

The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom

By Paris Reidhead*

Proverbs chapter nine in verse 10 tells us that “*The* fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.” “Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.”

Let us bow in prayer. Father, we ask that tonight as we go into this missionary conference we may sense Thy presence. Remind us that missions is in Thy heart. This is the primary commitment, and concern, and burden of the Godhead. We get this message that Thy love, and Thy grace, and mercy in Christ out to those for whom He died. Show us again Our Father that we don’t understand Thy book, unless we realize it’s the unfolding of Thy great, eternal missionary purpose. Give to us also Father, the realization that the Church is the missionary society. This is a meeting of the local missionary society now. Father, we have missionary service agencies, but grant that we will always recognize what they are, what their role is, and realize that it’s only the local church whom Thou hast given this task of sending those who will carry the message of Thy Grace. To that end bless us now, and in these three days that follow that will come so quickly. Let everything be done that will bring honor, and glory, and praise to the Lord Jesus Christ for we ask it in His precious, holy Name. Amen.

I have the joy and privilege of being associated as a close friend, colleague with A. W. Tozer¹ during the two, or three years that he was writing that very, very important book that I trust you have, or will get entitled “The Knowledge Of The Holy.” I recall him saying to me that, “This is probably the greatest contribution that I can make to the body of Christ.” On one occasion, for he had a premonition of his rather early death, ... On one occasion he said, “God has promised me that I’m going to live long enough to see the book published, and know that it’s been received,” and he did, but only a few months after that.

It’s so important for us to understand that “the fear of the Lord is indeed the beginning of wisdom.” Now, what is fear? The word in the Hebrew, in the Greek implies reverence, but we’ve lost the sense of the meaning of reverence. I remember one saying that it is ... Reverence of God, a Godly fear is a reverential trust.

Some years ago I was driving in North Carolina. There were well marked limits to speed on the highway. I was anxious to get back home, and so my foot got heavy. After a while I heard that sound that I’m grateful to say is not too familiar, but it’s always frightening. That siren, and that light. In those days the State Highway Police used the red turret light. My children described it as being the surrey with the cherry on top. Well, the surrey with the cherry on top was up next to me, and the light was shining at me, and the siren was howling, and the officer was pointing. Now I want to ask you do you think that what I felt was reverential trust?

I revered him as the State Police commissioned by the governor to keep people like me from breaking law. He was going to do his duty. There wasn’t any question in my mind about that. He was ... I trusted him implicitly to do his duty, and I revered him, but what I felt didn’t seem to me to either be reverence or trust. It was plain ol’ scared.

A fear of the Lord is that, reverencing who He is, and what He will do, and it’s the beginning of wisdom. Now friend if you are aware of the fact that God is God. You haven’t started to get wise yet. Fear of the Lord is that kind of awareness that God is God.

Now, the difficulty we have is to understand the nature of man. I’d like to ask you to turn to Romans the third chapter, and I’d like to begin reading with the 9th verse. Because this describes the kind of people that God sent me to, and it’s the 18th verse that will give to you some insight as to what we find out about those whom we call Gentiles ... Paul calls Gentiles. Another word for Gentiles was pagan or heathen.

“What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written, There’s none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and

1 Aiden Wilson Tozer (1897-1963) Pastor and Author, Christian and Missionary Alliance Magazine Editor

misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known:" Here's a summary: "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Rom. 3:9-18)

My wife and I were the first two missionaries in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, then called Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, now known as Sudan. Which is west of Ethiopia, south of Egypt, North of Kenya and Uganda, and west of Chad straddling the Nile river for about 1800 miles. The Sudan is as large as the eastern ... The half of the United, or the part of the United States east of the Mississippi, so you're talking about a rather large country in terms of square miles. We were the first in that country to have training from the Summer Institute of Linguistics. When they found out that we'd had that training the civil secretary asked the mission if they would second my wife and myself to the government to do a survey. They had been wanting to get someone to survey an area in which there were no missions working, and in which there was no education.

We were put under the direction of the Deputy Director of Education in charge of all education activity in the Southern Sudan. The Deputy Director of Education met with us. He drew out on the map an area and he said, "Apart from the Sudan Interior Missions station at Chali Field, we have no insight at all, no understanding of how many tribes are there, what languages they speak, whether or not those languages are related, and if one or more of them might be useful as an educational medium. We need ... Can we use one of these languages? Can we ... Must we use Arabic, or should we use English? These are the problems we want you to help us answer."

