

# The Fear of the Lord

This page contains multiple miscellaneous resources (sermons, dictionary articles, devotionals, concordances, etc) related to the fear of the Lord or the fear of God. Here is a simple index to this page.

- [Introduction](#)
- [Selected References on the Fear of the LORD](#)
- [Quotations on Fear of the LORD](#)
- [Other Resources Related to the Fear of the LORD](#)
- [Webster's English Definition of Fear](#)
- [Fearing God Overview - Dr Robert Morey](#)
- [Why We Should Fear God](#)
- [Psalm 128: Blueprint For A Satisfying Home - Steven Cole](#)
- [C H Spurgeon on Fear of the Lord](#)
- [All the Day Long - Sermon by C H Spurgeon](#)
- [The Fear of God by Wilhelmus A'Brakel](#)
- [The Secret of the Lord is with Those who Fear Him by J. C. Philpot](#)
- [Nave's Topical Bible: Fear of God](#)
- [Thompson Chain Reference Fear of God](#)
- [The Topical Concordance - Fear](#)
- [The Fear of the Lord - Charles Bridges](#)
- [Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature](#)
- [Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible - Fear](#)
- [Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology - Fear](#)
- [Holman Bible Dictionary - Fear](#)
- [The Fear of the Lord - Bible.org](#)
- [1901 Jewish Encyclopedia - Fear of God](#)
- [The Fear of God - By William S. Plumer](#)
- [Those Who Fear God! - William Nicholson](#)
- [The Heart United to Fear God - William Nicholson](#)
- [He is the one you are to fear! - James Smith](#)
- [On Godly Fear - Thomas Reade](#)
- [The fear of the LORD - Derek Prince](#)
- [Walking in Fear of the Lord - Warren Wiersbe](#)
- [The Fear of the Lord - Charles Stanley](#)
- [The Fear Of The Lord - Andrew Murray](#)
- [Humility and the Fear of the Lord - Bob Hoekstra](#)
- [The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom - A. W. Pink](#)
- [The Worth of Wisdom, and the Fear of the Lord - William Arnot](#)
- [The Christian's Perspective - James Smith](#)

## INTRODUCTION

As **Jon Courson** says "Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Solomon says the **fear of the Lord** is the foundation. The **fear of the Lord** is the single most important essential. The **fear of the Lord** is where it all begins."

When we come to the subject of the fear of God, the Bible speaks of **fear** of the Lord in some 295 verses! Scripture speaks of men fearing God, His name, His Law or His Word. In the OT there are 235 ref to the **fear of God**. In the NT there are 43 references to the fear of God which, by the way, is the same number of references as man's love to God. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible proclaims that the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life and those who drink deeply of it shall have the blessings of God in this life and in the life to come. However, those who reject the fear of the Lord will end up in the ways of death. The fear of God is the predominant response to and fundamental attitude toward God, His Word, His Law and His name, that God desires. This is why it is mentioned more times than any other aspect of vital piety.

Given the scriptural importance of the fear of the Lord, most of us must confess that although we have been going to church for

many years, **we have never heard a single sermon on the fear of God When was the last time you had a Sunday School lesson on the fear of God? Have you ever read a book on the fear of God?** The typical Christian today has heard many sermons on the **love of God** but absolutely nothing about the fear of God. This is sad as well as unbiblical. Of course you should love God. That is not the issue. What we are saying is that we must relate to God in more than one way. Loving God is not enough according to the Bible. We must also FEAR Him. If we take the Bible seriously, the fundamental aspect of our relationship to God should be the fear of the Lord! Fear goes hand in hand with love: love is the positive side, fear the negative; love prompts one to do what pleases God, fear prompts one to refrain from what displeases God.

**But what is the fear of the Lord?** It is that affectionate reverence; by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father's law (enabled by His Spirit giving us the desire and the power - Php 2:13NLT-note). His wrath is so bitter, and His love so sweet; that hence springs an earnest desire to please Him, and—because of the danger of coming short from his own weakness and temptations—a holy watchfulness and fear, "that he might not sin against him" (Heb12:28, 29).

#### Related Resources:

- [Listen to an excellent sermon on the Fear of the Lord](#) by Dr Steven Lawson - very convicting message! ([Different source - same message](#))
- [How is the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about fear?](#)
- [What does it mean to have the fear of God?](#)
- [How does fearing God add length to a person's life \(Proverbs 10:27\)?](#)

**THE FEAR OF THE LORD** - Let me encourage you to do your own study of the **Fear of the Lord**. You will be amazed at the nuggets of gold that you will glean as you simply observe the text under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit! The following "**Select References on the Fear of the Lord**" can be nicely charted out as speaking of some aspect related either to the description of what a godly fear is or to the blessed dividend of a godly fear. I guarantee this short study will be very profitable and lead you into a fuller understanding of this subject which is absolutely vital to a healthy Christian life. [See selected list of Scriptures related to the Fear of the Lord](#) which on which you can make observations. You will be challenged, convicted and blessed!

THE FEAR OF THE LORD		
SCRIPTURE REFERENCE	DESCRIPTION OF GODLY FEAR	DIVIDENDS OF GODLY FEAR

### DO YOU WANT TO KNOW A SECRET?

The following verse encapsulates my desire that all believers (myself included) come to a full knowledge of the **fear of the Lord**:

Ps 25:14 The **secret** (fellowship, intimate friendship) of the LORD is **for those who fear Him**, and He will make them know (yada - [see note below](#)) His covenant.<sup>15</sup> My eyes are continually toward the LORD, For He will pluck my feet out of the net.

**Comment:** Notice Ps 25:15 is interesting as it occurs in the context of a man who is experiencing an growing knowledge and intimacy with Jehovah, surely one the greatest experience anyone could attain in this life! But David knows he (like all of us) is "prone to wander" and so he (and "we" enabled by the Spirit certainly in the NT) chooses to fix His eyes on Yahweh, "continually toward the LORD." (cf Col 3:2, Heb 12:2, etc) And why does he do this? What is the spiritual benefit to us if each morning we begin by fixing our eyes on the LORD? David explains that he will pluck our feet out of the net! The implication is clear that as we walk about in this godless world, many snares and temptations will be set by the [world](#), our own [flesh](#) and the [devil's minions](#), all continually seeking to ensnare us and hinder our walk with Jesus. We see a similar dynamic in Psalm 119:12 "With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments." Notice the first declaration speaks of the psalmist's zealous commitment for the Lord. But he immediately recognizes that he is always vulnerable to the three enemies of his soul and ever prone to wander and so he wisely prays for divine protection.

See [James Hastings lengthy comment](#) on this verse below

**Spurgeon** - The word "**secret**" here might, with greater propriety, be translated "friendship." "The

friendship of the Lord is with them that fear him,” but it also signifies in its root that conversation which familiar friends hold with each other. Conversation in its most cherished exercise, that homely intercourse which springs from mutual confidence, and is on the part of one man the unbosoming of himself to another, is thus implied. If I may open it up in a phrase, it means, “The amity of true friendship.” Such is the favour vouchsafed to those who fear God. But taking the word as it stands (for I dare say the translators weighed all these variations well before they chose the one before us), we will endeavour to give amplitude to the sense, while we keep to the word “secret.” ([See full sermon below](#))

**Spurgeon** - Trust the Lord much while He is with you. Keep no secrets from Him. His secrets are with you; let your secrets be with Him.

**Oswald Chambers - The secret of the Lord** - The secret (friendship R.V.) of the Lord is with them that fear Him. Psalm 25:14. **What is the sign of a friend?** That he tells you secret sorrows? No, that he tells you secret joys. Many will confide to you their secret sorrows, but the last mark of intimacy is to confide secret joys. Have we ever let God tell us any of His joys, or are we telling God our secrets so continually that we leave no room for Him to talk to us? At the beginning of our Christian life we are full of requests to God, then we find that God wants to get us into relationship with Himself, to get us in touch with His purposes. Are we so wedded to Jesus Christ’s idea of prayer—“Thy will be done”—that we catch the secrets of God? The things that make God dear to us are not so much His great big blessings as the tiny things, because they show His amazing intimacy with us; He knows every detail of our individual lives. “... him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose.” At first we want the consciousness of being guided by God, then as we go on we live so much in the consciousness of God that we do not need to ask what His will is, because the thought of choosing any other will never occur to us. If we are saved and sanctified God guides us by our ordinary choices, and if we are going to choose what He does not want, He will check, and we must heed. Whenever there is doubt, stop at once. Never reason it out and say—‘I wonder why I shouldn’t?’ God instructs us in what we choose, that is, He guides our common sense, and we no longer hinder His Spirit by continually saying—‘Now, Lord, what is Thy will?’ (My Utmost for His Highest)

**J C Philpot - “The secret of the Lord”** (that is, present possession) “is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them” (that is, something future) “His covenant.” This shews, that while all the people of God, who fear His name, have the secret with them, that is, a measure of the secret, yet all the people of God have not the covenant revealed to them at the same time with the secret. The “secret” is in the present tense; the “shewing of the covenant” is in the future. It is very sweet to see how the Holy Ghost has discriminated between these blessings. If, for instance, it had run thus, “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He shews to them His covenant,” some doubting, desponding child of God might say, “How can I be one of those that fear God? for it says, God shews to them His covenant, and He has not shewn it to me yet.” But being put in the future sense, “He will shew to them His covenant,” it takes the form of a promise, and so is just adapted and sweetly suited to their wants. This covenant is the covenant that “stands fast for evermore;” the everlasting covenant of grace, which stands in the Person, love, blood, and work of the Son of God; the covenant made by a Triune Jehovah, on behalf of the elect, before the world was. What a suitable foundation for a poor tottering heart! The Lord in showing this covenant unto them that fear Him, shews them that it is all of grace, and therefore meets all their unworthiness and superabounds over all the aboundings of their sin; that it is more than a match for their aggravated iniquities, and will land them safe in glory, because God has determined to bring them there. Nothing but a covenant of grace can suit a poor exercised soul, who knows His helplessness and worthlessness; and the Lord shews this to them that fear Him. (Ears from Harvested Sheaves.)

**F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily** - Psalm 25:14 The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. What marvellous words! They remind one of the sapphire work which the elders saw at the foot of the throne, and which was like “the body of heaven for clearness.” Three different renderings are suggested by the R.V.

**The Secret of the Lord.** — To some it is permitted to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. To these the white stone is given, on which is engraven a name, which only he knows that receives it. There are secret passages of love between Christ and the believing soul, which it would not be lawful for it to utter. High fellowship: deep blessedness. Things which eye hath not seen. Jesus revealed his secrets when Judas had gone forth. “Wherefore askest thou after my name,” He said to Manoah, “seeing it is secret?”

**The Counsel of the Lord.** — “His Name shall be called... Counsellor.” He draws near to those that fear to grieve Him, and gives them counsel. He instructs them in the way that He chooses for them; He guides

them in his truth and teaches them; He guides them in judgment; and tells them, as He did Abraham, what He is about to do.

**The Friendship of the Lord.** — “Ye are my friends,” said Jesus, “if ye do whatsoever I command you.” He longs for friends — those to whom He can tell his desires, on whom He may impose implicit confidence, and who will be so taken up with Him as to be indifferent to everything else, their one purpose to do his least bidding. Oh to be honored with the personal friendship of Jesus! It were a rare privilege to be entrusted with his secrets, and to hear Him say, “I have not called you servants, but friends.”

**John Kennedy** - The Lord shares His secrets with those who fear Him, imparting wisdom and peace in difficult times. He gives them guidance during times of decision. He gives reassurance as needed. Fear the Lord. Let His Word be precious, and use it for the ends for which it is given. Aspire for a clearer view of its wonders, a simpler faith in its truth, a ravishing sense of its sweetness, and a deeper experience of its power. Be guided by its light, molded by its form, fed by its manna, and cheered by its comforts, fearing Him and learning His secrets day by day. (See full sermon below - "[The Secret of the Lord](#)")

**Tim LaHaye in Embracing Eternity - Relationship with God** Today's Reading: Psalm 25:14; Luke 7:36-50-note. **With them he shares the secrets of his covenant. Psalm 25:14 -- WE WILL NEVER** understand the heart of God until we learn to revere the holiness of God. If we want to know Him, we must first learn to honor Him. **"Friendship with the Lord is reserved for those who fear Him"** writes the psalmist. **"With them he shares the secrets of his covenant"** (Psalm 25:14). The hidden things of God are revealed only to those who understand His greatness in the face of our unworthiness. It is intended for those who come to Him in humility and admiration. When Jesus was invited to eat at the home of a Pharisee, a sinful woman showed up with a bottle of expensive perfume. She knelt at his feet weeping. Then she anointed his feet with her perfume and wiped them with her hair. She sat broken before him. When the Pharisee realized who she was, he said to himself, "This proves that Jesus is no prophet. If God had really sent him, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!" (Luke 7:39-note). While the woman wept, the Pharisee accused her in his thoughts. While she knelt at his feet, he judged. While she humbled herself in the presence of the Deity, he tried to humiliate the Divine One. So what did she understand that the Pharisee had missed? he knew that friendship begins with honor. That forgiveness begins with brokenness. That being right with God begins with reverence for Him. Jesus said to the Pharisee, When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You didn't give me a kiss of greeting, but she has kissed my feet again and again from the time I first came in. You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume. I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven. (Luke 7:44-47-note) **Too often we want to sit and dine with Jesus, but we neglect to kneel before Him.** We want the pleasure of his company but not necessarily at the expense of our dignity. We want to talk face-to-face, yet never think to stoop and wash his feet. We want friendship with God without a healthy reverence for Him. Jesus is our friend, but He is also our Lord. If we want a relationship with Him, we begin by remembering who He is. (See also LaHaye's devotional [Reverence for God](#) below)

**Ian Paisley** - It Is Secret for It Is God's Purpose. The secret is God's purpose. Psalm 25:14 The Covenant of God's grace, secret from before the foundation of the world, is made known in this hidden life. That life gives us growth not only in grace but in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh that I might thus know Him.

**John Phillips** - A Right Attitude Toward the Word (Ps 25:14) "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant." God's covenant with Israel, of course, was contained on the tables of stone laid up within the ark. God's covenant with us is likewise contained in His Word. Nobody can hope to have any real guidance unless willing to spend time with the Word of God, seeking out the great secrets of the Lord which are contained in Scripture. There is no situation we can face in life which is not covered by some specific word of God. So we have David's plea-his concern as a believer and his confidence as a believer. But David has not yet finished his psalm.

II. David's Plight (Ps 25:15-22) When David was writing this psalm he was in trouble, in desperate need of guidance from God. His whole world had collapsed. This discussion of the priorities, principles, and prerequisites of guidance was no mere academic exercise. David needed help. In the closing verses he makes that clear.

A. How He Proceeded to Evaluate His Plight (25:15-19)

Note the five things he says about this.

1. His Difficulty (Ps 25:15)

"Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net." Absalom's plots were cleverly and cunningly laid. He had succeeded in winning the hearts of the men of Israel and David's plight was real.

Psalm 25:14 reminds me of Paul's great desire in Philippians...

**that I may know Him** and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Php 3:10-11-[note](#))

**Secret** ([05475](#))(**sod**) primarily means confidential conversation, speech or talk. Compare the Arabic word sa'wada which means to speak secretly. **Sod** emphasizes confidentiality in contrast to more general advice or counsel. Sod can refer to the close friendship which exists between people (Ps 55:14) or to the intimate knowledge that friendship brings, especially their secrets (Pr 25:9)

**Sod** describes talk to one about something that is to be kept confidential (eg, confidential conversation in Amos 3:7 "Surely the Lord GOD does nothing Unless He reveals His **secret counsel** (sod) To His servants the prophets."

Here are some other OT uses of sod - Pr 3:32 = intimate with the upright; Ps 55:14 = sweet fellowship; Ps 111:1 = In the company of the upright; Pr 15:22 = Without consultation, Job 29:4 = the friendship of God

So Ps 25:14 teaches us that as we learn to **fear of the LORD**, we will grow in our intimacy and in our communication with the LORD of the Universe! Is this not sufficient motivation to set aside a few days and ponder what God Himself teaches us about a proper fear of Him? Do you desire a greater intimacy with Jesus, a more vibrant prayer life where you are truly praying without ceasing, always read to share a "text" message with the Most High God (cf 1 Th 5:17-[note](#))? Then prayerfully study the **fear of the Lord** and the Spirit will renew your mind (Eph 4:23-[note](#)), transform your thinking (Ro 12:2-[note](#)) and ultimately transform you from glory to glory into His image (2 Cor 3:18-[note](#)).

**Fruchtenbaum** writes that "Hebrew word **sod**, (is) used 22 times in the Old Testament, and generally having the meaning of "secret counsel." It is a divine secret that can be known and understood only if revealed by God to His people through the prophets. (Fruchtenbaum, A. G. The footsteps of the Messiah. Page 656)

**Sod** is used in the proper name "**Besodeiah**" (Neh 3:6) which has a great meaning - "in the secret of Jehovah." Sod is used in Nu 13:10 in "**Sodi**" (which means "a confidant"), the name of an Israeli in the tribe of Zebulun.

**Bromiley** in the ISBE writes that "The Hebrew **sod** can refer both to intimate or confidential speaking and to those involved in such speaking, or to a gathering of intimates."

**Know** is the Hebrew verb **yada** which does not mean simply to have knowledge of something. It is often used in Scripture in a protective sense and refers to God's providential care and love, which includes the eternal security of believers and His divine provision. It means that God looks out for the righteous.(Ps 1:6). Yada is a word of intimacy and in fact speaks in some contexts of a man "knowing" a woman. The Septuagint translates **yada** in Ps 25:15 with the verb [deloo](#) which means to make clear or plain, to show clearly. It is the verb used by Peter of the Lord Jesus Christ's **making it clear** to him that his laying aside of his earthly dwelling was imminent (2 Pe 1:14), or in other words telling Peter he would soon die. In 1 Cor 3:13 [deloo](#) speaks of "each man's works will become evident, for the day **will show** ([deloo](#)) it."

