

Monday, MAY 10, 2010

Since then, we know what it is to fear the Lord . . .
2 Cor. 5:11

The fear of the Lord is not discussed all that much and I believe that many times it is explained as reverence and awe.

That is true to an extent. But if God meant reverence or awe, wouldn't He have guided the writers of Scripture to use one of those words? But He uses the Greek word phobos; which Thayer defines as:

fear, dread, terror--that which strikes terror

Solomon tells us that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). This is the same Greek word as Paul uses.

In Hebrews 12:28 God tells us to worship Him with reverence and awe, but follows that in verse 29 reminding us that He is a consuming fire. Could it be that we are to worship God in reverence and awe and fear Him as well? C. S. Lewis puts it quite well in the "Chronicles of Narnia" when he presents that Aslan is not a tame lion, as those who opposed him found out.

God is not a tame God. He is not unpredictable, but it is imperative that we have a fear of Him. Paul indicates that if we know God we will fear Him and we will know what it means to fear Him. This statement directly follows Paul telling us that we will each stand before the judgment seat of Christ. It directly precedes the statement that the fear of the Lord causes us to try to persuade men.

God is to be feared. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31 KJV). We do not fear the judgment of God if we have come to a saving knowledge of Him, but we do know what it means to fear God. A person who does not know God does not understand the fear of the Lord the way we do, so in a way, we need to fear God for them.

Does your neighbor know what it means to fear the Lord? If he or she did, wouldn't they give their life to Him? Are you afraid enough of the Lord's righteous judgment that you are trying to persuade others to avoid the wrath that you know is coming to them?

Certainly God loves, but He does not wink at any sin—ever. It brings His wrath, and God's wrath is to be feared, because the sentence is eternal (Matthew 10:28).

Family Discussion Question: How can the fear of the Lord move me to persuade others?

Tuesday, MAY 11, 2010

Please read 2 Corinthians 4:16-6:2. If you have time this week, you may want to read the entire letter!

It is always important to remember that the Bible was not written to us. It was written for us, but not to us. It was written to a certain people at a certain point in time for a certain purpose. In order to clearly understand a passage we must try to determine as best we can the people and the circumstances at the time of the writing. Then, with the Spirit's guidance, we can interpret the passage. After interpreting the passage, we can then begin to seek God for the application for our lives. Many times we can be tempted to skip these steps and just read as though it were written to us. That is not a wise way to look at God's Word.

In the case of the passage we are looking at, we are reminded that Paul is writing to a church that he established. These are people who have come to a saving knowledge of Christ through his message, so he is speaking to them as their "pastor". In 11:28-29 he explains how seriously he takes this.

Through this passage he is revealing the purpose of this letter. He is using himself as an example of how someone who has given his or her life to Christ should live and be motivated. He is explaining to them why he presented the Gospel the way he did and why it should be trusted—because the message is from God directly through Paul, His servant. He wants them to know that even though many others are coming in and telling them otherwise, that he can be trusted because of Christ. He is revealing his motives, since they are unable to understand them.

In so expressing this, he is revealing that this should be - will be the result in each person who truly knows Christ. You can hear the heart of Paul as he longs for those he loves to remember and respond (6:11-13, 7:2-7).

Try to imagine that you are a person who lives in Corinth in 55 AD. The pressures of that culture are causing you to doubt the truth that you have been told and to doubt the one who brought the truth to you. You are so focused on the pressures of this world that you cannot even think straight about the future. You are trying to fit in and to make it. You are trying to see to it that your kids get all the advantages that this new culture has to offer. How does this new thing called "church" fit in with that?

Family Discussion Question: What was Paul saying to the church of Corinth?

Wednesday, MAY 12, 2010

Can you see the similarities between living in Corinth in 55 AD and living in Southeast Wisconsin in 2010? God has not changed and neither have Satan's tactics.

Since the first temptation in the garden he has been focused on having us dwell on the temporary and satisfy immediate needs without the concern of consequence. Our flesh and self have worked that into an art form. Credit cards and instant gratification go hand in hand and have shaped our view and our perspective. I believe that Paul is really trying to help the Corinth church see through eternal lenses, and I believe that is the chief application for us today.

Each day we are faced with the "happiness" we can have by satisfying the temporary. It takes great resolve and focus and a renewing of the mind in order to see that real joy comes from focusing our sights on the eternal. Would you please read Matthew 6:25-34? Especially look at verses 32 and 33. Jesus is telling those listening to the Sermon on the Mount to have an eternal perspective. In verse 33 He makes it clear that the only way to get the temporary in a way that brings glory to God is to focus on the eternal. In verse 32 He makes it clear that pagans (those who do not worship the true God) are wrapped up in the temporary. They have the order reversed. They are so focused on getting what they "need" that they miss the best and only way to get it.

