

The Trembling Christian

R. Stanley, 1 January 2021

The “fear of God” is a major theme that runs throughout the Bible. These words occur nearly 100 times in it. We the modern Christians do not fear God as much as our forebears. All the evils in the society and the Church are the result of the loss of the fear of God. The words, “fear of God,” in the Bible come first from the mouth of Abraham. While sojourning in Gerar, he told the people that Sarah was his sister. The King took her being attracted by her beauty. But God warned him in a dream to return her to Abraham because she was his wife. When the king asked, Abraham why he lied, he replied, “Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will kill me in order to take my wife” (Gen 20:11).

The darkest passage in the Bible on the sinfulness of man is Romans 3:9-18. This is a quote from several texts in the Old Testament. The underlying reason for such wickedness of men and women is, “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (v18; Psa 36:1). The loss of the fear of God is the root; sin is the fruit. There’s so much of preaching and teaching on *Holiness, Worship, Word-study, Ministry and Leadership*. But even a cursory look at these aspects would convict us that we are definitely substandard and subnormal. The underlying reason is absence of the fear of God. In the following paragraphs we would see how the trembling Christian is indeed the triumphant Christian.

1. Holiness

The fear of God prevents us from sinning against Him. One of the early examples in the Bible is that of the Egyptian midwives. Because the Israelites were alarmingly increasing in number and strength in spite of the oppression by Egyptian taskmasters, the King commanded the two senior midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, to kill male babies while conducting deliveries (Ex 1:8-16). But these two dear ladies disobeyed the King’s order because they “feared God” (v17). God blessed their families because they “feared Him” (v21).

The Biblical teaching is quite clear: “By the fear of the Lord one departs from evil” (Prov 16:6). The Book of Proverbs is called the Book of Wisdom. It opens up with the words, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (1:7). Then it continues, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil” (8:13a). There are 14 references to the “fear of the Lord” in this Book. “Pride and arrogance” are mentioned as the imminent evil (v13b). A proud and arrogant man does not tremble before God. When God healed King Hezekiah of a terminal illness in answer to his prayer, he promised to God, “I shall walk softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul” (Isa 38:1-5,15). If we as God’s children do not tremble before Him with humility and brokenness, He knows how to bring us to that blessed state. God chastises us as our Father in order to make us “partakers of His holiness.” Such of His dealings must intensify our reverential fear for Him (Heb 12:9,10).

The reason why we deliberately continue in sin is that we have no fear of God’s *judgment*. Eccl 8:11, “Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Beloved, let’s not mistake God’s delays as His tolerance of evil. Here’s Paul with his challenge: Rom 2:4, “Do you despise the riches of God’s goodness, forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that

the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” We wrongly think that God’s final judgment is for unbelievers only. In no uncertain terms, the Bible teaches us that “WE must ALL appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ” (2 Cor 5:10). It’s with this knowledge of the “terror of the Lord,” the apostles persuaded men to get right with God (vv11,20). When Paul spoke about the future judgment, even a pagan Governor like Felix “feared!” (Acts 24:25). No verse in the Book of Proverbs speaks louder to our dull ears than 29:1, “He who is often reproved, and yet hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy!”

God in His New Covenant with us has not lowered His standard of holiness and righteousness. Rather He has blessed us with an inner ablement, through a new heart and new Spirit, to obey His holy laws. He promised, “I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me” (Jer 32:40; Ezek 36:26,27). He adds, “I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer 31:34b). Taking advantage of this “grace” of God, we lose our reverential fear for Him. But the Psalmist had a profound understanding of God’s forgiving love: Psa 130:4, “There is forgiveness with You, O Lord, that You may be feared.”

The fear of God should only be increasing all the time in our life. We are quite familiar with Proverbs 28:13, “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” We fail to look at the next verse which teaches us how to forsake the confessed sins: “Happy is the man who is always reverent, but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity” (v14). Oh the blessedness of trembling before God ever! Of all the characteristics of God, the one that should be dominant in our mind must be His Holiness. We have predictions and miracles in other religions also. But only the God of the Bible is all-holy! See how Prophet Isaiah trembled when he heard the heavenly chorus, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!” Even the foundations of the temple trembled! (Isa 6:3-5). Our reverential fear for God is proportional to our understanding of His Holiness.