**Adrian Rogers** comments on Ps 25:14 that the blood covenant "It is the secret of blessing. All of the promises in the Bible are really covenant promises."

## SELECTED REFERENCES ON FEAR OF THE LORD To fill Out the Chart

**Definition & Dividends:** As you observe the following verses, you will note that some have both "**definition**" and "**dividend**". Pray and study through these passages filling out the chart for a rich rewarding study of a truth that will give you a firm foundation of the value of the fear of the Lord. Note that some of the passages have the word **reverence** rather than **fear**, but the idea is the same.

Pr 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning (first word in the Hebrew Bible in Gn1:1... might there be some

relation?) of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Pr 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom & the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Pr 3:7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD & turn away from evil. 8 It will be healing to your body, & refreshment to your bones. (Do you see >1 benefit?)

Pr 8:13 "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way, And the perverted mouth, I hate.

Pr 16:6 By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, And by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil.

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil....8 And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." 9 Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing?

Ps 34:11 Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

Ps 119:38 Establish Thy word to Thy servant, as that which produces reverence (yir'ah) for Thee.

Pr 1:29 Because they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD

Pr 2:1-5: receive my sayings, treasure my commandments within 2 Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding; 3 For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; 4 If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; 5 Then you will discern the fear of the LORD, & discover the knowledge of God.

Pr 10:27 The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be shortened.

Pr 14:26 In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And his children will have refuge.

Pr 14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, That one may avoid the snares of death.

Pr 13:14 The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, To turn aside from the snares of death.

Pr 19:23 The fear of the LORD leads to life, So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.

Pr 22:4 The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD Are riches, honor and life.

Pr 29:25 The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.

Eccl 8:12 Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life, still I know that it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly. 13 But it will not be well for the evil man and he will not lengthen his days like a shadow, because he does not fear God.

Ge 22:12 And he said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

Dt 4:10 "Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.' (Note that fear is learned.)

Dt 17:19 "And it shall be with him (the king), and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes,

Ps 31:19 How great is Thy goodness, Which Thou hast stored up for those who fear Thee, Which Thou hast wrought for those who take refuge in Thee, Before the sons of men!

Ps 33:18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope for His lovingkindness,

Ps 34:7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, And rescues them

Ps 34:9 O fear the LORD, you His saints; For to those who fear Him, there is no want.

Ps 36:1 (For the choir director. A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD.) Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes. (quoted in Ro 3:18 where it seems to sum up the litany of charges against the natural man... the sum of them all is "No Fear of God before their eyes")

Ps 86:11 Teach me Thy way, O LORD; I will walk in Thy truth; Unite my heart to fear Thy name.

Ps 90:11 Who understands the power of Thine anger, And Thy fury, according to the fear that is due Thee? 12 So teach us to number our days, That we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom

Ps 103:11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.

Ps 103:13 Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.

Ps 115:11 You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield.

Heb 13:6 so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT SHALL MAN DO TO ME?"

Ps 145:19 He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them.

Ps 147:11 The LORD favors (is pleased with, delights in) those who fear Him, Those who wait for His lovingkindness.

Isa 29:13 Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote,

Ps 2:11 Worship the LORD with reverence, And rejoice with trembling.

Pr 31:30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.

Ps 128:1 (A Song of Ascents.) How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways.

Ps 112:1 Praise the LORD! How blessed is the man who fears the LORD, Who greatly delights in His commandments.

2 His descendants will be mighty on earth; The generation of the upright will be blessed.

3 Wealth and riches are in his house, And his righteousness endures forever.

Some saints think that "Fear of the Lord" is an OT teaching and we no longer are to fear God because we are covered with the blood of Christ. In a sense of course they are correct (see Ro 5:1-2), but observe the following passages.

Lu 12:4 "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5 "But I will warn you whom to FEAR: FEAR the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, FEAR Him!

Acts 9:31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and, going on in the FEAR OF THE LORD and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase

2Co 7:1 Therefore, having these promises (see 2Cor 6:14-18), beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness IN THE FEAR OF GOD.

Eph 5:21 and be subject to one another in THE FEAR OF CHRIST.

Phil 2:12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING;

1Pe 1:17 And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, CONDUCT YOURSELVES IN FEAR during the time of your stay upon earth;

1Pe 2:17 Honor all men; love the brotherhood, FEAR GOD, honor the king.

Rev 14:6 And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an **eternal gospel** to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; 7 and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, (cp Pr1:7,9:10) and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." (Note: This event most likely occurs at the mid point of Daniel's 70th Week.)

Mal 4:2 "But (see contrast in previous verse Mal 4:1 which pictures those who do not fear God) for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.

Rev 19:5 And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you



who fear Him, the small and the great."

Eccl 12:13 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. 14 For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

#### EXTRA VERSES:

Isa 66:2 "For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who TREMBLES at My word.

Ps 27:1 (A Psalm of David.) The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?

Pr 28:14 How blessed is the man who fears always, But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.

Mal 3:16-18 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. 17 "And they will be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him." 18 So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

### QUOTATIONS ON FEAR OF THE LORD

1. We fear men so much because we fear God so little. William Gurnall
2. In that mingled fear and love which, combined, constitute the piety of man toward God, the OT placed its emphasis on the fear, the NT places it on the love (though there was love in the fear of God's saints then, as there must be fear in their love now). Bishop Trench.
3. Nothing twists and deforms the soul more than a low or unworthy conception of God. A. W. Tozer.
4. Only he who can say, "The Lord is the strength of my life," can say, "Of whom shall I be afraid?" Alexander Maclaren
5. The only sure way to take fear out of living is to keep a respectful fear of God in our lives, which means to maintain a reverent attitude toward his place and influence. This brand of fear is a healthy ingredient, a deterrent to want, a spur to courage and confidence, an insurance against loss, and source of comfort and understanding. Eugene Asa Carr
6. He who knows what it is to enjoy God will dread his loss. He who has seen his face will fear to see his back. Richard Alleine
7. He who does not fear God has need to fear everything else. Anon.
8. The fear of God is the greatest antidote against the fear of man. Anon.
9. Godly fear shrinks from sin, worldly fear from punishment; the one influences our thoughts, the other only our actions. Ayguan
10. But what is this fear of the Lord? It is that affectionate reverence, by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father's law. Charles Bridges
11. If Jesus in his humanity delighted in the fear of God, surely we need to give serious thought to cultivating this attitude in our lives. Jerry Bridges
12. Just as obedience to the Lord is an indication of our love for him, so is it also a proof of our fear of God. Jerry Bridges
13. I fear God, yet am not afraid of him. Thomas Browne
14. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and they that lack the beginning have neither middle nor end. John Bunyan
15. Though there is not always grace where there is fear of hell, yet, to be sure, there is no grace where there is no fear of God. John Bunyan
16. He that fears God fears nothing else. Edmund Burke
17. Nothing is more powerful to overcome temptation than the fear of God. John Calvin
18. Righteousness flows from only one principle—the fear of God. John Calvin
19. The fear of God is the root and origin of all righteousness. John Calvin
20. There is no wisdom but that which is founded on the fear of God. John Calvin
21. The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else. Oswald Chambers
22. The fear of the Lord is not just the end of wisdom but its beginning. Edmund P. Clowney
23. The learning of the Christian man ought to begin with the fear of God. Thomas Cranmer
24. Let us familiarize our minds with the fear due to Christ the Judge, and a new power will enter into our service, making it at once more urgent and more wholesome than it could otherwise be. James Denney
25. As he that fears God fears nothing else, so, he that sees God sees nothing else. John Donne



26. The fear of the Lord was a lovely grace in the perfect humanity of Jesus. Let it be the test of our 'predestination to be conformed to his image' Sinclair Ferguson
  27. The essential ingredients of the fear of God are correct concepts of the character of God, a pervasive sense of the presence of God and a constant awareness of our obligation to God. Al Martin
  28. The fear of God is the soul of godliness. John Murray
  29. No man acts with true wisdom till he fears God and hopes in his mercy. William S. Plumer
  30. True piety is never separate from the fear of God. William S. Plumer
  31. Reverent fear of God is the key to faithfulness in any situation. Alan Redpath
  32. The fear of men weakens, but the fear of the Lord strengthens. Remigius
  33. As faith is a grace that feeds all the rest, so fear is a grace that guards all the rest. William Secker
  34. True ethical absolutes can only be grounded in the fear of a living God. R. C. Sproul
  35. It is a blessed fear which drives us to trust. C. H. Spurgeon
  36. Unregenerate fear drives from God, gracious fear drives to him. C. H. Spurgeon
  37. Fear came into man's heart with sin. Adam was never afraid of his God till he had broken his commands. C. H. Spurgeon
  38. The Christian, like a net, must have both the lead of a godly fear and the cork of a lively faith. George Swinnock
  39. The height of God must lay man low. George Swinnock
  40. No one can know the true grace of God who has not first known the fear of God. A. W. Tozer
  41. The fear of God is both a virtue and a keeper of other virtues. John Trapp
  42. As the embankment keeps out the water, so the fear of the Lord keeps out uncleanness. Thomas Watson
  43. The fear of God promotes spiritual joy; it is the morning star that ushers in the sunlight of comfort. Thomas Watson
  44. It is only the fear of God that can deliver us from the fear of man. John Witherspoon
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## **THE FEAR OF THE LORD: LOVE WISDOM AND HATE EVIL - Patrick Morley**

The fear of the Lord leads to life: Then one rests content, untouched by trouble. Proverbs 19:23

Are you content? Is your life untouched by trouble? Learn to understand the fear of the Lord.

About ten years ago, I attended a Christian wedding for which the bride and groom wrote their own wedding vows. As the solemn, joyful moment came, they faced each other, clasped hands, and exchanged those vows.

The bride said, "And the reason I love you and want to spend my life with you is that you understand the fear of the Lord."

What is the fear of the Lord? Do you understand it? Is it important to you?

Many of us have lost the fear of the Lord. We have forgotten our deep awe for the character of God, His holiness, His eternity, His sovereignty over all the affairs of men. We let Him get smaller. We let our impression of ourselves get bigger. We see ourselves as larger in intellect and capabilities, as more technologically advanced and more scientific. As we prosper, we don't need God as we once did.

What is the fear of the Lord? And how can we get it into our lives? The fear of the Lord is to love what God loves and to hate what God hates. The fear of the Lord is both positive and negative.

### **Love Wisdom**

The positive is to love what God loves—wisdom. God loves wisdom. The fear of the Lord is to love wisdom. "My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding...then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom" (Proverbs 2:1-2, 5-6).

To love wisdom is to fear the Lord. "The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom" (Job 28:28). The person who would understand the fear of the Lord will love what God loves. God loves wisdom, so he will love wisdom.

Wisdom comes from God alone. Many want to add their own unique theories to the wisdom of God. We often want new ideas, new truth. But the pages of Holy Writ give testimony to the durability of God's wisdom over man's fresh ideas.

When we add to the wisdom of God, it does not become the wisdom of God plus something, but the wisdom of God minus something. Can we lead a rebellion against the eternal God? Can we be His teacher? Let us learn to love the wisdom of God, and then we will understand the fear of the Lord.

### **Hate Evil**

The negative is to hate what God hates—evil. God hates evil. "To fear the Lord is to hate evil" (Proverbs 8:13). "Through the fear of the Lord a man avoids evil" (Proverbs 16:6). "To shun evil is understanding" (Job 28:28). The person who would understand the fear of the Lord will hate what God hates. God hates evil, so he will hate evil.

What differentiates the person who understands the fear of the Lord from the one who does not? The person not gripped by the fear of God tolerates evil. He does not take exception to the moral filth which permeates culture. He doesn't like it, but his motto is, "Live and let live." He is not of the world, but neither is he into the world. He is God's person in the world, but he has not been sent into the

world. He has no impact, because he tolerates evil.

The person gripped by godly fear cannot tolerate evil because God does not tolerate evil. He hates evil with the intensity that God hates evil, or at least he tries to. He is a reformer, not a recluse. His hatred of evil sanctions him no occasion to tolerate.

## Two in One

The fear of the Lord consists both in loving and hating. It is loving what God loves—wisdom, and hating what God hates—evil. When we love what God loves and hate what he hates, we are not far from the kingdom of God. “The fear of the Lord leads to life: Then one rests content, untouched by trouble” (Proverbs 19:23). Do you know what God loves? Do you know what God hates?

## The Antidote for Disobedience

How important is this ignored injunction to fear the Lord? Solomon waxed eloquent for twelve chapters in Ecclesiastes about the futility of pursuing temporal kingdoms. At the end of the book, he summarized: “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Though we have lost the fear of the Lord, our duty is to find it again.

The fear of the Lord is the antidote for disobedience. The Hebrew people pledged obedience to God when Moses declared the ten commandments to them. God responded to their pledge: “Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always” (Deuteronomy 5:29). God links obedience to the fear of the Lord—it is the antidote for disobedience.

Learn to understand the fear of the Lord. Surrender to it. Love wisdom and hate evil.

## I SURRENDER

Father, teach me the fear of the Lord. I surrender my own clever ideas that I would add to Your wisdom. Help me to love what You love—wisdom. Help me to hate what You hate—evil. Take away my tolerance of evil that I might be a reformer, that I might be sent “into” the world and not merely take up space “in” the world. Amen.

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## Puritan Daily Readings

### Tends to Life

By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.

Proverbs 16:6

“By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil;” that is, in their judgment, will, mind, and affections; not, that by the fear of the Lord, sin is annihilated, or has lost its being in the soul; there still will be those Canaanites, but they are hated, loathed, abominated, fought against, prayed against, watched against, strove against, and mortified in the soul. This fear is called a fountain of life. “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death” (Prov. 14:27). It is a fountain, or spring, which so continually supplies the soul with a variety of considerations of sin, of God, of death, and life eternal, as to keep the soul in continual exercise of virtue, and in holy contemplation. It is a fountain of life; every operation thereof, every act and exercise thereof, has a true and natural tendency to spiritual and eternal felicity... “The fear of the Lord tendeth to life; and he that has it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil” (Prov. 19:23). It tends to life even as of nature; everything has a tendency to that which is most natural to itself, the fire to burn, the water to wet, the stone to fall, the sun to shine, and sin to defile. Thus I say, the fear of the Lord tends to life; the nature of it is to put the soul upon fearing of God, of closing with Christ, and of walking humbly before Him. It is “a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.” What are the snares of death but sin, the wiles of the devil, and so on. From which the fear of God has a natural tendency to deliver you, and to keep you in the way that tends to life.

February 16

### Instruction of Wisdom

The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.

Proverbs 15:33

This fear of the Lord is called “the instruction of wisdom.” You heard before that it is the beginning of wisdom; but here you find it called the instruction of wisdom: for indeed it is not only that which makes a man begin to be wise, but to improve, and make advantage of all those helps and means to life, which God has afforded to that end; that is, both to his own, and his neighbors’ salvation also. It is the instruction of wisdom; it will make a man capable to use all his natural parts, all his natural wisdom to God’s glory, and his own good. There lies, even in many natural things, that, into which if we were instructed, would yield us a great deal of help to the understanding of spiritual matters; for in

wisdom has God made all the world; nor is there anything that God has made, whether in heaven above, or on earth beneath, but there is couched some spiritual mystery in it. The which men think of no more than they do the ground they tread on, or than the stones that are under their feet, and all because they have not this fear of the Lord, for had they that, it would teach them to think, even from that knowledge of God, that has by the fear of Him been put into their hearts, that He being so great and so good, there must needs be abundance of wisdom in the things He has made: that fear would also endeavor to find out what that wisdom is, yea,

and give to the soul the instruction of it.  
February 17

Love and Kindness

By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.

Proverbs 16:6

Godly fear also flows from a sense of the love and kindness of God to the soul. Where there is no sense or hope of the kindness and mercy of God by Jesus Christ, there can be none of this fear, but rather wrath and despair, which produces that fear that is either devilish, or else that which is only wrought in us by the Spirit as a Spirit of bondage; wherefore the godly fear flows from some sense or hope of mercy from God by Jesus Christ. "If thou, Lord," said David, "shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Ps. 130:3-4). "There is forgiveness with thee." This the soul has sense of a hope in, and therefore fears God. Indeed, nothing can lay a stronger obligation upon the heart to fear God, than sense of, or hope in mercy. This begets true tenderness of heart, true godly softness of spirit; this truly endears the affections to God; and in this true tenderness, softness, and endearing of affection to God, lies the very essence of this fear of the Lord, as is manifest by the fruit of this fear when we shall come to speak of it. This fear of God flows from a due consideration of the judgments of God, that are to be executed in the world, yea upon professors too: yea, further, God's people themselves, I mean, as to themselves, have such a consideration of His judgments towards them, as to produce this godly fear.

### Other Resources Related to the Fear of the Lord

- [How is the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom?](#)
- [Ted Hildebrandt - Justifying the Fear of God](#)
- [The Fear of the Lord as the 'Principle' of Wisdom - Henri Blocher](#) - 26 page article
- [Proverbs 1:7 The Fear Of The Lord](#) - Sermon by Alan Carr
- [Proverbs 1:7a The ABC's of Wisdom- with Solomon – Fear of the Lord - Where Knowledge Begins](#) - Ray Pritchard
- [Proverbs 14:26 The Fear of the Lord A Source of Much Good](#) - Charles Simeon
- [Proverbs 23:17, 18 The Fear of God All the Day](#) - Charles Simeon
- [Proverbs 29:25 The Fear of Man](#) - Charles Simeon
- [Proverbs 29:25 Fear of Man Destroyed by Trust in God](#) - C H Spurgeon Sermon Notes

### WEBSTER'S COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY ENGLISH DEFINITION OF FEAR

[Click here](#) for multiple other English dictionary definitions of fear

TRANSITIVE verb:

1 archaic : FRIGHTEN

2 archaic : to feel fear in (oneself)

3 : to have a reverential awe of (fear God)

4 : to be afraid of : expect with alarm INTRANSITIVE verb : to be afraid or apprehensive

**FEAR** : noun

1 a : an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger<sup>1</sup>

b (1) : an instance of this emotion

(2) : a state marked by this emotion

2 : anxious concern : SOLICITUDE

3 : profound reverence and awe especially toward God

4 : reason for alarm : DANGER

**SYNONYMS:** FEAR, DREAD, FRIGHT, ALARM, PANIC, TERROR, TREPIDATION mean painful agitation in the presence or anticipation of danger.

