

The lessons are structured to encourage one another to open up and frankly discuss issues that affect our faith and walk with the Lord, our fear of man being more than the fear of God, the needless fears of many things that torment us, our attraction to vanities and ways of the world, and the lack of diligence in the study of God's Word that leads us to doubt the promises of God.

"If you wish to know God, you must know His Word. If you wish to perceive His power, you must see how He works by His Word. If you wish to know His purpose before it comes to pass, you can only discover it by His Word."

- Charles H. Spurgeon



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NOT FOR SALE

THE FEAR OF GOD AND THE CHARACTER OF THE FOOL

The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 1:7

Inspired and extracted from the sermons
of Rev. Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834 -1892)

PANTAI BAPTIST CHURCH

Living A Life Of Wisdom
Based On Proverbs

“Look at the various activities of your life which you think are great and on which you have prided yourself – how will it look when you are dying? Is it so great as it seems to be? The greatest of human accomplishments will appear to be insignificant when we come to die, especially those on which men most pride themselves. We will then say what madmen we must have been to have wasted so much time and energy on such worthless things. When we discover that they were not real, that they were only mere bubbles, mere pretences, we will then look on ourselves as having been crazy to have spent our entire life and all of our energy on them.”

“Wisdom is the compass by which man is to steer across the trackless waste of life. Without wisdom man is as the wild asses’ colt, he runs hither and thither, wasting strength which might be profitably employed.”

“A man must be prudent in such a world as this. This is a world full of enemies. We must be wise or the arrow will suddenly find out a vulnerable place in our armour. How shall we handle matters wisely? The serpent tells Eve to mistrust her Maker, to do that which seems right in her own eyes. To pluck the forbidden fruit and eat of it. That

was her folly. She listened to the serpent. Be wise, and learn of God, and close your ears to him who would have you destroy yourself. It is never wise to sin.”

“The character of God is the refuge of the Christian, in opposition to other refuges which godless men have chosen. His name is our strong tower. The righteous run into it. Now, running seems to me to imply that they do not stop to make any preparation. So the Christian, when he is attacked by his enemies, should not stop for anything, but just run into his God and be safe.”



INTRODUCTION

This Guidebook 1 on the study of Proverbs focuses mainly on the key verse which is Proverbs 1:7 which says *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*

Understanding what is the fear of the Lord, the attributes of the Almighty God and the character of the fool will be the pillars of these 8 lessons. At the end of this Guidebook, the diligent student of God’s inspired word in Proverbs will hopefully have learned:

1. to love and reverence the Almighty God with all the honour due to Him
2. that the man who fears God need fear nothing else
3. that it is a delight to meditate upon the Word of God
4. that it is a joyful experience to walk closely with the Lord and to commune daily with Him
5. that the fool is someone he will never try to be

The lessons are structured to encourage one another to open up and frankly discuss issues that affect our faith and walk with the Lord, our fear of man being more than the fear of God, the needless fears of many things that torment us, our attraction to vanities and ways of the world, and the lack of diligence in the study of God’s Word leading to the sin of unbelief and doubt in the promises of God.

This Guidebook is inspired and based on the sermons of Rev Charles H. Spurgeon (1834 – 1892).

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Faith and the Fear of God

THE ancient world was destroyed for its wickedness and corruption. In Genesis chapter 6 we read about how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. But Noah was righteous among all the peoples of the earth. So God said to Noah that He was going to “bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.” The Lord instructed Noah to build an ark according to specifications that were given. Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family (Hebrews 11:7). Faith and fear led Noah to do exactly as God commanded him. Those who have faith in God would show it by a holy fear which makes them zealous to leave nothing undone which is commanded of the Lord. Years of building a boat and yet no water to float it. 120 years of warning people that God is about to destroy them and yet no flood! Did it stop Noah and his family from building the ark? Did the flood finally come?

God said of Noah when He bade him come into the ark, “Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.” God declared him righteous; not righteous by his works, but righteous by his faith. Noah believed God, and found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Take distinct note that at the back of everything was his faith in God. Noah’s faith begat his fear: his faith and his fear produced his obedience. Faith is

the acorn, from which the oak of holiness will grow. Noah had faith and holy fear of the warning and threatening of God. He believed the flood waters will come. So he kept on building the ark over a few decades while the rest of the people were eating and drinking and carrying on in their wicked ways.