The fear of God is the antidote for backsliding. The writer of Hebrews admonishes us, “Let us fear lest any of us comes short of entering God’s promise of rest” (Heb 4:1). He adds, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” by reminding us of the promise of God, “The just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him” (10:31,38). If you are backslidden, make sure that your sorrow is deep enough and repentance genuine enough. Only then you will be blessed with holy “indignation, fear, desire and zeal” (2 Cor 7:9-11). Philippians is an Epistle of Joy. It is in this Epistle, the writer calls us to work out our own salvation “with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). Salvation is not *of* works, but *for* works (Eph 2:8-10). Faith which does not manifest itself through works is dead (Js 2:17,20). While facing a temptation, do not consider what folks would think of you if you yield to it. Rather realize how God would look at it. The fear of man is a “snare” whereas the fear of God is “security” (Prov 29:25). This is how Joseph overcame an enticing temptation (Gen 39:9). The earliest written book in the Bible is the Book of Job. Here’s its opening sentence: “Job feared God and shunned evil” (Job 1:1).

2. Worship

While rejoicing on one side over the renewal in the worship of the Almighty, I'm also lamenting over the loss of reverence in the prevalent worship practices of the day. Who can beat the devil in inventing cheap substitutes? He hides from us the awesomeness of God. The repeated call in the Bible is to tremble before God, overwhelmed with awe. Psalm 99:1-3, "The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble! He dwells between the cherubim; let the earth be moved! ... Let all peoples praise His great and awesome name!" Psalm 114:7, "Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob!" God Himself asks His people, "Do you not fear Me? Will you not tremble at My presence?" (Jer 5:22). After witnessing the miraculous deliverance of Daniel from hungry lions, King Darius wrote, "I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom, men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel" (Dan 6:26a).

The fear of God is not a joy-killer. In fact, it is the fear of the Lord which imparts radiant joy as against wild happiness. The very first Messianic Psalm calls us, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Psa 2:11). One of the most frequently used Psalms of Praise calls us, "Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth!" (Psa 96:9). When the Ark of God was brought to be set in the Tabernacle of David, he delivered a Psalm into the hand of Asaph the chief musician which is an excellent call to worship and thank the Lord. We have it in 1 Chronicles 16:7-36. Do go through these 30 verses to catch the spirit of pure worship. In this Psalm, David specifically calls us to "tremble before the Lord" as we bring an offering to Him and worship Him in the beauty of holiness (vv29,30). David believed in dancing before the Lord as well as trembling before Him (2 Sam 6:14). Charismatic songleaders who encourage the believers to dance in God's presence should also exhort them to tremble before Him. Otherwise it would lead to lopsidedness and eccentricity. One reason why the gothic structures of our Church buildings of old had high ceiling was to give a sense of awe to the entrants! (Isa 6:1).

The fresh outpourings of the Holy Spirit during seasons of revival lead people to rapturous worship. It is when we are filled with the Spirit, we burst forth into singing and making melody in our heart to the Lord. Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs flow out spontaneously (Eph 5:18-20). Here again we must be cautious lest we lose the reverential fear for God and slip into frivolity. There are seven names given to the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 11:2, "Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of Wisdom, Spirit of Understanding, Spirit of Counsel, Spirit of Might, Spirit of Knowledge and Spirit of the fear of the Lord." We are interested in wisdom, knowledge and might which manifest through the Gifts of Revelation and the Gifts of Power. Consciously or unconsciously we leave out the "fear of the Lord!" Is it because it is the 7th and the last in this list?! God forbid. Whether it's prophecy or miracles, these are only means to bring us to the fear of God. The ultimate aim of the gifts of the Spirit is to make the presence of God real among us (Psa 68:18; Eph 4:8). It is in order to bring us the "rebellious" to a place of "reverence!" (1 Cor 14:24,25).

