

Holiness to Completion in the Fear of God

by Tim Conway

The Christian self-cleansing is the process of cleansing ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

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Scripture: Matthew 5:28, Matthew 10:28, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Hebrews 4:1, Hebrews 10:26-27, Hebrews 12:14, Hebrews 12:27-29

Topics: "Christian Holiness", "Fear Of God"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of self-cleansing for Christians based on 2 Corinthians 7:1. It highlights the need to cleanse ourselves from all defilement, pursue holiness, and fear God in the process. The speaker stresses the seriousness of sin, the necessity of amputation of sinful habits, and the fear of facing judgment if holiness is not pursued. The message urges believers to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, emphasizing the need for genuine repentance, obedience, and a life reflecting Christ's image.

Transcript

2 Corinthians 7.1 This is part 5 of an ongoing series dealing with the Christian self-cleansing. The Christian self-cleansing, that concept comes from this verse. 2 Corinthians 7.1 reads this way, Since we have these promises, promises that were articulated back in chapter 6, that we looked at in the first message in this series, but since we have these promises, beloved, here it is.

Let us. He's speaking to the Corinthians. He's not speaking to the whole world in general.

Let us. This is the Christian's cleansing. Let us cleanse ourselves.

That's where I get the Christian self-cleansing. Directly from Paul's words. Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

Now brethren, this is a series. I cannot say everything that needs to be said in one message. I'm going to emphasize something to you today, which obviously if you've been paying attention and you've participated in the series thus far, you know that other things have been said.

Other things have been brought out of Scripture that are necessary as we consider cleansing ourselves. The Christian self-cleansing. Pursuing holiness.

The perfection of holiness or the completion of holiness. I'm going to tell you something today. Some of you may not like this, but the thing that you always need to ask yourself is this.

Have I dreamt this up on my own? Or do I actually have a biblical basis for what I'm going to say? And I recognize right here at the beginning, I want to emphasize something today about the Christian self-cleansing, about bringing holiness to completion that needs to be said. But it's not all that needs to be said. We have four messages behind us already of other things that need to be said.

But I told you I really believed that we needed to look at the fear of God. You see that at the end. We are to bring holiness to completion in the fear of God.

So I want to deal with that today. Now, turn in your Bibles to Philippians 2. 2 Corinthians 7-1 is viewing our holiness from the negative perspective. In other words, get rid of the bad.

But of course, that's not it. That's not all. It's not just we get rid of the bad.

The bad is to be replaced by the good. So yes, we give up. Yes, we put off.

Yes, there are things we need to cleanse away. But the truth is that there is another side to this. So, certain verses in the Scripture look at it from the negative side.

Put off. And then other verses look at it from the positive side. Put on.

So we go to Philippians 2, v. 12. The reason that I want to go here is because this is another verse that has to do with our holiness being brought to completion and it emphasizes likewise fear. We may read right across these words very quickly, but if you pick up Philippians 2, v. 12 midway, work out your own salvation.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Now I want you to think about that verse.

Work out your salvation. That's not what we need to tell people who are lost. That's what we tell people who are saved.

Work out your own salvation. You say, I didn't think works played a part in Christianity. Of course they do.

Work out your own salvation. What does that mean? Work out your own salvation? Well, it doesn't mean that it's your salvation because it's of your making. All you have to do is go to v. 13 and you see whose making it is of.

It is God working in you. It's your salvation because it's happening to you. And you are to work out what God is doing in you.

That's the idea here. It's our own salvation inasmuch as God is doing the work to me. Brethren, is this statement erroneous and heretical when we call people to work out their salvation? Well, it isn't.

And the reason this teaching does not conflict... Because you know what we do. We go over to Ephesians 2, and v. 8-9, and we love to quote it, and it's good to quote, and we should quote it. We're saved by grace through faith.

Yes. And you go through there a little ways. And it's not according to our works.

We're not saved according to our works. And so, how do we square these two? Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, and yet at the same time, we're saved by grace through faith and that has nothing to do with our own works. How do we put those together? How do they fit? Well, it's because we're talking two totally different kinds of works.

You see, on the one hand, Paul has in mind works of the law that we might be able to come to God and present that somehow would make us right with God. Somehow reconcile us to God. Works of the law.