With regard to his Second Coming, the Lord Jesus said this in Luke 17: 26-30 - 26 “Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. 27 People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. 29 But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.”

Read : *The long suffering of God : Genesis 6:3.*

*Noah and the Flood : Genesis 6:9-14 ; Genesis 6: 17-22; Genesis 7: 1-6
Genesis 7: 11-12 ; Genesis 7: 17-24 ; Genesis 8: 1; Genesis 8: 13-17;
Genesis 8: 20-22; Genesis 9: 1-4; Genesis 9: 8-13.*

Discussion

1. The old world before the flood was corrupt and full of violence. God was patient to give them a chance to repent. The ark took between 50-75 years to build. The wicked were indifferent to the warnings about the coming flood. Either they did not fear God or they did not believe the flood would happen. Indifference and apathy – Do you think there is a parallel between the old world before the flood and today?
2. “The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.” (Joel 2:31). Do you believe that the sun will turn to darkness and the moon to blood one day? Does Judgement Day strike terror in your heart? Or do you think it is not going to happen anytime soon?

3. Noah believed God’s warning about the flood. The fear of God led him to obey God’s instruction to build the ark. If you believe in the coming Judgement Day and the end times as Jesus warned in Matthew chapter 24:6-14 (please have someone read this), what do you think you should do to change the way you are living your Christian life now?

4. The floods came. The wicked perished. Where was righteous Noah and his family?

5. Do we need to be terrified of persecution and the end times which the Bible says will happen? God said to those who fear him and walk according to His ways – “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.” (Isaiah 43:2). Were Daniel’s three friends consumed by the fire when they were thrown into the furnace? Do you believe in the Promise of God in Isaiah 43:2 above?

Prayer

“Lord, help me to be like Noah who obeyed your instructions to build the ark because of the warning of the coming flood. Make me see the coming end times and start rebuilding my life according to your Word. I want to be safe like Noah in the ark when the floods come. Help me not to fear persecution but to rest secure in your Promises that You will be with me when I walk through the fire and the flood, that You will never leave me or forsake me (Hebrews 13:5), that Your angel will encamp around me (Psalm 34:7) and your Right Hand will always uphold me. (Isaiah 41:10).

I am weak in faith my Lord and not courageous as some are. Help me to run into your strong tower when I am afraid. Renew my strength and make me soar on wings like eagles. (Isaiah 40:31). Carry me like you carry the lame and the weak in your everlasting arms. Never let me go, my Lord and my God.

Fear the Lord all day long

*“Be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long.”
- Proverbs 23:17*

WE must first of all be in the fear of God, before we can remain in it “all the day long.” This can never be our condition except as the fruit of the new birth. Where this fear exists it is the token of eternal life and it proves the abiding indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This holy fear of the Living God is the life of God showing in the quickened ones (saved). This fear is for all the day and for every day: the longest day is not to be too long for our reverence, nor for our obedience. If our days are lengthened until the day of life declines into the evening of old age, still are we to be in the fear of God; yea, as the day grows longer our holy fear must be deeper. We do not have a religion of spasms, fearing God one day and not fearing Him the next.

To be in the fear of the LORD, “you must be born again.” (John 3:7) Someone asks, “How am I to know whether I have been born-again?” Well, one of the first evidences of regeneration is faith in Jesus Christ, for wherever there is a sincere trust in Jesus Christ, the new birth must have been experienced. This belief was described by Christ as “the work of God.” Another evidence of the new birth is repentance. Sorrow for sin is one of the sure signs of the new Nature. The newborn Christian hates the sins he loved before and continues to hate them. And the longer he lives, the more he mourns that he ever committed them. His loathing of sin grows with his growth in Divine Grace and sin is never so hateful to a man as when he is most fully sanctified. The nearer we get to Heaven the more ashamed we shall be of ever having been guilty before God. Sincere prayer is another sure evidence of regeneration.

Our fear of God leads to true godliness. The child of God should not regard godliness as an extraordinary thing. We need an ordinary, common-place, every-day godliness, which may be compared to the light of the fixed stars which always shine. Religion must not be thought of as something apart from daily life; it should be the most vital part of our existence. Our praying should be like our breathing, natural and constant; our communion with God should be like our taking of food, a happy and natural privilege. It is a great pity that some Christians draw a line across their life, dividing it into the sacred and the secular - Sundays for religion and weekdays for business. Beware of serving Christ on Sunday, and Mammon on Monday. Beware of the godliness which varies with the calendar. All our actions should be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. Do nothing to be seen of men or you will ripen into a mere hypocrite. Living or dying we are the Lord’s so let us live as such. We must have a seven-days’ religion, or else we have none at all. Periodical godliness is perpetual hypocrisy.