The word "Revival" is spoken of more frequently now than ever. This is welcome. My understanding of the Scriptures fills me with a jubilant anticipation of an unprecedented

endtime Revival before the Return of our Redeemer. But the worrisome fact is that we don't know what Revival is and what its purpose is. A classic prophetic passage on Revival, which is actually a prayer for Revival, is Isaiah 64. I urge you to use this entire chapter for your regular prayer for Revival. When God comes in revival power, even the mountains would "shake" at His presence (Isa 64:1,3). And the nations would "tremble" at His presence (v2). Which means, the unheard of would happen (v4). All the rubbish in us would be burned (v2). Genuine worship with shivering joy would be restored (vv5a,11). We would no more be depending on our own righteousness (v6). We would totally and unconditionally surrender ourselves to God as the clay in the potter's hand (v8). Beloved, let's beware of voluntary shaking of ourselves during worship sessions and deceiving ourselves that it's reverential fear! I plead with worship leaders to avoid all theatrical performance in our gatherings. God hates this. Some of our TV programmes are sure to stir up the holy anger of Isaiah and Jeremiah. How can you change your dress for each stanza while singing about the humble Carpenter of Nazareth? May be it's "Another Jesus!" (2 Cor 11:4). Are we enthraling the Almighty or entertaining the audience? Let's get broken over our broken altars! (Isa 64:11). That's the surest road to Revival (57:15).

Jesus has taught us to address God as "Our Father" (Mt 6:9; Jn 20:17). The Holy Spirit is enabling us to cry out to God calling Him as "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15). This dearness and nearness in no way should feign our reverence for God. Hear God's challenge: "If I am the Father, where is My honour? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence?" (Mal 1:6). Do you notice that these two questions are directed towards "priests?" Sad to say that the reverential fear for God, whose name is "*Reverend* and Holy," is evaporating from us who are called *Reverends*! (Psa 111:9). The Father and the Son are resident in us through the indwelling Holy Spirit (Jn 14:23,17). At the same time we must not forget the fact that "God is in Heaven, and we are on earth." We should therefore approach Him reverentially with fear and trembling. Our words in praise and prayer cannot be casual (Eccl 5:1,2). Jesus is the only begotten Son of the Father God. Nevertheless, see how the author of the Book of Hebrews brings Him before us as the supreme example for our subject under study: Heb 5:7, "Jesus in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear!" Intercessory prayers like those of Abraham must be characterised by reverential fear (Gen 18:27). He fell "prostrate before God" before God promoted him, and called himself "dust and ashes" even after his promotion (17:3-6; 18:1,2,27).

3. Word-study

The Bible is more than a book. It is the very Word of God in print. When we read the Bible, God speaks to us. Reading the Bible means hearing God's voice. If I read the Bible for an hour, it means I have been listening to God speaking to me for sixty minutes! Whether it's what Moses spoke or Paul wrote, whether it's what Job spoke or his friends, and whether it's the Psalms of David or the Proverbs of Solomon, as for me, it's the Word of God because God in His wisdom has included all these in the Bible as "Scriptures" (Rom 16:26; 2 Tim 3:15,16). Whatever may be the theological conflicts in this area, I believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible.

The testimony of the Psalmist must be ours too: "My heart stands in awe at Your Word" (Psa 119:161). When God gave the Ten Commandments, the people "trembled" (Ex 20:18). If people trembled over what they heard from Mount Sinai, our reverence for what God speaks to us, as from Mount Zion, should be even greater (Heb 12:21-25). Stephen the first martyr of the Church mentions this point: "The voice of the Lord came to Moses. He trembled!" (Acts 7:31,32). Look at Prophet Habakkuk's confession when he heard God speak to him: "When I heard, my body trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; ... and I trembled in myself" (Hab 3:16). Ezra was a Bible Teacher. God used him as a Reformer in the rebuilding of the House of God. It was no easy task. He recruited in his team only those who "trembled" at the words of the God of Israel (Ezra 7:6a,10; 9:4). God is not seeking men with skill and stamina. His eyes are towards those who "tremble" at His Word (Isa 66:2b). God has no respect for those who approach the Bible as learned professors. He demands childlike attitude (28:9,10). Children are known for humility (Mt 18:4).