I organized a trip to go down into the area, and in the course of that time I went into a village of a very small tribe. As near as we could ascertain there were only about 300 people in the entire tribe, but a separate language. In that area we found 10 tribes. We found some with as few as 50 people, but keeping alive that culture, and that language. In some cases, we found as much as a 95% incidence of Syphilis, or Gonorrhoea sometimes together. Both of them Spirochete diseases.

We'd gone ... I'd gone into this village. I was welcomed there. I called the people around using an Arabic speaker who knew the language as my translator. I proceeded to try to find out what the people knew. I picked up a stick that was there, branch of a tree with some leaves on it, and I said, "Who made it?" Immediately the answer came, "Onenamesh." "Where is Onenamesh?" They said, "He lives at the head of the river up there in Ethiopia in the sky." "What has he made?" They said, "He's made everything." They had a name for the creator, and then they had a name for Satan: the evil one. They said, "Onenamesh is good." Then they just said ... Described the other one who was there who was evil. They ... I proceeded to ask if they ... What was sin? What was wrong? What pleased Onenamesh? They said, "Oh, he's very angry against lying." "Who told you?" "Our stomachs tell us." "Who ... What else?" "Oh, he's very angry against murder. He's angry against stealing. He's angry with people, because they don't say what's true." Who told them? Where'd they find it out? Sounded like somebody'd been there giving them a daily vacation bible school teaching them the Ten Commandments, but I was the first one ever to come into the village with a Bible. I was the first one, so they said, to ever mention the name of Jesus there. To our understanding, we could find that there'd never been anyone through there that had named the name of Christ, or taught, open the Word of God. Nor had they had contact with Muslims other than as traders, through whom they might go to get some cloth or some salt.

I found out that they knew a great deal more than my professors in school had taught me to expect. They knew the name of God. They knew that God was holy. They knew that God didn't bother them when they were alive. He was going to punish them when they died, because they'd been doing things that were bad, and that they'd been lying, and stealing, and murdering. They had described all of this without my having to open the book before them.

The next after I'd spent this time with them, and I won't take you further in it, but the next day I saw the chief go by, and he had a chicken by the feet. He was walking rather rapidly. I asked him to stop and visit. He said, "Oh no, no, no. I've got to go to the witch doctor." "Why are you going to the witch doctor?" "Because my grain is not doing well, and I've got to make a sacrifice to the evil spirit, so that I will have grain to feed my goats, and I'll be able to have food for the family." "Why don't you sacrifice it to Onenamesh?" He laughed. He said, "Onenamesh doesn't want chickens. At least, we don't know that He wants chickens, and He never bothers us." It's the one they ... The one I would call, you would know as Satan. "He's the one that bothers us. He's the one that ruins our crops, and kills our goats, makes our children sick. We have to take all the chickens we've got to him. We can't waste them on Onenamesh."

Now, I want to read the 18th verse again. "The way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." They knew Him, they knew all about Him, but there was no fear of God. Now to confirm this I want you to go to Romans chapter one, verse 32. Previously from verse 29 through 31 we're told about all the things which are described there. The words in the 32nd verse, "Who knowing the judgement of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death." Though we have a list up above of things which those who do them are worthy of death it then declares, "They not only do the same, but they have pleasure in them that do them." "No fear of God before their eyes, they know the judgement of God, and they have their pleasure with those who are under judgement with them."

In the first verse of the second chapter, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things, but we are sure that the judgement of God is according to truth against them that commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou should escape the judgement of God?" (Rom. 2:1-3) "No fear of God before their eyes." No escape.

Judging others, and it sounds to me like the media, doesn't to you in the present time? They are so quick to morally pontificate. Doing identically the same things. Judging those whom they think are now vulnerable, and yet "no fear of God before their eyes." I can expect that from the worldly, Godless media. I saw a sign the other day on a bumper. It said, "Let's exchange the media for the hostages." I thought that there was wisdom that should be observed. At any rate, the media seems to take such great pleasure in indicting those who have named the name of Christ, and who had failure in their lives. I don't object to that. The thing that I find so tragic is Christianity that loses its fear of God. I don't expect anything else from the world, but I do think we have a right to expect more from the Church of Jesus Christ.

There was a time back in the middle of the 19th century when there was an advent of something we've come to call higher criticism: modernism. We've known it as liberalism. It attacked the veracity of the Word of God. It attacked the deity of Christ. It attacked the necessity, the virgin birth, the holy sinless life, the atoning death, the resurrection of Christ. Said it was all myth.