Works of the law whereby we would merit something with God. But the works that Paul's talking about in Philippians 2 are not works of the law. Because remember this, the law is not of faith.

The works in Philippians 2 are works of faith. Works that are not of faith are works of the law whereby you're seeking to merit God's approval based on your own performance. But, remember, faith works through love.

There's obedience. Remember that in Romans? The obedience of faith. Two different kinds of works.

There's an obedience of faith and there's a law-keeping. Now, the one, the law-keeping, that men do to try to be right with God. But there's no conflict here.

Because brethren, we know the truth. The truth is this, we don't tell lost sinners to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. We tell them in all their fear and trembling, you can come broken.

You can come afraid. You can come empty and bankrupt and depraved and filthy and vile. And you can come and He doesn't want anything.

Because He's done it all. And if you will rest on that substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on that cross for you, you'll find that God will forgive all your sins. He'll wipe away all the filth, all the guilt.

Brethren, that's the doctrine of justification. And we know that He justifies the ungodly. We don't have to have works to present to Him when we come to Him in this way.

We know what happens. We know that on that cross, He who knew no sin, the Perfect One, He came under the law and He kept it. And He pleased His Father.

And He was this perfect, spotless Lamb. And He was laid on the altar. And He was sacrificed in My place.

And God spent His wrath on Him that I deserved. He who knew no sin became sin. And you know what the truth is? Scripture teaches us by the obedience of one, by the obedience of Christ, the many are counted righteous.

And what happens is, God gives us the righteousness of God if we're in Christ, based on His merits. But you see, the thing is, Scripture teaches us that if this process of salvation is once initiated by God in our lives, we know what happens. We don't just believe and get justified.

But what? We're born again. We're new creations in Christ. And the Spirit is put within us.

And you know what the Spirit does? The Spirit works His works. And what does that look like? Well, He produces love within us and love is the fulfilling of the law. What happens is we hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Things happen within us. And you know what? Jesus Christ was offered up on that cross for more than just bearing the guilt of our sin. He says that He was offered up on that cross a people for His own possession.

Brethren, people who would be producing all these good works. He said, those who believe in Him, the works I do, you're going to do too, and greater works. You see, there is a place to work.

Why? Because if you tried to come to God in the beginning based on works of the law, that's not grace. The law is not of grace. The law is performance.

It's you do this and live. But brethren, the thing is, the grace of God, once we're saved and we come and we're accepted by the merits of Jesus Christ, the grace of God isn't done with us. The grace of God now is going to conform us to the very image of Christ.

These things are not in conflict with each other. Now, you start living your life? You start living your Christian life thinking, oh, my performance today is what is going to guarantee me acceptance with God. Now you're going back to the law.

Now you're headed back down the road of the Galatians. You don't want to go there. We live as much by faith today as we did in the very beginning.

But faith works through love. Faith works. Because God is at work in us.

Both to will and to do of His good pleasure. I mean, Paul says it, does he not? In the beginning, coming to Christ? I mean, he says indeed. He says, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of Christ Jesus my Lord.

And he says, for His sake, for His sake, He gave up all of it. You know what he counted it? Scubalon is the word. Our ESVs say rubbish.

It's dung. It's really a filthy word. Everything.

He counted everything as loss. He gave it all up. He suffered the loss of all things.

Because you know what he wanted? All he wanted was one thing. I want Christ and I want to be found in Him and I want to be found in having a righteousness that is not according to the law, but a righteousness which is by faith. A righteousness which is from God because of faith.

Brethren, that's the truth. But that faith and that salvation and that grace of God, it produces a people who God is going to conform to the image of His Son. And this is what we looked at last week.

The Spirit. The Lord the Spirit is at work as we behold the glory of the Lord. From one degree of glory to the next.

He is fashioning us. And we work that out. We participate.

We're actively involved in that. You hear these things. Holiness, purity.

How often do we hear things like this in Scripture? Strive for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. Or Colossians 3.5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you. Or Romans 6.12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies.

We get these kind of charges, these commandments. Over in Romans 6.13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness. 2 Corinthians 7.1 We know.

Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit. Here in Philippians 2.13 Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. And what is that? What does that mean in your life? Work out your salvation.

What does that look like? All you have to do is go to the next verse. Look at it. Philippians 2.13 For it's God who works in you.