Mary was chosen by God to be our Lord's mother because of His sovereign grace. The introduction of the angel to his announcement underlines this fact: "Rejoice, highly *favoured* one, the Lord is with you; *blessed* are you among women!" (Lk 1:28). However what made her great was her reverential submission to the Word of God. Though she did not fully understand the words spoken by the angel, she said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to Your Word!" (v38). Everytime we open the Bible, whether for meditation or memorisation or study, the prayer of little Samuel must automatically be offered to God: "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears" (1 Sam 3:9,10). Daniel, like John the Apostle, was given unusual revelations about the endtime. His attitude towards God's Word is amazing. When he heard the "sound of God's words," he "trembled" on his knees and on the palms of his hands (Dan 10:9,10). I have seen Brother Bakht Singh (1903-2000), an apostle, reading the Bible on his knees. It's said that juniors in the Army are supposed to get up from their seats while answering a phone call from a senior officer. I have been teaching young believers to develop the habit of meditating the Bible on knees. Once you lose this reverence, you will simply puff up with head knowledge without heart inspiration.

When we read the Bible with a reverential attitude, it will lead us to further brokenness. God breaks us in stages, area after area. No one attains total brokenness overnight. The Word of God is a hammer that can break the rocklike parts of our heart (Jer 23:29b). The problem with us is that we don't know how "hard" our heart is (Rom 2:5a). We may be thinking that we are quite broken before God with total yieldedness. That's why God challenges us, saying, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jer 17:9). Nothing exposes our heart to us like the Word of God which is a scanner as well as a scalpel (Js 1:23,24; Heb 4:12,13). We have heard of saints whose uncontrollable tears have spoilt the printed pages of their Bibles. Personally speaking, nothing breaks me a proud guy like the Word of God.

Trembling before God's Word is not just to stir up our emotional feelings. It's an expression of readiness and willingness to obey it. Even the devils believe and "tremble," but they don't obey God (Js 2:19). They are known for their rebellion against God's Word. They believe God's Word but twist it to their convenience as they obviously did

while tempting Eve and Jesus (Gen 3:1-5; Mt 4:6,7). Let's beware of the superficial and ceremonial reverence for the Bible without an obedient heart. That would be Bibliolatry! Apostle James calls us to receive God's Word with "meekness" (= reverence) (Js 1:21). That must be coupled with a willingness to obey; otherwise it's self-deception (v22). Absence of reverence hardens our heart lest the "implanted" seed of the Word takes root to sprout and grow to fruitfulness (Mt 13:20,21). Note the words, "immediately" and "joy," while Jesus referred to the stony soil in the Parable of the Sower (vv5,20). These are the sermon-tasters who fill our pews.

God is our compassionate Father. At the same time He is a "consuming fire." The Israelites "trembled" when they witnessed "the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking" when the Ten Commandments were first given (Ex 20:18). But they did not obey and so they perished. The writer of the Hebrews warns us: "If people who refused to obey the voice that came from a mountain perished, how can we escape if we turn away from the voice that comes to us today from Heaven?" (Heb 12:25). It is in this context that he calls us to "reverential obedience" and "godly fear," presenting God as a "consuming fire" (vv28,29).

4. Ministry

It's a sad observation that several Christian ministries, whether independent or institutional, are getting commercialised. Prophet Jeremiah's times are perhaps repeating. See how God is opening His heart of anguish with him: "Everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of My people superficially, saying, 'Peace, Peace!,' when there is no peace (Jer 6:13,14). This is the direct result of Preachers and Pastors not standing with trembling each morning in the presence of the God of Heaven and earth before facing people to minister to them. God did not choose me to serve Him because He "found" me faithful, but because He "counted" me faithful (1 Tim 1:12). This must be my constant realisation lest I lose my reverential fear for Him. Everytime I come across Isaiah 10:15, I'm convicted of my blindness and foolishness: "Shall the *axe* boast itself against him who chops with it? Or shall the *saw* magnify itself against him who saws with it? As if a *rod* could wield itself against those who lift it up, or as if a *staff* could lift up, as if it were not wood!" Four examples to drive home one truth!

During my school and college days I was one among about 40 students in the classes. I do not understand why God saved me also along with a handful. There are hundreds and thousands of Pastors and Preachers in India. I fail to understand why God chose me, along with just a few others, specifically as a Bible Teacher to teach Sound Doctrine. I'm not a Literature graduate but an Engineering graduate whose language is Mathematics. Why did God choose me to write for Him? I am a non-Seminarian but theologians and Bible College students read my writings with keen interest. Why Lord? Why Lord? Why Lord? He is silent but He turns my attention to Romans 11:20c, "Do not be haughty, but fear!" Any day I am what I am by the "grace of God," and I do what I do by the "grace of God" (1 Cor 15:10). I join Paul to confess, "I am not sufficient of myself to think of anything as being from myself, but my sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor 3:5). I often go to God with this realisation to wash His feet with my tears! I do not get words enough to thank Him. I imagine how much John must have trembled and his hands shivered when he baptized Jesus (Mt 3:11-16; Mk 1:7; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:27).