There were another company of people who believed in the authority of the Word of God, and the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the victory of Calvary, and in His resurrection. These people became known as those who held to, adhered to the fundamentals. The people who that stood at that time in the beginning of that conflict had an experience with God. They met God. They'd been born of God, and they were simply articulating a list of the central truths. It's called fundamental truth. They had a real relationship with God. Their children came along. Some of them met God, but many of them adhered to the fundamentals. Their grandchildren, and now their great-grandchildren, and their great-great-grandchildren have been led to believe if they give an intellectual assent to a list of essential truths they can assume that they're born of God. What we have done has been to fill the churches of America with people that have nothing more than an intellectual assent to a plan of salvation, and have never been born of God.

This isn't new. In 1950, living in Greenville, South Carolina there was a ... In Spartanburg 35 miles to the east was a South Carolina Southern Baptist Convention, and the main speaker was Robert G. Lee from the great Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. The next day after Dr. Lee had spoken on this subject, three people who'd been present in that meeting came to see me, because they knew the concern I had. I had expressed it in their presence. This is what Dr. Lee said, "For 40 years I've been a close observer of what is going on in our Southern Baptist Churches. I am convinced that no more than one out of ten of our people have any experiential knowledge of the new birth." And the preachers went, "Ohhh," and he said, "Brethren, if I am in error I've put it too high. If the facts were really known probably far less than 10%."

Andrew Blackwood in his book, about 20 years ago, called Contemporary Evangelical Thought, said he was convinced that probably no more than one out of ten of the members of the Evangelical Churches of American knew anything experiential about the new birth. A. W. Tozer writing on one occasion, and speaking on many said, "That in his opinion, based on his close association with evangelicals" and he said, "including my own fellowship, I seriously question if any more than one out of ten of our people know anything about the new birth." "Out of the mouth of two or three witnesses." (Matt. 18:16)

I'm not here to confirm, or to correct what they said. I'm only here to say that there are a multitude of people in that community called Christian, Evangelical Christian, that have never understood anything about the fear of God. Because when

they are told that sin is a congenital disease that they'll be ... Only because of its inheritance factor, and because all they need to do is nod their head, or say, "uh-huh," in a half a dozen places, and walk somewhere, and sign something, and that they're now qualified to take their place among the company of the redeemed, you can expect that there will be no fear of God before their eyes. They've never understood that when God wants to bring a cannibal out of ... Then change him into a Christian, or a savage and turn him into a saint there's some things he does.

In this same tribe, that same day I was learning about what God had made, and what the people knew about him. I thought that because they ... I said to one of them, "You say it's wrong to lie, and steal, and murder?" "Yes." "How do you know?" "Our stomach tells us." That's where we say heart, but they said stomach. We had one tribe nearby when we translated that verse, "Be not afraid. It is I," because they put the seat of personality in another organ the way the verse came out was. "Don't get a shiver in your liver. It's only me." We have to recognize that organs have been associated with the seat of personality in different cultures. I said, "How do you know it's wrong?" "Because my stomach ..." Have you ever ... Because I said to one man, "Have you ever committed murder?" He said ... Looked at me. He squinted. He said, "Do you work with the government?" I said, "No. I don't work for the government." He said, "Do you tell the government what I say?" "No. I don't tell 'em what you say." He said, "Yes, I've killed people."

Now because they knew they were sinners, they knew they had sinned, and they knew what sin was I thought they were ready to be converted. I said, "Would you like ... I've got a message from Onenamesh. I've got a message from Him. He loves you. He gave His Son to die for you, and if you'll accept Him, He won't punish you when you die, but you can go to be with Him. Would you like that?" About four of them understood what I was saying and they said, "Yeah. We would. We would."

They got ... I got the idea. I said, "Come over here." I went into the inquiry room. That was over under the next tree, and we sat down there. I started to talk just to them. Finally I got around to giving them a prayer, and taught 'em what to say, and they prayed it. Then I had believed ... I only spent a little bit more time with them, but boy when I got back to my tent I want you to know I wrote a letter to the church, Calvary Baptist Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan that supported us, because I wanted them to know what a good investment they were makin'. We'd only been in that tribe one day, we had three converts ... Four converts.

