood of immorality, violence, and other such things that feed it. As outrageous, insensible, and incomprehensible as our national behavior may be, I am more shocked and dumbfounded by yet another fact. Did you know that George Barna has conducted polls and discovered that no significant difference exists between those who claim to be Christian and those who do not? When it comes to voting issues such as abortion, or lifestyles habits such as living together before marriage, both Christians and non-Christians believe and do the same things in basically the same proportions. Does this shock you? It ought to. How in the world can tens of millions name the name of Christ yet continue in wickedness? How can those who died to sin still live in it?

If a fringe element of a few thousand existed perhaps we could quietly ignore it, but when the vast majority of the country claims to be Christian, then integrity demands that we evaluate ourselves. We must ask the question, "What is it about the quality of our discipleship that allows wholesale numbers of professing Christians to comfortably cling to such abhorrent lifestyles and still believe that a holy God accepts them?" Could so many have so misunderstood the demands of Christ if we were adequately communicating the requirements of the gospel? If "you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free," and huge numbers continue in bondage to sin, then evidently we've failed to proclaim some part of the truth.

Nearly two years ago at the annual Denominational Prayer Leaders Network, several of us were sitting around a breakfast table listening to Henry Blackaby. He was talking about what it would take for a moral and spiritual turnaround in our land, and he noted that every great spiritual awakening rediscovered some lost truth about God. Unable to contain my curiosity I interjected a question, "What is it in our day?" Without the least hesitation he replied, "the fear of God."

After studying every verse in the Bible that addresses fear and its various forms, I heartily agree with that assessment. I discovered that the command to fear God is most commonly mentioned as a deterrent to sin. For example, when God entered into a covenant relationship with Israel in Exodus 20, He caused all of Mt. Sinai to quake and smoke while engulfing the top of it with thunder and lightning. In verse 19 the people were so petrified that they begged Moses to talk with God and not them "lest we die." Moses makes a very interesting statement in verse 20, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." Other Scriptures affirm this principle as well. "By fear of the Lord one departs from evil" (Pr 16:6) and "the fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (Pr 8:13) represent two among many. On the other hand, Scripture often speaks of those who continue in sin as having "no fear of God" (Ps 36:1, Rm 3:18.) Clearly God meant fearing our accountability to Him to be a great motivation for refraining or departing from sin.

The application for America is readily apparent. Her seared conscience and unbridled licentiousness could instantly be cured by a realistic vision of a holy God before whom we shall all give an account. Could anyone continue in vile immorality who really believed that God "by no means clears the guilty" (Num. 14:18) but in the Day of Judgment that Jesus "Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Rev. 19:15)?

Prior to the 20th century our forefathers both in the culture and the church understood the fear of God. As a consequence they often interpreted national calamities to be God's expression of His displeasure at their sin. In times of pestilence or war the Puritans always responded by searching their soul. Those of the 18th century also held this understanding, but perhaps no finer example of this prevailing belief exists than a quote from Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address in which he attributes the Civil War to God's judgment on America for the iniquity of slavery. "Fondly do we hope--ferently do we pray--that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether."

Unfortunately, the awareness of our accountability for sin has been lost from modern culture and as a consequence America does not fear God. The Bible has been barred from the formation of our children's character. Judges have torn down the Ten Commandments from courtroom walls. Prayer has been banned from public arenas. The role of Christian influence has been painstakingly blotted from the pages

of our history books. In days past ministers commanded respect because of who they represented, but now the United States seems to disparage anything Christian, unless of course it's a reinterpreted Christianity that panders to their version of tolerance. In place of respect exists a proactive course of disregarding and despising God - and that in light of all that He has done for us. No, America no longer fears God.

But I'm not sure she is to blame. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus noted that two defining characteristics of his followers are salt and light, agents of preservation and illumination to others. If the nation is not being preserved or illumined, especially when we are a supposed majority, then what is the problem? Was Jesus wrong or have we lost our flavor? Could the utter moral collapse of our society and the swiftness of it really have occurred in a country founded upon the character of tens of millions of salty, shining Christians? Obviously not, so what is the problem? Earlier I noted Barna's statistic that no significant difference exists in the lifestyles and beliefs of those in the church and those outside the church. Could the problem be that Christians don't fear God either? Could we too continue clinging to sin if we truly believed there would be an accountability for us? Would we feel secure with a knowledge that God does not show favoritism? Then the problem must be that we don't fear God any more than the world does.

This explains our societal deluge of immorality. The world's blatant pursuit of sin is only the logical conclusion of the church's acceptance of it. We have lost our saltiness and America rots as a result. No greater need exists today than to recapture this truth, so how do we do it?

In order to return we must first retrace our steps to find where we deviated from the paths of our forefathers. In the next issue, I will address the belief system that caused Christians to lose the fear of God. For now suffice it to say that the most critical need in our churches and culture today is to recapture a proper understanding of what it means to fear God.

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