- FEAR is the most general term and implies anxiety and usually loss of courage.

- DREAD usually adds the idea of intense reluctance to face or meet a person or situation and suggests aversion as well as anxiety FRIGHT implies the shock of sudden, startling fear.
- ALARM suggests a sudden and intense awareness of immediate danger (view the situation with alarm).
- PANIC implies unreasoning and overmastering fear causing hysterical activity TERROR implies the most extreme degree of fear.
- TREPIDATION adds to DREAD the implications of timidity, trembling, and hesitation.

Dread (fear) ([06343](#)) [pachad](#)

## FEARING GOD OVERVIEW Dr Robert Morey

The following overview is from Dr Robert Morey's excellent and very thorough treatment of the topic of [Fearing God- The Key to the Treasure House of Heaven](#).

In dealing with the nature of the fear of God, the very first problem we face is the poverty of the English word "fear." It does not tell us what kind of fear is in focus. It does not indicate any specific attributes. The English word "fear" is simply not precise enough to tell us how to relate to God in sharp contrast to the richness of Hebrew. One of the reasons why God chose Hebrew as a vehicle of divine revelation is its precision. **The OT uses 17 different Hebrew words and one Aramaic word to describe different kinds of "fear."** These words are not simple synonyms. They describe fear in different ways with different meanings. 9 of these words are used to describe man's fear of God. The following is a summary of how these words are used in reference to our walk with God.

### 1. Stand in Awe

**Guwr** describes the fear that we should have of God is (Ps 22:23, 33:8) In their respective contexts, this word means to turn aside from the normal pursuits of life and come into the presence of God. Once we are standing in His presence, our attitude should be one of wonder and reverential awe at the power and majesty of the Creator and Sovereign Ruler of the universe. It emphasizes that we must stand before God with the right attitudes. Did you ever wonder why we stand so much during church services? Why do we stand to pray and stand to sing? The early Church understood that we needed to "stand in awe" of God and to worship Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The next time you stand in church, remind yourself that you are to stand in awe of the Great God whom you serve.

### 2. Tremble Before Him

The second Hebrew word is **chuwl**. This word is very interesting. The original root meaning of the word means to whirl or writhe in pain. It is used to describe such painful situations as a woman giving birth. As the pregnant woman approaches the time to give birth, she writhes and cries out in her labor pains. (Isa 26:17) It also is used to describe the pain of the wounds inflicted by weapons of war such as arrows. The heaviest fighting was against Saul, and when the Philistine bowmen who were shooting located Saul, he was severely wounded by them. (1Sa 31:3) It also described the inward dread, anxiety and terror that gripped the Canaanites when they heard the Israelites were coming. (Dt 2:25)

This word is used of man's fear of God five times and is translated as "tremble." (1Ch 16:30, Ps 96:9, 114:7, Jer 5:22)

The one exception is Ps 37:7. In this passage, the NIV mistranslates the word *chool* as "wait patiently." The NIV misses the point of the Psalmist. Just as a woman in childbirth endures the pain of labor because she looks forward to having her baby, even so we should patiently endure painful situations in life because we look forward to God's grace and mercy. We all naturally want an easy life. But God sometimes leads us into paths of pain and suffering. In such circumstances, we must writhe in pain patiently before God without cursing or murmuring against Him. When a true child of God is crushed in the wine press of suffering, sweet wine comes forth. But this is not so with counterfeit Christians. When they are pressed down by pain and suffering, bitterness and cursing comes forth. Suffering reveals one's true character.

### 3. Be in Dread of Him

The third word is **'arats** which means to be so terrified of or filled with dread of what is coming upon you that you physically shake or tremble. It emphasizes the external signs of fear such as trembling or shaking. It should be translated "tremble in dread of." This word is used of the fear of God three times. (Ps89:7, Isa 8:13, 29:23)

This word means that we ought to tremble at the very thought of coming under the condemnation of God. We should dread such an experience, "for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12:29). Why is it mistranslated in Ps 89:7 and Isa 29:23? We don't know why. Maybe the translator did not like the idea of "trembling in dread" of God. Thus the word is mistranslated as "greatly feared" and "stand in awe." But there are other Hebrew words which have those meanings. The Hebrew word means "to tremble in dread of" the Lord.

#### 4. Living in Dread

The fourth word is **pachad** which usually means to live under a fearful apprehension of a distant danger which keeps the mind in suspense. (Dt 28:66) It is used twelve times in reference to the fear of God. Pachad implies a fear which is caused by an enemy or inflicted by God Himself. (2Ch 20:29) It is used of things which come unexpectedly upon us and which startle us. The Hebrew word is also used as a name of God. The God of Isaac and the God of Jacob are both called by the name of "Fear" in Ge 31:42, 53 The fear of the Lord was so central to Isaac's concept of God that one of his names for God was "Fear"!

#### 5. To Be Frightened of God

The fifth word **amah** means to be frightened by something to the point of terror. It is used to describe the terror of darkness or death (Ge 15:12; Ps 55:4). It is used of the fear of God three times. Terror and dread fall upon them; (Ex 15:16, 23:27, Job 9:34) It is never used in the positive sense of reverential awe. It means that sinners should be in terror of what God will do to them in judgment for their sins. One of the consequences of not preaching the doctrine of hell is that unbelievers get the idea that nothing bad will happen to them after death. Nature hates a vacuum. Since most Christians have been intimidated into keeping quiet about hell, false ideas on the afterlife have gained popularity. Many people believe that at death they will enter a tunnel of light and meet a being of light who will take them to the other side to join their loved ones who have gone on before them. Everything will be beautiful and happy. There is hell to shun as well as a heaven to gain.

#### 6. The Terror of God

The Aramaic word dechal is a word that always means stark terror. It is used of the terror that Nebuchadnezzar caused in the hearts of his enemies in Da5:19. It is also used in the book of Daniel to speak of the terror of God. (Da 6:26) When was the last time you heard a sermon on the "terror" of the Lord? Could it be that we have emphasized the love of God to the exclusion of His terror?

#### 7. The Fear of God

Since the seventh word **yare** is the general word for fear in the O Testament, it can have a positive or negative significance depending on the context. It is used for the "fear of God" 180x. Please take note that we are not referring to how many times this Hebrew word is found in the OT but to how many times it is specifically used in reference to God.

The Negative Sense - Abraham was afraid to let people know that Sara was his wife because he feared for his life (Ge 26:7). To be afraid of burning to death is another example of this usage (Dt 5:5). It is in this sense that Moses was afraid to look upon God because he assumed that to see the essential glory of God meant instant death (Ex 33:20, 3:6)

Yare translated as "trembling" in the presence of God. (Ps 119:120). In this sense it means to be literally terrified of God. (Hab 3:2). Have you ever been so afraid of God that you literally trembled? It is often used where God terrifies the wicked with threats of judgment (Dt 2:25). It is the emotional response that sinners should have when God warns them (Ps 50:22)

The Positive Sense - In the positive sense of worship and reverential awe, yare is used throughout the Psalms (Ps 33:8; 34:9; 86:11; 112:1; 119:63). Solomon tells us in Ecc 3:14,

Political Respect - It also was used to describe the respect that people gave to political leaders such as Moses and Joshua (Jos 4:14).

Afraid of God More than Man - It is in this sense that the midwives feared God (Ex 1:21). They did not obey Pharaoh's command to abort the Jewish babies because they feared God MORE than they feared him!

## **8. Terror and Fear**

The eighth word is yagor. It is used only once for the fear of God. Moses said that he was “horrificed” by God’s plan to destroy the entire nation because of their wickedness. (Dt 9:19)

## **9. Worship with Trembling**

The last word is ra’ad. It is used in Ps 2:11 in the command, “Worship the Lord with trembling.” This is the only time it is used in the Bible. It means that in our worship of God we should be trembling in awe of His greatness.

## **New Testament**

In the New Testament, all the different Hebrew words for “fear” are translated by the Greek verb phobos and the verb, adverbs and adjectives which modify that noun. The “fear” of God in the NT embraces all the emotions of the human heart.

## **The Christian and the Terror of God**

Liberal theologians have taught for many years that “fearing” God was only valid in OT times and thus it has no place in the life of a Christian. But the “terror” of the Lord also refers to the terrible judgments that God can bring upon His own people when they rebel against Him! We have so over emphasized the love of the Lamb that we have forgotten “the wrath of the Lamb.” (Rev 6:15-17) It was this “terror” of Christ’s coming judgment upon sinners that motivated the Apostle Paul to evangelize the lost. (2Co 5:11) The coming judgment upon rebel sinners should likewise motivate us to share the Gospel with people.

## **Solemn Warnings**

Many Christians today assume that they should never be afraid of God. The idea of divine chastisement for sin is foreign to thinking. They assume that once they have accepted Christ as their personal Savior, God will look the other way as they sin. Becoming a child of God means freedom from divine chastisement in the Christian life. This modern form of antinomianism is the exact opposite of what the Bible teaches. In Heb 12:4-13 we are told that one of the marks of being a child of God is divine chastisement. If you are His child, then He will punish you when you wander from the path of righteousness. There is no way to avoid the fact that the solemn warnings found in the Book of Hebrews are directed to professing Christians. We are told that we should be afraid of God if we fall away. Therefore, as long as the promise of entering his rest remains valid, let us be afraid lest someone among you fails to reach it. (Hebrews 4:1) For if we choose to go on sinning after we have received the full knowledge of the truth, there is no more sacrifice for our sins. All that remains is a terrifying prospect of judgment and a raging fire that will consume God’s enemies. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God! (Heb 10:26-27,31,12:28-29)

Apostates need to be warned that they are on their way to hell. The “Apostle of Love” called apostates “antichrists” and stated that when people fall away from the Faith through heresy or immorality, this only reveals that they were never saved to begin with (1Jn 2:19). Their true unregenerate nature was revealed by their apostasy.

## **Jesus and The Fear of God**

The words of Jesus must be taken at face value. (Lu 12:4-5) The NT clearly indicates that when we fall into sin, we should be afraid of the chastening hand of God. If we are not chastised by God, this is clear evidence that we are not the children of God (Heb 12:5-8).

## **Wonder, Awe, and Reverence**

Fearing God in the New Testament also means to give God the reverence due to Him. (Rev 15:3-4) The fact that the fear of God is taught in the Gospels (Mt 10:28-29), the Acts (Acts 9:31), the Epistles (2Cor 7:1, 1Pe 2:17) and (Rev 14:7) should convince us that it is an essential part of living a holy life before God.

## **Why So Much Shallowness Today?**

Given the vast amount of Biblical material on the fear of the Lord, how can we justify our silence on and ignorance of the subject? Could it be that modern Christians are shallow in their lives and sloppy in their beliefs because they do not fear God? If we take the Bible seriously, the reason that most Christians today are weak, carnal, spineless, and mindless is rooted in the fact that they do not fear God!

## Conclusion

The entire Bible is filled with exhortations to fear God. Just as the presence of the fear of God is the surest sign of God's blessing, the absence of that fear is the surest sign of God's curse.

## MEANINGS OF FEARING GOD

Most commentators have correctly distinguished reverential fear from slavish fear. But are these the only two distinctions that can be made?

### Objective/Subjective

The fear of the Lord may refer to something objective, that is, something which is outside of man and thus does not depend upon man's belief or feelings for its existence. On the other hand, the fear of God can refer to something subjective, that is, it may refer to the emotional state or inner feelings of man.

### The Objective Fear of God

The objective fear of God has nothing to do with the emotions of man. It has nothing to do with man at all. It is something external to man that exists irrespective of whether man is there or not. In Scripture, the word "fear" is used to refer to objective things. What are they?

### God's Name

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not have a Bible that gave them the names of God. Instead, God revealed Himself directly to them and, at times, gave them names by which He was to be worshipped. They also developed other names for God which brought into view certain aspects of the person and work of God. When the Patriarchs thought about God and their relationship to Him, they chose "Fear" as one of their name for God because they feared Him above all things in this life and in the life to come. (Ge31:42,v53) Jacob made an oath in the name of the "Fear" of Isaac. Why? Isaac's fear of God was so central in his life that it became a name for his God. Like Isaac, our greatest fear should be the frown of God and our greatest joy, the smile of God.

### God's Word

The fear of God is used as a name for Scripture in Ps19:9. The entire Psalm is dedicated to the two-fold Revelation of God. In Ps19:1-6, the Psalmist celebrates General Revelation as given in the Creation. He states that no one can say that he is ignorant of God because God has not revealed Himself: (Ps 19:1).

### General Revelation

General Revelation is the silent witness to the existence of God found in the creation around us and the conscience within us. It goes on twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The Apostle Paul pointed out that General Revelation means that all of humanity (including the heathen) is "without excuse" and thus under the just judgment of God (Ro 1:18-23).

While General Revelation is enough to condemn us, it is not enough to save us. This is why Ps19 does not leave us simply with General Revelation. The Palmist goes on to describe Special Revelation as given in Scripture. He refers to Scripture by such terms as "the law of the Lord;" "the statutes of the Lord;" "the precepts of the Lord;" "the commands of the Lord;" " the fear of the Lord" (Ps 19:7-9) In Ps 19:9, David uses the phrase "the fear of the Lord," as a title for Scripture because it is the means by which we come to understand that there is a God to be feared and what this fear is all about.

### God's Attributes

The word "fear" is also used in terms of God's attributes. Just as God is said to be loving or kind, he is also said to be terrible, terrifying, awesome and awful:(Dt 7:21) 2Sa 7:23 tells us that not only is God in His nature "awesome," but God's works are "awesome" and "fearful" to behold. The KJV uses the word "terrible" instead of the word "awesome" (NASB). The KJV is actually closer to the original Hebrew on this point. Thus the God of the Bible is a "terrible" God who inspires terror in the hearts of rebel sinners.

### Revealed Religion

The fear of the Lord is also used to refer to revealed religion, i.e., the true religion given to us by God. In Ps



34:11, David said, "Come you children, listen to me and I will teach you the fear of the Lord." What is "the fear of the Lord" but to believe all that God has revealed in His Word. It means the religion revealed in the Bible. Thus throughout the Psalms, true believers are described as those who fear God. For example, in the Ps 22:23, we are told, "All of you who fear God, praise Him." In David's mind, fearing the Lord and believing in the Lord are one and the same thing. No one can truly believe in God without fearing Him. Those who fear God are referred to as true believers in general.

### **God Fearers**

Later during the inter-testamental period, those who "feared" God came to mean Gentile converts to Judaism. This is why Paul said in Ac13:26, "and those among you who fear God". The expression "those among you who fear God" referred to those Gentiles who had abandoned their paganism and embraced the religion of Israel. They were called "God-fearers." The phrase no longer meant believers in general.

### **The Worship of God**

Lastly, it is used for the public worship of God in both the Old and New Testament. In Ps2:11, the Psalmist commands us to, "Worship the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling." In Rev 15:3,4,

The literary parallelism found in Rev 15:4 equates "fearing" God with "bringing glory" to God. To fear God means, in this context, to worship the God who is there and who is not silent. Thus our worship of God should involve fearing Him in the sense of awe, reverence, wonder and praise.

### **Irreverent Behavior In Church**

The lack of godly fear in public worship is the reason why there is very little reverence in many church services today. There is so much talking, laughing and carrying on before the service that it sounds more like a circus or a ball game than a worship service. We should be preparing our hearts for worship once the piano, organ or guitar begins to play. There is absolutely no excuse for people to be running around and making noise before church services. All of us have been in church services where children are allowed to talk, play with toys, make faces at the people behind them, and, worst of all, make that irritating noise caused by rubbing a pencil up and down the cover of the hymnal. Brethren, these things ought not to be. If you cannot control your children, then send them to junior church or to the nursery. Then ask your pastor for family counseling on how to raise your children in the fear and discipline of the Lord. If you do not train them in the fear of the Lord, who will?

### **Temporary/Permanent**

The **fear of God** can be temporary or it can be permanent. We all know people who at one time attended church. There was a temporary fear of God in their lives. Then they turned away from the Lord and returned to the ways of wickedness. Today there is no fear of God before their eyes as they give full reign to their lusts. There are always those people who "get religion" temporarily during some crisis in their life. The soldier in the fox hole is a good example of this. When the bullets are flying all around and the enemy is charging, it is easy to say, "God, if you get me out of this alive, I promise to serve you the rest of my life." Even when God delivers him, does he fear the Lord the next week? No, the vows he made to God are soon forgotten. The fear of God was only a temporary episode in an ungodly life. No true work of grace was done in his heart. He is more likely to be found in the whorehouse than God's House. What a contrast to those who walk in the fear of the Lord all their days! The permanent fear of God is one of the gracious provisions of the New Covenant. I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so they will not turn away from me. (Je 32:40)

When you come to know Jesus Christ in a true conversion experience, you cannot escape from it. The love of Christ is like the hymn, "O love that will not let me go." There is no one else to whom you can go for the words of eternal life (Jn 6:67,68). This is why in the New Covenant, God instills a permanent fear of Him into our hearts so that we will never fall away.

It never ceases to amaze us to hear modern preachers telling people that once they are saved, they do not need to fear God. How even sadder it is to see the people going out and living in such a way that proves that they do not fear the Lord. We will have to answer to Christ when He returns (2Cor 5:10).

