

7,8,21 Rom. 2 vs. 17-29 Soul vs. spirit; religion vs. spiritual life

This section of Romans focuses on Paul's indictment of religion. Religion involves much more than simply saying, "my church isn't religious, but the Catholic church is."

When the enemy sees that level of discernment, he knows that he can work with that.

So, what I did to prep for this, is explore the source or root of the religious mindset. It starts within us before it ever expresses itself outwardly.

There is a 'smallness' about religion that I feel many people, especially the religious, overlook.

Small people, filled with pride and self-satisfaction, tell God and each other the way things should be from an extremely limited understanding;

- which is the opposite of humility and teachability.

To use a couple of illustrations to show you what I mean by smallness; this first one was reported in an article by Barbara Olson called, "The Greatness of God and the Triviality of Gods." Here's an excerpt from that article;

Several years ago, the actress Shirley MacLaine delighted a large television audience when, by standing with open arms on the shore of the Pacific Ocean, she began to sing loudly, "I am God, I am God, I am God." This was shown in the television mini-series "Out on a Limb" in 1987."

The Lord looked down from heaven on this tiny human, with a voice that could barely be heard, screaming that she was God.

There's nothing more blinding than pride – just like Lucifer, who decided that he could go to war against the Almighty and win.

Our Lord simply states: “Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Mat. 23:13).

Here’s another illustration of this from Baxter’s book, “The Central Theme of the Bible”, it shows how close we often come to having a religious spirit. He writes,

“Is the capability of amazement becoming strangely perverted in modern man? Are we so occupied with wondering at little things which only *seem* big, that we do not marvel anymore at the things which are *genuinely* big? We are so in the habit of marveling at clever new man-made things that we are losing our marvel at the sunrise, the sunset, and the procession of the seasons . . . (we are impressed, even in awe, with cathedrals and the outward show of religion, rather than astonished at the Incarnation and Resurrection of the Person those churches claim to honor). We think of ourselves as wonderfully superior and informed, when in fact it may be that we are mere children, too busy playing with exciting new toys to have an adult sense of wonder at what is really marvelous.”

If our understanding of the Lord was based on spiritual revelation instead of what the author to the Hebrews calls “elementary teachings”, we would be less impressed with what man has made and more impressed with what God has made.

Do you ever suddenly realize something about God that sort of stuns you – and you just sit in amazement for a few minutes?

An author I was reading recently discussed what he called, “the never-ending surprise.”

For those who belong to the Lord, eternity will be a time of unending astonishment, as we learn more and more about Who our God is. We’ll be exploring “the unsearchable riches of Christ” forever.

Since the Lord is infinite, our growth in understanding and amazement will also be infinite.

We are invited to ‘taste and see that the Lord is good’ in this life as merely a sample of the ages to come.

Now, in our section of Romans 2; to focus on the specifics of Paul's arguments against religion, he addresses people who think they've found a way to be justified before God, apart from receiving the free gift of forgiveness in Christ, here are their options.

First, they could plead ignorance (Rom. 2:12a)

“For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law . . . “

They could say, "I didn't know anything about any 'Law of God'"

This one won't work, because vs. 15 shows that they have not only violated God's Laws, they have violated their own conscience as well. If *they* were the judge, and if they were totally honest, they would have to condemn themselves.

Vs. 15, “They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or excuse them.”

Or, their second option, they can claim they've kept the Law and earned their justification.

This one fails, because Rom. 2:13 says, “It is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.”

In Romans 2:17-29 Paul expands on this by focusing on the religious Jew.

Even though the context is limited to Paul's anger (and a little bit of sarcasm thrown in) directed at Judaizers, the application is to all religious people.

We saw last week in the first part of Romans 2, that the basis of all God's judgment, all justice, is performance.

Unbelievers face their “performance-test” at the Great White Throne where the issue will be entrance to heaven or banishment to the Lake of Fire.

Believers will never have to face this judgement - they face theirs at the Bema seat where the issue is rewards or loss of rewards; not salvation.

And Acts 17:31 shows us the standard God is going to use.

“. . . He has set a day when He will judge the inhabited world in righteousness by a Man whom He has appointed.”

Jesus of Nazareth is the appointed Judge and His life as representative Man, the last Adam, is the standard of righteousness God will use to measure humanity.

So, keeping these principles in mind, here are some dangers that come out of this section of Romans regarding religiosity.

Religious people believe they are superior because at some time in the past, God has shown them favor;

(2:17) “But if you bear the name ‘Jew’ and rely upon the Law and boast in God . . . You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, are you not (now) dishonoring God?”

