

A walk with Mr O (16)

Afraid of God?

Mr O, may I ask you a question that I've never asked anybody before?

The answer is obviously 'Yes'. But I'm intrigued.

I don't want to be too intrusive or personal; but are you ever afraid of God?

Before I answer, I would really like to know where this question has come from. What has prompted it?

It's quite simple, really. The other day, when I was out walking by the river, I was thinking about God. I was thinking about His eternity and how He has always existed. Then I began to think about the fact that the whole of His being is present in all places; that He is always the same; that He knows everything; that He is holy and just and strict and powerful and wise and inescapable

I could feel my heart racing and I began to be a bit dizzy. Then I thought of these millions of galaxies which He just spoke into existence; of the fact that He is pure spirit; that He is Three and yet One; that He has a plan which unfolds in every detail of every event; that He is the Judge of all humans and angels; and that He is the one who sends every one of us to either hell or heaven.

At this point, Mr O, I was completely overcome. I couldn't take any more. I was scared out of my wits and had trouble walking home. When I got back I was trembling and nauseous.

Was it wrong of me to feel as I did? What do you think? And are you ever afraid of God?

Yes, I am very afraid of God. But you need to know that the experience you had, although life-changing, was defective. Can you see why?

When I was ten years old I needed some extra help at school ,so, for just a term and a half, my parents sent me to a little private school run by a certain Mrs Longman. This formidable lady was fierce. I was terrified of her. Yet I loved her with the whole of my being. I would have done anything for her. Deep down I just knew that she cared about me. She rescued me educationally and I owe her a debt that I can never repay.

It is not wrong to be scared of God. 'The fear of the Lord' is encouraged from one end of the Bible to the other. But it is wrong to have a one-sided view of God. It is sinful to forget His tenderness.

In eternity He lovingly elected millions of men and women to be saved from their rebellion, sin and misery by a Redeemer. So it was that the eternal Son of God became man, living perfectly on earth before dying our death on the cross. The most overwhelming thought that can pass through a human mind is that 'the Son of God loved me and gave himself for me.'

Risen from the dead, the Son of God lovingly applies His redemption to us by means of His Word and Spirit. Who can ever recite the wonders of justification, adoption, sanctification, and the assurance of God's love? These are blessings that we enjoy in this life. And what shall we say of the blessings that God's tenderness will give us in the future? These are Christ's presence in death, resurrection to glory, acquittal at the final judgment, and the full enjoying of God throughout eternity!

Mr O, as you talk about God's grace I can feel my heart leaping in a way that it didn't during my other experience. Because He is so awesome I still feel that I want to run away from Him, and yet because He is so kind I want to run to Him. If you like, I want to hide from Him and I want to hide in Him.

And that is what authentic spiritual experience looks like. We worship Him. We are awe-struck and reverent. Always. And yet at the same time we bathe in the warm ocean of His infinite, eternal, unchanging and undeserved love.