### **Saving/Non Saving**

The fear of the Lord can be saving or it can be non-saving. The fear of God can motivate people to seek salvation. Thus John the Baptist, Jesus and the Apostles did not hesitate to warn people of the wrath to come

(Mt3:7; Lu12:5; Ro1:18). They were saved from hell as well as to heaven (1Th1:10). In times past, it was not strange to hear of sinners who turned to God in fear of hell and judgment. But this does not happen too often today. Why? The kind of God that is preached today is not the kind of deity that would really throw anyone into hell. He is all love and there is no wrath to escape. It is possible, sadly, to fear God in a non-saving sense. Millions of religious people think they can earn their way to heaven by their own good works. How sad. They fear God's judgment and try to live a good life in the hope that their good deeds will outweigh their bad deeds.

### **Individual/Group**

An individual or a group can fear God. When God sends unusual judgments upon sinners, this can inspire corporate fear in the population of unbelievers and among the churches in general (Acts 5:5,11). True heaven-sent revival comes to churches when the people are "walking in the fear of the Lord" (Acts 9:31 cf. Acts 2:42,43). Reverence for the name of Jesus comes from a general fear of God (Acts 19:17). This explains why people in general today—including far too many professing Christians—take the name of God and of Jesus in vain. When there is no general fear of God in the population at large, lawlessness, blasphemy and wickedness will abound (Ge 20:11). The fear of the Lord is also individual. Thus Joseph could truly say, "I fear God" (Ge 42:18). Do you fear God?

### **Attitude/Action**

The fear of God can be either an action or an attitude. It can refer to something that you do. Thus there are places in the Bible where it is used in the sense of obedience. They "feared" God by doing what He said to do (Ex1:17). Or, it can refer to an attitude. Joseph was characterized by an attitude of fear toward God that enabled him to say "No!" to immorality.

### **Spiritual/Carnal**

The fear of God can be either spiritual or carnal. That is, it can either come from the Holy Spirit or it can come from the natural heart of man. The spiritual fear of God contains all the positive elements as well as all of the negative elements of fear. We rejoice with trembling. We worship in an attitude of awe and godly fear (Ps 2:11). A carnal fear of God usually contains only the negative aspects of fear. Those who only slavishly fear God have a carnal fear of God that is non-saving.

### **Sincere/Hypocritical**

The fear of God can be sincere or it can be hypocritical. Just because someone says that he fears God does not mean that he does in fact fear God. People can be quite hypocritical on this point. The real question that must be asked is, "Do you fear God enough to depart from evil and to keep His commandments?" Obedience to God is where "the rubber meets the road."

### **Caught and Taught**

We are to teach our children the fear of the Lord (Ps 34:11). They must learn to have reverence for God, His Word, His name and His Church. Don't use God's name in vain. Don't ridicule the church which is the Bride of Christ. And don't have "roast preacher" every Sunday afternoon. Be reverent about the things of God (Ps 46:10).

### **The Work of The Holy Spirit**

Only the Holy Spirit can put a saving fear of God into the hearts of sinners. This is the goal of the Spirit's work in the New Covenant. (Jer 32:38-40)

([Fearing God- The Key to the Treasure House of Heaven - Robert Morey, Charles Welty](#))

## **WHY WE SHOULD FEAR GOD**

The subject of the origins or causes of the fear of God is important because we are not born fearing God. It is something we must learn by instruction and by experience. In Scripture, people did not just suddenly wake up one morning fearing God. There was always a cause, a reason or a motivation for that fear regardless of what kind of fear it was. Something or someone caused them to fear the Lord. In many cases, the same doctrine,

event or situation which caused a positive reverential awe in the people of God caused a negative terror in the hearts of unbelievers. The truth of God's absolute sovereignty is a good example of this phenomenon.

## **The Sovereignty of God**

In Psalm 97 and 99, both Psalms begin with the glorious truth that "the LORD reigns" over all things. The response of the people of God is to rejoice (Psalm 97:1,8), be glad (Psalm 97:1,8,12), see His glory (Psalm 97:6), exalt the Lord (Psalm 97:9; Psalm 99:5,9), give thanks (Psalm 97:12), praise (Psalm 99:3), and worship (Psalm 99:5,9). This is in stark contrast to how the wicked responded to the doctrine of God's sovereignty. After stating that God is enthroned in the heavens and is the Sovereign Ruler and Judge of all things, the Psalmist tells us how unbelievers responded to this doctrine: They are put to shame (Psalm 97:7) and tremble in fear (Psalm 99:1). Indeed, they should fear! If God is Sovereign, then there is no way to escape His wrath on the day of Judgment. This is why so much hatred is directed against the doctrine of God's sovereignty. If this doctrine is true, then there is no hope of escaping God's judgment.

## **Children and the Fear of God**

Children and the Fear of God Children and the Fear of God Children and the Fear of God Fearing God is something that parents should teach their children. As David stated, "Come you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. (Ps34:11)" Every parent should be vitally interested in how David did this. The entire Psalm is given over to a lesson in the fear of the Lord.

## **Motives to Fear God**

The hundreds of passages in the Bible which describe someone fearing the Lord usually also tell us the cause or motivation for that fear. The following is a breakdown of the major reasons why people fear God according to the Scriptures.

## **The Nature of God**

The God who has revealed Himself in Scripture is a "terrible" and "awesome" God, i.e., He is the kind of God who inspires either reverence or terror in the hearts of men (Dt 7:21; 10:17; Ps 47:2; 89:5-10). Thus the authors of Scripture single out various attributes of God as inspiring fear of Him. We should fear God for what He is, in and of Himself, in His own nature. For example:

1. The Greatness of God (Dt7:21; Ps96:4).
2. The Sovereignty of God (Ps33:6-12; 97:1; 99:1; Da 6:26).
3. The Holiness of God (Rev15:4).
4. The Jealousy of God (Dt6:13-15).
5. The Justice and Righteousness of God (2Ch19:6-9).
6. The Judgment of God against His enemies (Jos2:9-13).

## **The Names of God**

We should fear God for His great and glorious names. It should even be a delight to fear God's name according to Neh 1:11! No wonder the Psalmist prayed, "Unite my heart to fear Thy name." (Ps86:11) Do you want God's blessings in your life? Moses said that you must "fear this honored and awesome name of God, the LORD your God" (Dt 28:58). If you want success in life, then you must "delight to fear Thy name" (Neh 1:11). We should glorify the name of God according to Ps 86:12. The great and awesome name of God should be praised (Ps 99:3). Because of the salvation of God's people, the nations will fear the name of the Lord (Ps 102:15). God's name is holy and awesome (Ps 111:9). Because God is a great King, His name is feared among the nations (Mal 1:14). This is why all blasphemy will result in swift judgment (Ex 20:7). It should always shock us whenever someone takes the name of God or Jesus in vain. It is about time that we publicly protest against such blasphemy. The reason that people tolerate it on the TV and in the movies is that they no longer fear the name of the Lord.

## **The Word of God**

The Scriptures are called "the fear of the Lord" in Ps 19:9 in two senses. First, the Bible should be the object of our awe and reverence because it is the written Word of God and should be treated as such (Ps 119:161; Isa 66:2,5). Second, the Bible is the source of our fear of God (Dt17:18-20; 31:9-13). We learn what it means to fear God in the Bible.

## The Works of God

God's mighty deeds in history should motivate us to fear Him all the days of our lives. His works are truly "awesome" (Ps66:3; 65:5,8).(Rev15:3-4) We should be in awe of God's mighty acts because they are:

- Many (Ps 104:24)
- Great (1Ch 17:21)
- Wonderful (1Ch 16:9; Ps 65:8)
- Righteous (Ps 145:17)
- Marvelous, Righteous and True (Rev 15:3)

## The Mighty Works of God

Some of God's works are singled out in Scripture as especially promoting the fear of God.

**Creation:** The fact that God made us means that we belong to Him and thus owe to Him our worship and obedience (Ps 33:8-9).

**Sovereignty:** Since He is working all things according to the counsel of His own Will (Ep1:11), we should be in awe of His sovereignty (Ps 33:11; Jer 5:22-24).

**Judgment:** We should fear the judgment of God more than the judgment of men. Man can kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But God can cast us body and soul into an eternal hell according to the Lord Jesus (Mt 10:28).

**Forgiveness:** God forgives our sins that we might fear Him (Ps130:4). The fear of God is not to be viewed as something which led to our conversion and then is dropped. The fear of God is the GOAL of God's plan of salvation!

## Conclusion

God's wondrous nature, name, Word and works should motivate us to fear Him, for our God is an awesome God, a great and glorious God, mighty in judgment, compassionate in mercy, and working all things according to His sovereign will. ([Fearing God- The Key to the Treasure House of Heaven - Robert Morey, Charles Welty](#))

## Psalm 128: Blueprint For A Satisfying Home (part 2) Steven Cole

**A godly man is to lead his family in fearing the Lord**(Ps 128:1-2, 4).

You've probably noticed that God did not inspire the psalmist along politically correct lines! In our American society, seeing the man as the head of the family is not the "correct" thing. Even many Christians have opted for an "egalitarian" marriage. But in both the Old and New Testaments, God's directives for the family invariably are given to the man as the spiritual leader. And so, this psalm is addressed to the man of the family (v. 3, "your wife," etc.).

How do you lead your family spiritually? There's some good news and some bad news. The good news is, it's easy to lead: Kids follow your example. But that's also the bad news. We can't escape being examples to our children, either for good or for bad. Do we live out our Christianity in our attitudes, words, and actions in the home? Do our kids see the fruit of the Spirit in us, especially when we're under pressure? A great deal of what our kids learn about everyday life comes from watching our example as dads. Scary, isn't it!

A study once disclosed that if both parents attend church regularly, 72 percent of their children remain faithful. If only the dad attends regularly, it drops to 55 percent. If only mom comes, it plummets to 15 percent. If neither parent attends, but they just send the kids, only 6 percent remain faithful ("Pulpit Helps," 6/81). Of course, God can overcome the percentages as we seek Him, so a single mom shouldn't lose hope. But it does show the important influence of godly fathers on their kids.

A godly man will lead his family in fearing the Lord. The fear of the Lord is a dominant theme throughout the Bible, and yet I fear that we have lost it in our upbeat, feel-good, American Christianity. What is the fear of the Lord? I define it as a healthy respect and reverence for God stemming from the knowledge of God and resulting in obedience to God. Thus it is an attitude (respect and

reverence) that results in an action (obedience).

The fear of the Lord stems from knowing Him. We may fear some things, like future events, because we don't know them. Some people may fear God in an unhealthy sense that causes them to avoid Him because they don't know Him. But we fear other things because we do know them. I fear my power saw because I know the terrible damage it can cause if I carelessly get my hand caught in the blade. That fear doesn't cause me to avoid my saw, but rather to treat it with proper respect.

The proper fear of the Lord stems from understanding something of His greatness, power, and absolute holiness. Our God is the eternal God who spoke the vastness of the universe into existence. Modern science can't fathom the awesome enormity of our universe. In fact, we can't even figure out many of the simple functions of the human body which, as David wrote (Ps. 139:14), is fearfully and wonderfully made. We can't keep our bodies from getting sick, growing old, and dying. We can't create or explain the essence of life.

Yet proud, rebellious man shrugs off God by saying that it all happened by sheer chance plus time! How stupid! Surely, "there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Ps. 36:1; Rom. 3:18). If we see God's greatness and power in what He has made, we will fear Him.

We especially should fear Him when we realize that this great and powerful Creator is also absolutely holy and that we have violated His holy standards. Every time in the Bible a man, even a righteous man, gets a glimpse of God in the splendor of His holiness, he is stricken with fear. None of us could even dare to draw near to this holy, powerful God if He had not also revealed Himself as a God of love, who mercifully made provision for our sins in the death of Christ. Now He invites us to draw near, but we must always do so with reverence and awe. The fear of the Lord stems from the knowledge of Him.

The fear of the Lord results in obedience to Him. The man who fears God "walks in His ways" (v. 1b). Proverbs 8:13 says, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." Some Christians say, "That's too negative. God is my loving Father, so I don't like to think in terms of fearing Him. I just like to think about His love." But in 2 Corinthians 7:1, just after stating that God is our Father and we are His sons and daughters, Paul concludes, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

If we're growing in the knowledge of God, we'll be growing in the fear of God. To grow in the fear of God means to grow in holiness and to flee from evil. When we're tempted to sin, even if no one else is watching, we will remember that God is always watching. Joseph's brothers had sold him into slavery in Egypt. He was far from his family, in a pagan land. He was alone in the house with a wealthy woman who tried to seduce him. He easily could have rationalized, "I'll never get a wife here as a slave in Egypt. I have needs. Besides, who will know if I go to bed with her?" But instead, because he feared God who sees into every bedroom, Joseph replied to her, "How could I do this great evil, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9). Fearing God will cause us to walk in His ways as revealed in His Word.

In terms of home life, a man who fears God will not use His name in vain. He will not joke about God or be flippant toward God or His Word. He will rid his home of any trashy magazines. He will not watch trashy TV shows or videos. Positively, he will take the initiative in leading his family in reading God's Word, in prayer, and in a commitment to church life and ministry.

The fear of God is a practical thing that affects all of life. The man who fears God will "eat of the labor of [his] hands" (v. 2). He is a hard worker, whether on his job or at home. I'm not talking about overwork, but rather about an attitude toward work. The man who fears God is not lazy. By his example and attitude he shows his children the positive value of work and motivates them to use their lives productively. In my opinion, if you spend hours each week in front of the TV set, you communicate something negative to your kids. I'm not against some TV watching, if a program is wholesome. But there are far more productive ways to spend leisure time. A man who fears God will use his time productively.

The fear of God also affects our emotional state and attitude toward life: "You will be happy and it will be well with you" (v. 2b). The man who fears God is content. He isn't griping about how hard life is or complaining about all the bad breaks he has received. He isn't grumbling about how hard he has worked. He is happy. It is well with him. He's a cheerful, pleasant man to live with. The key to his happiness is given twice, so we won't miss it: He fears the Lord and walks in His ways (vv. 1, 4). This man's happiness doesn't come from circumstances; his joy is in the Lord.

A little girl was out in the yard where her dad was working after a rainstorm. She stepped exactly where he stepped and called out to him, "Daddy, if you don't get mud on your feet, I won't get any mud on me!" A dad and his son were climbing a mountain and came to a difficult part. The dad stopped to consider the best route up. Behind him, his son called out, "Choose the best path, Dad! I'm coming right behind you!"

We lead our families by example, men! At the heart of our example, we need to be growing in the fear of the Lord. It's a process, but my question is, Are you involved in the process? You need daily to be growing in your knowledge of God through His Word and seeking to make His ways your ways. A man who fears God is at the center of God's blueprint for a satisfying family... A satisfying

home is based on God's blessing. God's blessing is based on the fear of the Lord. Is your home being built on the fear of the Lord?

## **Psalm 34**

### **Enjoying God and His Blessings**

To experience God's salvation, we must fear Him.

David feared Saul and he feared the Philistines. But he testifies (34:4), "I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears." He goes on to state (34:7), "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them." Further (34:9), "O fear the Lord, you His saints; for to those who fear Him there is no want." Again (34:11), "Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord." Fearing God is inextricably bound up with experiencing His salvation.

I read somewhere last year that a professor at a Christian college mentioned fearing God in his classroom. He said it expecting that all the students would agree that we are to fear God. But he was stunned when they all vigorously disagreed that as Christians we should fear God! They argued that God's love excludes all need to fear Him! While it is true that perfect love casts out the fear of punishment (1 John 4:18), it is also abundantly clear that we are always to fear God in the sense of bowing in reverent awe before Him. Even the saints need to be exhorted to fear God (Ps. 34:9)! If you do not fear Him, you will not take refuge in Him.

D. To fear the Lord is to live in obedience to Him.

Throughout this psalm, there is an emphasis on being righteous, which means, to obey the Lord. David addresses his readers as "saints" (or, "holy ones"), which is somewhat unusual in the Old Testament (Willem VanGemeren, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. by Frank Gaebelin [Zondervan], 5:284). He exhorts us to "depart from evil and do good" (34:14). He assures us (34:15) that "the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry." Most scholars also take verse 17 to be referring to the cry of the righteous (the Hebrew word "righteous" is lacking). He also mentions the righteous in verses 19 & 21.

By contrast, David states (34:16), "The face of the Lord is against evildoers, to cut off the memory of them from the earth." Further (34:21), "Evil shall slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned." So either God's eyes are towards us favorably because we obey Him (34:15), or His face is against us because we disobey Him (34:16, 21). At the root of obeying the Lord is fearing Him. As Proverbs 8:13 states, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." Fearing Him leads to obeying Him, which leads to enjoying God and experiencing His blessings.

### **C H Spurgeon on Fear of the Lord**

Ps 111:10. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:

It is the A B C of true wisdom. He who has learned to fear God has learned the first part of wisdom. According to some, the word "beginning" here means the chief, the head, the front, just as, often, in Scripture, "beginning" signifies that. "The fear of the Lord" is the chief part of "wisdom," the essence of it.

Ps 19:9 "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever." When you come to know God, and the power of true religion in the form of holy, childlike fear, you never lose it, it is yours for ever. Time cannot destroy it, eternity will but develop it.

#### **Fear of God (from Gospel Extracts)**

There is a kind of fear towards God from which we must not wish to be free. There is that awful, necessary, admirable, excellent fear which is always due from the creature to the Creator, from the subject to the king, ay, and from the child toward the parent. That holy, filial fear of God, which makes us dread sin and constrains us to be obedient to His command, is to be cultivated. "We had fathers of our flesh, and we gave them reverence, shall we not be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?"

There is the "fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom."

To have a holy awe of our most holy, just, righteous, and tender Parent is a privilege, not a bondage. Godly fear is not the "fear which hath torment"; perfect love doth not cast it out, but dwells with it in joyful harmony. The angels perfectly love God, and yet with holy fear they veil their faces as they approach Him; and when we shall in glory behold the face of God, and shall be filled with all His fulness, we shall not cease humbly and reverently to adore His Infinite Majesty. Holy fear is a work of the Holy Ghost, and woe unto the man who does not possess it! Let him boast as he may, his "feeding himself without fear" is a mark of his hypocrisy.