As important as our past may be, it’s the present and the future that matters the most.

Pride is always a danger anytime God gives us light – this is why Paul had to receive a thorn in the flesh “due to the abundance of revelations given” to him.

God shows us some amazing truth, totally by grace, and we almost immediately forget that it came from Him, from His Spirit – we didn’t “figure it out”.

If we "figure something out" in the Bible, it's likely to have no spiritual value or content at all. It's just dead, cold, doctrine or theology; and rather than rejuvenating us and enhancing our spiritual life in Christ, it leaves us religious, critical, and proud.

Second Danger: Religious people are generally critical of those who they consider to have lesser light;

(Lk. 18:9-14) "And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you; this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

How much we know is much less important than how obedient we are to the light we have.

In the parable, we have a religious man and a sinner, a loser. One is excited about how great he's doing; the other one knows he needs God. One is living in a fantasy world; the other is seeing himself and life the way it really is. So, one is forgiven; the other one sees no need for forgiveness.

Which leads to the third danger: The self-righteous are always self-deceived;

(Rom. 2:21-24) "You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit

adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the Law, through breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? For 'the Name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you.'"

Self-righteousness is the single most self-blinding of all character traits.

As important as outward obedience is, it can easily gravitate into religion if we aren't careful.

(Rom. 2:28-29) "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter . . . "

True spirituality is based on the attitude of the heart, not outward rituals and religious traditions.

Christianity as Christ meant it to be, is an inward relationship *expressing itself* in an outward way. We become what we are outwardly only because Christ is at work inwardly shaping and directing our lives.

What I'm going to read now is a definition I found of 'spirituality' that would be good to consider. It shows where and how the Spirit is working and what He is seeking to accomplish.

It helps us understand the inner man of the heart.

"The strength of the Lord's people is none other than the strength of the Holy Spirit in the inward man. Right at the very center of the being, deeper than thought or reason, deeper than emotion or feeling, deeper than all that which comprises the outer man which, under given circumstances, may prove weak and incapable of standing up to the situation. In the variations of our soul life, the changes of our moods, our ideas, our attitudes, our feelings, our minds; deeper down there is that strength which does not let

us go. That is the true nature of spirituality. It is not the tremendously forceful conviction of our intellects or the mighty power of our wills. When these cannot stand up to conditions of intense spiritual antagonism, opposition or confusion, there is the more inward thing, in the inward man, which is of God, the Holy Spirit: 'Strengthened with might by His Spirit into the inward man.'

"Test that out and the result is that when the mind is bewildered by the perplexity of a situation, and the arguments are all in the direction that a mistake has been made, a wrong course has been taken, everything is false – when all the feelings are churned up, disturbed, anxious, fearful, or when there are no feelings at all, they are simply petrified by the position – when circumstances are all arguing in the opposite direction of that which we, in the purest moments of our fellowship with God, determined upon. Then spirituality is proved by that inward strength which abides: that standing when you cannot go forward; that holding when you can do nothing; that remaining when all the forces are seeking to sweep you off your feet. That represents a measure of spirituality. That is the true nature of the child of God. In a sentence, true spirituality is not to live on the outside; it is to live with God right down deep in the inner part of your own being, where He, the Spirit, is."

It's the difference between a house built on sand (Christianity) versus a house built on a rock (a real, genuine, deepening relationship with Christ).

This is why Paul is indicting religion in Romans chapter 2. It not only destroys us, but it also grieves and quenches the Spirit within us.

Theime used to call religion "Satan's ace trump". It's the original sin of Lucifer – when in his pride he determined that it would be him, not God, that creation worshipped.

Of all the evils that exist in the universe, whether angelic or human, the one thing God hates more than anything else is religion – it deadens the soul, separates us from genuine spiritual life in Christ, and makes the world mock us and blaspheme God.

The inside of the cup will always be more important than the outside for the simple reason that unless the inside is genuine, the outside will be dead works at best.

And our Christianity has to be that which, as Paul says in Rom. 2:29, "is inward, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God".

To further explain the pitfalls of religion, which Paul demolishes in Rom. 2, we need to see the difference between the source of religion, which is our souls, and the source of true spiritual life, which is in our spirits.

As you know, the soul is mind, emotion and will. All three of these can generate an incredible amount of religious activity, which can be overwhelmingly convincing; especially if it's kept up-to-date with everything that is popular in contemporary Christianity.

The will chooses to pursue the mission and values of the church; the mind studies the Bible and current church growth books and makes plans; the emotion drives the implementation of those plans and impresses the congregation with the genius of the church leaders for what they've come up with.