Well, about two and a half months later I was back there, and I found that my ... They called themselves Jesus Boys. I said, "Where are ..." "Oh you mean the Jesus Boys. We'll call 'em." One of 'em came. He was staggering drunk. They'd just been to a beer feast. They were still Jesus Boys. They still went to the witch doctor, they still went to the demon dance, they still went to the beer feast, and they were Jesus Boys. I get they'd done everything the people that I had "led to the Lord back in the states," had been expected to do. Only difficulty back in the states they slept between sheets, ate with silver, didn't have their beer feast, or pig dances, so here they were. I realized then I had to go into the scripture, and find out what God wants to do when he turns a cannibal into a Christian.

Back in Indiana we had a ... I was pastor of a country church during the time I was at Taylor University. Every Sunday I'd go out there they'd have us eat our lunch in a different place. That was a day of meat stamps. It was nice to have a good meal with ... You didn't have to pay with stamps. Now, I never asked what they did about it, but they always had plenty of everything. They had a quaint saying. They'd make that schedule out three or four months, five months, six months in advance. I remember one day I was at the door greeting the people, and there were two older men down at the side, and one of 'em said to the other, "Who's eatin' the preacher today?" That was their of sayin', "What family is taking the pastor, and his wife home for dinner?"

When I got among these people I'll tell ya that, "eatin' the preacher," had a double meaning, because they had a reputation of having had salty flesh. They liked it, and some of their neighbors that didn't go home at night ended up in a stew. Not with their wives, but with the people whose territory they crossed. I figured that I better find out. I read in the scripture, "Take heed lest you be devoured one of another," but in that of eating there that I didn't think Paul intended to convey.

As I went back to the Word I find that there's three things that God does when he wants to bring a cannibal to Christ. First he puts a sample of his Grace up next to him: to live Christ. Then he puts an intercessor up next him to intercede, legally represent him, and then someone to witness him. Maybe the same one in all three offices, but often it isn't. Then the first thing that God

does is to awaken the sinner. He expects the witness to use the appropriate scriptures, and then having been awakened, he's to use scriptures that bring that sinner to realization of his crime. Ah, now we're getting down to the fear of the Lord.

"When He, the Spirit of Truth, has come He will convict the world of sin." (John 16:8) What is that? It's sin. What is it? I use the word disparagingly. People think sin is a congenital disease. No. Sin is a high treasonous crime against Almighty God. It's treason. It's rebellion. It's anarchy. It's transgression, and the sinner is an enemy. He's not prepared for Grace until God the Holy Ghost has brought him to conviction, and the reason we don't see more people saved is because we don't see more people lost. No one is going to be saved until they've discovered their lostness. Yet we've almost lost the skill of preaching to give to sin the character of transgression, and of course prepare sinners for Grace. If I had my way, and I don't, and it's probably wise and good I don't have it, but I would declare a moratorium on the public preaching of the plan of salvation in America for 12 months, and demand the preaching of the holiness of God, and the righteousness of God, and the law of God until sinners began to cry out, "What must I do to be saved?"

We gospel hard to a generation of sinners telling them how to be saved, long before they discover they have any need to be saved. We've filled our churches with the unconverted who have no fear of God before their eyes. What a tragedy it is, but you expected more. I came to the baptism as a Holy Spirit back in 1953. There wasn't any charismatic movement then. It was just a hungry heart that sought God, and wanted him. I was a Baptist ... Member of a Baptist church. I was deputation secretary for the Sudan Interior Mission with a national ministry, and missionary meetings.

Then I became hungry for God, and I was filled with the Spirit of God, and He gave me several gifts of the Spirit including the gift of tongues. My friend, I got the order of the boot. I've almost decided to have minted a cowboy boot, and put on the lapel. I discovered there's a lot of people that are members of the Royal Order of the Boot, and I was one of them. Kicked out of the church, and kicked out of the mission society. Why? Because God had met my heart in and of Himself.

Then there came a ... I paid a terrific price. One of the best known names in America had a business man leave Wheaton, Illinois, and go around the world to warn the mission societies to have nothing to do with Paris Reidhead. It was like a tree falling that was heard around the world. I didn't deserve that attention. I wasn't worthy of it, but I got more free advertising than people would be able to pay for. I didn't particularly feel thrilled about it, but I did find out I had to give thanks to the Lord for it, because He said give Him thanks always for all things. I did it though I could have got along without it. If you don't mind my saying so.

Then came the charismatic movement. Oh, I was thrilled. The burden of my heart in seeking God was that I might have power for witnessing ministry. When I went to Africa as a dispensationalist trained here in this city my bible was the size of a Sunday School quarterly. Ephesians, Philippians, part of Colossians, all the juicy parts had been assigned to somebody else, but that was really all that was ours: the church epistles. Everything else belonged to the old testament, the future testament, the Jews, the tribulation. Somebody else had it. Now I'm out with people that have never seen a white man, never heard the name of Jesus, never been told ... I could have said Christ was born 40 years ago, and died yesterday, and they wouldn't have known the difference. They had no idea of history.