The fear which is to be avoided is slavish fear; the fear which perfect love casts out; that trembling which keeps us at a distance

from God, which makes us think of Him as a Spirit with whom we can have no communion; as a Being who has no care for us except to punish us, and for whom consequently we have no care except to escape if possible from His terrible presence.

This fear sometimes arises in men's hearts from their thoughts dwelling exclusively upon the divine greatness. Is it possible to peer long into the vast abyss of Infinity and not to fear? Can the mind yield itself up to the thought of the Eternal, Self-existent, Infinite One without being filled, first with awe and then with dread? What am I? An aphid creeping upon a rosebud is a more considerable creature in relation to the universe of beings than I can be in comparison with God. What am I? A grain of dust, that does not turn the scale of the most delicate balance, is a greater thing to man than a man is to Jehovah. At best we are less than nothing and vanity. But there is more to abase us than this. We have had the impertinence to be disobedient to the will of this great One, and now the goodness and greatness of His nature are as a current against which sinful humanity struggles in vain, for the irresistible torrent must run its course and overwhelm every opponent. What does the great God seem to us out of Christ but a stupendous rock, threatening to crush us, or a fathomless sea, hastening to swallow us up? The contemplation of the divine greatness may of itself fill man with horror, and cast him into unutterable misery!

Each one of the sterner attributes of God will cause the like fear. Think of His power, by which He rolls the stars along, and lay thine hand upon thy mouth. Think of His wisdom, by which He numbers the clouds and settles the ordinances of heaven. Meditate upon any one of these attributes, but especially upon His justice, and upon that devouring fire which burns unceasingly against sin, and it is no wonder if the soul becomes full of fear. Meanwhile let a sense of sin with its great whip of wire flagellate the conscience, and man will dread the bare idea of God: for this is the burden of the voice of conscience to guilty man, "If thou wert an obedient creature, this God were still terrible to thee. What art thou that thou shouldst have any claims upon Him, for thou hast offended, thou hast lifted the hand of rebellion against the infinite majesty of Omnipotence—what can become of thee?"

### **Spurgeon, C. Faith's Checkbook**

Happy is the man that feareth always. Pr 28:14

THE fear of the Lord is the beginning and the foundation of all true religion. Without a solemn awe and reverence of God, there is no foothold for the more brilliant virtues. He whose soul does not worship will never live in holiness.

He is happy who feels a jealous fear of doing wrong. Holy fear looks not only before it leaps, but even before it moves. It is afraid of error, afraid of neglecting duty, afraid of committing sin. It fears ill company, loose talk, and questionable policy. This does not make a man wretched, but it brings him happiness. The watchful sentinel is happier than the soldier who sleeps at his post. He who foreseeth evil and escapes it is happier than he who walks carelessly on and is destroyed.

Fear of God is a quiet grace which leads a man along a choice road, of which it is written, No lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon. Fear of the very appearance of evil is a purifying principle which enables a man, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to keep his garments unspotted from the world. In both senses he that feareth always is made happy. Solomon had tried both worldliness and holy fear: in the one he found vanity, in the other happiness. Let us not repeat his trial, but abide by his verdict. Spurgeon, C. Faith's Checkbook

### **Holy Fear**

He that feareth the commandments shall be rewarded. Proverbs 13:13

HOLY awe of God's Word is at a great discount. Men think themselves wiser than the Word of the Lord, and sit in judgment upon it. ??So did not I, because of the fear of God. We accept the inspired Book as infallible and prove our esteem by our obedience. We have no terror of the Word, but we have a filial awe of it. We are not in fear of its penalties, because we have a fear of its commands.

This holy fear of the commandment produces the restfulness of humility, which is far sweeter than the recklessness of pride. It becomes a guide to us in our movements, a drag when we are going downhill, and a stimulus when we are climbing it. Preserved from evil and led into righteousness by our reverence of the command, we gain a quiet conscience, which is a well of wine; a sense of freedom from responsibility, which is as life from the dead; and a confidence of pleasing God, which is heaven below. The ungodly may ridicule our deep reverence for the Word of the Lord, but what of that? The prize of our high calling is a sufficient consolation for us. The rewards of obedience make us scorn the scorning of the scorner.

### **Fear Has Its Place**

"Happy is the man that feareth always."—Proverbs 28:14

THE fear of the Lord is the beginning and the foundation of all true religion. Without a solemn awe and reverence of God, there is no foothold for the more brilliant virtues. He whose soul does not worship will never live in holiness.



He is happy who feels a jealous fear of doing wrong. Holy fear looks not only before it leaps, but even before it moves. It is afraid of error, afraid of neglecting duty, afraid of committing sin. It fears ill company, loose talk, and questionable policy. This does not make a man wretched, but it brings him happiness. The watchful sentinel is happier than the soldier who sleeps at his post. He who foreseeth evil and escapes it is happier than he who walks carelessly on and is destroyed.

Fear of God is a quiet grace which leads a man along a choice road, of which it is written, "No lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon." Fear of the very appearance of evil is a purifying principle which enables a man, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to keep his garments unspotted from the world. In both senses he that "feareth always" is made happy. Solomon had tried both worldliness and holy fear: in the one he found vanity, in the other happiness. Let us not repeat his trial, but abide by his verdict. (Faith's Checkbook)

One said to me this week, "I am afraid to come to God, for I believe I am only driven to him by the vile motive of fear."

"Ah," I replied, "it was the devil who told you that, because in Hebrews 11 we read that 'Noah, being moved with fear, built an ark for the saving of his house' " (v. 7). Fear is a very proper motive for a guilty man to feel. Where else can such poor sinners as we are begin, except with selfish fear? As to its being vile to fear, it would be viler still to defy your God. You ought not to say "It is too vile a motive." Why, what but a vile motive can be expected from such a vile wretch as you?

I would rather go to heaven doubting all the way, than be lost through self-confidence. There is a holy fear which must not be banished from the church of God. There is a sacred anxiety which puts us to the question, and examines us whether we be in the faith, and it is not to be disdained.

There is nothing in the Bible to make any man fear who puts his trust in Jesus. Nothing in the Bible, did I say? There is nothing in heaven, nothing on earth, nothing in hell, that need make you fear who trust in Jesus. The past you need not fear, for it is forgiven you. The present you need not fear; it is provided for. The future you need not fear; it is secured by the living power of Jesus.

There is the natural fear which the creature has of its Creator, because of its own insignificance and its Maker's greatness. From that we shall never be altogether delivered. With holy awe we shall bow before the divine majesty, even when we come to be perfect in glory.

Second, there is a carnal fear, that is, the fear of man. May God deliver us from it! May we never cease from duty because we dread the eye of man! Who are you that should be afraid of a man that shall die? From this cowardice God's Spirit delivers believers.

The next fear is a servile fear—the fear of a slave toward its master, lest he should be beaten when he has offended. That is a fear which should rightly dwell in every unregenerate heart. Until the slave is turned into a child, he ought to feel that fear which is suitable to his position. By means of this fear the awakened soul is driven and drawn to Christ, and learns the perfect love which casts out fear.

If servile fear be not cast out, it leads to a fourth fear, namely, a diabolical fear. We read of the devils, that they "believe and tremble" (James 2:19). This is the fear of the malefactor toward the executioner.

But fifth, there is a filial fear which is never cast out of the mind. This is to be cultivated. This is "the fear of the Lord" which is "the beginning of wisdom" (Pr 9:10).

A dear brother reminded us that we may tremble on the rock, but the Rock never trembled under us. Another reminded me of a remark I made some time ago: "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee" (Ps. 56:3). "Well," I said, "that is going to heaven third-class, but the better way is to go to heaven first-class: 'I will trust, and not be afraid' (Isa. 12:2), letting no fear come in at all, but depending entirely on what God has declared in his Word."

You have heard that story of the woman on board ship, who was much disturbed in a storm, while her husband, the captain, was calm and restful. She asked him why he was so placid when she was so distressed. He did not answer in words, but he took down his sword and held it to her breast. She smiled. He said, "Why are you not afraid? This is a sharp sword with which I could slay you in a minute."

"Ah," she replied, "but I am not afraid of a sword when it is my husband who wields it."

"So" said he, "neither am I afraid of a storm when it is my Father who sends it and manages it."

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 22ND, 1890,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

"Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the **fear of the Lord** all them day long. For surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off." — Proverbs 23:17, 18.

LAST Lord's-day we had for our texts two promises. I trust they were full of comfort to the tried people of God, and to souls in the anguish of conviction. To-day we will consider two precepts, that we may not seem to neglect any part of the Word of God; for the precept is as divine as the promise. Here we have a command given of the Holy Spirit through the wisest of men; and therefore both on the divine and on the human side it is most weighty. I said that Solomon was the wisest of men, and yet he became, in practice, the most foolish. By his folly, he gained a fresh store of experience of the saddest sort, and we trust that he turned to God with a penitent heart, and so became wiser than ever — wiser with a second wisdom which the grace of God had given him, to consecrate his earthly wisdom. He who had been a voluptuous prince became the wise preacher in Israel: let us give our hearts to know the wisdom which he taught.

The words of Solomon to his own son are not only wise, but full of tender anxiety; worthy, therefore, to be set in the highest degree as to value, and to be received with heartiness as the language of fatherly affection.

These verses are found in the Book of Proverbs: let them pass current as proverbs in the church of God, as they did in Israel of old. Let them be "familiar in our mouths as household words." Let them be often quoted, frequently weighed, and then carried into daily practice. God grant that this particular text may become proverbial in this church from this day forward. May the Holy Ghost impress it on every memory and heart! May it be embodied in all our lives!

If you will look steadily at the text you will see, first, the prescribed course of the godly man: "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." Secondly, you will note the probable interruption of that course. It occurred in those past ages, and it occurs still: "Let not thine heart envy sinners." We are often tempted to repine because the wicked prosper: the fear of the Lord within us is disturbed and envious thoughts, which will lead on to murmuring and to distrust of our heavenly Father, unless they be speedily checked. So foolish and ignorant are we, that we lose our walk with God by fretting because of evil-doers. Thirdly, we shall notice, before we close, the helpful consideration, which may enable us to hold on our way, and to cease from fretting about the proud prosperity of the ungodly: "For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off."

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I. Oh, for grace to practice what the Spirit of God says with regard to our first point, THE PRESCRIBED COURSE OF THE BELIEVER — "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long!" The fear of the Lord is a brief description for true religion. It is an inward condition, betokening hearty submission to our heavenly Father. It consists very much in a holy reverence of God, and a sacred awe of him. This is accompanied by a child-like trust in him, which leads to loving obedience, tender submission, and lowly adoration. It is a filial fear. Not the fear which hath torment; but that which goes with joy, when we "rejoice with trembling."

We must, first of all, be in the fear of God, before we can remain in it "all the day long." This can never be our condition, except as the fruit of the new birth. To be in the fear of the Lord, "ye must be born again." The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and we are taught therein by the Holy Spirit, who is the sole author of all our grace. Where this fear exists, it is the token of eternal life, and it proves the abiding indwelling of the Holy Ghost. "Happy is the man that feareth alway." "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him." This holy fear of the living God is the life of God showing itself in the quickened ones.

This fear, according to the text, is for all the day, and for every day: the longest day is not to be too long for our reverence, nor for our obedience. If our days are lengthened until the day of life declines into the evening of old age, still are we to be in the fear of God; yea, as the day grows longer, our holy fear must be deeper.

This is contrary to the habit of those persons who have a religion of show; they are very fine, very holy, very devout, when anybody looks at them; this is rather the love of human approbation than the fear of the Lord. The Pharisee, with a halfpenny in one hand and a trumpet in the other, is a picture of the man who gives an alms only that his praises may be sounded forth. The Pharisee, standing at the corner of the street, saying his prayers, is a picture of the man who never prays in secret, but is very glib in pious assemblies. "Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward." Show religion is a vain show. Do nothing to be seen of men, or you will ripen into a mere hypocrite.

Neither may we regard godliness as something off the common — an extraordinary thing. Have not a religion of spasms. We have heard of men and women who have been singularly excellent on one occasion, but never again: they blazed out like comets, the

wonders of a season, and they disappeared like comets, never to be seen again. Religion produced at high pressure for a supreme occasion is not a healthy growth. We need an ordinary, common-place, every-day godliness, which may be compared to the light of the fixed stars! which shineth evermore. Religion must not be thought of as something apart from daily life; it should be the most vital part of our existence. Our praying should be like our breathing, natural and constant; our communion with God should be like our taking of food, a happy and natural privilege. Brethren, it is a great pity when people draw a hard and fast line across their life, dividing it into the sacred and the secular. Say not, "This is religion, and the other is business," but sanctify all things. Our commonest acts should be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer, and thus made into sacred deeds. The best of men have the least of jar or change of tone in their lives. When the great Elijah knew that he was to be taken up, what did he do? If you knew that to-night you would be carried away to heaven, you would think of something special with which to quit this earthly scene; and yet the most fitting thing to do would be to continue in your duty, as you would have done if nothing had been revealed to you. It was Elijah's business to go to the schools of the prophets and instruct the young students; and he went about that business until he took his seat in the chariot of fire. He said to Elisha, "The Lord hath sent me to Bethel." When he had exhorted the Bethel students he thought of the other college, and said to his attendant, "The Lord hath sent me to Jericho." He took his journey with as much composure as if he had a lifetime before him, and thus fulfilled his tutorship till the Lord sent him to Jordan, whence he went up by a whirlwind into heaven. What is there better for a man of God than to abide in his calling wherein he glorifies God? That which God has given you to do you should do. That, and nothing else, come what may. If any of you should to-morrow have a revelation that you must die, it would not be wise to go upstairs and sit down, and read, or pray, until the usual day's work was finished. Go on, good woman, and send the children to school, and cook the dinner, and go about the proper business of the day, and then if you are to die you will have left no ends of life's web to ravel out. So live that your death shall not be a piece of strange metal soldered on to your life, but part and parcel of all that has gone before. "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." Living or dying we are the Lord's, and let us live as such.

Ours must never be a religion that is periodic in its flow, like certain, intermittent springs, which flow and ebb, and flow only to ebb again. Beware of the spirit which is in a rapture one hour, and in a rage the next. Beware of serving Christ on Sunday, and Mammon on Monday. Beware of the godliness which varies with the calendar. Every Sunday morning some folks take out their godliness and touch it up, while they are turning the brush round their best hat. Many women, after a fashion, put on the fear of God with their new bonnet. When the Sunday is over, and their best things are put away, they have also put away their best thoughts and their best behavior. We must have a seven-days' religion, or else we have none at all. Periodical godliness is perpetual hypocrisy. He that towards Jesus can be enemy and friend by turns is in truth always an enemy. We need a religion which, like the poor, we have always with us; which, like our heart, is always throbbing, and, like our breath, is always moving. Some people have strange notions on this point: they are holy only on holy days, and in holy places. There was a man who was always pious on Good Friday. He showed no token of religion on any other Friday, or indeed on any other day; but on God Friday nothing would stop him from going to church in the morning, after he had eaten a hotcross bun for breakfast. That day he took the Sacrament, and felt much better: surely he might well enough do so, since on his theory he had taken in grace enough to last him for another year. You and I believe such ideas to be ignorant and superstitious; but we must take heed that we do not err after a similar manner. Every Friday must be a Good Friday to us. May we become so truly gracious that to us every day becomes a holy day; our garments, vestments; our meals, sacraments; our houses, temples; our families, churches; our lives, sacrifices; ourselves kings and priests unto God! May the bells upon our horses be "holiness unto the Lord"! God send us religion of this kind, for this will involve our being "in the fear of the Lord all the day long."

Let us practically note the details which are comprised in the exhortation, "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." The sun is up, and we awake. May we each one feel, "When I awake I am still with thee." It is wise to rise in proper time; for drowsiness may waste an hour, and cause us to be behindhand all the day, so that we cannot get into order, and act as those who quietly walk with God. If I am bound to be in the fear of God all the day long, I am bound to begin well, with earnest prayer, and sweet communion with God. On rising; it is as essential to prepare the heart as to wash the face; as necessary to put on Christ as to put on one's garments. Our first word should be with our heavenly Father. It is good for the soul's health to begin the day by taking a satisfying draught from the river of the water of life. Very much more depends upon beginnings than some men think. How you go to bed to-night may be determined by your getting up this morning. If you get out of bed on the wrong side, you may keep on the wrong side all the day. If your heart be right in the waking, it will be a help towards its being right till sleeping. Go not forth into a dry world till the morning dew lies on thy branch. Baptize thy heart in devotion ere thou wade into the stream of daily care. See not the face of man until thou hast first seen the face of God. Let thy first thoughts fly heavenward, and let thy first breathings be prayer.

And now we are downstairs, and are off to business, or to labor. As you hurry along the street, think of these words, "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." Leave not thy God at home: thou needest him most abroad. In mingling with thy fellow-men, be with them, but be not of them, if that would involve thy forgetting thy Lord. That early interview which thou hast had with thy Beloved should perfume thy conversation all the day. A "mile from Jesus in the morning will be sunshine all the day. Endeavor, when thou art plying the trowel, or driving the plane, or guiding the plough, or using the needle or the pen, to keep up constant communication with thy Father and thy Lord. Let the telephone between thee and the Eternal never cease from its use: do thou put thine ear to it, and

hear what the Lord shall speak to thee; and do thou put thy mouth to it, and ask counsel from the oracle above. Whether you work long hours or short hours, "Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long."

But it is time for meals. Be thou in the fear of the Lord at thy table. The soul may be poisoned while the body is being nourished, if we turn the hour of refreshment into an hour of indulgence. Some have been gluttonous, more have been drunken. Do not think of thy table as though it were a hog's trough, where the animal might gorge to the full; but watch thine appetite, and by holy thanksgiving make thy table to be the Lord's table. So eat the bread of earth as to eat bread at last in the kingdom of God. So drink that thy head and heart may be in the best condition to serve God. When God feeds thee do not profane the occasion by excess, or defile it by loose conversation.

