



## *When Fears and Doubts Crowd In*

I heard an evangelist once say, “If you are not absolutely sure you have been saved, if you don’t know the day and the hour, then you aren’t truly saved.” I know of nothing in Scripture that even hints that. We don’t say to a child, “If you can’t remember the day when you were born, then you weren’t really born.”

Probably every Christian, at one time or another, has doubted whether or not he was truly a Christian.

I trusted the Lord Jesus when I was four years old, sitting on the side arm of an easy chair in the living room of the little house my Daddy built on Seminary Hill in Fort Worth, Texas. I was listening to Daddy preach on the radio, and that day I remembered all the bad stuff I did. I knew Jesus had died for me, so He could forgive me all that. That day I took Jesus as my Savior. I received His gift of everlasting life. I was so very glad..

To this day I remember the sweet emotion of relief of being friends with Jesus my Savior. My big sister Grace didn’t think I really got saved. “You’re supposed to cry when you get saved, and you laughed.” I didn’t care. I knew Jesus was my Savior, and I just kept smiling!



I grew up in a wonderful, godly home. We read the Bible together at the breakfast table every single day. Mother taught us Scripture. Because Daddy was an evangelist, we often heard him preach every night, week after week.

And for years I never doubted that I was forgiven for my sins and that I was going to Heaven to see Jesus, my best friend—until my teens. Then I went through weeks of terrible doubting. What if I was just a hypocrite, not really sorry enough for my sins? What if I didn't really have enough faith? Obviously I didn't have enough faith or I wouldn't be in this mess!

One morning, walking to high school, I said, "Lord, I've done every thing I know to do to get saved. If I go to Hell, it will be Your fault because I've done everything I know to do."

And the Lord so sweetly answered my trembling heart that morning, "Good, Libby, you finally understand! I'm the One responsible for bringing you home, and I'm going to do it. Relax and enjoy the ride."

All that to say that certainly you will sometimes have doubts and fears. The song, Amazing Grace, says,

***'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
and grace my fears relieved.***

It is absolutely right for our hearts to fear a Holy God. It is His grace that teaches us how just and righteous He is. But His grace, shown to us in Jesus, then takes all those fears away.

## **1. People in Scripture were nearly always terrified when they encountered the presence of God.**

What did Adam and Eve, who had such a sweet and intimate relationship with their Creator, do when they'd disobeyed Him and eaten of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil? (Genesis 3:8).

What did the prophet Isaiah, seeing God in the temple, wail? (Isaiah 6:5).

What did Manoah say when an angel of the Lord came to tell him about Samson's birth? (Judges 13:22).

When the angel Gabriel came to the virgin Mary to tell her that she would bear a Son, Jesus, what did he first have to reassure her? (Luke 1:30)

Again and again in the Gospels, you'll hear Jesus say, "Be not afraid" (Matt. 14:27; 17:7; Mark 6:50; John 6:20). It is the human reaction when the eternal God reveals Himself to us shabby mortals.

## **2. God has commanded us to fear Him.**

Matthew 10:28-31 says.

*And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill*

*the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

*Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.*

*But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”*

Notice here, that right after God tells me I am to fear Him, He adds the sweet assurance, “Do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

What does it mean to fear God? We might use words like “honor,” “be in awe,” “reverence.” But there is also the connotation of just plain fear. The Greek word is often translated “dread.”

How are we to worship God in His holiness? (Psalm 96:9)

Because God is our sovereign King, what are all of us to do? (Psalm 99:1)

What did the writer of Psalm 119:120 exclaim?

But notice, in Isaiah 57:15, whom does the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity especially invite to fellowship with Him?

And whom does the Lord especially honor? (The KJV *look upon* means *esteem*.) (Isaiah 66:2)

### **3. Fearing God in Scripture seems to be directly related to hating sin and keeping yourself pure.**

Notice how Proverbs 8:13 links the two: “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate” (Proverbs 8:13).

How does Proverbs 16:6 link the two ideas?

In 2 Corinthians 6:16-18 God makes this wonderful promise: “For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people. . . I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters,’ Says the LORD Almighty.”

Because of that wonderful promise, what two things does 2 Corinthians 7:1 command us to do?

In fact, Psalm 130:4 says, “You offer forgiveness that we might learn to fear You.” Because of the price Jesus paid for our sins to forgive us, we more clearly see how great His holiness is.

According to Psalm 34:11-14, how can we learn the fear of the Lord?

### **4. Why must we fear God? Because He hates sin, and will certainly punish it.**

God hates sin. He doesn't just tolerate it. He doesn't just say it's bad. He hates it. With terrible anger. With rage.

What does Psalm 7:11 say about this?

Psalm 90:7-12?

Robert Ingersoll, who claimed to believe there is no God, said, “In nature there are no rewards or punishments; there are only consequences.” Even with that definition, we can see how sin hurts the human body.

That, of course, is why God hates sin so much. Sin destroys the beautiful bodies that God created in His image. Sin leaves its mark on us, not just emotionally and spiritually, but physically as well.

The relationship between homosexuality and AIDS is established. Gonorrhea, syphilis, and cervical cancer are transmitted by sexual promiscuity. Drunkenness causes dementia and cirrhosis of the liver. One in five deaths in America is caused by cigarette smoking. Addiction to recreational drugs ruins lives and overdoses kill users daily. The emotions of sinful anger and envy cause ulcers and high blood pressure.

No wonder God hates sin with a holy hatred!