And what's He working in me to produce? I mean, as I'm working out my salvation with fear and trembling, God's at work in me. He's at work on my will. Makes me willing.

And then I work. And notice this. Notice the work for His good pleasure.

Now brethren, if you think He's conforming us to the image of Christ. Do you remember when He speaks of His Son? What does He say about Him? This is My Son in whom I am well pleased. I'm well pleased.

You see brethren, as we become more like Him, the idea is our works please Him. That's the whole idea here. When you wash, cleanse away every defilement of body and spirit, you know what your aim is? His pleasure.

This is what it's about. It's about pleasing Him. It's about walking so as to have God looking at you and from one degree of glory to another, you are being fashioned into this image of His all-pleasing Son.

That's the issue here. Pleasing God. His good pleasure.

Now, that's the positive side. What are we doing with our life? We're filling it and we're willing and doing the things that please Him. That's the positive side.

The negative side? Cleanse defilement. But you know what in both? Paul tells us, do it with fear. Even fear and trembling.

Whether it's positive or negative, you see it there. 2 Corinthians 7.1, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. Philippians 2.12, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Now you know what, when I read this, a bunch of questions start swirling around in my mind. Like, do I fear God enough? Do I fear God? And I ask, as I'm working out my salvation, I mean, as I'm thinking about, as I think about, like, put to death therefore what is earthly in you. As I'm thinking through those things, is there an underlying fear that prompts this? Does the church have it? Is there a healthy fear of God in this church? And those are the kind of questions that I'm asking.

And what ought to motivate this kind of fear? I mean, what should we be afraid of? You know, fear is not random. In fact, all fear can really be defined by what we fear. What does it even mean to fear God? And should I take trembling? I mean, work out my salvation with fear and trembling.

Should I take trembling literally? If so, do I ever actually do that? And then, of course, in reformed circles, there's this very, I guess, popular concept of there being two types of fears. Are there really different kinds of fears? If so, what are they? How do they differ from each other? And if there are different forms of fear, which one should I have as I seek to work out my own salvation? Cleanse myself from every defilement.

How do these exhortations to fear fit with the other portions of God's Word that tell me not to fear? Right? I mean, don't we hear that perfect love casts out fear? We weren't given a spirit of fear.

Where do we go with all this? What do we do? And brethren, I can hear this. I can hear this. Some well-meaning preacher stands up.

Well-meaning, because I've heard this kind of thing. And what happens? They basically preach this. Well, there's two kinds of fear, so say many reformed preachers.

And by the way, this comes from Martin Luther. We sang his song. Two kinds.

You basically have this craven fear, which he called servile fear, which is basically the kind of fear that a slave would have of his slave master who has a whip and goes around and beats him. On the other hand, we would have what is called the filial fear. Now that comes from a Latin term that has the idea of a fear that a child would have for a parent.

Maybe more specifically, a father. And so, it's said this way. You basically have the kind of fear that a prisoner would have of his executioner or that a slave would have of his slave master.

That's one kind of fear. And over on the other hand, you have the kind of fear that a child would have for their father. And as Christians who have been forgiven, we certainly can't have this kind of fear.

We have to have this kind of fear. And so basically, it isn't really much of fear at all other than it's this kind of reverence or respect. Maybe they still allow that it's a sort of fear, but it's more the fear of falling out of fellowship or somehow disappointing a father who you dearly love and respect.

And so basically, these two are laid out and then it's very articulately, you know, this case is developed that, well, this kind of fear, the fear that a child has for the father, is the kind of fear that we should have as we seek to work out our salvation. And that's what the fear in trembling, it means with respect to God. That's what the fear of God basically means.

It means reverence to God. Now look, I'm not saying that we shouldn't have reverence for God. I'm just saying those two neat categories don't work.

And what they do is they lead to error. I think that there's a danger here that distinguishing these things that way can be very misleading. Brethren, let me tell you something.

I want to tell you why I think that this is bad. Because I think when you preach that way, you know what you end up with? The whole church walks out of here and nobody is stirred to fear. Oh, that's nice.

We're supposed to have reverence for God. And we walk out and nobody really has been stirred to fear God the way that perhaps Isaiah feared God when he saw the Lord high and lifted up in His temple and the train filled the place. I guarantee that if he walked out and he heard some of the sermons preached today, he'd probably have a thing or two to add to that sermon.