We are not doing God a favour in serving Him. It's we who are honoured to be His "fellow-workers" in His "field" and in His "building" (1 Cor 3:9). The "field" speaks of *planting* of Churches, and the "building" refers to *perfecting* the Churches. The first category of workers is farmers and fishermen, whereas the next one is builders and shepherds. In the very next verse, Paul speaks of the "grace of God" which made him a wise masterbuilder (v10). I am not able to think of a greater apostle than Paul, though he calls himself the "least of the apostles" (15:9). His testimony challenges me more than that of anyone. He tells the Corinthian believers, "I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling" (2:3). Honestly and humbly I would confess the same. Both while preparing a sermon and just before delivering it, I will have to use the restroom several times! When Dr. Billy Graham (1918-2018) showed how his palms would sweat before and during preaching, because of nervousness, there was a standing ovation in the 5000-delegate gathering of Itinerant Evangelists from all over the world in Amsterdam, Holland, in 1983. Can you think of such a frank testimony from perhaps the greatest evangelist in Church History? Oh the blessedness of trembling! Not only on the pulpit but also during ministry to individuals, we must maintain holy reverence. Examples: (a) While answering questions on our faith (1 Pet 3:15), (b) While restoring backsliders (Jude 22,23), (c) While correcting the trespassers (Gal 6:1).

Whenever we think of Priest Eli, what comes up is his shortcomings. Except for his utter failure in restraining his sons from ungodly deeds, there were so many plus points in his life. He was the one who encouraged Hannah when she poured out her grief before God (1 Sam 1:17). He was the one who taught young Samuel the first syllables of prayer (3:9). That which attracts me most in his biography is 1 Samuel 4:18. A messenger from the battlefield told him that Israel was crushingly defeated by the Philistines and his two sons were killed. But the moment the messenger reported that the Ark of God was captured, he fell down and died. We read that his heart was "trembling" for the Ark of God (v13). This should be the reverence we the servants of God should have towards ministerial things. We later read in 2 Samuel 6:9 how David spoke of his reverential fear for the ark of God when it was being brought back to Jerusalem. The ark represented the presence of God. Whenever we climb on the pulpit, we must have a conscious realisation of what Angel Gabriel told Zacharias: "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God" (Lk 1:19a). We must be more conscious of the Lord who stands beside us on the pulpit than the people who sit before us in the pews. This was the secret of Paul's powerful ministry of preaching (2 Tim 3:17a).

Mega structures are becoming status symbols for Preachers and Pastors. Beloved, we are to glory only in the Lord, and not in our "wisdom" or "strength" or "riches" for erecting such buildings (Jer 9:23,24; 1 Cor 1:31). What a magnificent temple Solomon built! But see what he said in his prayer of dedication: "Lord God of Israel, behold, heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this temple which I have built!" (2 Chr 6:18). Look at his posture when he offered this prayer: "He knelt down on his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread out his hands towards heaven" (v13b). Here's God's challenge to each of us, servants of God, whenever we undertake huge projects for the Kingdom of God: "Heaven is My throne, and the 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 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” (Isa 66:1,2). God pronounced severe judgment on King Nebuchadnezzar the moment he boasted, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built for *my* mighty power and *my* majesty?” (Dan 4:30,31). I lament that this Babel spirit is returning to Christendom with a secret desire “to make a name ourselves” (Gen 11:4).

The grave danger for Preachers is when people praise them, especially after a splendid sermon or a powerful prayer. What happened in the Apostles’ ministry in Lystra teaches us a landable lesson (Acts 17). When the pagan priest and the people were getting ready to garland Barnabas and Paul and worship them with animal sacrifices, they ran away “tearing their clothes!” (vv13,14). Already they had little clothing! (2 Cor 11:27b). Beloved, let’s be simply mirrors to reflect to God all the applause we receive from folks. God will never share His glory with anyone. He did not spare even a heathenic King like Herod when he failed to give Him all the glory following the people’s handclap for his oration (Acts 12:21-23). When Preachers and Pastors are adorned with reverential fear for God, the Church members would catch that spirit and “walk in the fear of God” (Acts 9:31). The oil flows always from the “head” to the garments (Psa 133:2). At any point of time in our life, dear Preacher friends, we must be able to say that we are serving the Lord with all humility and with many tears” (Acts 20:19).