**5. So we too should be properly afraid of sin and embrace the fear of the Lord.**

My father used to say that a farmer must hate weeds, because they keep the good crop from growing. Doctors hate germs because they kill people. Violinists hate strings out of tune. Housekeepers hate dirt. You must not tolerate anything that keeps you from a sweet relationship with God.

If we listen to the Scriptures which warn us to fear God, we will also hear that God has provided a way for us to escape its punishment.

What is it, according to Proverbs 16:6 that will help us stop sinning?

## **6. When sin has such terrible consequences in our lives, why would we *not* want to get rid of it?**

Woody Allen, actor and movie producer, said: “All people know the same truth. Our lives consist of how we choose to distort that truth.” Could it be true that God has given all of us human beings an innate, honest understanding of right and wrong, but that we choose to lie to ourselves, in different ways, so we can ignore God and do what we please?

How does 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 confirm this idea of lying to ourselves? (Especially notice words that emphasize deception: *counterfeit, deceive, refusing to love the truth, believe the lie, delusion.*)

It is possible to have unrepented sin in our lives and not even be aware of it. We’ve accustomed ourselves to it, discounted it as not important, surrendered all but that “small” sin. If this is true, no wonder we feel unworthy to come to Jesus and talk to Him! So we need to be absolutely honest with ourselves and probe deeply enough to root out any self-deception.

How did God help the Israelites in the wilderness come to determine this for themselves? (Deut. 8:33)

What did King David beg God to do for him? (Psalm 19:12-14)

How did David express this longing to know his own heart in Psalm 139:23,29?

The first 25 chapters of the prophecy of Jeremiah express God's intense anger with the nation Israel. But in chapter 26:2,3, God told Jeremiah to:

*Stand out in front of the Temple of the LORD, and make an announcement to the people who have come there to worship from all over Judah.*

*Give them my entire message; include every word. Perhaps they will listen and turn from their evil ways.*

*Then I will be able to withhold the disaster I am ready to pour out on them because of their sins.*

God does not willingly punish us for our sin; He yearns to forgive us and enjoy a relationship of sweet intimacy with Him.

## **7. Jesus took the awful burden of our sins so that we can come into God's presence boldly and without fear.**

When you feel unworthy in God's presence, what do you do? You simply take the forgiveness God offers. If there is something displeasing to God in your life, and you want Him to reveal it to you, He will. Don't wallow in your sin. Give it to Jesus, and let Him forgive and cleanse you.

**8. When you have been forgiven, there should be no room for self consciousness, for feelings of unworthiness in His presence.**

This relationship isn't about you or me. It's about Jesus. When we focus on Him, we will be lost in the glory of His presence, and we won't even think about ourselves.

Annie Dillard, in her book, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, says, "Self-consciousness is the one thing that divides us from God and fellow creatures. It's the bitter pill of evolution, cutting us off at both ends."

Annie Dillard blames our self-consciousness in God's presence on evolution. But truly, it was our sin that cut us off from God, that made us self-conscious and embarrassed in His presence. Thank God He made a way for us to forget about ourselves in His presence!

What will the Lord Jesus reveal to us when we "sit in heavenly places" with Him? (Ephesians 2:4-8)

When you were forgiven by Jesus, you were "accepted in the beloved." You were adopted as God's precious child. Every sin you ever committed or will commit has been blotted out by the blood of Jesus; not just forgiven but obliterated, not to be found in God's memory or written in any record of His.

In that marvelous position, you can come into your Father's presence boldly. You can stay there without any self-

consciousness, without any sense of unworthiness. You can stand before Him as the redeemed child of God, with no thought of yourself. It's all about the glorious God who created us so He could give us all the treasures of Heaven in Christ Jesus.

Fears may return. Doubts may rise and rise again. How did the writer of Psalm 94 respond when he felt abandoned? (Psalm 94:17-19)

Chapter nine of the Gospel of John tells the story of a man who was born blind, who'd never seen his mother's face, who was ridiculed by the Pharisees when he told them Jesus had healed him. How could Jesus, an obvious sinner, have the power of God to heal his blindness?

His quiet answer? "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25)

Martin Luther said, "You can't keep the birds from flying through your hair, but you can keep them from building a nest there." Doubt becomes sin only when you make decisions that control your behavior as if your doubts were true.

*Just come to Jesus! Come as you are, with your frustrations, your doubts, your fears of unworthiness. Just come! He said, "Come and talk with me." Answer Him, "Lord, I am coming."*

More—

## *Asaph, Psalm Writer and Doubter*

Asaph's ancestor seems to have been the Asaph who was King David's choir director in the tabernacle and who put many of David's psalms to music (1 Chron. 16:4,5; 2 Chron. 29:30).

But this Asaph seems to have lived some years later, after the king of Babylon had destroyed Solomon's temple. Psalm 73 and 77 are laments he wrote, seeing the terrible havoc of the enemy. But they also reveal an intimacy with God that will make you hunger for such a relationship. Read through them and look for clues about his relationship with his Heavenly Father.

Asaph had deep doubts about the goodness of God and about His loving care. What were Asaph's fears, as he expressed them in Psalm 77:7-9?

Have you ever wondered why unbelievers seemed to prosper when you didn't? What circumstances in Asaph's life caused him to doubt? (Psalm 73:1-14)

But when these fears overwhelmed him, what three steps did he take? (Psalm 77:10,11)

Where was he when he came to understand what God was doing? (Psalm 73:16-22; 77:13)

What wonderful conclusion did Asaph come to? (Psalm 73:23-28)

***I will remember the works of the LORD:  
surely I will remember thy wonders of old.***

***I will meditate also of all thy work,  
and talk of thy doings.*** Psalm 77:11,12



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