The human spirit, on the other hand, cares *only* about God's plans and moves in the power and direction the Holy Spirit Who *always* aligns Himself with the eternal purpose of God in Christ.

If you explained these differences to 90% of today's evangelical pastors, they would totally agree with you, and double-down on their belief that they are in the spiritual, not religious, camp.

Which is impossible, because the Bible clearly states that in this time in history, in our generation, the majority of the churches will be in a state of apostasy. For the most part, the church of 2021 will be an imitation, having only a 'form of godliness'.

And don't forget that this is exactly what Israel's and Laodicea's response was to the teaching of the Lord – “we're doing great and looking forward to 'well done good and faithful servant' when He returns.”

Rev. 3:17 says, “*You say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.*”

It seems like no matter who you talk to, they always believe that deception characterizes the 'other guy'; not them.

So, to help us go a little deeper into how to ensure we are on solid ground, we need to know more about the function of our spirits.

If we operate in the soul, we're going to be deceived; living in spiritual ascendency is our only hope of avoiding what Paul presents in Rom. 2:29,

“... circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

Those who live in the soul, in the flesh, who seek the praise of men, forfeit the praise of God.

I think the best way to understand this is to look at an article by Sparks that details what the human spirit is made up of, and what it does for us. He's drawing from a passage in Heb. 5:14, which says,

“Solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their (spiritual) senses trained to discern good and evil.”

In the context of Hebrews, 'good' refers to spiritual life and growth; 'evil' refers to religion – the outward over the inward.

You probably noticed that the word 'senses' is in the plural. We have one human spirit that comes to life at the new birth; but that spirit, by God's design, has several 'senses' within it.

Here's what Sparks wrote,

“You will recall that phrase, ‘have their senses exercised (or trained)’. Do you see the force of senses now? There are faculties for discriminating. These senses are those which are given to us with our new birth; for with new birth, we have a new set of senses. As in the physical our five senses are seeing, hearing, tasting, touching and smelling, so in the new birth, that which is born of the Spirit, there is a new set of spiritual faculties or spiritual senses; that is, faculties for seeing spiritual things which the natural man cannot see; hearing, ‘He that hath an ear...’; tasting, touching, scenting.

“These are very real things in the spiritual life, but every newborn babe truly born of the Holy Spirit has these faculties, though they are not yet properly functioning. And when you put all the senses together you can sum them up in two words, spiritual perception or spiritual intelligence. There is a word used very much in the New Testament instead of perception. It is discernment. (1 Cor. 2:15), ‘He that is spiritual discerns ...’.

“It would be impossible to place too much emphasis upon the value of spiritual discernment, spiritual perception. It is an inclusive faculty of fundamental importance, the faculty of spiritual intelligence, perception, discernment.

“For lack of this the Lord’s people are kept in infancy, and the church is kept in infancy, and the church and the Lord’s people are therefore a prey to all sorts of things; all sorts of deceptions. They are a prey to anything that is presented to them in a persuasive way. They are open to anything that has a real, sound argument based upon Scripture. They are a prey to anything that comes along in any guise using the language of Scripture.

“The range of perils for the undiscerning is almost limitless, and how necessary for all the Lord’s people to have in the midst of them those who have discernment, who have spiritual intelligence. So, a vessel, an instrument related to God’s full purpose, to His fullest thoughts, is one characterized by this factor of spiritual intelligence, senses exercised to discern.

“If only, that among the Lord’s people there were more of those who saw through, ‘quick to discern’, quick of scent. This is a need. It is a matter of absolute importance, and it is an indispensable thing to real service, that there shall be spiritual discernment, spiritual perception, the power of discriminating, senses exercised.

“This is just the opposite of impulsive or mechanical action. So many receive a kind of impulse, a presentation, a soul-impact, an appeal, a vivid picture, a thrilling story; and that is made the instrument of appeal to go out to serve the Lord: it is pure soul, and a lot go out under the impact of such an appeal. I have known of young people going to a series of missionary meetings extending over a week, and one night it was China, and the next night it was India, and the next night it was somewhere else. The first night they were sure they were called to China, and they were going to offer themselves to China; and the second night they were sure they were called to India, and were going to offer to India, and the third night they thought they were called somewhere else; and if they had done what they decided to do, they would have offered themselves to every country during the week.

“It is the difference between impulsive mechanical action and senses exercised to discern. It is the difference between external instruction and the Spirit of the Lord inwardly making known. It is the birthright of every child of God to know the voice of the Lord in his or her own spirit. It is maturity when we come to that and all the other is commanded to stand back while we listen to the Lord, while we detach ourselves and let all the emotion and heat of the hour fall away, and our heart hears the voice of the Lord. That is maturity, that is sonship, that is spirituality, and that means God entrusting with responsibility. He needs such a personal walk with Himself in which all things are tested in His presence.”