Brethren, let me tell you, I'm not saying this just because I have an opinion on this matter and I've looked at what Luther did and I said, you know, in my opinion, I don't like that. Brethren, I think there's a problem. I'm not going to say that there isn't one kind of fear, but I don't think there are two different kinds of fear.

I think fear is fear. It's on a scale. It can be more, it can be less.

Sometimes the idea is maybe there's anxiety. We have these low-level fears. Sometimes we can mount it up to the terror of a situation.

But brethren, I think in the end, what really defines fear is not that there's different kinds of fear. There may be different levels of fear. But I think the real issue is there are different things we fear.

I think every fear needs to be defined, not by different sorts or different genre of fears, but by what we fear. You see, in Scripture, there are things that are good to fear and bad to fear. And it always comes down to what it is that you fear.

That's what you need to look at. When you're afraid of something, you need to ask yourself, what is it that I'm afraid of? What is it that I'm really afraid of? Is Paul simply saying, what you should be really afraid of, Christian, is that you do disrespect to God? Is that his only meaning? And that you fall out of fellowship and God may be grieved. That is something to fear.

But is that it? Is that all that Scripture would say to us? Brethren, what I want you to do is turn to Matthew 5.28. Because I want you to see and feel. Now look, brethren, I know there are other verses. I know there are other verses you can think of.

And we don't have time to look at every single verse. We don't have time to do an exhaustive study right now. My point is this, I want to show you that when it comes to the fear that ought to motivate us as we work out our salvation, there may be more to it than just simply this nice, clean-cut category of filial love, so-called.

Brethren, I want you to get a feel for what Jesus Christ Himself said we ought to fear. Matthew 5.28, but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. And brethren, you know as well as I do, massive amounts of Christians, so-called, professing Christians, can do things akin to this.

Look at a woman in lust after her, and then very quickly soothe the conscience with this fact that, oh, but I'm not in danger. I've been saved by the grace of God through faith. And so I'm safe.

And you say, well, shouldn't we think that? Shouldn't the doctrine of justification give us that kind of security? Yes and no. And I say that based on Scripture, and I'm going to show you. I'm not making this up.

Jesus does not... You remember, this is the Sermon on the Mount. And I know there was a whole crowd there, but you know who was right there in front of Him? He's looking in the very eyes of His disciples front row. And He doesn't say this.

Well, guys, don't worry about it. If you basically live your life lusting after women, don't worry. What I'm going to that cross to do is sufficient, and you'll be okay in the end.

So just put away your fears. Do you notice He does not say that? In fact, let's notice very carefully what He does say. Everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

If your right eye causes you to sin... Now brethren, you have to think here. The Christian self-cleansing, remember, what is it we're doing? We're cleansing ourselves of every defilement of body and spirit. Do

you see that reality right here in this verse? I hope you do.

The illustration is graphic, but it's the same truth. Notice, if your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it's better... Notice, two alternatives here.

It's better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. You see what the problem is? Jesus does not tell us as Christians that there's never a place to have a good, sober estimate of what not cleansing yourselves of every defilement will lead to. He wants you to have a sober estimate if holiness is not being worked out in your life.

And He does not give you any doctrine of justification to go hide under. Because Scripture is very clear that if your holiness right now at this time is not a reality, then any security you're putting in justification is a sham. Because if your holiness, if your present ongoing sanctification is not a reality, it is proof positive that your justification is not a reality.

That's why we get many of the things said to us in Scripture that are said to us, which I will point out more of them in a second. But I want you to see this verse 30. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.

For it's better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. Brethren, our Lord's instruction and warning here captures the very essence of self-cleansing and working out our salvation in fear and trembling. Do you see why we should fear and tremble? Do you think Jesus would have us to have a very healthy contemplation of the hell that awaits people who go on living lustful lives? Brethren, I know this goes on.

We get people who habitually do not break this grasp of pornography. And the weeks and the months go by. And they seek to calm their fears with the doctrine of justification.

Oh, listen to me. Jesus is not playing games here. And this doesn't just come down to lust.