Discussion

1. Do you remember when you first accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Share with one another a 3 minute testimony of your salvation.
2. How would you describe your Christian life now?
3. Share with one another honestly how tough it is to be a Christian in the work place. Most times you will agree it is not the work that is tough but the people you have to work with. Open up that you may be able to pray specifically for each another.
4. Do you commune with the Almighty God before you begin your day? The command in Proverbs 23:17 is in the present tense – Be thou in fear of the Lord all the day long. Were you aware of this command before this lesson today? Do you believe it will change your life if you start the new day with God?

Prayer

Abba Father, forgive me for the life that I lead. You alone know all my daily comings and goings and how little I have thought of you in all that I do and say. Help me to be ever conscious of your loving kindness towards me, your constant protection over my life. Help me to know you are the quiet listener to every conversation and that You see from Heaven everything I do. I am now fearful of all the wrong I have done and I confess my sins before you claiming the promise in 1 John 1:9 that you will forgive me and wash me clean of all unrighteousness that I may begin anew again tonight. Thank you for your faithfulness towards me and loving me despite my weaknesses. Thank you for Grace undeserved.

I want to wake up tomorrow morning and talk with you before I start my day. I need you Lord to face the day. I ask this in Jesus' most precious name, Amen.

**A Fear to be Desired**

“And shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.” - Hosea 3:5.

THE fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, fills the heart of a Christian and the goodness of the Lord becomes the source and fountain of that fear in those whom the Lord has blessed with His grace. Between the fear of a slave and the fear of a child, we can all perceive a great distinction. Between the fear of God's great power and justice which the devils have, and that fear which a child of God has when he walks in the light with his God, there is as much difference, surely, as between hell and heaven.

Observe that the fear which drives anyone away from God is a vice and a sin, but the fear that draws us towards God, is a virtue. Blessed is the man whose heart is filled with that holy fear which inclines his steps in the way of God's commandments, inclines his heart to seek after God, and inclines his whole soul to enter into fellowship with God. That fear which we ought all to seek after – always links itself to Christ Jesus. If you fear God, and know *not* that there is Mediator between God and men, you will never think of approaching Him. God is a consuming fire, then how can you draw near to Him apart from Christ? If you fear God, and know not of Christ's atonement, how can you approach Him? Without faith, it is impossible to please God, and without the blood of Jesus there is no way of access to the divine mercy seat. *If you know not Christ, you will never come to God.*

What is this fear of God? First, it is a sense of awe of His greatness. The mightiest kings and princes are but as grasshoppers in His sight. We talk about the greatness of mankind; but “all nations before Him

are as nothing.” When we turn to the Word of God, and there see His merciful arrangements for the salvation of sinners through Christ Jesus, we bow down and worship the living God.

The fear of God also takes another form, that is, the fear of *His Fatherhood*. When divine grace has given us the new birth, we recognize that we have entered into a fresh relationship towards God; namely, that we have become His children. By *“the Spirit of adoption, we cry, Abba, Father.”* Having this fear of God before our eyes, we cry to those who would tempt us to sin, *“How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”*

God’s goodness often fills us with amazement, and in it there is an element of fear. We say to Him, “Why have You been so good to me, for so many years, and in so many ways? Why have You manifested so much mercy and tenderness toward me and treated me as if I had never grieved or offended You?” This holy fear is near akin to gratitude. A child who really knows the love and goodness of God, will fear lest he should be ungrateful. May the Lord grant us the Grace to walk in the fear of the Lord all our days for Christ’s sake!” Amen.

Discussion

1. The source and fountain of the fear of God comes from Grace that is imparted to a believer. And that fear grows with God’s goodness to him. It is a reverential fear that has peace and is free of torment. Think of Adam before the fall when he was not afraid of God and would freely commune with his Maker in the cool of the evening. When did Adam run and hide from the presence of God? Why was he afraid when he didn’t before? Are we blessed that we have the promise in I John 1:9? Read that verse.
2. John 1:12-13 says, “Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of blood, nor of the desire or will of man, but born

of God...” In Japan there is a practice of powerful families who have no heirs to adopt strangers to be sons. Suzuki Motor has a tradition of doing that. The adopted son takes on the surname of his adoptive father and inherits the wealth of the family.

