

Last week we began to consider the various descriptions or activities of Christian or Gospel Fear—the first of these was Trembling at the Just Judgments of God—this brings us this morning to—Bowing before the Holy Word of God...

As we read through our Bibles, it becomes evident that to fear God is to fear His Word—and the reason for this is obvious—there exists an inseparable relation between God and His Word—what we think of the one we think of the other—thus Christian or Gospel Fear shows itself by its attitude to the Word—by bowing to the Holy Word of God...

#### I. How it Bows Before the Word

#### II. Why it Bows Before the Word

#### I. How it Bows Before the Word

##### A. It trembles at its judgments

1. Now—because I sought to deal with this aspect of fearing God last week—let me simply remind you of a few things...
2. Throughout the Scriptures, in both the Old and New Testaments, there is a considerable amount of space given to judgment...
3. Last week I distinguished between temporal and eternal judgment—the first is a preview or foretaste of the second...
4. Thus—all of the temporal judgments of God, recorded in Scripture, are intended to point us to that final judgment...
5. For example—the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues against Egypt, the death of many in the wilderness, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, and the destitution of Babylon and all the other nations—all shadowed or foretold the final and universal destruction of this world and God's enemies...
6. Thus—if you were to add up, throughout the prophets, how many chapters describe judgment, it would be at least 1/3...
7. How many chapters in the book of Revelation are given to describe the fiery judgments of God upon His enemies (1/3 or more)...
8. How many times throughout the epistles do the apostles describe the coming judgment of God upon His enemies...
9. Now—let me ask you—how does a Christian, a God-fearer, respond as they read through these sober descriptions...
10. I suggest—we tremble before them—it awe of God's wrath, justice, and amazing grace, in rescuing us from them...
11. Ps.119:120—"My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am in fear of Your judgments"—that is—those parts of Scripture which describe God's judgments...
12. Gospel and Christian Fear trembles before the mighty judgments of God, as the display of divine power and justice...
13. But—remember what I also said last week—trembling at God's judgments is never divorced from faith, hope, and love...
14. There is a kind of fear, called legal or slavish fear, that drives us from God—Gospel Fear drives us to God...

##### B. It believes all its testimonies

1. Those who humbly bow before the Holy Word of God, believe everything that Word says—without exception...

2. Shorter Catechism (a baptist version)—"Q.4. Are the Scriptures trustworthy in all they affirm? A. The Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments, being God-breathed, are infallible and inerrant in all their parts and are, therefore, trustworthy in all they affirm concerning history, science, doctrine, ethics, religious practice, or any other topic..."
3. In short—those who fear God, humbly believe everything His word says, about God, man, Christ, morality, and eternity...
4. [1] God—those who bow to Scripture—believe everything it says about God—as creator, redeemer, and judge...
5. This I trust is the obvious place to being—those who bow to Scripture believe there is only one TRUE God...
6. They believe that God created all things in six literal days—they believe that He both gracious, just, and righteous...
7. [2] Man—those who bow to Scripture—believe everything it says about man—as a responsible, fallen, creature...
8. [3] Christ—those who bow to Scripture—believe everything it says about Christ as the only way of salvation...
9. Acts 4:17-20—"Let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name. So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard..."
10. [4] Morality—those who bow to Scripture—believe everything it says about what is right and what is wrong...
11. In other words—they don't give in to the pressures of this world—but hold the truth regardless of consequences...
12. Let me briefly illustrate this with John the Baptist—who, if you remember, maintained the truth to his death...
13. Matt.14:3-4—"For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Because John had said to him, 'It is not lawful for you to have her'..."
14. [5] Eternity—those who bow to Scripture—believe everything it says about the eternal nature of heaven and hell...
15. Rev.1:9—"I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for (because of) the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ..."
16. Rev.6:9—"When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held..."

C. It submits to its commands

1. Gospel or Christian Fear not only trembles at God's judgments, believes His testimonies, but obeys His commands...
2. This is a point I intend to return to in a few weeks—that is—the connection between fearing and obeying God...
3. Let me simply say at this point—that these two are obviously and intimately connected—to fear God is to obey Him...
4. Deut.6:1-2—"Now this *is* the commandment, *and these are* the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe *them* in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged..."
5. Ecc.12:13—"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all..."
6. That is—every person who fears God will keep His commandments—these are necessarily and intimately related...

7. CHS—"He that knows the Lord aright also trembles with fear lest he should break God's law. He sees what a perfect law it is, and how spiritual it is, and how it overlaps the whole of human life, and the man cries, 'It is high; I cannot attain unto it; O my God, help me, I pray thee.' He views the law with reverence. He admires with a sacred fear. He trembles at God's word, not because he dislikes it, but because he cannot bear to be so far off from compliance with its righteous demands..."
8. [1] It is careful submission—by this I mean—it's a cautious and watchful obedience to each of His commands...
9. Those who fear God and His word—have a deep hesitation to offend God and to bring any shame upon His name...
10. Those who fear God—walk through this world—careful not to offend God by disobeying and breaking His commands...
11. Deut.28:58—"If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD, then the LORD will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues..."
12. [2] It is joyful submission—by this I mean—Christian or Gospel Fear produces a willful and glad obedience...
13. Ps.112:1—"Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who delights greatly in His commandments..."
14. Ps.119:161-162—"Princes persecute me without a cause, but my heart stands in awe of Your word. I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure..."
15. [3] It is loving submission, Ps.119:163—"I hate and abhor lying, but I love Your law" Ps.119-167-168—"My soul keeps Your testimonies, and I love them exceedingly. I keep your precepts and Your testimonies, for all my ways are before You..."

