

We finish chapter 32 this week where Christian and Hopeful have been crossing through the Enchanted Ground. Their conversation is spiritually convicting where among other things, we hear the testimonies of;

- Hopeful – the bona fide pilgrim who is genuinely aware of his sinfulness, that Jesus is the only mediator between him and God and that his righteousness is only through faith in Jesus Christ not by his own works.
- Ignorance – the bona fide heretic who is a counterfeit and believes that his human works together with Jesus’ sanctification will gradually work his justification; and today we read about
- Temporary – the bona fide apostate.

The departure of Ignorance brings these questions of his spiritual state to our pilgrims. The questions are these; in the lives of men and women like Ignorance, is there ever true conviction of sin, its consequences and is there any fear about their dangerous spiritual condition? Good questions aren’t they. **Proverbs 9:10** says; “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*” Also **Proverbs 1:7** says; “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*” The answer is yes, there is a conviction of sin and the fear of God’s judgement does come, but because of spiritual ignorance and the way it will affect their own self-righteousness, the way they live and how they’ll need to change, but they don’t understand that to feel this way is good, so they try to stifle it. In doing so, the pleasures of this world choke the conviction and fear and they return to their former state. I would suggest this; it’s better to have the fear of God in your life now while you have the opportunity to repent while alive on this earth, than the fear of eternal judgement when you die and realize that you’ve rejected Christ Jesus and are eternally condemned to hell. The fear of God is good! It provokes you to repent! Don’t try to quench the conviction of sin and the fear of God that is at work in your life at this moment. It’s meant for your eternal good. Sin calls for mercy and repentance, not just being afraid of the judgement to come. Do you remember back at the beginning in the City of Destruction that Christian ‘feared’ that his burden would deliver him to hell? It was the fear of God that was bringing Godly sorrow and repentance to him to flee his sinful life.

What is the right kind of fear in your life?

- a) It triggers serious thinking about what sin is. The prophet Isaiah says it this way after having a vision of God in heaven; [Isaiah 6:1-5](#) “*...woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*”
- b) It compels a sinner to turn to Jesus and to repent. The two criminals who were crucified with Jesus, the one repents and the other curses him, [Luke 23:39-43](#)
- c) It keeps your heart tender to the conviction of the Holy Spirit; **Proverbs 8:13**, “*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.*”
- d) You will not want to grieve the Holy Spirit, [Ephesians 4:25-32](#), “*...and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom were you sealed for the day of redemption.*”

Why do you try to suppress fear?

- a) You think it comes from the devil. Yes, we know the devil continually tries to get us to be fearful, but God’s fear is a holy fear that seeks His mercy. **Proverbs 10:27**; “*The fear of the Lord prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened.*” **Proverbs 19:23**; “*The fear of the Lord leads to life, and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; He will not be visited with evil.*”
- b) You think it goes contrary to faith. Not so. Humble and reverent submission to the fear of God will build your faith!
- c) You think you need to be positive, confident, and self-sufficient and that fearing God is too humiliating. Or you think that you’re too manly or too womanly to be reverential to the fear of God.

d) It will depreciate your own self-righteousness, self-esteem, self-holiness and all the other self-interests you have within yourself. Holy fear would sour all of these good, comfy, warm fuzzy feelings you have about yourself.

So in suppressing and turning away from the fear of the Lord, a person again will have their own self-worth with no conviction of sin. Remember Hopeful was from the town of Vanity Fair, where the belief was that fundamental Christianity was damaging to the human psyche, so instead liberalism, humanism, and broad-minded religion was given way to. As Christian and Faithful preached the gospel of Christ Jesus, light came, the fear of God was revealed and experienced like never before. Unfortunately because there was no repentance, they killed Faithful and Christian escaped. In essence, suppressing fear will produce an artificial outcome that will only require constant damage control for fear that the truth concerning God, sin and grace will shine a holy light on you and expose reality. **John 8:32** says it simply; *“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* The sinful nature of man loves darkness rather than light as it says in John 3:19 and he wants people to see his heart as pure and wholesome; in essence, he wants his unholiness to be seen as holy. That can’t happen. If you call out for God’s mercy, He will freely give it to you, but if you willfully reject and turn aside, He too will reject you and turn aside as it says in **Romans 1:18-32**; *“...because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened...therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness...”* I urge you, do not run from or ignore the fear of God!

