



# THE CROSS

Concerned Christians

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## FEARING THE LORD?

BY ANDY POLAND GENERAL MANAGER

Is there a need for Christians to fear God? As a Mormon, I believed I needed to fear God in order to maintain my motivation to keep the commandments. I couldn't imagine it was possible to serve God without a healthy fear of punishment. I even used the following scriptures as fear motivation to support my belief:

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7).  
"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12).

When I became a Christian, 1 John 4:18-19 challenged my former beliefs:

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us."

No one who has the fear of punishment can know the love of God. So if that is true, what is the meaning of "fear" that is spoken of in Proverbs and Philippians? I was baffled until I read this verse in Proverbs 8:13:

"To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech."

Therefore to fear the Lord is not really "fear;" fear of the Lord is a hatred of committing evil acts.

Today my relationship with God has dramatically changed. I no longer have a "fear of punishment," but I have a strong "fear of the Lord" or hatred to do evil. The key to understanding how this is possible comes from understanding when a person receives forgiveness from the Lord.

Paul demonstrated in the book of Romans that forgiveness is received *before* we do good works.

"Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before!" (Romans 4:9-10).

The significance of those words means that salvation is something that occurs right now because of the love of God, not something that occurs in the future because of my good works. As a Christian I am not working towards forgiveness or eternal life. I already have it. The result of knowing that my salvation is behind me sets me free from the fear of future punishment or separation from God. My forgiveness has truly allowed me to experience the perfect love of God and has given me different motivations for keeping the commandments. My new motivation for keeping the commandments is gratitude and love for God. I no longer *have* to keep the commandments; I *want* to keep the commandments.

As a Mormon, I constantly worked towards forgiveness through continual repentance, causing me to retain my

fear of punishment or fear of separation from God. Therefore, my motivation for keeping the commandments was fear and a desire for personal reward for my good works. I kept the commandments for *selfish* reasons, not *selfless* reasons.

The difference between these two opposing views relates to the time that I receive salvation or eternal life. It comes down to the simplicity of two words. Are you saved *before* you keep the commandments or *after* you keep the commandments? I have a hope from God that does not leave because I have a salvation that is in my past and is not something I receive in the future.

Even though as a Christian I have been set free from the fear of punishment, I have a greater "fear of the Lord" or hatred of committing evil acts. One of the evidences of a true follower of Christ is the abhorrence of committing sin. Paul declares, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!" (Romans 6:14-15). Paul was adamant that sin should not be a part of the Christian life. "Why not say—as some slanderously claim that we say—'Let us do evil that good may result'? Their condemnation is just!" (Romans 3:8).

The reality of this existence is that we do not have the ability to completely eradicate all sin from our lives even after we have been saved. John said, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). James added, "For whoever keeps the whole law but stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (James 2:10).

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## FEARING THE LORD? CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

The key to knowing if someone is a true follower of Christ is determining if they have a hatred of committing sin. Hatred of sin does not mean that a person will stop sinning, but when they find themselves sinning will have a deep remorse for entering into that sin. Someone that claims to be a follower of Jesus but insists that grace gives them the ability to commit sin freely without remorse cannot say they have the “fear of the Lord.” Jude warned the early Christians, “For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord” (Jude 1:4).

Ultimately, a true Christian must be secure in his understanding that God has taken away the threat of punishment, and retain a deep hatred to commit sin. If someone has only one of these qualities the evidence shows that they are not a true believer and follower of Jesus. For those who have been born of God, Paul declared, “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).



## Letters!... We get Letters! From the Mailbag



**FROM KEARNEY, NEBRASKA:** Boy did I get a shock today. I have been attending a local church and we have a female pastor. She pointed out today that the men in the white shirts and black ties, that go door-to-door spreading their message are a good example. She didn't point out it is the wrong message and has nothing to do with Christianity. It might be a good example for Christians to go door-to-door, but that was not in her message. There was a man on the Christian radio station talking about LDS and he had it right. He mentioned that many cults take our Christian beliefs and give them a different meaning. It's too bad the pastor couldn't have listened to the program. She is a little lax on many biblical points and I wonder why I am still attending this church. I am pointing out how the bible stands and she doesn't like it. Keep up the good work and may the Force be with you.

**FROM TOLEDO, WASHINGTON:** We have neighbors who are Mormons, and one in particular has taught Mormonism for years. Such nice people and always willing to help (we live in a homeowner's development). Some other neighbors across from them are also a Mormon family. Another one of our friends told us today that a DVD is going to both couples. We so enjoyed the DVD. Thank you for your hard work to further the gospel and the understanding of it. (Editor's note: The referenced DVD is entitled, *The Bible vs. Joseph Smith* and is available through our web site). Blessings to you all.

**FROM MESA, ARIZONA:** Thank you for *The CROSS* and for insightful articles like why knowing the true God is important. My motivation for serving God came out of desire to be a god; not out of desire to be subject to God. Thank you for being deeply biblical. Thank you for loving

people, but in truth. Blessings on you all.

**FROM PARMA, IDAHO:** Thank you for what you are doing. As an “X” LDS, I appreciate your insights to what they believe. I have heard things I did not even know. Blessings.

**FROM OREM, UTAH:** Thank you for your quick response to my e-mail. I just left the Mormon church and I am now a born again Christian. Here is my address [for mailing the newsletter].

**FROM LOVELAND, COLORADO:** Keep up the good work in Gilbert – we have Christian friends who live there.

**FROM KINGMAN, ARIZONA:** Thank you for all you do to reach the LDS for Christ. God bless you and your ministry!

**FROM HUACHUCA CITY, ARIZONA:** Thank you for your continued endurance through these tough times financially. Even though money is tight, you continue to do the Lord's work in bringing the wonderful message of God to the lost. God bless you for that. Enclosed is our monthly donation. I hope it helps.