## II. Why it Bows Before the Word

1. Here—I want to suggest five reasons why those who fear God bow to His word—because of its authority, value, content, power, and perfections...
2. [1] Because of its authority—in short—those who fear God bow to His word because they hear and see God in that word...
3. We hear within Scripture the voice of God our Father, or our Father who art in Heaven—we bow to the word because we bow to Him...
4. Isa.66:2—"On this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word..."
5. Why does the poor and contrite spirit tremble at His Word—but because it is God's Holy and perfect Word...
6. 1Thess.2:13—"For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of god which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe..."
7. [2] Because of its perfections—that is—we behold within the word the glory, majesty, and splendor of God...
8. Though we distinguish God from His word, we can never separate them—the Scriptures are God-breathed...
9. Thus—many of the attributes of God are applied to Scripture—it's good, truth, unchanging, perfect, and just...
10. Jeremiah Burroughs—"Above all things in the world, the Word of God has the most of the glory of God in it..."
11. Ps.138:2—"I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; for You have magnified Your word above all Your name..."
12. While this is a rather difficult statement—I think it simply means—God is more clearly seen in His word than anywhere else...
13. God has elevated His word, that is His glory within that word, above every other means His name is known...

14. Albert Barnes—"The word of God - the revelation which he has made of himself and of his gracious purposes to mankind - is superior in clearness, and in importance, to all the other manifestations which he has made of himself..."
15. Ps.19:1—"The heavens declare the glory of God"—but, His word alone makes God known in glorious perfection...
16. [3] Because of its content—simply put—Christians bow to the word of God because of the transcendent truth it contains...
17. [a] It tells of a majestic triune God—this One God eternally exists as three co-equal persons—Father, Son, and Spirit...
18. [b] It speaks of man's creation and fall—what a privileged creature man is—yet how far he's fallen from that privilege...
19. [c] It tells of a loving Savior who made atonement for His people—it tells us about the GodMan who died and rose again...
20. [d] It tells of a great salvation that ends in a glorious resurrection—it tells us about salvation from sin, by faith, in Christ...
21. [e] It speaks of the eternal states of everlasting misery and happiness—it describes a glorious place called heaven and a terrible place called hell...
22. Jeremiah Burroughs—"In the Word of God there are wonderful, high, glorious, amazing mysteries that are revealed, mysteries to be trembled at...O the mysteries of salvation, they are such that are so infinitely above us that they cannot but cause trembling in the hearts of those that come to understand the glory of them. There's the mystery of election, of redemption, of the hypostatic union, of the death of the Son of God, sanctification, glorification. They are mysteries to be trembled at, in respect of the infinite depth, length, height and breadth of them..."
23. [4] Because of its power—that is—we bow before His word because we know what that can do in us and others...
24. The Scriptures describe themselves as a hammer, rock, fire, and a sword—all things that need to be feared...
25. Rom.1:16—"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek..."
26. Oh my dear friends—how powerful is the word of God in the hand of God's Spirit—to give life to dead sinners...
27. But—the same word used by the Spirit to give life in the first place—is the same word that keeps us to the end...
28. [5] Because of its general scope—by that I mean—we bow before the word because in it we behold our Beloved Groom...
29. The Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments—are the words of Christ to His chosen and beloved Bride...
30. Thus—Christians bow before the Holy Word of God because it contains a portrait of their beloved Husband...

### III. Lessons

#### A. Failure to bow before the word betrays the lack of Gospel fear

1. Your views of God are no better than your views of His word—no one loves God who doesn't bow before His word...
2. John Calvin—"Many boast that they reverence and fear God; but, by disregarding his word, they at the same time show that they are despisers of God. All the reverence that we owe to God must be paid to his word..."
3. Now—I fear that this statement describes, not only many Americans, but also, many professing Christians...
4. There are many who claim to love God, and yet, fail to bow before the holy, infallible, and inerrant word of God...
5. Thus—here I want to briefly suggest several ways in which this failure to bow before God's law shows itself...