Temporary - the bona fide apostate. He would be likened to the parable of the sower that Jesus talks about in **Matthew 13:5-6, 20-21**; *“Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth, and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.”* *“But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.”* Temporary too had an initial conviction of sin and of God’s judgement (like Ignorance). He appeared to be on track as there were tears and he was heartily going on his own pilgrimage speaking many a time with Faithful and Hopeful. But wouldn’t you know it, a man by the name of Save-self was sent by the enemy to rob the seed that had been planted and hence, he was scorched and fell away. Save-self was a humanist who believed you could save yourself, that you didn’t need Jesus Christ.

Here are some reasons why Temporary backslid, maybe they apply to you too.

- a) His sin caused him to be spiritually nauseous at his life, so he yields to change and starts on his pursuit of Christianity but after the spiritual nausea subsides (because the soil of his heart was hard) he decided his life wasn’t as bad as he thought and hence like it says in **Proverbs 26:11**; *“As a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.”* Repulsive isn’t it! The twinge of guilt is more upsetting than the cause of it! His mind was not changed.
- b) The fear of man (not of God) ensnared him. He again was governed by self-interest.
- c) Out of pride and not wanting to look foolish for the sake of Christ, he abandoned his pursuit of Christianity
- d) Because the thought of hell is so disturbing, to flee this conviction instead of yielding to it and repent of sin, he abandons the way of the cross, gives way to his former life and he rids himself of the terror and wrath of God by hardening his heart.

You see my friend; you need to realize that God has given you a free will. You’re not a robot. You can choose life or death, heaven or hell. The Holy Spirit is a gentleman who will not coerce you, manipulate you or push you to against your free will. Every person can heed or reject the prompting of Holy Spirit. As we’ve read, he is here to convict us of sin, of righteousness and the judgment to come. Temporary had all this happening to him. So what’s the outcome of one then who turns back?

- a) Genuine thoughts of serving God are willfully displaced – but family, careers, sports, amusements and all other things to distract are implemented.

- b) Prayer, bible studies and reading good Christian literature or watching good Christian movies, curbing of fleshly appetites are neglected – for fear of looking too fanatical!
- c) Healthy Christian fellowship is kept at bay although they may continue in going to church; anything more intimate which requires participation diminishes, together with tithes, giving, showing up on time and support of outreach.
- d) They develop a critical and hypocritical spirit towards those who are sold out for God. They will say anything to justify their turning aside.
- e) They prefer to associate again with the godless people they left behind
- f) Secular social activities replace Sunday fellowship and church life
- g) They amuse themselves in finding other hypocrites to justify themselves
- h) Secret pursuit of carnal and immoral interests transpire and maybe with a hint of conscience still there, they seek to justify their unfaithfulness rather than repent of it
- i) They concede to the flesh while trying to rationalize their lifestyle claiming liberty under grace.
- j) Their rebellious, bold godlessness reveals their hard heart and their lifestyle is openly materialistic. The lusts of the world that they vomited up during a time of true conviction to sin, is now licked up again as if it were never upsetting.

Do you identify with any of the characters and their bona fide stance on life? I truly pray that the conviction of the Holy Spirit would draw you to holy repentance, fleeing the things of the world, the flesh and the devil and you would come to know Jesus Christ personally as your Lord and Saviour. Repent today while there is still breath left in you to do so. You don't want to stand before Almighty God saying you never knew. Today you know. Choose Jesus Christ.