- A) What do you think is expected of this adopted son?
 - B) Now dear Christians, you are adopted into the family of God. Have you ever reflected deep and long what this really means? Discuss.
3. When you pray, do you call Him Abba Father in a loving manner as though He is just near you? Or you feel He is actually far beyond the clouds in Heaven though you know your Heavenly Father is Omnipresent? Are you afraid to imagine that He is in the place you are right now?
 4. Has God been good to you all these years? Share with one another His mercies and love since you became a born again Christian.

Prayer

Abba Father, I want to thank you with all my heart for your goodness to me all these years since I became a Christian. Please forgive me for not being the child I should be. You have been faithful when I am not. I don’t know what would have happened to me if you had just let me stray. But you were watching over me all this time and my precious Savior was interceding for me before your throne. I have no words sufficient to tell you I am sorry or to thank you enough for never letting the devil pluck me out of your hand. I want to come home to where I belong, near to You and my Lord Jesus always. For then I know I will have the peace and happiness that only You can give.

Be real to me all the time my Lord and my God. Teach me your ways and give me understanding that I may learn to be wiser from now on. I ask in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Happy is the man who fears God

*“Happy is the man who feareth always”
– Proverbs 28:14*

THE Christian who fears his God is filled with a quiet grace that leads him along the King’s Highway where *“no lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon.”* (Isaiah 35:9-10). The Holy path to Heaven is exclusively for the redeemed of the Lord. Angels accompany them and saints that have gone before, cheer them along. They sing as they make their way to their eternal home where the Lord God Almighty awaits tenderly for them. Happy indeed is the man who fears the Lord for he is at peace and fears nothing else.

The true believer does not possess a slavish or servile fear of God like that of a slave towards its master lest he should be beaten when he has offended. He does not have a diabolical fear like that of the devils who tremble with fear of judgement and hell when they see Jesus (Mark 5:6-8). From these kinds of fears Jesus has come to set us free. The Lord takes pleasure in those who reverence and fear Him in a loving way, who desires to honour Him at all times. The rewards are exceedingly great.

There are many Christians who have so little faith in God, that they fear trials will sooner or later *overtake* them, will also *overthrow* them. They are afraid of suffering that threatens them; they fear that they will not have patience enough to bear up under it, and they feel sure that their spirit will sink in their sickness. Above all, they are *dreadfully* afraid to die. Because they cannot trust God, they are doubtful that *“all things work together for good to those who love*

God” (Romans 8:28). So they go on, fearing this and fearing that and fearing the other, and their life is spent, to a great extent, in sorrow and sighing. May the Lord graciously deliver any of you who are in that condition!

The godly are free from that kind of fear. He knows that whatever happens, God will overrule it for the good of his children. *“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.”* Resignation to the Divine will has made him feel that whatever the Lord wills is right. He does not seek to have his own will, but he is glad to make God’s will his will, and so he is perfectly satisfied with all that comes his way. He knows God will never cease to be faithful to His promises.

Discussion

1. What are the things you fear most in life? Is it losing your health to cancer or other disease? Is it being struck with sudden loss of wealth or being plunged into abject poverty? Is it worrying about old age and its infirmities? Is it being lonely? Share with one another what you worry about and fear most. Promise one another to keep in full confidence what is being shared in the group so that there is freedom to share.
2. After those who are comfortable to share have bared their soul, Read Luke 4:16-20. Jesus has come to “proclaim freedom for the prisoners” (imprisoned by fears and torment from sin) and to “set the oppressed free” (fears that oppress the soul). Stop the discussion and pray together for those that have shared their fears claiming the promises of Jesus in Luke 4. There is a vulnerability felt once you share your fears and it is comforting to have friends immediately pray for you.
3. Read Isaiah 35:8-10. The prophet Isaiah talks about a Highway called the Way of Holiness. When God’s people walk along this

highway, the beasts who frighten us will flee when they see the Lord. In John 14:6 Jesus said *"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."* When you walk with Jesus on the road to Heaven, He is the Way and nothing will harm you, no ravenous beasts or lions. Do you believe that? Is it a source of comfort to you in a world full of violence and evil men?