You can see how impossible it is for the natural or soulish man to distinguish between that which is spiritual and that which is religious. All he has to work with are his five senses.

His senses give him input from his environment and his mind interprets what comes in.

Christians can function exactly the same as the natural man.

(1 Cor. 2:14) “The natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

(1 Cor. 3:1-3) “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly (soulical) . . . and are walking like mere men (the natural man).”

(Heb. 5:12,14) “By this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you . . . you have come to need milk and not solid food (which) . . . is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”

The main point in Heb. 5 is that unless our spiritual senses are trained in discernment, we will interpret the condition of pastors, churches and our own spiritual growth with our mind and our emotions – in other words, *our soul will rule our Christianity*.

Dostoevsky once wrote, “It takes something more than intelligence to act intelligently.”

And that is what Paul’s is warning us about in Romans 2 and in 1 Cor. 2, and what the author of Hebrews is warning about in Heb. 5.

The primary characteristic of contemporary Christianity in America, is that it’s a religion of the soul.

The appeal in most churches is not to the spirit, it’s not providing in-depth teaching designed for spiritual growth; it’s either an appeal to the mind in intellectual churches like those who are Calvinist or Reformed, or it’s an appeal to emotion in many of the charismatic churches.

Another illustration: Four people walk into a Sunday morning service at a large, popular contemporary church.

The first one rocks out to the worship music, listens to the message, watches everyone smiling, hugging and slapping backs, and thinks – ‘this is perfect’. And he settles down for the long haul.

The second person sees all the same things, but feels something isn’t right; he just doesn’t know what it is. But this guy is hyper-critical, so he leaves, not necessarily for the right reasons.

The third person also feels something is wrong, and can’t identify it. He’s not hypercritical, he’s just a young believer sensing something, but this is kind of new to him, so he can’t identify the reason for what he’s sensing. He did notice that the worship leader isn’t wearing skinny jeans, and that’s a deal breaker for him; so he’s out of there.

The fourth person instantly knows that this church is operating from the soul, not the spirit. He’s not fooled by the hype or the feel-good message. His spiritual senses are well-trained; he knows exactly what’s happening.

If a church is exciting and upbeat, most people will go for it on that basis alone.

One dead giveaway of a religious, Laodicean church is its *emphasis*.

Laodicea’s mindset always started with “I . . . “I am rich / I am increased with goods / I have no need”, etc.

Religion is self-directed; spirituality is Christ-centered.

Since every evangelical church believes they are Christ-centered, in spite of the fact that the Bible clearly predicts a nearly complete departure from that position in this generation, called a great “falling away”, I need to spend a few minutes explaining what “Christ-centered” actually means from God’s standpoint.

These excerpts are from a book called, “The Kingdom that Cannot be Shaken”;

“. . . *until* the Lord’s people get the right attitude, the right point of view, that is, that all things in God’s full and final concern are centered in God’s Son, *they have not come into line with God’s (spiritual) resources*. While the direction is toward ourselves — (i.e. things done for *us*; rather than what

we've been brought into for *Him*) — or toward anything less than the Son Himself, *we have not got God's dynamic for accomplishing His work*, and therefore it becomes necessary, as the sufficient, the adequate basis of the Holy Spirit's operation, that there should be a revelation of Jesus Christ in the heart, for *it is (only) in relation to Him and what God has purposed concerning (Christ) that all the energies of God are released and made active.*

(There has to be an exclusive connection to God's purpose in Christ for the church to experience God's resources for the accomplishment of that purpose.)

“. . . divine fulness will be proportionate to the measure in which the purpose of God governs (our mindset) . . . If the setting up or building of something on this earth in any way governs our consideration, our activity, God is not in that. He is not giving Himself to anything that is not according to the eternal purpose. . . Divine disfavor will rest upon all that stands in the way of the full thought of God. Hence there has to be discrimination in work, in method, in means. Is this God's purpose? Is this the way *to reach* God's purpose? Is this the means that God would employ? And so often in the light of a true spiritual understanding of what God is after, and how God reaches what He is after, there has to be a shedding of a very great deal in the work of the Lord. And that requires that, so far as the Lord's servants are concerned, they shall be marked by true adjustability. . . (the role of the pastor) is to keep God's full purpose in view. It is essential to God (that this be so) . . . (pastors) are going to be judged by that.”