I remember going before God saying, "I think it's a dirty trick Lord. You're sending me out here to finish Paul's work, and You took away all the equipment You gave Paul. I don't see what's right and fair about that. If I've got to do Paul's job why couldn't you have left Paul's equipment around?" Because I've been told we didn't need mighty signs and wonders anymore, because we had the book, but it was the book that told me about them. Here I'm being told they're not for us, they're not for today, we don't need them. My heart was hungry. Why? That I might be affected in my witness to the lost.

Now I'm hearing about people being baptized. I'm hearing about a great movement. I'm hearing about full gospel business, and I'm expecting that what Christ said when he left that, "After that the Holy Ghost has come upon you. You shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, Judea, Sumeria, and the outermost part of the Earth," and it never happened. (Acts 1:8) Never happened. I talked to one of the business leaders, and I said, "What's happened? Where is this movement? What's gone wrong with it?" Here's what the Word says, "When the Holy Ghost is come upon you, you will be witnesses."

We had our international convention in Singapore last year. There were 2500 of us, but that's not missions. That's not missions. Missions is when you go, and you live with the people, and you see the gospel planted, and the church planted, and

the people built up, and established in the Lord. A few people making a trip to a beautiful hotel, I don't care where it is in the world, only ones that get any witness there are the elevator operators. I was in a hotel, and the elevator operator said, "Oh, boy. I'm glad you're not like them." I never told her. I just wanted to find out what one of "them" were. She said, "I've been saved four times today already. Then I went to ... First one that came I got mad that they were butting in." My boss said, "Look. When these folks are here, the only ones they've got nerve enough to talk to are the elevator operators because their captives." And so she said, "Just go along with 'em. Say yes, yes, yes, and if you say yes often enough, five or six times, then they'll leave you alone." She said, "I've been saved four times already today."

No, that's not missions. That's not missions. It's going in where the people are, and learning their language, and living with them, and serving them. That's missions. I thought I was going to see it, and I didn't see it. My heart ached. They said, "Are you going to become part of this movement?," and I said, "No! Not until they become biblical." "What do you mean biblical?" I said, "Not until they get the fear of God before their eyes, and they understand that Christ said, 'If you love me, you will keep my commandment, and my commandment says you go teach all nations all that I've given you to teach them.'" "When the Holy Ghost has come upon you, you'll receive power that you can be witnesses both in Jerusalem, Judea, Sumeria, and the outermost part of the Earth." I said, "When they become biblical."

I despaired that there was a full gospel church, a charismatic church anywhere in the country. Add a missionary burden, and then God in his sweet Grace gave me an invitation from a church here in Minneapolis called Soulfire Calvary Temple. Harry Conn² said, "Go. They've got a missionary vision, and they've got a missionary burden." I came here, and I discovered that there was a church that had the world upon its heart. I began to realize that maybe God had a possibility, and I dare to believe, I dare to believe that the great untapped resource for mission is in the charismatic full gospel churches.

The fundamentalists who have nothing, but the Word written in the book, and the fear of God, afraid to disobey the Word, have carried the heavy hand of missions for 100 years in Britain and America. Because the Word said, "Go," the people went. It said, "Give," and they gave, because of fear of God, and because of love for the Lord, because of a desire to serve Him, but often without power. Without any power. Then God gave this movement ... We have a list of 5600 independent, charismatic full gospel churches in America. Did you know there were that many? 5600. Several of them being formed every week. Many of them every month now.

One of the most ... Oh, so few have a burden for the world. A burden for the world. No fear of God. No fear of God. I've met a young man whose name you might recognize. Had left where he was, was in our area, his mother had been a great blessing to me. I knew his step-sister, so I asked for a meeting with him, and we had lunch together. He came as my guest. We sat there and I said, "Peter, now that you're free, the one thing that I've noticed in your ministry that is missing is a real understanding of missions." I said, "If you're willing to go to the field, and minister the Word, I will be responsible with some others to raise money, so that you can go to the field as many months as you want." He said, "Oh, no. I'm not interested in missions." I said, "What?" "I'm not interested in missions. I don't believe that missions are relevant for us today. I think that everything that God is doing is right here in America." My heart was sick, but I knew where he got it. Knew what it was. I've been crying out to God now for some 20 years that there would be a breakthrough among the full gospel churches, the charismatic churches, and that they would have, but I know what it is. They must have a fear of God. A fear of God.