4. Read 1 Corinthians 2:9 - *"it is written: "No eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" - the things God has prepared for those who love him."* Meditate for a moment this glorious promise of God and end the session in joy that those who love and fear the Lord will be truly happy and free.

Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, I am one of those who fear this and fear that and worry much about many things in my life. Thank you for the promise that you have come to set me free from all the fears that torment my soul. I am not strong in my faith or my constitution. I need you to cut loose the bondages that bind me. Set me free dear Saviour that I may soar like the eagle high above the skies.

Lord, please walk with me closely along the highway to Heaven. I am told in Isaiah 35:9-10 that when you walk with me, no lions or ravenous beasts will come my way for they tremble and fear before you. I remember the Legion of demons that fell to your feet when they saw you in the Gadarenes. I feel safe with you walking through this dark and difficult world. Make me brave my Lord and strengthen me day by day so that I will not only be happy and free but that I might be a good servant unto you. In your precious name I ask, Amen.

Do you Know Him?

"That I may know him." - Philippians 3:10

THE object of the Apostle Paul's life—that for which he sacrificed everything: country, kindred, honour, comfort, liberty, and life itself, was, that he might *know* Christ. This is the desire of one who has been saved, who enjoys the full conviction that his sins are pardoned, and that he is in Christ. It is only the regenerated and saved man who can feel the desire, *"That I may know him."*

Let us pass by that crowd of *outer-court* worshippers who are content to live *without* knowing Christ. I do not mean the ungodly and profane, I mean children of God: the visible saints. How many there are of these whom I must call outer-court worshippers. "That I may know him," has not stirred their hearts. They are content to know the historic life of Jesus Christ, from the manger to the cross. They know the life of Christ, but not **Christ the Life**. (*John 14:6 - I am the Way, the Truth and the Life*). Multitudes of followers of Jesus are satisfied with his words, but forget that he is himself "THE WORD."

Most believers rest perfectly at ease with knowing Christ's sacrifice. They see Jesus as the great High Priest, laying a great sacrifice upon the altar for their sins, and with their whole heart they accept his atonement. By faith they know that all their sin is taken away by precious blood. But not every Christian perceives that Christ was not only the offeror of a sacrifice, but was *himself the sacrifice*. I want to know the man who thus gave himself for me. I want to behold the Lamb once slain for me. I want to rest upon the bosom which covers the heart which was pierced with the spear. I want to know his person, his deity, and his humanity.

Christians, do not be satisfied with *thinking* you know him; *hoping* you know him, but **know him**. Seek with the apostle, to give up everything of your own righteousness, and all other objects and aims in life, and say, “*This I seek after, that I may know him.*” Do not let him say to you as he said to Philip, “*I have been with you so long and yet you have not known me Philip?*” (John 14:9).

I cannot know Christ through another person’s brains. I cannot love him with another man’s heart, and I cannot see him with another man’s eyes. “*Mine eyes shall see him and not another.*” (Job 19:27). I am so afraid of living in a *second-hand* religion. God forbid that I should get a *biographical* experience. Lord save us from having *borrowed* communion. No, I *must* know him myself. O God, let me not be deceived. – *Charles H Spurgeon.*

Discussion

1. Would you consider yourself an *outer-court worshipper* of the Lord Jesus Christ as described by Charles H Spurgeon? Do you know of any or many *outer-court worshippers*?
2. If someone asks you, do you know the Queen of England? You might say that you know in the sense that you are aware of who she is, you have seen her pictures on TV and in magazines, you have read about her life and have a pretty good idea who she is. And you would be sure you can recognise her if she was among a large group of ladies. Many people say they know Jesus at this level. What about you?
3. The next question to be asked is this – Are you on speaking terms with the Queen? What do you understand by “on speaking terms” with someone? That you talk to the person regularly like once a week or everyday? Well, its an idiom to mean you are on friendly or amicable terms with a person but perhaps in a superficial or guarded capacity. Are you on speaking terms with the Lord Jesus? How often do you speak with Him?

4. Who in your life can you really say you know him or her? Your spouse? Your children? Your best friends? Your mother or father or grandparents? Your boss? Your business partner? Your colleague at work? Name one person and share with one another why you can truly say you know that person.

5. The Lord Jesus said to Philip, “Have I been so long with you and yet hast thou not known me Philip?” (John 14:9). Replace Philip’s name with yours. How do you feel?