During the day our business calls us into company. Our associations in labor may not be so choice as we could wish; but he that earns his bread is often thrown where his own will would not lead him. If we were never to deal with ungodly men, it would be necessary for us to go out of the world. He that is in the fear of God all the day long, will watch his own spirit, and language, and actions, that these may be such as becometh the gospel of Christ in whatever society his lot may be cast. Seek not to be a hermit or a monk; but be a man of God among men. When making a bargain, or selling thy goods to customers, be thou in the fear of God. It may be needful to go into the market, or on the exchange; but be in the fear of the Lord amid the throng. It may be, thou wilt seldom be able to speak of that which is most dear to thee, lest thou cast pearls before swine; but thou must abide always under holy and heavenly influence, so as to be always ready to give a reason for the hope which is in thee with meekness and fear. "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long," though thine ears may be vexed and thy heart grieved with the evil around thee. He that cannot be in the fear of God in London cannot in the country.

The company have now gone, and you are alone; maintain the fear of the Lord in thy solitude. Beware of falling into solitary sin. Certain young men and women, when alone, pull out a wicked novel which they would not like to be seen reading; and others will have their sly nips though they would be reputed very temperate. If a man be right with God he is in his best company when alone; and he seeks therein to honor his God, and not to grieve him. Surely, when I am alone with God, I am bound to use my best manners. Do nothing which you would be afraid to have known. Be in the fear of the Lord when you are so much alone that you have no fear of men.

The evening draws in, the shop is closed, and you have a little time to yourself. Our young people in shops need a rest and a walk. Is this your case? "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." In the evening, as well as in the morning, be true to your Lord. Beware of ill company in the evening! Take care that you never say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me." "Be thou in the fear of the Lord" when sinners entice thee, and at once refuse any offer which is not pleasing to God.

"Recreation," says one. Yes, recreation. There are many helpful and healthy recreations which can in moderation be used to advantage; but engage in no pastime which would hinder your continuing in the fear of the Lord. In your recreation forget not your higher recreation wherein you were created anew in Christ Jesus. Our chief rest lies in a change of service for our Lord; our fullest pleasure in fellowship with Jesus.

Night has fallen around us, and we are home with our families: let us not forget to close the day with family prayer and private prayer, as we opened it. Our chamber must see nothing which angels might blush to look upon. Those holy beings come and go where holy ones repose. Angels have a special liking for sleeping saints. Did they not put a ladder from heaven down to the place where Jacob lay? Though he had only a stone for his pillow, the earth for his bed, the hedges for his curtains, and the skies for his canopy, yet God was there, and angels flocked about him. Between God's throne and the beds of holy men there has long been a much frequented road. Sleep in Jesus every night, so that you may sleep in Jesus at the last. From dawn to midnight "be thou in the fear of the Lord."

Let us now remember special occasions. All days are not quite the same. Exceptional events will happen, and these are all included in the day. You sustain, perhaps, one day, a great loss, and unexpectedly find yourself far poorer than when you left your bed. "Be thou in the fear of the Lord" when under losses and adversities. When the great waterfloods prevail, and storms of trials sweep over thee, remain in the ark of the fear of the Lord, and thou shalt be as safe as Noah was.

Possibly you may have a wonderful day of success; but be not always gaping for it. Yet your ship may come home; your windfall may drop at your feet. Beyond anything you have expected, a surprising gain may fall into your lap: be not unduly excited, but remain in the fear of the Lord. Take heed that thou be not lifted up with pride, so as to dote upon thy wealth; for then thy God may find it needful to afflict thee out of love to thy soul.

It may happen, during the day, that you are assailed by an unusual temptation. Christian men are well armed against common temptations, but sudden assaults may injure them; therefore, "be in the fear of the Lord all the day long," and then surprises will not overthrow you. You shall not be afraid of evil tidings, neither shall you be betrayed by evil suggestions, if you are rooted and grounded in the constant fear of the Lord.

During the day, perhaps, you are maliciously provoked. An evil person assails you with envenomed speech; and if you a little lose your temper your adversary takes advantage of your weakness, and becomes more bitter and slanderous. He hurls at you things which ought not to be thought of, much less to be said. "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long"; "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath"; "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." The adversary knows your tender place, and therefore he says the most atrocious things against God and holy things. Heed him not; but in patience possess your soul, and in the fear of the Lord you will find an armor which his poisoned arrows cannot pierce. "May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

It may be, that during the day you will have to act in a very difficult business. Common transactions between man and man are easy enough to honest minds; but every now and then a nice point is raised, a point of conscience, a matter not to be decided off-hand: "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." Spread the hard case before the Lord. Judge a matter as it will be judged before his bar; and if this be too much for thy judgment, then wait upon God for further light. No man goes astray even in a difficult case, if he is accustomed to cry, like David, "Bring hither the ephod." This holy Book and the divine Spirit will guide us aright when our best judgment wavers. "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long."

But, alas! you are feeling very unwell; this day will differ from those of activity. You cannot go to business; you have to keep to your bed. Fret not, but "be in the fear of the Lord all the day long." If the day has to last through the night because sleep forsakes you, be still with your thoughts soaring toward heaven, your desires quiet in your Father's bosom, and your mind happy in the sympathy of Christ. To have our whole being bathed and baptized in the Holy Ghost is to find health in sickness, and joy in pain.

It may be, also, that you suffer from a mental sickness in the form of depression of spirit. Things look very dark, and your heart is very heavy. Mourner, "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." When life is like a foggy day — when providence is cloudy and stormy, and you are caught in a hurricane — still "be in the fear of the Lord." When your soul is exceeding sorrowful, and you are bruised as a cluster trodden in the wine-press, yet cling close to God, and never let go your reverent fear of him. However exceptional and unusual may be your trial, yet row within your soul, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

I have sketched the matter roughly. Let me now suggest to you excellent reasons for being always in the fear of the Lord. Ought we not to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long, since he sees us all the day long? Does the Lord ever take his eye from off us? Doth the keeper of Israel ever slumber? If God were not our God, but only our lawful master, I should say, "Let us not be eye-servants"; but since we cannot escape his all-seeing eye, let us be the more careful how we behave ourselves. "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long"; for Jehovah, whom thou fearest, sees thee without ceasing.

Remember, also, that sin is equally evil all the day long. Is there an hour when it would be right to disobey God? Is there some interval in which the law of holiness has no force? I trow not. Therefore, never consent to sin. To fear God is always right: to put away the fear of God from before our eyes would be always criminal; therefore, be ever in the fear of God. Remember the strictness of Nehemiah's integrity, and how he said, "So did not I because of the fear of the Lord."

Walk in the fear of the Lord at all times, because you always belong to Christ. The blood-mark is always upon you; will you ever belie it? You have been chosen, and you are always chosen; you have been bought with a price, and you are always your Lord's; you have been called out from the world by the Holy Spirit, and he is always calling you; you have been preserved by sovereign grace, and you are always so preserved: therefore, by the privileges you enjoy, you are bound to abide in the fear of the Lord. How could you lay down your God-given and heaven-honored character of a child of God? Nay, rather cling for ever to your adoption, and the heritage it secures you.

You can never tell when Satan will attack you, therefore be always in the fear of the Lord. You are in an enemy's country. Soldiers, be always on the watch! Soldiers, keep in order of fight! You might straggle from the ranks, and begin to lie about in the hedges, and sleep without sentries if you were in your own country; but you are marching through the foeman's land, where an enemy lurks behind every bush. The fear of the Lord is your sword and shield; never lay it down.

Furthermore, remember that your Lord may come at any hour. Before the word can travel from my lip to your ear Jesus may be here. While you are in business, or on your bed, or in the field, the flaming heavens may proclaim his advent. Stand, therefore, with your loins girt and your lamps trimmed, ready to go in to the supper whenever the Bridegroom comes. Or you may die. As a church we have had a double warning, during the last few days, in the departure of our two beloved elders, Messrs. Hellier and Croker. They have been carried home like shocks of corn, fully ripe. They have departed in peace, and have joyfully entered into rest. We also are on the margin of the dividing stream: our feet are dipped in the waters which wash the river's brim. We, too, shall soon ford the black torrent. In a moment, suddenly, we may be called away: let every action; be such that we would not object to have it quoted as our last action. Let every day be so spent that it might fitly be the close of life on earth. Let our near and approaching end help to keep us "in the fear of the Lord all the day long."

If we keep in that state, observe the admirable results! To abide in the fear of the Lord is to dwell safely. To forsake the Lord would

be to court danger. In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, but apart from it there is no security. How honorable is such a state! Men ridicule the religion which is not uniform. I heard of a brother who claimed to have long been a teetotaler; but some doubted. When he was asked how long he had been an abstainer, he replied, "On and on, for twenty years." You should have seen the significant smile upon all faces. An abstainer off and on! His example did not stand for much. Certain professors are Christians "off and on"; and nobody respects them. Such seed as this will not grow: there is no vitality in it. Constancy is the proof of sincerity. "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long": this is to be happy. God has spoiled the believer for being easy in sin. If you are a Christian you will never find happiness in departing from God. I say again, God has spoiled you for such pleasure. Your joy lies in a closer walk with God: your heaven on earth is in communion with the Lord.

If you abide in the fear of the Lord, how useful you will be! Your "off and on" people are worth nothing: nobody is influenced by them. What little good they do, they undo. The abiding man is also the growing man. He that is "in the fear of the Lord all the day long" gets to have more of that fear; and it has more practical power over his life and heart. What a poor life they lead who are alternately zealous and lukewarm! Like Penelope, they weave by day, but unravel by night. They blow hot and cold, and so melt and freeze by turns. They build and then break down, and so are never at rest. Children of God, let your conduct be consistent. Let not your lives be like a draught-board, with as many blacks as whites. Do not be speckled birds; like magpies, more famed for chatter than anything else. Oh, that God would make us white doves! I pray you be not bold one day and cowardly another; be not one day sound in the faith, and the next day on the down-grade. Be not under excitement generous, and in cool blood mean as a miser. Oh, that we might become like our Father in heaven in holiness, and then become like him in immutability, so as to be for ever holy!

From all this let us infer our great need. I think I hear somebody say, "You are cutting out a nice bit of work for us." Am I? Believe me, I am looking to a stronger hand than yours. To be in the fear of the Lord for a single day is not to be accomplished by unrenewed nature; it is a work of grace. See, then, what great grace you will need for all the days of your life. Go for it, and get it. See how little you can do without the Spirit of God: without his indwelling you will soon cast off all fear of the Lord. Plead the covenant promise, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Depend upon God for everything; and as you know that salvation is of faith that it might be by grace, exercise much faith towards God. Believe that he can make you to be in his fear all the day long. "According to your faith, be it unto you." Believe holiness to be possible; seek after it, and possess it. Faith, as it is the channel of grace, must always be associated with truth. True faith lives on truth. If you give up the doctrines of the gospel, you will not be in the fear of God at all; and if you begin to doubt them, you will not be "in the fear of the Lord all the day long." Get solid truth for the foundation of your faith, and let your firm faith bring you daily grace, that you may manifestly be always in the fear of the Lord.

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II. Now I have rightly taken up the most of my time with the principal topic and we will only have a word or two upon the next theme. Let us consider THE PROBABLE INTERRUPTION. It has happened to godly men in all ages to see the wicked prosper; and they have been staggered by the sight. You see a man who has no conscience, making money in your trade, while you make none. Sometimes you think that your conscientiousness hinders you; and I hope it is nothing else. You see another person scheming and cheating: to him honesty is mere policy, and Sabbath-labor is no difficulty; for the Word of God is nothing to him. You cannot do as he does, and therefore you do not seem to get on as he does. Be it so: but let not his prosperity grieve you. There is something better to live for than mere money-making. If your life pleases God, let it please you. Never envy the ungodly. Suppose God allows them to succeed — what then? You should no more envy them than you envy fat bullocks the ribbons which adorn them at the show. They are ready for the slaughter. Do you wish yourself in their place? The fate of the prosperous sinner is one to be dreaded: he is set on high to be cast down.

Do not even in your wish deprive the ungodly of their transient happiness. Their present prosperity is the only heaven they will ever know. Let them have as much of it as they can. I have heard of a wife who treated her unkind and ungodly husband with great gentleness for this very reason. She said, "I have prayed for him, and entreated him to think about his soul; but at last I have come to fear that he will die in his sins, and therefore I have made up my mind that I will make him as happy as I can in this life. I tremble to think of what his misery must be in the world to come, and therefore I will make him happy now." O men in your senses, surely you will not grudge poor swine their husks and swill! Nay, fill the trough, and let the creature feed; for it has neither part nor lot in a higher life. Believer, take thou thy bitter cup and drink it without complaining; for an hour with thy God will be a hundredfold recompense for a life of trial.

One is the more tried because these men are very apt to boast. They crow over the suffering believer, saying, "What comes of your religion? You are worse off than I am. See how splendidly I get on without God!" Care nothing for their boasting; it will end so soon. Their tongue walketh through the earth, but it only utters vanity.

It is galling to see the enemies of God triumphant. Their policy for a time beats the plain protest of the lover of truth. Their deceit baffles the plain man. The lovers of error outnumber the men of God. Such men tread on creeds and trust-deeds and every other legal protection of honest people. What care they? They despise the old-fashioned folk whom they oppress. Remember Haman, in

the Book of Esther, and note how glorious he was till he was hung up on the gallows.

There was no real cause for envying the wicked; for their present is danger, their future is doom. I see them now on yonder island, sporting, dancing, feasting merrily. I am standing as on a bare rock, and I might well envy them their island of roses and lilies; but as I watch I see that their fairy island is gradually sinking to destruction. The ocean is rising all around; the waves are carrying away the shores: even while they dance the floods advance. Lo, yonder is one infatuated wretch sinking amidst the devouring flood. The rest continue at their play; but it cannot last much longer. They will soon be gone. Let me stand on my lone rock, rather than sink amid their fleeting luxury. Let me abide in safety rather than dance where danger is all around.

Ay, dear friends, if you envy the wicked it will do you serious harm.

Envy helps in no way, but it hinders in many ways. If you envy the wicked you may soon wish to be like them. If you do so wish, you are like them now! He that would be willing to be wicked in order to prosper, is wicked already. He who says, "I should like to do as they do, that I might grow rich as they do"; why, he is a man that has his price, and would sell his soul if he could meet a purchaser. No, not for all the world would we share the lot of unbelievers. We would sit in the gate with Mordecai sooner than feast with the king with Haman. God help us, dear friends, that we may not be disturbed by seeing the prosperity of the wicked.

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III. We close with THE HELPFUL CONSIDERATION. The text says, "For surely there is an end; and shine expectation shall not be cut off."

First, then, there is an end of this life. These things are not for ever: on the contrary, all that we see is a dissolving view. Surely, every man walketh in a vain show: even as a show it is vain. You talk of spiritual things as though they were shadows; but in very truth these are the only substance. Temporal things are as the mirage of the desert. The things about us are such stuff as dreams are made of; and when we truly awake we shall despise their image. In all wealth and honor there are a worm and a moth. Think of the sinner's end, and you will no longer be troubled when he spreads himself like a green bay tree.

Next, there is an end of the worldling's prosperity. He makes his money. What then? He makes more. What then? He makes more. What then? He dies; and there is a little notice in the newspaper which says that he died worth so much; which, being interpreted, means that he was taken away from so much which he never possessed, but guarded for his heir. There is an end in death, and after death the judgment; "for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing." What an end will that be! The sinner may live as carelessly as he pleases, but he must answer for it at the judgment-seat of Christ. Loud may be his laughter, sarcastic and bitter may be his criticisms upon religion; but there is an end; and when the death-sweat beads his brow, he will lower his key, and need help from that very gospel which he criticized. "There is an end." Let us not spend our lives for that which hath an end: an immortal soul should seek immortal joys.

Dear friends, to you there is an end in quite another sense. God has an end in your present trouble and exercise. Your difficulties and trials are sent as messenger from God with gracious design. "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long"; for every part of the day hath its tendency to work out your spiritual education, your preparation for the heaven to come. In everything that happens to you your heavenly Father has an end. The arrows of calamity are aimed at your sins. Your bitter cups are moans to purify the inward parts of the soul. Fret not, but trust. There is an old proverb, that you should never let children and fools see half-finished works: even so, the work of God in providence cannot be judged of by such poor children as we are; for we cannot see to the end of the Lord's design. My brethren, when we see the end from the beginning, and behold God's work complete, we shall have a very different view of things from what we have now, while the work is still proceeding.

Lastly, whilst there is an end to the wicked, there will be no failure to your expectation. What are you expecting? That God will keep his promise? And so he will. That God will give you peace in the end? And so he will. That he will raise you from the dead, and set you in heavenly places with Christ? And so he will. And that you shall be for ever with the Lord, and he will grant you glory and bliss? And so he will. "Your expectation shall not be cut off." Every Christian is a man of great expectations, and none of them will fail. Let him cultivate his hope, and enlarge its scope; for the hopes which are built on Jesus and his grace will never disappoint us. In our case the birds in the bush are better birds than those in the hand; and they are quite as sure. The promise of God is in itself a possession, and our expectation of it is in itself an enjoyment.

I have done, dear friends. May the Holy Spirit speak these things home to your hearts! Christian people ought to be exceedingly glad; for if they have but a small estate, they have it on an endless tenure. The worldling may have a large house, but he has it only upon a short lease: he will have nothing soon. Just now there is a great noise made about leaseholds falling in. Every ungodly man may have his life-lease run out to-morrow! But the believer has a freehold. What he has is his without reserve. "Their inheritance shall be for ever." By faith grasp the eternal. Treasure the spiritual. Rejoice in God, and "be in the fear of the Lord all the day long." God grant you this in his great grace, for Christ's sake! Amen.