This comes down to pride, to unbelief, to being cowards, to being liars, to being greedy, to being in any way unholy. If from one degree of glory to the next, we're not being transformed into the image of Jesus Christ by the Spirit, by God who's at work in us to will and to do, and we're not working out that salvation. Brethren, you see, you want to work this out with fear and trembling.

Because the reality is, God throws sinners into hell all the time who lived life in the church, and they thought themselves protected by the doctrine of justification, by the doctrine of the fact that all their sins were forgiven by the merits of Jesus Christ on the cross, and yet their lives were not holy, and without holiness you will not see the Lord. Scripture is very straightforward on this. If you are living a life of bondage to sin, and that is not... Brethren, I'm not talking perfection, but I'm talking about a direction of holiness whereby we are more and more becoming like Christ, where there is a working out, where there is a putting to death by the Spirit the deeds of the body, where there is warfare, there is amputation, where you are actually cleansing yourselves.

Things are being put off. Yes, you are striving. There's failures and there's falls, but you have a hunger inside to be like Christ, and you're battling, and you're embracing that cross.

It's not just something you run to, it's this protective little cover in light of all the wickedness and ungodliness that you just go on in your life, habitually drinking sin like water. But brethren, your life is not

what it used to be. And you really are hungering after, oh, you want holiness.

And you know your failures, but you're clinging to Christ and in the power of that, you're in His Word. Like Scott said, you're coming here, you want to be under the sun of the preaching, you want the influence of the brethren, you want to please God. You're confessing your sin when you're falling.

I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about those who, there's a habitual pattern of sin and you just can't break it. It's got you in bondage.

Listen, brethren, this is no light matter. Don't try to soothe your conscience and go hide under the doctrine of justification if your life is a pattern that indicates that there has been no spiritual amputation. This is serious stuff.

And you see, Jesus does not come along. And He doesn't say this, well, I say to you, everybody who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart, and well, yes, you need to do some amputation, but don't fear. I mean, yes, fear God, but all that means is reverence.

It has nothing to do with the consequences of your sin. It has nothing to do with punishment. You see, brethren, that's why those two categories, those two neat categories of a servile fear and a filial fear, listen, I'm not saying that we should not love God.

Jesus Christ would be the first one to tell us that the greatest commandment of all is to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. But He's also the same One that told us that if you've got a lust problem and you're not working out and cleansing in your life and by the power of the Spirit of God putting that thing to death, you're going to go to hell. And that is to put it just like He's putting it here.

You are going to go to hell. And you don't want to try to dodge that by saying, well, you know, I just hope it's going to work out in the end. I just hope that somehow Jesus is going to be wrong.

I just hope somehow God's going to make an exception with me. Brethren, I'll tell you what you ought to fear. You ought to fear the non-partiality of God.

You see, we're partial. We're partial to ourselves. You know, in all of our lost life, we basically spent our lives worshiping ourselves.

We're very humanistic in our thinking. And then we get saved, and that's one of the biggest idols that has to be killed. Remember, die to yourself.

You've got to carry your cross daily. You've got to follow Christ. I mean, He's dying to self.

That's hard. I mean, that's at the root of our sanctification. Dying to self.

And you see, we tend to love ourselves. And we tend to think very highly of ourselves. And we tend to think, well, we don't want to go to hell and we wouldn't throw ourselves into hell.

But Jesus, Paul, God Himself, they lead us to believe over and over that God is not partial. You know what that means? That means if you prove to be somebody that has lust, who hasn't amputated it, you're going to go to hell. And it doesn't matter who you are.

It doesn't matter that you are you. Brethren, you know I'm not making this up. You know that comes from this verse.

Brethren, I'm not saying that you work this out in your own strength by the Spirit. We do this in faith, clinging desperately to the cross of Jesus Christ for resurrection power, for the power of the Spirit of God to be worked out in our life. But we do it.

We do work out our salvation. We do cleanse ourselves from every defilement of the body and spirit. We do this in the strength of God.

But brethren, we've got to do it. We do it clinging to the cross. And if that amputation is not happening, you're not making the radical amputations in your life to be holy.

Brethren, it's not Tim Conway's words. It's Jesus' words. And I wouldn't be faithful to your souls to stand up here and tell you that this life of self-cleansing is kind of optional.