Prayer

My Lord and my God, you know me through and through. There is nothing I can hide from you. And yet I confess like Philip, I do not really know you. I have done a lot of the things others would say a good Christian would do. But I confess Lord that I have not spent the time to meditate on your Word to hear what you have to say to me (but I have time to read books or newspapers or magazines), to commune with you daily especially to start the morning talking with you (I have time to check on the news or read the papers and then rush off to work or to send the children to school or to go to the gym etc), and to share my troubles with you in quiet time (but have the time to share it with friends or family). It is no wonder then that I am often unhappy and stressed over many things and find it difficult to sleep at night.

Please help me Lord to reprioritize my life. I want to know you better. I need your peace to reign in my heart. I need you to take hold of my life and lead me back to the cross. This I ask in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Friend of God

*"You are My friends if you do what I command you."
- John 15:14*

JAMES 2:23 tells us this: *'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'* And he was called the friend of God. We should know that while God was Abraham's friend, this was not all, but Abraham was **God's friend**. He received and returned the friendship of God. From one point of view Abraham was always the object of God's pity and mercy, but by His grace the Lord lifted him also into another condition, in which he became the object of the Lord's delight. God gave Abraham His heart, and Abraham gave God his heart.

We see how the Lord comes down to Abraham, and communes with him and He lifts up Abraham to enable him to see the things of God. What *condescension* on the Lord's part to be on terms of friendship with a *man*! Note the singular excellence of Abraham. How could he have been God's friend had not *grace* worked wonderfully in him? *Was it not a great venture for God to call any man His friend?* (Isaiah 41:8, James 2:23). Abraham, though a man with like passions with us, and subject to weaknesses which the Holy Spirit has not hesitated to record, yet Abraham was a *singularly* admirable character. The Spirit of God produced in him *a deep sincerity, a firm principle, and a noble bearing*. **God is not ashamed to be called his God**. This divine friendship resulted in the bestowal of *innumerable* benefits. The life of Abraham was *rich* with mercies. We read, "And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the Lord had blessed Abraham in every

way." (Genesis 24:1) Friends bless their friends, or at least wish they could do so. Abraham's Almighty Friend denied him no good thing.

Surely God does not need friends. You and I need friendship. We cannot always lead a self-contained and solitary life. We are refreshed by the companionship, sympathy and advice of a like-minded comrade. We are very foolish if we commit ourselves to a host of *acquaintances*, but we are wise if we have found a faithful friend. Friendship is one of the sweetest joys of life. Many might have failed beneath the bitterness of trial if they had not found a friend. *No such necessity* can be supposed of the *all-sufficient* God. Yet through His beloved son, Jesus Christ, we have the privilege of friendship with the Lord for Jesus said in John 15:14 *"You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you."* We must *keep* our place, or we shall not be His friend. The character of "friends", is applied to the disciples of Christ; and belongs, not only to his apostles, but to all that love him, believe in him, and obey him; to whom he has showed himself friendly, by laying down his life for them.

Do you wish to be a friend of God? Well, then, first you must be *fully* reconciled to Him. Of course you cannot remain His enemy and be His friend – that is clear enough. If you are *pardoned* through the sacrifice of Jesus, if you are *justified* by His righteousness, if you are *regenerated* by His Spirit, you are no longer God's enemy, yet that will *not* entitle you to be called the friend of God. You must go further than that, if you would be His friend. You must choose God to be your God and your friend, deliberately, resolutely, undividedly and heartily. *Love* for God must be in your heart, *gratitude* must beget *attachment*, and attachment must cause delight in His company via His Word. You must maintain *close* communion with Him and His Grace will bring you into a condition of tender love and fervent desire towards the Lord your God.

Discussion

1. Read Genesis 18:16-33. The conversation between God and Abraham. Was Abraham terrified and in great fear of God as he pleads for Sodom and Gomorrah?

2. Friends are not in fear of one another. They care and do things for each other. If you call someone your friend, you will go the distance for that person. Friends confide in each other and bare their souls. If the person is your best friend, he or she is sometimes closer than a family member. Now, no friendship lasts if it is only one *sided*. No *true* friend only *takes* and never *gives* for then he or she will soon have *no* friend at all. While we understand the principles of friendship among man, *do you ever think of God as your friend?* Ask one another this question.