# The Fear of God

## by Wilhelmus A'Brakel

### The Word Fear Defined

Fear is either expressive of reverence or terror. Fear as terror is generally expressed by the Hebrew words *magor*, and *pacadh*, and by the Greek word *phobos*. Fear as being reverence is denominated in Hebrew as *yirah*, and in Greek as *eulabeia*. However, these words are occasionally also used without this distinction.

Fear issues forth from love—either for ourselves or for God. Self-love engenders fear when something occurs which could deprive us of something good or whereby some evil could befall us. We fear deprivation, or the evil itself, and whatever or whoever would deprive us of that which is good, or whereby evil could be inflicted upon us.

God has created self-love in man and wills that we make use of it. The law requires that we love our neighbor as ourselves (Mat 22:39). It is therefore not sinful to fear deprivation and evil. This fear was inherent in Adam's nature prior to the fall, even though there was no occasion for this fear to arise in him. The Lord Jesus also had such fear (cf. Mat 26:37; Heb 5:7). One may indeed be fearful of death and other discomforts, and thus also of wild animals and evil men.

This fear becomes evil, however, if it begets the use of evil means—either to preserve or acquire that which is good, or to avoid evil. This is true if we fear man more than God and, in neglecting both the fear of God and obedience toward His commandments, we seek to get man on our side in sinful ways. We then give no heed as to whether we displease God; as long as we can please men in order that they will do us no evil, but good. "Do not fear those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mat 10:28).

Since we must have love for ourselves, and fear issues forth therefrom, we must have more fear for evil which relates to the soul than to the body. Since, the soul's well or woe is dependent upon God, we must be fearful out of love for our own salvation, and must fear God's judgments. "My flesh trembles for fear of You; and I am afraid of Your judgments" (Psalm 119:120). An unconverted person must also, by fear for the eternal wrath of God, be persuaded to believe (2 Cor. 5:11). A converted person must, for fear of spiritual harm, stir himself up to be earnest. "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Heb 4:1).

### The Definition and Nature of Filial (godly) Fear

Filial fear is a holy inclination of the heart, generated by God in the hearts of His children, whereby they, out of reverence for God, take careful pains not to displease God, and earnestly endeavor to please Him in all things. It is a motion of the heart. The noble soul is gifted with emotions, and dependent upon what the objects are, is moved to either joy or sorrow, love or hatred, fear or fearlessness. As far as the fear of God is concerned, man is insensitive, hard, and without emotion. "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Romans 3:18). In regeneration, however, the heart of stone is removed and a heart of flesh is received, which is soft and pliable, and is very readily moved upon beholding God, dependent upon the measure in which God reveals Himself to the soul. If God is perceived as being majestic, a motion immediately arises within their soul—a motion which is befitting to the creature, in respect to God.

It is a holy motion. Since an unconverted person is in essence nothing but sin, also all that proceeds from him is distorted. The ability to fear is directed toward an erroneous object and is exercised in a disorderly fashion. Believers, however, having been sanctified in principle, are also sanctified as far as their inner motions are concerned. Their fear has a proper object and consequently functions in a holy manner, that is, in faith and love. They are devout and fear God (Act 10:2).

God generates this holy motion. By nature man is totally unfit for any good work. He finds no delight in God and has no desire to fear the Lord. He may be terrified of God, but he cannot fear Him rightly. However, God enables His own people to fear Him. "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jer. 32:40).

The Holy Spirit is therefore called "the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2).

This filial fear is found in the hearts of God's children. The heart is the seat of all motions—evil as well as good. God has enclosed this precious gift in the hearts of His children, and all the motions relative to fear proceed from the heart. Their fear neither consists in talk, refraining from evil and doing good, nor in the appearance of fear—but rather in truth. The heart, intellect, will, and affections are involved here, and the heart brings forth various deeds which manifest the fear of God. Only God's children truly fear the Lord, and therefore those who have this virtue are called God-fearing people. "... the same man was just and devout" (Luke 2:25); "... devout men" (Acts 2:5); "And devout men carried Stephen to his burial" (Act 8:2).

Filial fear is engendered by reverence for God. God is the object of this fear. "O fear the Lord, you His saints" (Psalm 34:9). God is eminent, glorious, and majestic within Himself—even if there were no creatures. "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty" (1 Chr. 29:11). Hereby God is awe-inspiring in and of Himself. With the advent of intelligent creatures who observe the brilliance of His glory, it cannot but be that they have reverence for Him, who is both infinite and majestic.

A natural man does not know God. Therefore he may be fearful of His judgments, for calamities, and sometimes may acknowledge God to be solemn (although he generally does not progress this far), but he cannot have reverence for Him. That is the privilege and blessedness of believers. A sinful person cannot tolerate God's majesty. He would flee in terror from God, for He is to him a consuming fire. However, in Christ—God is a reconciled Father to His children, and therefore they simultaneously love and revere Him. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Psalm 2:11).

### **The Serious Consequences of Being Void of the Fear of God**

(1) Be assured that God will give you a fearful and trembling heart as long as you do not fear Him, so that you will find neither rest nor safety anywhere. Rather, your own heart and conscience will be continually tormented. The wish of David will come upon you. "Put them in fear, O Lord" (Psalm 9:20). Be assured that the curse which the Lord threatens—will come upon you. "The Lord will cause your heart to tremble, your eyesight to fail, and your soul to despair. Your lives will hang in doubt. You will live night and day in fear, with no reason to believe that you will see the morning light. In the morning you will say, 'If only it were night!' And in the evening you will say, 'If only it were morning!' You will say this because of your terror at the awesome horrors you see around you." (Deu 28:65-67); "You will live there in such constant fear that the sound of a leaf driven by the wind will send you fleeing. You will run as though chased by a warrior with a sword, and you will fall even when no one is pursuing you" (Lev 26:36). "His enemies will crawl with fear into holes in the ground. They will hide in caves in the rocks from the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty. They will abandon their gold and silver idols to the moles and bats. They will crawl into caverns and hide among the jagged rocks at the tops of cliffs. In this way, they will try to escape the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty as he rises to shake the earth" (Isaiah 2:19-21).

(2) Be assured that if you continue on without fear for the Lord—even though you may peacefully approach your end—the terror of the Lord will at last come upon you. When you will be forsaken by everything, the Lord will be a terror to you and strike terror into you. Oh, how many are there who breathe their last breath with consternation and full of terror! Remember Belshazzar, and consider that you will also experience this. "Then the king's face turned pale with fear. Such terror gripped him that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way beneath him!" (Dan 5:6). In that condition he departed from life.

(3) And even if no terror were to come upon you in this life and at death, you will nevertheless be overcome with fear on every side after your death. Then wrath and anger, oppression and consternation will eternally be upon you. Then you will know what it is to fall into the hands of God. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:31). Give heed to what is expressed in Psalm 76:7, "You, even You, are to be feared: and who may stand in Your sight when once You are angry?" It is in this manner that the prophet presents this terror, "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites. Who among us will dwell with the devouring fire! who among us will dwell with everlasting burnings!" (Isaiah 33:14). Oh, that you would quietly reflect upon, and apply all this to yourself—and that you would believe it!

### **The Fear of God in Believers**

We shall now turn to you, believers. You will indeed observe your deficiency in this, but you will also be able to perceive that the Lord has put the principle of His fear within you.

(1) Do you not desire that disposition of the fear of God as we have described it in the foregoing? You do not only acquiesce in this, judging it to be good and fitting, but you grieve that you have so little of it and are desirous for a greater measure of it. This is an indication that you are already a partaker of it, for the servants of God are described as such. "... Your servants, who desire to fear Your name" (Neh 1:11).

(2) Do you not perceive heartfelt intentions and initiatives to walk in the fear of the Lord? Can you find any delight in having subdued a sin and in having done some good, unless this has been done in the fear of God? And perceiving your deficiency and impotence toward that which you love, is it not frequently your earnest prayer to God—that He would fulfill His promise to you in putting His fear in your heart? Behold, there you have evidence that you have the nature of those who fear God. This was David's prayer: "Unite my heart to fear Your name" (Psalm 86:11).

(3) Is your desire for the fear of God entirely impotent and your prayer entirely fruitless, or do you perceive the principles of it in your actions? Does not God reveal Himself to you in His majesty? Does not your heart say that the Lord is indeed worthy to be served? Are not reverential motions stirred up within you toward God? Do you not at times bow in reverence before Him? Has it not been

your experience that, due to a sense of His majesty, you have cast your eyes downward, closed your eyes, and covered your face with your hands? Did not a holy trembling come upon you at times, and was it not your delight if these motions became more sensitive—yes, did it not cause you to rejoice when thinking upon this afterwards, wishing it to recur and that it would always be thus? Would you not have committed many sins, and neglected many holy things—if the fear of the Lord had not prevented you? Does not the fear of God nip many sins in the bud, and does not this motivate you to perform your duty? If these things are within you—you must be convinced of the truth, even though the measure is yet small. You will observe your disposition in Job: "I dreaded destruction from God, and for fear of his splendor I could not do such things" (Job 31:23). Such was also true for Nehemiah: "... but I did not do so—because of the fear of God" (Neh 5:15). Acknowledge therefore this received grace, and it will render you capable to read the following rebuke and exhortation, with benefit.

### **Believers Rebuked**

The more clearly you will be convinced of the principles of the fear of God within you—the more you must grieve over your deficiency in the fear of God. These manifest themselves in the disposition of the heart, the penetration of sinful thoughts, words, and deeds contrary to the revelation of God's presence, and in the fear of man whereby the fear of God must consequently yield.

First, we are to be severely reprimanded, if, knowing that God is majestic, having experienced how good it is to humbly walk with the Majestic One, and knowing how invigorating it is to walk in the way of uprightness, we nevertheless neglect to thus focus upon the Lord and fear Him continually. This makes us vulnerable to all kinds of sin. When the doorkeeper sleeps with the door wide open—every lust can then enter without any impediment! And even if we are aware of this, there is nevertheless no strength to oppose it, and we are overcome before realizing it. If then, with Samson, we wish to offer resistance, we shall have lost our strength.

Secondly, this is followed by a disposition which is yet more evil, namely, when we even proceed to satisfy this lust, doing so not only when our conscience points out its evil, and counsels us not to begin; and upon having begun, counseled us to desist from and subdue the lust, to be silent in the midst of an evil discourse, and to refrain from the sin which we are currently committing; but also when our conscience causes us to reflect upon God and His majesty.

Indeed, this is especially true (which is most abominable) when God manifests Himself to the soul, sensibly discourages the soul from sin, and, so to speak, shakes His finger and says, "Behold! I am here, and I certainly see what you are doing! Cease sinning—or else I shall cause you to feel My displeasure!"

It is a setting aside of the fear of God, a grieving of the Holy Spirit, and the inflicting of a deadly wound upon the soul when, due to the agitation of sin, we are driven onward and seek to hide ourselves from the presence of God in order to be able to proceed, and then actually prevail in carrying out the sin which is at hand. If God were not infinitely longsuffering and immutable, He would cast away such impudent souls!

The third sin committed, is to fear man—a sin to which the godly are still vulnerable. If we have not yet fully denied ourselves in regard to honor, love, advantage, and pleasure, nor are much inclined to acknowledge the insignificance of man (that is, that man can neither stir nor move, can do neither good nor evil to us), and we have not accustomed ourselves to see the hand of the Lord in all things, thus perceiving that God alone does everything, and that all men are but instruments in His hand, being used either to do good or evil unto us—this will engender a looking unto man.

In time of war we consider the multitude and courage of the soldiers and we stand upon our sword (Ezekiel 33:26). "Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations?" (Jer 21:13). If, however, we perceive that the might of the enemy supersedes ours, we are fearful and the heart is moved "as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind" (Isaiah 7:2).

We fear man when in sickness, legal cases, business transactions, in the plying of our trade, in pursuing our desire which must be attained to by the instrumentality of men, etc.; we look to men and, in our thoughts end in them—as if it had to come from them. We vehemently seek to have them on our side, and we are fearful of losing their favor. In our association with men we fear the one for his wisdom (which is no match for ours), the other for his status and imposing personality, the third for his wickedness, and the fourth for his benevolence which we would not like to lose. Now if such a person has no desire for godliness and would become angry if you were to manifest the image of God and perform your duty, and if, out of fear for him, you were to hold back and accommodate him in the commission of sin, behold, then the fear of God is rendered inferior and must yield. There God is on the one side, and man on the other side. There the fear of God is on the one hand and the fear of man on the other hand. If, however, the fear of man motivates us to do something which is contrary to the fear of God, then we reject the fear of God because of the fear of man.

This is a dreadful sin, for first of all God has forbidden it. "Do not fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell!" (Mat 10:28). "Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die?" (Isaiah 51:12).

Secondly, it is the greatest act of contempt toward God—if He must yield to man for you. It is idolatry and a sin of the heathen.

"Who... worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator" (Rom 1:25).

Thirdly, it is a denial of the providence of God—as if God did not reign; as if the creature could function independently.

Fourthly, it affects and troubles you continually.

Fifthly, it causes you to fall from one sin into the next, and you ought therefore to be ashamed of your previous fear of man. Be warned and give heed to the exhortation of the Lord: "Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?" (Isaiah 2:22). Follow David in his noble courage. "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear—what can man do unto me?" (Psalm 118:6).

### **Incentives for the Fear of God**

It is not sufficient to be on guard against the sins which are contrary to the fear of God; rather, it is our great duty to conquer them all by the fear of God. The livelier the fear of God is—the less power will sin have over you. Therefore in the future commit yourself fully to tenderly fear the Lord your God—in order that the fear of God may guard you and direct your thoughts, words, and deeds. Oh, if only I could make you more lively in this! Give careful attention to the following incentives; may you be tender and pliable.

First, does not God have all the perfections within Himself which are able to engender reverence? He is majestic, glorious, omnipotent, holy, good, and awe-inspiring; that is His nature. How can anyone therefore be in the presence of God—without fear and reverence?

Consider what has been expressed in the Word of God: "Who is like unto You, O Lord, among the gods? who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Exo 15:11); "That you may fear this glorious and fearful name—the Lord Your God" (Deu 28:58); "For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: He also is to be feared above all gods" (1 Chr. 16:25); "O Lord God of heaven, the great and dreadful God" (Neh 1:5). His wrath upon the sinner is dreadful. "Who knows the power of Your anger? even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath" (Psalm 90:11). His goodness begets reverence in order that He may thus be feared in love. "But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared" (Psalm 130:4). Is it not proper, befitting, and requisite—that you, having been created by God and having received grace from God, fear this majestic God and tremble before Him?

Secondly, the root of the matter is indeed in you. You desire it and you cannot hear the fear of God mentioned, and your heart is inclined to it and your desires are stirred up. Why would you subdue this desire? All that has a principle of life is desirous for growth and perfection—which is thus also true for you in this respect. It is indeed natural if a servant fears his master and a child his father. You have chosen the Lord to be your Lord, and has not He given you the Spirit of the adoption of children and set you among His children? Have you not entered into covenant with Him—that He would be a God unto you and that you would be the recipient of His favor? This must stir you up to fear your Lord and your Father. "If then I am a Father—where is My honor? And if I am a Master—where is My fear?" (Mal 1:6). Acknowledge this relationship, and it will beget filial fear in you.

Thirdly, the fear of God is the fountain of all the holiness which delights you. Sinful lusts will lose their potency, corruptions which surface will readily be subdued, you will be stopped in the middle of sinning, and you will find yourself inclined toward the practice of all manner of virtues. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Pro 9:10); "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom" (Pro 15:33); "The fear of the Lord is clean" (Psalm 19:9); "The fear of the Lord tends to life:" (Pro 19:23); "... perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

Fourthly, the Lord has pleasure in those who fear Him. It ought to be a very precious matter to us—that God is pleased with us. It ought to be our great desire and earnest endeavor—to be pleasing to the Lord. God is, however, pleased with the fear of God, for therein the acknowledgment and the glorification of His perfections coalesce. "The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him" (Psalm 147:11). How lovely it is when man delights himself in God—and when God finds pleasure in man!

## **The Secret of the Lord is with Those who Fear Him Preached at Zoar Chapel, London, August 4, 1844, by J. C. Philpot**

"The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him; and he will show them his covenant." Psalm 25:14

There is no truth more offensive to the carnal mind, nor one more sweet to those taught of God than this—that true religion is of a spiritual and supernatural character. That God should dwell in man; that the blessed Spirit should condescend to be our teacher; that we know nothing except through this divine tuition; that all saving faith stands wholly and solely in the power of God; and that there is

no true religion independent of the inward work and witness of God the Spirit in the conscience—such a creed as this may well raise up all the scorn of the natural mind. But take away the Spirit's work, and what is left? Nothing but a dead carcass of forms. There can be but two kinds of religion—the one external, and the other internal; the one natural, and the other spiritual; one that stands in forms and ceremonies, and the other that stands in the communications of mercy, grace, and truth out of the fullness of Jesus. So that if a man denies the inward teachings of the Spirit of God to be the sum and substance of religion, he has no other refuge but Popery; and, to be thoroughly consistent, he should declare himself a Papist at once; for there is no real stopping-place between vital religion wrought in the heart and conscience by the power of God the Spirit, and that which stands in external forms, rites, and ceremonies.

But it is the especial privilege of God's people, and when enjoyed it is the very comfort of their souls, that all vital godliness is wrought in their hearts by the power of God. They are well convinced that they have no more religion, and no less religion, than is brought into their conscience with divine power. To have a measure of this heavenly teaching, and to live under the enjoyment of it, constitutes all the happiness that a child of God can really feel here below. He learns this, not only from the presence of it when divinely communicated, but also from its absence when these blessed communications are withdrawn and suspended.

In the text we find the Holy Spirit speaking of "a secret." We need not wonder, therefore, that vital godliness is known but to a few. If it is "a secret," it is evident it is not understood and known by all; the very essence of a secret being that it is confined to a few. And if there be a secret in religion (and such the Holy Spirit declares there is), it shows that vital godliness is confined to those only to whom the secret is made known by the power of God.