It's not. It's either self-cleansing or hell. You say, but wait, that sounds too much like we're saved by words.

Brethren, I'm just telling you how Jesus speaks. And you know Scripture speaks this way over and over and over. Why? Because God speaks to us as people who haven't made it to the end yet who need to persevere to the end.

I know God knows who His own are. But He often speaks to us from our vantage point. And you see, we haven't persevered.

You will be saved if you endure to the end. But we haven't gotten to the end. And you know the reality is, many people that sit in the churches, they do end up going to hell because they don't do exactly what's described right here.

You see, yes, we can look behind the scenes and say this, if God is really working in you to do and to will, or willing to do, you certainly will amputate. He will put the will in you to amputate. But see, we're to work that out with fear and trembling.

Because it's a fearful thing, brethren. And from our vantage point, we have warnings over and over and over in Scripture that if you don't... Paul says it to the Corinthians, don't be deceived. If you practice unrighteousness, you will not inherit the Kingdom.

Jesus says it, does He not? He says not everybody is going to inherit the Kingdom. Not everybody's going to enter the Kingdom. He says it's only those who do the will of His Father who's in Heaven.

You see, my will being conformed to His will, my works being conformed to His good pleasure, it's mandatory. And it's mandatory because grace will always take us down this road. But we work it out.

And brethren, remember how we work it out. There's a promise in the New Covenant that says this, God will put His fear within us so that we will not depart from Him. You see, a healthy fear of hell, that's good.

That's good. Brethren, that is good. Let's look at another verse.

How about Matthew 10.25? Brethren, you understand what I'm saying. I'm not telling you to fear that God is going to break His promises. I'm not telling you to fear that if you trust Christ, you might find it to be an

uncertain foundation at some point.

I'm not telling you that. I'm not telling you that. I'm telling you to fear that you don't end up like many who have a profession of Christianity, but they deny the power thereof.

That's what I'm telling you to fear. I'm telling you to fear unholy Christianity. I'm telling you to fear being deceived.

Isn't that amazing how often? Don't be deceived! The unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom. Be afraid of being deceived. Listen to this, Matthew 10.25. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher and the servant like his master.

If they called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household? So have no fear of them. You see, our fears can be defined by what we fear. If you fear people who threaten you or call you names like they called Jesus, that's a bad fear.

Don't fear them. For nothing is covered that will not be revealed or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light.

What you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear Him.

Brethren, Matthew 10 is very specific instruction to His disciples and what they were going to face in this world. Sheep among wolves. He's not saying this to the lost rabble out there.

He's looking at church leaders. Future church leaders. And He says this to them.

Don't fear those who can kill your body. He doesn't say, you know, just have reverence for God. We should have reverence for God.

But what is that reverence built on? You see what He tells us? What is the thing that He wants us to know about the God whom we're supposed to fear? Look at it. Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Wow! He doesn't say just fear Him who is your Father. He says to His disciples, fear Him who throws people into hell. Fear Him.

Brethren, as we go about living our Christian life, you need to recognize something. The sins, let's think about it. Guys, you look at a woman you lust after.

Do you know how many multitudes of men are burning in the flames of hell right now for that sin? How many are perishing in eternal flames who have done less than you have? And I want you to think about this. How many men and women and children are in hell right now who made professions of faith and they were thrown into hell for these very things? Because they had a form of godliness, but they denied the power thereof. They were Christians in name, but in reality, they were dead like Sardis.

Brethren, this is a serious thing. And God is no respecter of persons. And if you get to the end and you come face-to-face with God and you had a kind of Christianity where you banked everything on this free forgiveness, you banked everything on the doctrine of justification, but there was no reality of the power of God in your life for holiness.

God is no respecter of persons. You know what He says? Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness. If your life can be described as a pattern, habitually as a practice, as being unlawful, you're undone.

You're undone. Brethren, do you know what we're going to be judged with in the end? Not faith. You see, faith works.

And you're going to be judged by your works. And Jesus said, well done, good and faithful servant. He's gathering all the nations before Him.

He's got His sheep on His right. And I was hungry and you fed Me. He doesn't get into the negatives about what they put off.

It's more about the positives, what they put on. Brethren, it's about your works in the end. It's about your life in the end.