6. But—as I suggest these—I want to search your own heart to see, if at all these responses are found within you...
7. Because—while it's true Christians bow to the word of God, they may in some sense struggle with these things...
8. [1] In DESPISING His word, Prov.13:13—"He who despises the word will be destroyed, but he who fears the commandment will be rewarded..."
9. To "despise" is to "hate or loath"—to view something without value—to treat it lightly or without importance...
10. Ps.50:17—"To the wicked God says: What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant in your mouth, seeing you hate instruction and cast My words behind you?..."
11. To "cast God's word behind you" means to treat it as an unholy thing—to think it's meaningless and useless...
12. Obviously, such people as this have never bowed to the Holy Word of God, and the reason being—they do not fear God...
13. [2] In IGNORING His word—such people are willing to hear the word, but they are rather indifferent to it...
14. It's something they endure for an hour or more on Sundays—but it's never a concern Monday through Saturday...
15. Ez.33:31—"So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them..."
16. My friends, be sure, if you come to hear the word of God, with no intention to obey them, you do not fear God...
17. CHS—"There is no practical regard to it, no weighing it, no considering it, no meditating upon it, no applying it to the conscience and the daily life..."
18. [3] In JUDGING His word—that is—a person who sits himself up above the word obviously does not fear God...
19. This is surely a very high crime, as instead of letting the word of God judge us, we instead judge the word...
20. A person who fears God, does not come to judge the word or preacher—but he comes to be judged by the word..
21. CHS—"There are men abroad nowadays – I grieve to say some of them in the ministry – who take the Bible, not that it may judge them, but that they may judge it. Their judgment weighs in its balances the wisdom of God himself..."
22. [4] In DISTORTING His word—that is—by perverting the true meaning of Scripture for their own personal gain...

#### B. All true Christians bow before the Holy Word of God

1. Though we all by nature, despise, ignore, reject, and ridicule His word, things change when you become a Christian...
2. A universal sign of saving grace—is that a person now humbly bows in submission before the Holy Word of God...
3. And—there are three areas where this becomes evident—[1] in the church, [2] in the home, and [3] in the heart...
4. [1] In the CHURCH—that is—we must bow to the holy word of God with regards to how the church is run...
5. Simply put—who has the authority within the church—who determines what the church is, and what it does...
6. My friends—let me put this as plain as I can—you don't, and I don't—no one does—none but God Himself...
7. God, within His word, determines how we approach Him in worship, and how we as a church are to serve Him...
8. 1Tim.3:15—"I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth..."

9. For example, every few years there are all sorts of fads and gimmicks suggested for how to grow the church...
10. [2] In the HOME—that is—we must bow to the word of God concerning how we order or govern our homes...
11. Here of course I'm largely thinking of heads of homes—who have the final responsibility to regulate the home...
12. Jer.24:15—"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"—and we will serve Him according to His word...
13. Now—how does this practically look—it means that everything done within the house is that which honors God...
14. It means we lovingly, humbly, and yet unashamedly—judge all that's done in that home, by the light of Scripture...
15. For example, take the word of God and judge your finances—does the way you spend your money honor God...
16. Or else, take the word of God and judge your activities, what you spend most time doing, does this honor God...
17. You see—these are simple and yet practical ways Christians are seen bowing before the Holy Word of God...
18. [3] In the HEART—by this I mean—we must get our consciences bound to the sacred and Holy Word of God...
19. Oh my dear friends—what a joy to have your hearts captivated to the holy, gracious, and unfailing word of God...
20. Everyone is bound to something or someone as a final authority—man by nature is bound to his own opinion...
21. Oftentimes, young people become bound to the opinions of their age—slaves of the fads and opinions of men...
22. Oh what a joy—to be liberated from the opinions of men—to have one's conscience bound to God's Word...
23. I was mentioning to someone the other day—how central to the Reformation was the principle of liberty of conscience...
24. Now—that the conscience is free to think as it pleases—but it's free to from the mere opinions and traditions of men...
25. It's free to be bound to the sacred Scriptures—to bow to God's Holy Word—to become slaves of righteousness...

#### C. God delights in those who bow before His Holy Word

1. This is a beautiful motivation for us to fear Him and His word more—to bow before His Holy and perfect Word...
2. Isa.66:1-2—"Thus says the LORD: heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist, says the LORD. But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word..."
3. Within v1 the Lord speaks of two places that He dwells—He dwells in heaven and He dwelt in the OC temple...
4. In v2 God describes the house that He chooses to indwell—poor and contrite sinners who tremble at His word...
5. Ps.51:16-17—"For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart —these, O God, ou will not despise..."
6. Jeremiah Burroughs—"All the beautiful objects in the world are not so lovely in the eye of God as a heart that trembles at the Word..."
7. What a great incentive to bow before the Holy Word of God—God looks to the one who trembles at His word...

8. [1] He looks at them with approval—this likely is in contrast to the external worship associated with the temple...
9. The Jews look to their temple for approval with God—as if it were these things that made them right with Him...
10. But—here God says—It's not to the temple with all its external glory, but to poor and contrite souls I will look...
11. John Calvin—"Though we appear to be wretched in our abasement and humility, and though we appear to be unworthy of being beheld by men, yet we are truly happy; because the Lord looks upon us, and bestows on us his favor..."
12. [2] He looks at them with delight—that is—He looks at them with love and delight so as to dwell with them...
13. [3] He looks at them with care—perhaps they are rejected by me, but God will look after their well-being...
14. John Gill—"He looks on these poor ones, and feeds them; on these afflicted ones, and sympathizes with them; on these contrite ones, and delights in their sacrifices, and dwells with them, and among them..."
15. Oh dear people—what a wonderful reason to humble ourselves this morning, and bow before His Holy Word...