So, we need to ask ourselves that question. What order are you living? What do you seek first? It becomes a question of trust and it reveals your real perspective.

If you are not worshipping God fully, you will overly focus on the temporary. God has an eternal plan for every person's life. You are part of that plan. If you are busy focusing on the pursuit of gratification of the temporary you will miss the eternal plan. It will affect our decisions as parents and grandparents as well.

Many times we quote Jeremiah 29:11. Do we apply it correctly? What is God's plan for your life? Is it possible you are living out a much smaller plan than that which He has for you? His passion is that a lost world would come to know Him. He reaches to them through those of us who have been reborn and refocused with an eternal perspective and priority.

Family Discussion Question: What are some practical steps I can take to readjust my perspective?

Thursday, MAY 13, 2010

One of the ways that Paul helps us know if our perspective is changing is by the way we view Christ and others. We have been changed to bring change. We bring a new perspective. The old way of looking at the world is gone, we see through spiritual eyes. We see this in the life of Jesus. He came as the Word - the visible expression of the thoughts of God (John 1:1). Repeatedly we find in the gospels that He is misunderstood. They are hungry; He is the Bread of Life (John 6:35). They are thirsty; He is the Living Water (John 4:10). They fear death; He is the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25). Throughout the Gospels we see that people view Christ as someone who can meet their immediate physical needs. When He steps in and begins to reveal how He can meet their eternal needs, He is misunderstood and rejected. It demonstrates that we may all want a Savior but we do not necessarily want to be saved. John 8:31-59 reveals how many were so focused on the physical that they did not even see God was with them, the very God they claimed to serve.

When we come to a saving knowledge of Christ we see Him differently and we see those He loves differently - and by the way, He loves everyone. If we do not, then we need to ask what may be missing in our relationship with Him.

Jesus is God.

Jesus came to be the answer to our problem and He still is - when viewed correctly. Sin is your problem. It brings you all the pain you experience. It causes you all the angst in your life. It is the root of any of your dissatisfaction. In heaven, when sin is finally defeated and removed from our presence, we will be in complete joy. Only Jesus can move you out of sin in your life. Only Jesus can allow you to see that the "attacks" you may get from others many times is just the pain of sin in their life lashing out for help! You see them from an eternal viewpoint and you long to allow Christ in you be a healing agent for their pain.

Only Jesus can place an eternal perspective in your heart that burns with a passion for the lost of the world that overtakes your thoughts and cares. You do not see people at face value, you see them as unique creations of God, highly prized and valued by Him. You mourn with their pain and you see how harassed they are by the enemy.

Family Discussion Question: Are there any ways that I regard Christ or others from a worldly point of view?

Friday, MAY 14, 2010

Our final thought as we look at this passage and an eternal perspective is whether or not we have received the grace of God in vain.

Most times 6:1 is not included with Chapter 5. It would seem it is a link between the thoughts of the passage we have been looking at and the next. As such, it needs to be included. Paul has explained that we have become the very righteousness of God. In order for that to happen, Christ had to receive your sin on His body. He remained sinless, but He carried your sin to the punishment it deserved, so that God could credit His righteousness to you. He did not have to do this. How valuable is the righteousness of God to you? How does having it change your life?

If I asked one of your friends or family members to describe the righteousness of God as they see it in you, what would that description look like? What about a friend you have who does not know Christ?

If you have read many of my Digging Deeper or if you have listened to me very much, you know that I ask questions—a lot of questions. Almost all of these are questions I am asking myself first. I feel it is important to ask these questions to test ourselves and each other. Psalm 139:23-24 take a whole new meaning when accompanied with questions like these. Is there any way that I am wasting the righteousness that Jesus died to credit to me? God credited this righteousness to us so that we could use it to persuade people to turn to Him. It is not for you to hoard and use as a get out of jail free card. It is to make a genuine change in your attitudes, your thoughts, your desires and your motives.

The righteousness of God has been given to you to move you into the intimate relationship with God that you have been created for and that your spirit cries out for!!! It is your joy—His joy complete in you (John 15:11).

The righteousness of God has an eternal perspective of things and people. The righteousness of God is the only thing that restores our relationship to God. What do you have that is of greater value than the righteousness of God?

Family Discussion Question: How can the righteousness of God envelop my whole being?



Pastor Chuck Cervenka

MAY 10 - 14, 2010

THE CALL

HIS PASSION FOR ALL

AN ETERNAL

PERSPECTIVE (PART 2)

It seems very common today to be confronted with the need to “think green”. Waste has become a problem for us as people consume more and many items are made to be disposable. If we are not living with an eternal perspective we can have a wasteful view of grace, considering it to be disposable. But is it? What would it mean for us to “think green” when it comes to the grace of God?



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