5. Leadership

The fundamental principle of leadership was succinctly told by our Lord to His disciples in Mark 10:43,44, “Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your *servant*. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be *slave* of all.” This He said contrasting the secular leadership (v42). The status of a “servant” or a “slave” speaks of reverential fear. We know how a servant or a slave would stand before his master. Without this quality, all our qualifications worth nothing in leadership. The words, “servant” and “slave,” were in common usage those days when the slavery and bonded labour systems were in vogue. That’s why Paul addressed both the masters and the servants stressing the need for reverence and respect for each other. He wrote, “Servants, be obedient to your masters with fear and trembling ... And you, masters, give up threatening, knowing that your own Master is in Heaven” (Eph 6:5,9). In his last words, David said, “He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God” (2 Sam 23:3b). Mutuality of submission is unique to Biblical Christianity (Eph 5:21). Leaders must “esteem” the subordinates better than themselves and vice versa (Phil 2:3). Apostle Paul deeply appreciated the Corinthian believers for receiving his associate, Titus, “with fear and trembling” (2 Cor 7:15).

The kings of old were admonished to read the Book of God regularly in order to learn its principles so they might “fear” God and not “lift” their hearts above their citizens (Dt 17:18-20). King Jehoshaphat appointed judges for every city in Judah (2 Chr 19:5). The first thing he told them was, “Let the fear of the Lord be upon you” while dealing with issues (v7). He commanded them, saying, “Act in the fear of the Lord, faithfully with a loyal heart” (v9). Leadership problems in Churches, Missions and Christian organisations are mainly due to forsaking the principle of mutual respect and reverence. What’s necessary is not primarily the improvement of the system but the change of heart. We have too many Christian leaders who like the unrighteous Judge of Luke 18, neither

“fear God” nor “regard men” (v4). Fatherlike and motherlike leaders will accomplish more than authoritarians (1 Thess 2:7,11). Friendly leaders are becoming extinct (Jn 15:15).

Ezra was the leader for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, and Nehemiah for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Together both these Reformers and their books give us timeless lessons on leadership. We looked at Ezra under the third section namely, Word-study. Now comes Nehemiah with his selfless character. The former governors had burdened the people unendurably and extracted money and materials from them. Their yoke was heavy on the people. But Nehemiah behaved differently. He testified that he did not do things as the former rulers, because of the “fear of God” (Neh 5:15). What a difference it would make in our Churches and Ministries if our leaders would copy Ezra and Nehemiah! We desperately need this fresh breeze in our suffocating situation. When leaders lift themselves with pride and prejudice, God patiently keeps giving them time to repent. At one point He snatches the scepter from their hands and strikes their head with it (Isa 3:16,17). When they come to their senses, God restores to them years of leadership as He did in the case of King Hezekiah (Isa 38). Look at Hezekiah’s confession following this experience: “I shall walk softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul” (v15). A lofty king is brought to soft walk! Let all of us leaders take this decision right now: “I will hate pride and arrogance” (Prov 8:13). Let us fall flat before God before we stand up to lead men. There’s no other way. The way up is down. Jesus took the lowliest form before getting exalted to the loftiest position (Phil 2:5-9).

Conclusion

There are still so many areas not covered in this Article where we must behave as trembling Christians. Our very life must be characterised by this kind of brokenness (Psa 51:17). Apostle Peter admonishes us to “conduct ourselves throughout the time of our sojourning here in fear” (1 Pet 1:17). King Solomon ascertained, “I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him” (Eccl 8:12b). “The fear of the Lord prolongs days” (Prov 10:27). This speaks of the quality of life rather than its duration (v28a). The ultimate purpose of God in all His dealings with us is to make us like Him in holiness. On our part we can perfect holiness only if we walk in the “fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1). A Book of Remembrance is kept there in the portals of Heaven “for those who fear God” (Mal 3:16b). The Return of Christ will be the rising of the Sun of Righteousness for those who “fear” the Name of the Lord! (4:2).