Let me illustrate it. Would you turn please to Acts chapter two? Acts chapter two, and I want you to read verses 41 to 43. Acts 2, 41 to 43. I want you to see it, because I believe the Spirit of God wants to say something to us tonight, and in this conference. I believe He has something that is important that He wants us to have. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: the same day they were added unto them about 3000 souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Now listen "And fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles." All was that way when people begin to fear God, and reverence His word, and obey what He's revealed. And begins to work.

I will confirm it out of a second text. Will you turn to Acts chapter five, verse five. Here we're dealing with Ananias and Sapphira, who had lied to the Holy Ghost. Verse five, "And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost, and

² Harry Conn (1914 – 2001) The founder and president of Men for Missions and a frequent teacher and conference speaker.

great fear came on all them that heard these things.” Then in verse 11 and 12, “And great fear came upon all the church” when Sapphira fell down, “and upon as many as heard these things, and by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people.” When the people of God begin to fear God, God is released to work.

What we must have more than any other single thing in this day, and in this time is the baptism of the knowledge of the holy. The nature of God, the wonder, the grandeur, the truth of God, and the authority of the Word. Is it going to come? I would submit to you that holy fear of God has been, and ever will be one the prime motivating forces in missions. You’re going to stand before the judgement seat of Christ. You’re going to give an account of the deeds you’ve done in the body. You’re going to give an account of what you’ve done with your time, your talent, your money. You’re going to explain to the Lord Jesus why our obedience wasn’t consistent with our worship. We sing, “Oh how I love thee. Oh how I love thee.” We do mean it. Except He said, “If you love me keep my commandments.” (John 14:15) His commandment was that we should “go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever He’s commanded us.” (Matt. 28:19,20)

We have to explain what we’ve done with our talent, with our money. I say the fear of the Judgement seat of Christ. The Bema ought to be enough to motivate us. The love of Christ hasn’t. “The love of Christ,” said Paul, “Constrains me not to live for myself, but to Him who died for me and rose again.” (2 Cor. 5:14,15) Apparently we’ve become so enamored with the love of Christ we’ve forgotten that He has gone. We must see Him again as John saw Him. Every time I read the first chapter of Revelation I’m brought down on my face. John on the island of Patmos surrounded by believers that have come to be with him to have a Bible conference. He’s the last one. He knew Jesus. He leaned on his bosom, and he remember the good old days when he walked with the Lord. You see he’s too pally with the memory. We read, “I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard a voice behind me.” He was lookin’ back. He was lookin’ somewhere else. He said, “I turned, and I saw one like unto the Son of God. His head like wool shining like gold. His face the brightness of the sun. Gird about the paps with a golden girdle. Out of his mouth went a two-edged sword.” He said, “When I saw this Jesus glorified, exalted, reigning on the throne, I who leaned on his bosom fell at his feet as dead.” (Rev. 1:14-17) I believe he would’ve died, but he said, “I heard a voice, heard Him saying unto me, ‘Arise and stand upon thy feet.’” If John who lived with Him, and walked with Him needed a revelation of who the Lord Jesus Christ is, it is reigning authority as the Sovereign head of the church. How much more do we? If John could fall at His feet as dead, how much more ought we? Dead to ourselves, and our plans, our aspirations, our hopes, our programs, Lord Jesus what wilt thou have me do?

Missions begin with a revelation of who God is. Who the Lord Jesus Christ is. “And great fear fell upon all. Mighty signs and wonders were wrought by the hands of the apostles.” There’s a relationship between our worship, our fear of God, our trust of Him, our recognition of it, what He’s free to do. I see for this church a great future, a great ministry, and I told Mrs. Peterson that I’d been praying since I learned of our brothers going into the presence of the Lord not for a continuation of ministry, but a beginning of ministry. A beginning.

I sense the day with the anointing upon Pastor Peterson, and the sense of his presence in the service that there’s a time of new beginning. But if there is one message that’s got to go from this pulpit, and the pulpits of the land until it’s penetrated all of the sister churches who share this truth concerning the fullness of God’s Spirit, it is the holiness of God, the righteousness of God, the nature of God until great fear comes upon the hearts of all that love and worship him. Might it begin tonight, and in these days as God draws us on our faces before him. Let us pray.

* Reference such as: Delivered at Bethany Fellowship, Minneapolis, MN, by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.