3. You can say Mr A is your friend. But does Mr A consider you his friend? Some of you may consider God your friend because you do meditate on His word diligently and you spend time with Him. You are also deeply grateful to Him for His marvellous grace in your life. *But do you think that God considers you His friend the way God speaks of Abraham?*

4. In John 15:14 Jesus said we are *His* friends if we *obey* His commandments. It is possible then for you and I to be considered our Saviour's friend. What would you change in your Christian life now to have God call you His friend?

Prayer

Father in Heaven, I think of you as my God and the Lord Jesus as my Saviour and I am deeply grateful for the Cross and what Jesus has done for me. I know you love and care for me or You would not have sent Jesus to this forsaken earth to suffer humiliation at the hands of

wicked man just so I can be reconciled to You and have eternal salvation. I have not been a good Christian as I should be. I don't have the kind of faith like the great patriarch Abraham, but Lord, I want to be your friend. And I want to start today to review the commandments of my Lord. I ask for your Grace to enable me to do that which You have commanded. I want to be like David whom you love deeply because David is after your heart. I want to be after your heart. Grant me strength O Lord to be all that you want me to be which will be the greatest joy of my life. I ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.



Who are Fools?

“The fool says there is no God” – Psalm 14:1

FOOLS are *dead fish* which are carried down the stream. Living fish may go with the stream at times but dead fish always do so. There are plenty of such in all waters, dead souls, so far as the truest life is concerned, and they are always drifting, drifting, drifting as the current takes them. The fool says in his heart *“there is no God”* so God’s law is of small account to him. He does not fear God. Instead, the unwritten rules of society have a power over fools which they never think of resisting. They stand in awe of a fool’s banter. *Is this a right state to be in?*

Men are indeed fools when they prefer the *shadows* of time to the *substance* of eternity. *Temporal things are all vanities*. Yet the great guide of the world is fashion, and its god is *respectability*. How many of you look around on society to know what to do? You watch the general current, and then float upon it. You study the popular breeze and shift your sails to suit it. You ask – Is it fashionable? If it be fashionable, it must be done. Fashion is the law of the multitudes, but it is nothing more than *the common consent* of fools.

Each one of us must give an account of himself before God. If we follow a multitude to do evil, the multitude will not excuse the evil nor diminish the punishment. We can sin abundantly by passively yielding to the course of this world. Where then are you? Are you sailing in that great fleet that bears the black flag of the devil who commands the ship called Fashion? If so, be forewarned that they will come to destruction. Better part company and sail with the flag of the cross.

Have an honest talk with your heart. Ask this : can you go against the stream? It is the Way of Life. The opposing waters will wash and cleanse thee and you will be near thy God who is the Lord of the straight and narrow way which leads to glory and immortality.

Fools do not desire the knowledge of God nor of His ways and worship but despise it and treat it with contempt, especially the knowledge of God in Christ in which lies the highest wisdom for this is life eternal.
– Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible (Proverbs 1:7).

Discussion

1. Charles Spurgeon talks about the danger of going with the flow – doing whatever society thinks is the fashion of the day however ungodly, and being afraid to go against the views of the multitudes or society in general. Share your personal experiences with one another about peer pressure at school, college, the workplace, social media, the fear of missing out (FOMO), things you have to do to rise up the corporate ladder, mixing with the right social class etc. Be honest in sharing about the difficulties of staying godly in an ungodly and wicked world.
2. What do you struggle with most when mixing with non-Christian friends or relatives?
3. Do you feel a deep burden for lost souls who are just drifting away into eternity? Does it bother you as you watch a sea of humanity just dying without knowing Christ and do you wonder why you are not filled with a compassion for the lost? Is it because of a sense of helplessness? Or you have too many of your own problems to contend with in this life? Then read Matthew 11:28-30, Philippians 4:6-7, Joshua 1:9, 2 Corinthians 9:8. Meditate on His Word and find peace to move on and do the right thing.

4. Do you have family members or relatives or close friends who are the *dead fish* that Spurgeon talked about? This is the time for your CG Group to do a list of those family members who are unsaved so that everyone can remember them in prayer. If you can't share the gospel of life with them, pray for the Lord to send someone to do it. Stop and pray as a group for one another after this sharing.

Prayer

My Lord and my God, give me a heart of compassion like Jesus for the lost souls in this world. Help me not to just standby and watch as they drift aimlessly away without hope for eternity in Heaven with you. Give me the words to say to them and do what I can to share the gospel with them. I want to pray now for
(name) who does not know the Lord Jesus. Please call them like you called Lazarus from the tomb. Make them alive in Christ Jesus!