That's how you're going to be judged, because it's going to show whether your Christianity was real or not. Brethren, the thing about what I'm telling you right now is you know this is true. You know it is.

You know how many warnings there are in Scripture against people who drift and people who willfully sin after they come to a knowledge of the truth. What I'm telling you is meant to put a fear in you. You see, this is God wanting to put this fear in you.

God throws people into hell who persist in lawlessness. Listen to this. Hebrews 12.27. Somebody's alarm is going out.

It's not. Brethren, quickly, notice Hebrews 12.27. Hebrews 12.27. Now, brethren, let's read this. But I want you to kind of camp here in Hebrews for a moment.

This phrase yet once more indicates the removal of things that are shaken, that is, things that have been made, in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Now notice this, verse 28. Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship.

Now notice this. You see, somebody would say, yeah, here's the filial love. And it is.

This is very respectful, reverent, holy awe. But notice, the author of Hebrews, notice where he takes us with reverence and awe. For our God is a consuming fire.

Now he doesn't say, for our God is a gracious Father. Now he could say that. He could.

But he doesn't. Do you know who Hebrews is written to? You remember the bigger scope of this book? First verse, Hebrews chapter 2. We need to pay some serious, careful attention, lest we drift from the things that we have heard. Brethren, you know what? Hebrews is written to some people that are in danger of going back.

It's people who are drooping. It's people who are in danger of drift. And what do you say? Oh yeah, we need to be people that are about worship.

We need to be people that have a holy awe, reverence, respect. Why? Because God is a consuming fire. You remember Nadab and Abihu? They walked in His presence with unholiness, offered strange fire,

consumed.

You remember the followers of Korah? They were consumed. You remember those of Sodom and Gomorrah? They were consumed. You remember those soldiers who came from the King of Israel to apprehend Elijah? Two occasions, consumed.

And you can think of other accounts. The children of Israel in the wilderness, the fire of God fell upon them. Brethren, He's speaking to Hebrew Christians, and He says, I want you to remember something.

I want you to remember something. Our God is a consuming fire, and He tells them back in Hebrews chapter 10. He says, if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

Do you know what Scripture would have you fear? It would have you fear not trusting God. It would have you fear not reverencing the blood of Jesus Christ. It would have you fear going back to the vomit, to the pig's mud.

Brethren, fear it. And you know what? People do fall out. You should fear sin, because people begin to play with it, and they begin to sear their consciences, and next thing you know, they make shipwreck of the faith, and they die, and they are in hell.

And look, you can say, I don't think that's going to happen to me, but I'll warn you, God is no respecter of persons, and if it does happen to you, you will perish. You will. I am not trying to shake anybody's confidence in what Jesus Christ has done on the cross.

What I am doing is I am tagging on that fear that you see, the authors of Scripture want you to feel. Back in Hebrews 4.1, Therefore, while the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us fear, lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. I'll tell you this, brethren, you better fear, lest you fail to reach the rest that's at the end.

Brethren, what does it look like? Is coming to God filthy, dirty, with nothing to offer Him, embracing what Christ has done in your stead, to reconcile you to God. And in the power of that cross, in the power of that resurrection, in the power of the Spirit who is given to true believers, you follow Christ. You follow Him into a path of holiness, dying to self, and carrying your cross.

And brethren, fear it. Fear if that is not the case. Do you hear the cries of the damned? Hear it again.

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out, throw it away, it's better for you to lose one of your members, than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And we should be thinking that way. Brethren, as you go through your week, look at the idols in your life.

Look at the sin in your life. Do you not hear the Word of God? If you willfully sin after hearing the truth, you're in a very dangerous place. You're in one of the most glorious places, as Scott was telling us.

But you can also be in one of the most dangerous places. Because you sit before men who preach the truth from this Bible, God's going to hold you accountable. And you have a calling on your life as a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, to cleanse yourselves from every defilement.

Remember, we're moving towards Christlikeness, the perfection of Christlikeness. Everything's got to go. Everything that's bad has to go.

You can make no room for any sin. Unless you get casual. You see, this is healthy.

It is healthy. Because it will blow the casualty out of your life when it comes to sin. Very healthy.

Very healthy to recognize. God's no respecter of people. Very healthy for me to recognize.