Now, compare that with these passages;

(Ezek. 13:10) “It is because (the prophets) have misled My people by saying, ‘Peace!’ when there is no peace. And when anyone builds a wall, they plaster it over with whitewash.”

(2 Tim. 4:3) “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires.

Is the primary characteristic of the pulpit ministry of American churches to “keep God's full purpose in view” or to tell people what they want to hear?

As this author put it,

“It is the duty of every true Christian to study so as to be quite clear as to what that Eternal Purpose is. Having done so, everything that arises to engage us must be brought to the judgment bar of that purpose, and interpreted in its light.”

Now, let’s get more personal with this. And as I read these passages, keep in mind that “fire” in the Bible refers to judgment (as in the “lake of fire” for the unbeliever in Rev. 20). The warning of fire for a believer has to do with discipline and loss of reward, not loss of salvation.

(Heb. 6:7-8) “Ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.”

(John 15:6) “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.”

(Heb. 10:26-30) “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries . . . For we know Him who said . . . ‘The Lord will judge His people.’”

(Heb. 12:25) “See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven.”

(1 Cor. 3:14-15) “If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

The reason for all these warnings is that the Hebrew and Corinthian Christians were failing to distinguish between soul and spirit:

(Heb. 4:12) “The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

The warnings in Hebrews were given to believers involved in two things:

- 1) They decided to escape persecution by going back to temple worship. Judaism was allowed by Rome. They were unwilling to stay with the remnant “outside the camp” (in the underground church) who were going on with the Lord.
- 2) And stagnation – as Heb. 5 & 6 pointed out, they were not going on to maturity; they were not abiding in Christ. They remained in prolonged spiritual infancy.

This would cost them their lives in time and their inheritance in eternity. So, when I said earlier that ‘religion destroys’, you can see that that’s true on many levels.

The ‘Day of Visitation’ we have entered in the last part of this dispensation, is a time in which the Lord is dividing Christendom into soul and spirit – He is separating what men have made, out from the soul, from what Christ has built, which flows from the Spirit.

He is separating believers locked into the Christian religion from those who are living by the resurrection life of Christ.

This was the problem in Hebrews and Corinth, and it’s the problem now.

The church of the West is in the same spiritual condition as Israel was at the time of Malachi. You can read Malachi to see the confusion and resentment in those the prophet confronted.

What we can do individually, is study the scriptures in conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit, not our intellect, not our emotions - and pray that the Lord will bring our spirits, with all the spiritual senses they contain, into full operation and maturity, so we can see ourselves, the world around us, and the church, for what they really are, and avoid the pitfalls the enemy has brought to the people of God in this generation.

So, after a study like that, even though I don't want to lessen what Paul calls "the goodness and severity of God" in Romans 11:22, because these things we've looked at are real and need to be taken seriously, at the same time, we need to remember Who it is that we are in relationship with through all of this.

Even Demas is loved with an everlasting love.

So, I'll close with a true story that occurred in 1934 in England.

"The prince of Wales was visiting a small hospital where thirty-six hopelessly injured and disfigured veterans of the First World War were held. He stopped at each cot, shook hands with each veteran, and spoke words of encouragement. He was escorted to the exit, but he observed, 'I understood you had thirty-six patients here; I have only seen twenty-nine.' The nurse explained that the other seven were so shockingly disfigured that for the sake of his own feelings, he had not been taken to see them. The prince insisted that he must see them, and he stayed long enough to thank each soldier for the great sacrifice he had made, and to assure each that it should never be forgotten. Then he turned to the nurse again, 'But I've seen only six men. Where is the seventh.?' He was informed that no one was allowed to see him. Blind, maimed, dismembered, the most hideously disfigured of them all, he was isolated in a room which he would never leave alive. 'Please do not ask to see him,' the nurse pleaded. The prince, however, could not be dissuaded, and the nurse reluctantly led him into the darkened room. The royal visitor stood there with white face and drawn lips, looking down into what had once been a fine man, but was now a terror to behold. Then the tears broke out, and with the impulse of love, the prince bent down and reverently kissed the cheeks of that broken hero."

The author's comments were,

“There is One who has stooped far lower, to kiss a far worse ugliness. There never was a story to equal it. Calvary is the gracious, compassionate, redeeming kiss of the condescending Prince of Heaven upon these sinful hearts of ours.”

Hebrews tells us that our God is an all-consuming fire. Hebrews *also* tells us that He is also a Savior Who will never leave us or forsake us.

I believe it was F.F. Bruce who said (and I’m paraphrasing from memory);

“Reverence and awe in the presence of the holiness of God are not incompatible with gratitude, trust and love in response to His mercy.”