Lord I want to pray for myself too. I find it hard to resist peer pressure O Lord. I am afraid to stand up and be different. I am not so articulate to handle those with sharp or smooth tongues my Lord. Please give me the courage to wear the uniform of the cross wherever I am. Let your angels surround and protect me O Lord. Fill my heart with divine strength and courage to live a victorious life. Hold me up always O Lord. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



The Truly Wise

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." - 1 Corinthians 1:23-24

ONE would have imagined that, when God sent his gospel to men that Christ is come to save sinners, every ear would be attentive, every eye would be fixed and every heart would be wide open to receive the truth. But when the gospel was preached, instead of being accepted and admired, men could not bear it and sent its first preacher to the cross. The human heart of today dissected, would be like the human heart a thousand years ago. It holds the same latent opposition to the truth of God and men continue to scorn the gospel. The Jews make it a stumbling block, and the Greeks account it foolishness.

The Jew here is representative of a group who oppose the gospel. He comes from a holy ancestry and a pious family. He is a thoroughly religious man. He believes in good works and gives to the poor. He goes to the temple devoutly, he tithes faithfully, fasts twice a week, and loves the ceremonies of the law. Accordingly, when he hears about Christ, he asks who Christ is. "The Son of a Carpenter." Ah! "The son of a carpenter, and his mother's name was Mary, and his father's name was Joseph. That of itself is "positive proof that he cannot be the Messiah. A stumbling block to me; I cannot hear about it; I will not listen to it," said he.

And now the Greek. He is a gentleman found everywhere. He has an intense aversion to all forms of religion. He likes eloquence;

he admires a smart saying; he loves a quaint expression; he likes to read the last new book; he is a Greek, and to him the gospel is foolishness. You meet him in many places. He is thoroughly wise. Ask him anything, and he knows it. But if you are a Christian, and talk to him of Jesus Christ, he will say "I don't want to hear anything about that." This Grecian gentleman believes all philosophy except the true one; he studies all wisdom except the wisdom of God. Ah! wise man, full of worldly wisdom. In this world it will do well for you but what will you do when it is time to meet your Maker? Will all your philosophy and learning be of any good? God will bring you down to your knees philosopher. Christ shall not die for nothing. If one sinner is not saved, another shall be.

To the Christian, Christ is the wisdom of God. When believers listen to the voice of the Lord, He reveals to them the wise way of handling matters. (Proverbs 16:20). He who heeds the Word wisely will find good, and whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he! He will be delivered from cares and will not be troubled by evil tidings since his heart is fixed on trusting the Lord. He does not lean on his own understanding. He is not afraid to die for his soul will be with Christ Jesus. He is not afraid to live because he is set free from fears. Cast all your cares upon Him for He careth for you. The power and peace of Christ rests in such a believer. He walks upright and looks up towards Heaven for his help comes from the Heavenly Father at all times. Give man wisdom and he rises to all the dignity that manhood can possibly know.

Discussion

1. Discuss the background of the Jew first as described by Spurgeon above. Do you think the Jew looked down on the class of society which Jesus came from? Do you see any part of yourself in the Jew as described by Spurgeon?

2. Now discuss the background of the Greek. Have you met people who fit the description? Are you in awe of the Greek if you should come across him? Would you dare to share the gospel with the Greek described above?

3. Read Proverbs 6:16-19. What is at the top of the 7 things that God hates? Do you think pride is the common denominator between the Jew and the Greek described above? See Proverbs 16:18. What will happen to the Jew and the Greek?

4. Describe all the advantages of trusting in Jesus and leaning on Him in the last paragraph above. Does it make your heart glad dear Christian?

Prayer

Father in Heaven, examine my heart and cleanse me of all unrighteousness. There is that Jew and Greek within me that has to go. I am oftentimes proud of my works and achievements without realising that everything that I have, everything that is good in me or clever about me, comes from you. How often have I loved the world's applause and honor only to realise that they are fleeting and empty. Turn my eyes from vanities I pray. Humble me my Lord that I may be wise from now on and seek for the treasures that are real and everlasting which are found in you and your word. For I know you want to bless me always and keep me on the Straight and Narrow Way that I shall arrive at Heaven's gates safely. Thank you Lord for your loving kindness towards me. I want to trust you always from this day forth and walk close to you daily.

In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

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