

Sojourning In Fear

BY B. G. ECHOLS

It was a universal characteristic of Christians to address their prayers to God as Father. Without such a recognition of Him as Father, there is no true Christianity.

"Ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:1; see also Gal. 4:6). To think of God as Father is to think of kindness and concern. It is also a recognition of our sonship to Him. With this comes responsibility. "And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear" (1 Peter 1:17).

What is it to "call on Him"? It is to worship and rely on Him. Calling on God is descriptive of our whole life as disciples. Paul refers to Christians as "calling on the name of the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:2). This is one distinguishing mark of a Christian. Stephen died calling on the Lord (Acts 7:59). Saul had authority to arrest who called on the Lord (Acts 9:14). The words of Peter also remind us of Jesus' statement: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Mt. 6:9). Thus we must call on Him the way He has ordained. In so doing we show our dependence on Him. "Calling on Him" is more a habitual state of mind than a single act.

Earlier Peter had spoken of controlling our mind (1 Pet. 1:13), and living as children of obedience (1:14). Here is one powerful reason for so doing. God is the Judge. He will judge without partiality. "For Jehovah seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). Human judgment is not always without partiality. God's judgment is complete, unbiased, thorough, exact, and honest. We must not think that merely calling Him "Father" will prepare us for judgment. It is based on deeds (Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10). Thus every evil thought, empty word, and vain act will be open before Christ unless, by His grace and our faith, they are forgiven. As those who must eventually render an account to Him, we must lead lives of humble reverence.

Life is a brief span, a sojourn. Thus we must pass our time in fear. We must live before God in reverence, the fear of respect, not terror. Such an attitude of respect will motivate us to be ready for judgment. It is a fear of displeasing, a fear of causing pain to Him

Who loves us. It is a fear of courage. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more they can do.

But I will warn you whom you shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (Luke 12:4, 5). Our lives are to be lived reverently and humbly because of God's character, judgment to come, and the price of redemption.

The last is a basic fact which keeps our minds focused on proper living as children of obedience. "Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold..." (1 Pet. 1:18). Here also is another reason for controlling our minds. We have been redeemed. We must ever keep in mind the fact of our redemption. It was the turning point in our lives. We must not forget it. As we sojourn in fear, it is good to be reminded that there are some things which money cannot do. Money is almost omnipotent, but not quite. For at least one thing, we need blood.

A sojourn is defined as a "short stay." Christians are traveling through this life to their Father's house. Our brief life should be lived in the consciousness of our redemption and in fear of God upon whom we call as "Our Father in heaven." Then we will be ready to be judged.