**FROM FLORENCE, ARIZONA:** You may remember me – I'm the woman who is Catholic and raised my 3 children Catholic. My older son joined the Mormon church in the mid-70's. I contacted you sometime in that era and you gave me hope. I prayed and tried to reach him but couldn't. He is now, I would say, a “fanatic.” I read everything that could help, but nothing reached him. I'm 80 years old now, and scared. He has never written to me, and contact with him is only by phone. I'm living in Florence now with my [other] son. Please call or write to me if you still have your meetings – maybe I can get there. Love and blessings to you.

# SET FREE BY GRACE

BY PAUL TRASK

*Reorganized* Latter Day Saints? Yes, I was one of them. Over 100 separate denominations came from Joseph Smith's original Latter-day Saint movement. And the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS) is the largest of these other groups, second only to the Utah church. You see, not everyone followed Brigham Young to Utah. Many stayed behind in the Midwest, including Joseph Smith's own wife Emma and her young son, Joseph Smith III. In 1860 Joseph III responded to a call from a group of congregations in Wisconsin, and became their Prophet/President. His mother Emma, joined this reorganization with him. They distinguished themselves from Utah Mormonism in two significant ways. First, they had Joseph Smith's own son as prophet and second, they completely rejected the doctrine and practice of polygamy. But if you search for this Reorganized church today, you won't find it. That's because in 2001 they changed their name to "Community of Christ."

I joined my wife's RLDS church shortly after we were married, at the age of 19. I was a member for 19 years, fifteen of which as a priesthood member (Priest & Elder). I was a Pastor on two separate occasions, and I also served as Counselor to the San Francisco Bay Stake Bishop. I've now been out of the RLDS (Community of Christ) church for over 20 years, though I have an active ministry to those we left behind ([www.help4rlds.com](http://www.help4rlds.com)).

I began being active in the RLDS church because of a significant encounter I had with the Lord, wherein He forgave me for a life of sin I had lived during my college days. I desired to repent and begin life with Him anew. And the Lord responded to my plea. In His faithfulness He washed me clean, and filled me with a love for Himself and for people. I devoured the RLDS scriptures and had a deep and sincere prayer life. My exuberance for Him (and the RLDS church) was evident to all.

But slowly, over time, my exuberance began to fade. You see, I was learning ever more about Joseph Smith, his "scriptures," and the Restoration Faith. Of course, I read the bible as well. But it was Joseph's so-called "Inspired Version," which was a substantial corruption of the King James Version. And so the genuine text of the real bible was taking an increasing "back seat" to the writings of Joseph Smith. Smith's emphasis on law and legalism was laying on me a heavier and heavier guilt trip, which was hard to bear. I learned that Zion could not become a reality until we were good enough to warrant it (shame on us!). The Lord was powerless to bring Zion until we shaped up! And as a priesthood member and pastor, I had heavy responsibilities to turn that around. But it wasn't working very well. The essence of the real gospel—grace—was a scarce and illusive commodity.

My life in the RLDS church had turned from joy into an endurance contest. How long could I "keep the faith?" And so in the midst of pastoring a fundamentalist RLDS

congregation, I finally prayed, "Lord, please release me from the bondage of the RLDS church!" Within a matter of months, and in a most surprising way, the Lord granted my wish. I resigned as pastor and our family left the RLDS church forever.

Eighteen months later I was enrolled in a seminary program, with all my Joseph Smith stuff packed securely away in boxes, both literally and figuratively. There I emptied myself of all I thought I once knew, and I allowed myself to be formed all over again—by the bible alone this time. And I discovered grace—or rather it found me! It has transformed my life, and renewed my exuberance for God and His people. I found this new, biblical reality summed up once on a bumper sticker, "Christians Aren't Perfect—Just Forgiveness." That's me now. As I make room in my heart for God, He lives His life out through mine. I still sin, but He cleanses me anew as I bring it to Him. And I've been set free of my former "works" orientation. I try my best to just get out of His way, and let Him do His own work through me.



## AMAZING QUOTES

FROM LDS CHURCH LEADERS

True  False



**"I believe that none of us can conceive the full import of what Christ did for us in Gethsemane, but I am grateful every day of my life for His atoning sacrifice in our behalf."**

Thomas S. Monson, closing remarks of the April, 2011 General Conference

### BIBLICAL RESPONSE:

While Mormonism teaches that the Garden of Gethsemane is where Jesus atoned for our sins, nothing could be farther from the truth. None of the gospel writers made any such inference. Scripture is clear that Christ's atoning sacrifice was completed on the cross.

**Colossians 1:20** "And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

**Colossians 2:13-15** "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

**Hebrews 12:2** "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

(Further scripture support can be found in [Romans 5:8-11](#)).



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Register now for Concerned Christians' National Conference:  
**"Should Christians be Concerned about Mormonism?"**  
 Mesa Convention Center / August 5 & 6, 2011  
 Keynote Speaker— Sandra Tanner

## We need Volunteers!

Should Christians be  
Concerned about  
Mormonism?

Concerned  
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**National  
Conference**

- Can you help out on the days of the conference?
- Could you hang a poster advertising the conference at your church or workplace?
- Could you help us hand out registration cards?  
Please contact [bob@concernedchristians.org](mailto:bob@concernedchristians.org)



## Concerned Christians' Funding "Wish-List" Can You Help?

- Billboard outreach
- Mass media outreach (DVDs)
- An LED business sign at Concerned Christians
- A state of the art color copier for mass printings
- Expanding radio coverage
- Video equipment for training and outreach