It doesn't matter if I'm a pastor of a church. Very healthy for me to recognize. If Tim Conway goes on dabbling with sin, searing my conscience, willfully sinning, not amputating and gouging out when it needs to be done, being expedient, confessing that sin, turning from it, walking constantly in a spirit of genuine repentance.

Brethren, I recognize I'm no one special in the sight of God. It doesn't matter that I've stood in this pulpit. In fact, brethren, it will condemn me all the worse.

Be not many teachers. There's a stricter judgment. And I tell you, if I've stood up here and I have to recognize that reality, it ought to put a sober fear in us.

To whom much is given, much is required. And I'm not just saying that of me standing in this pulpit. You folks have been exposed to good preachers.

In this church, on the Internet, various media resources, you have been exposed to lots of truth. And I'll tell you what, if you have despised the grace, the Gospel, the Christ, His blood, and you have gone on kissing your idols, Scripture says, kiss the Son, lest He be angry. And if you have not, and you've gone on kissing your idols, He's going to be coming.

And He will be angry. And there will be no escape. Brethren, as we move forward, let us do so, work out our salvation with true fear and trembling.

True fear and trembling. Brethren, I'll say it again, God does not in any way want you to fear Him ever breaking any of His promises to you. He does not want you to fear that.

Fear not of that. His promises are absolutely certain. And you don't have to fear if your only hope and trust is Jesus Christ and you're clinging to Him.

You know you have nothing to offer God. Only by Him are you reconciled. Your only hope is in Him.

Your only hope is in that substitutionary work that He did on that cross. That is your hope. The fact that He came out of the grave, that is your hope.

You clinging to Christ, listen, you will not be ashamed. And He doesn't want you to fear ever being ashamed if that is your hope. Not at all.

Brethren, not at all. Brethren, what we should fear is this. We should fear not being saved if the God-given evidences of salvation found in this book are not a reality in your life.

And one of the evidences given to us in Scripture is that if you are saved, the Word of Jesus Christ has a place in you. If you say you know Him and you are not keeping His commandments, Scripture says it. You are a liar.

And the truth is not in you. And you should fear that. Listen, fear it.

If your Christianity does not measure up to biblical Christianity, fear that. And the biblical Christianity is a holy people for His own possession. Zealous of good works.

Who are working out their salvation. Who are cleansing themselves. Who are gouging out.

Who are amputating. Just chop that thing off. It's radical.

Strive to enter in. Going to be many. Many that will hope to have entered in.

Brethren, it's all out. By the Spirit. You've got to put to death.

Fear it if you're living according to the flesh. Scripture says you live according to the flesh. You're going to die.

You better fear that. You better fear the God who says those words and who is the God who throws both body and soul into hell. You better fear that.

Brethren, this is serious. It's life and death. I know it might make some of you feel uncomfortable.

But brethren, look, this fear aspect of our sanctification is critical. We've got to have a healthy dose of this. And this is one message.

Like I say, there's a lot of other things that need to be said. But this needed to be said. We don't want to be flippant about the God whom we serve.

Brethren, I have this picture. See, if we could just see, all brethren, if the veil could be pulled back and we saw right at this moment how many people God was casting into hell. Right at this moment.

And if you know your Bibles, you know it's true. Casting sinners into hell. Few there be that find life.

He's throwing many into hell right now. Brethren, if you could just imagine this like it's one big long line and you're in that line and you're watching God and He's taking people out of the line and many are being thrown into the fire. One after another after another.

The rare exception is one is being escorted into glory. But you see the vast majority into hellfire, into hellfire, into hellfire. Are you getting a little nervous in that line? Brethren, I'll tell you this, that's worthy of a healthy fear.

And if we could really see and if you knew how many of those people were being cast into the flame who were religious people and had sat in the church maybe even in our church. Brethren, I'll tell you what that ought to make you do. It ought to make you cling to the cross of Christ.

Tight! It ought to make you cling to what He's done. Cling tight! And brethren, in that faith, that faith should work itself out in love. Love to God and love for your fellow man.

Cling to that cross. Oh brethren, cling to that cross. That is your only hope.

You have no other hope. Jesus Christ and Him crucified. That is your hope.

My hope. Brethren, let us trust. Let us run.

Let us cleanse in the fear of God. God help us. Father, we do.

We ask You, help us. We ask You in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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