But if we look at the text, we shall see there are certain characters spoken of to whom this secret is discovered, and a promise also is made to those characters with whom the secret is. Thus, if God enables, we may take up the text in three leading divisions, and show who the characters are that "fear the Lord"—how "the secret is with them"—and what a promise the Lord has made to such, "he will show them his covenant."

I. Who the characters are that "fear the Lord." How much fear is spoken of in the word of God! But in order to understand what the Holy Spirit means by the term, which he so frequently employs, "the fear of God," we must bear in mind that there are two distinct kinds of fear. There is a *SERVILE* fear which dwells in the carnal mind, and which devils, reprobates, and hypocrites may experience; as we read, "the devils also believe and tremble." (James 2:19.) Thus "Felix trembled," when Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." (Acts 24:25.) And the mariners on board with Jonah "feared the Lord exceedingly" (Jonah 1:16), so that they offered sacrifices, and made vows. This is the fear of which we read, 1 John 4:18; "Perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment; he who fears is not made perfect in love." And it is the same fear which the Apostle Paul speaks of Rom. 8:15; "For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." This then is a servile fear, that has its dwelling in the carnal mind; and was manifested in Adam, when he hid himself from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden; in Cain, when his countenance fell as being the murderer of his brother Abel; and which discovered itself also in Saul, in Ahab, in Herod, and in other characters of whom we read in the word of God.

But "the fear" to which so many blessings are annexed, and which is spoken of in the text, is the *FILIAL* fear that dwells in the new man of grace raised up by the Spirit of God, and is the sole privilege, the alone portion of those whom God has chosen in Christ, and made to be heirs of his glory. This filial fear is a new covenant blessing; as we read, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (Jer. 32:40.) It is also a grace of the Spirit. "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." (Heb. 12:28.) And it is the beginning of wisdom. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Ps. 111:10.) It being the first grace in point of exercise that the Spirit of God draws forth in the conscience.

How many blessings are promised to and connected with this filial fear! For instance, we read, "The eye of the Lord is upon those who fear him." (Ps. 33:18.) "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him." (Ps. 34:9.) "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord." (Ps. 112:1.) "The Lord will fulfill the desire of those who fear him." (Ps. 145:19.) In fact, you can scarcely find any blessing of the highest nature, which is not more or less connected with the fear of God.

And so far from this filial fear of the Lord being checked, much less cast out by divine manifestations, and by the shedding abroad of the love of God, it is only heightened thereby. The "fear of the Lord," that begins at the quickening of the soul into divine life, deepens with every fresh teaching, and is increased by every fresh communication. Being a member of the new man, it is nurtured by the food with which the new man is fed; and thus, as we make progress in the divine life, so far from this fear being weakened, it becomes more deepened and strengthened. Thus it is not only compatible with, but ever accompanies consolation and enjoyment; as we read, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied." (Acts 9:31.) How these two things are brought together—"the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit;" and it is spoken of as the highest attainment of the church, when she is blessed with these two graces at the same time in lively exercise.

No, more, however high in filial confidence the soul may rise, fear will always rise with it. True confidence is strengthened just as filial fear is deepened; for we read, "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence." (Prov. 14:26.) So that so far from confidence, assurance, and enjoyment weakening fear, they only strengthen it. Let the soul rise to the highest point of divine consolation, fear will rise equally, I might say, increasingly with it. For the more we spiritually know of the character of God, the more will godly fear of his great majesty be experienced in the soul. Wherever, then, you find in yourself, or others, confidence, or what is called assurance, and do not see the fear of God accompanying it, be sure that such confidence does not spring from the inward teaching of God the Spirit in the soul. For the fear of God, so far from being weakened, much less annihilated or cast out by true confidence and the genuine consolations of God the Spirit, is only deepened and heightened thereby. Apply this test when you hear people speaking of their assurance; it will unmask a good many.

But this "fear of God" must have its foundation in some spiritual and experimental discovery of God. We cannot fear God until we know him; and we cannot know God until in some measure he reveals himself with power to our conscience. This, then, is the beginning of all true religion; this is the foundation of all vital godliness; this is the starting-place from which every living soul begins to run the race set before him—an inward discovery of the character of God by the revelation of the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures. This makes a deep, solid, abiding, eternal impression on the soul; for until the Spirit of God shows unto us and gives us to know something of the holy, spiritual, pure character of God, we cannot have any knowledge of him; and if we know him not, it is impossible for us to fear him.

But wherever the fear of the Lord is in the conscience, there will be fruits flowing out of it. We judge of a tree by the fruits it brings forth; and we judge of the extent of spiritual teaching by the effects manifested. If, then, the fear of the Lord be in our hearts, there will be certain effects and fruits flowing out of that fear. There will be, as this fear is in exercise, an abhorrence of evil, deadness to the world, separation in heart and spirit from those who are immersed in it—a desire to please God, and a fear to offend him; a living as under his immediate eye; there will be the workings of a tender conscience in our bosom; a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; a flowing out of godly simplicity and sincerity, and an earnest desire to live and die under the immediate teachings and testimony of God in our conscience.

There are indeed many of the people of God who cannot rise in strong faith, nor feel an assurance that all their sins are pardoned; they cannot cry, "Abba Father," with an inward spirit of adoption; and yet know something spiritually and experimentally of the fear of God working in their conscience. This is quite distinct from the servile fear that they had in the days of their flesh, and quite distinct from the ebbings and flowings of natural conscience, and the workings of that slavish spirit which drove them in times past from the sins they committed into some faint and short-lived repentance. Those confessions and amendments were the mere ebbings and flowings of nature; hence there were no abidings in them. But where the fear of the Lord is, it is "a treasure;" (Isa. 32:6), therefore not easily spent; something abiding in the heart, like a fountain, which is perpetually casting out its waters in living streams.

II. But we pass on to consider—for this is the main drift of the text—What "the secret of the Lord" is, which is said "to be with those who fear him." What do we understand by the expression "secret?" It something not revealed, nor made known to everybody; something locked up and concealed from the majority, and discovered only to a favored few. All the inward teachings, leadings, guidings, and dealings of God the Spirit upon the conscience, are therefore included in the word, "the secret of the Lord;" for all these inward leadings and teachings are "hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes." So that, with all their profession, they know nothing of the secret operation of God the Spirit in the conscience; their religion stands in forms and ceremonies, in rites and observances; it does not stand in the inward teachings of God the Spirit.

1. One part of "the secret of the Lord" is to show the very existence of a God. "He who comes to God," we read, "must believe that he is." (Heb. 11:6.) We cannot believe in the very being of a God, (at least such a God as the Scripture represents—a holy Jehovah, who compasses our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways,) until it is shown to us by the Spirit's teaching. So that all men in a state of nature are Atheists; no, all professors, devoid of the Spirit are the same. I do not say they are so doctrinally, but they are so practically; for until the Lord does in some measure spiritually make himself known to the conscience, all men actually live without God in the world.

But when the Lord does shine into the conscience, (for the "entrance of his words gives light,") we begin to feel that there is a God; that we are in his hand; that his eye searches all our ways; that go where we will he still accompanies us; that we cannot hide ourselves from his all-searching eye—and that he is such a God as the scriptures represent, who "will not clear the guilty," but is just, righteous, and pure, and hates sin with an absolute abhorrence.

It is a great thing to have this spiritual knowledge wrought in the conscience. O how much sin would this keep a man from! What a check to a light and frivolous disposition! What a bridle to a gossiping tongue! What a principle to bring out of the world! What a power to overcome the spirit of covetousness! What a whack upon the head of pride! What a turning out of doors of that base hypocrisy that our hearts are so full of! To carry about with us an abiding, inward feeling, "God sees me!" and feel ourselves living under his eye, looking down unto us, searching out our heart, and continually spying out all our ways, what a fountain of spiritual

uprightness!

2. The Lord's providential dealings with us is a part also of "the secret" which is "with those who fear him." What a mercy it is to see the Lord's hand stretched out for us in a way of providence! Some people affect to despise the providential dealings of God. But, as some one has justly observed, such as see him only as the God of grace see but the half of his countenance. We must see and feel him as a God of providence also to see the full face of Jehovah. How sweet it is to trace the Lord's hand in providence; to look back on the chequered path that he has led us by; to see how his hand has been with us for good; what difficulties he has brought us through; in what straits he has appeared; how in things most trying he has wrought deliverance; and how he has sustained us to the present hour. Thus to trace out his dealings with us, is a main part of "the secret of the Lord" which is "with those who fear him."

Some people may laugh and jeer at the Lord's dealings in providence; but all this is little else than the mere spawn of a man's atheistical, infidel heart, that is continually denying him to be the God of providence as well as the God of grace. How sweet are providential favors when they come stamped with this inscription, "This is from the Lord!" How precious every temporal mercy becomes—our very food, lodging, and clothing! How sweet is the least thing when it comes down to us as from God's hands! A man cannot know the sweetness of his daily bread until he sees that God gives it to him; nor the blessedness of any providential dealing until he can say, "God has done this for me, and given that to me." When a man sees the providence of God stamped on every action of life, it casts a glory, beauty, and sweetness over every day of his life. Thus to see the Lord's hand is indeed a main part of "the secret of the Lord which is with those who fear him."

3. A sense of the Lord's presence. O this is indeed a part of the secret which is with those who fear his name. The Lord's presence! Who but the Lord's people know anything of that solemn feeling which that presence creates, and which Jacob expressed, when he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. How awesome is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" (Gen. 28:16, 17.) What solemn feelings are produced in the mind under a sense of God's presence! How the Lord's presence turns night into day, makes every crooked thing straight, and every rough place plain! How it banishes all the gloom, melancholy, and despondency which hang over the soul! How it clears up every difficulty; and like the shining sun it drives away the damps and darkness of the night. If there is one thing to be coveted more than another, it is, that the Lord's presence might be more felt in our hearts; for it is "the secret of the Lord which is with those who fear him" to show to them and make them to feel his blessed presence.

4. The favor, the goodness, and the graciousness of the Lord brought with power into the conscience, is another part of "the secret which is with those who fear him." It is a secret, because it is only known to a few. It is a secret, because it is carried on in private between God and the soul. It is a secret, because never known until God the Spirit unfolds the mystery. It is this which makes the secret so mysterious and peculiar, that God's grace and favor should be given to such vile, filthy, polluted, unworthy, and unclean wretches, as every child of God knows and feels himself to be. It may indeed well astonish such, that favor should be shown them, that mercy should ever reach them, and that there should be any communication of it to visit and water their souls.

5. Communion with the Lord, so as to be able to talk to him, and find some access to his presence, is another part of "the secret which is with those who fear the Lord." What a different thing this is from mere wordy prayers! A man may fall upon his knees, utter words and sound words too, and be engaged for a long time in his devotions, and yet have no communion with God. On the other hand, he may be lying on his bed, sitting in his chair, or engaged in his daily occupation, and in a moment his heart may be caught up into communion with the Lord. But one five minute (or shall I say one minute, for these seasons do not last very long) communion with the Lord is better than being on our knees the whole day, supposing we could kneel so long, merely uttering words without a sense of inward fellowship with the Lord of life and glory. It is through this communion with the Lord that heavenly blessings are bestowed.

By communion with the Lord we—drink into his Spirit, learn his mind, know his will, taste his goodness, and receive from his fullness. And only so far as we are brought into communion with the Lord is there any communication of spiritual blessings to the soul. Sometimes it is with us as though a wall were built up between us and the Lord—we pray, but the voice never seems to reach the heavenly ear; there is no answer communicated; there is no seeing him, no getting near him, no pouring out of the heart before him; still less is there a receiving any communication from him. But when the soul is brought near to the Lord, these barriers are broken down, these walls fall, a measure of communion with him is enjoyed; and then there is a receiving out of his fullness, a communication out of him who fills all in all; a divine reception of his truth into the heart. So that by five minutes' communion with the Lord, we learn more, know more, receive more, feel more, and experience more than by a thousand years of merely studying the Scriptures, or praying to the Lord without his teaching and testimony. But this is a secret known only to those who fear God; and they at times are privileged and indulged with it.

6. The power of truth made known in the conscience is a part also of the secret which is with those who fear the Lord. What a powerful thing truth is, when it drops into the soul! The mere utterance of it is nothing. The most solemn truths are no more to me than the mere blowing of such a storm as we had last night, unless it is dropped with divine power into the heart and conscience. But



truth, when it is accompanied with a divine power, fills the heart, enriches the soul, drives out all error and falsehood, and lifts up the soul Godwards. This is a secret which those know only who fear God. There is a great talk about religion in our day—we near every one is religious. But as to the inward operations and teachings of God the Spirit, whereby light, life, and power, are brought out of Christ's fullness into the heart, this still remains a secret. This cannot be got at by human exertions; this cannot be attained so easily as a nominal profession; this is still confined to those who fear God, and they sometimes feel so blessed a power in the truth as it is in Jesus, that they can live by it and die by it.

7. Communications from Christ—such as faith, hope, love, meekness, patience—every good gift and every perfect gift—to receive them into a soft heart; to know their working through a divine operation on the soul, this, too, is a branch of that secret which is known only to those who fear God. They know they cannot produce these things themselves, and yet they know the power of vital godliness consists in them. But to their astonishment the Lord does sometimes work in them that which they could not possibly work in themselves; and thus they find that a life of faith is a secret which they could not get at until the Lord himself was pleased to reveal it, and seal it with divine power in their conscience.

8. But just so far as we are led into an acquaintance with this secret, will it have a powerful effect upon us; and one will be, to bring us into union with those who are taught the same divine lessons, and bring us out from those who are not so taught. If any with whom this secret is, are wrapped up in dead churches, there will be an aching void felt; they will want to have the secret which they feel traced out from the pulpit; but there is no word to meet their case. They want to trace something of it, too, in the members of the church of which they form a part; but they do not find that in their case, "as in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man." This inward want, sooner or later, brings them out of dead churches, from under dead ministers, and away from dead professors; and brings them into personal union and communion with the people who are taught by the Spirit of God.

And though they may still have (as we know we all have had) great prejudices, and even at times strong enmity, working against the peculiar people; and perhaps have to make great sacrifices, so that they hardly know what to do or say; yet when they are brought into union and communion with the spiritual family, it so overpowers every adverse feeling, that it makes them willing to take up the cross, and endure the shame, that they may live and die with the people of the living God. And thus we find the secret of spiritual communion with the people of God, and learn that the same secret is known to those who is known also to us; and thus there is a blessed fellowship and sweet participation in the consciousness of the same secret being with one another. What a union this creates, what love this kindles, what sweet emotions this produces in the bosom—to enjoy communion with Christ, and communion with the people of Christ! This is worth all the dead fellowship, all the vain esteem, and all the honors that the world can bestow—to be brought into a measure of divine communion with the Lord of life and glory, and into communion with the people of God—this secret is with those who fear God, and is worth a thousand worlds.

Now, you will observe that the text says, "The secret of the Lord IS with those who fear him." It speaks of it in the present tense, as something now known, felt, and enjoyed. It is not future, but present. So that if we have any evidence that we fear the Lord, we shall find something of this secret in our consciences. We may doubt and fear at times whether we know it aright; for our unbelieving heart ever breeds doubts and fears, and our desponding minds will ever put forth the spawn of despondency. Satan too will thrust in his fiery darts, and a thousand objections will shoot through the mind. But this does not destroy the reality of it; this will not throw down the Lord's building, nor injure the foundation. However the house may be rocked by the storm, or beaten by the winds, it stands fast forever, because it is founded upon a rock.

You who fear God, do you not find at times something of this secret? Would you go back to a dead profession in which perhaps you were wrapped up for years, when you tried to reform your habits, break off your bad practices, become religious; and yet all the time were unacquainted with the secret, and knew not the inward teachings of God the Spirit? Then there were no communications of light and life, no breathings and longings after the Lord, no desire to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection. You rested upon something external of your own to save your soul.

But when the Lord mercifully and graciously took you in hand, he battered down this proud natural religion, and laid it low in the dust, and by working powerfully in your conscience raised up his fear in your soul. Then you found something of which you were before completely ignorant; and since that time you have found spiritual religion, vital godliness, to consist in the inward teachings and leadings God the Spirit. You find now there is a secret in these things. If you speak of it to your relatives, they do not understand you; if you talk of it to those who are called "pious people," they cannot make you out; they think you are some mysterious being, whose religion they cannot fathom. But if you go into the company of God's people, and converse with them on spiritual matters, they know what you mean; and when you hear your experience described from the pulpit, and traced out in a hymn, or some experimental book, you feel a sweet going out of soul toward it; and you say, "If the man or book knew all that was passing in my heart, they could not describe my feelings more completely." This is to know something of the secret of the Lord—to have a secret and inward religion wrought with power in the conscience; and this is God's gift and God's work, and will shine when time shall be no more. If a man denies and scorns this, he had better go on to Rome; for if he has not those inward teachings and leadings of God the Spirit, he has no more true religion than if he were wedded to all the abominations of Popery.

III. But we find a PROMISE also in the text, and that you will observe runs in the future tense. "He will show them his covenant." The Holy Spirit has changed the tense here. "The secret of the Lord" (that is present possession) "IS with those who fear him; and he WILL show them" (that is something future), "his covenant." This shows, that while all the people of God, who fear his name, have the secret with them, that is, a measure of the secret, yet all the people of God have not the covenant revealed to them at the same time with the secret. The "secret" is in the present tense; the "showing of the covenant" is in the future. It is very sweet to see how the Holy Spirit has discriminated between these blessings. If, for instance, it had run thus, "the secret of the Lord is with those who fear him, and he shows to them his covenant," some doubting, desponding child of God might say, "How can I be one of those who fear God? for it says, God shows to them his covenant, and he has not shown it to me yet." But being put in the future tense, "he will show to them his covenant," it takes the form of a promise, and so is just adapted and sweetly suited to their needs.

The more we see what is the language of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, the more we shall admire it. Men need not talk of improving the Scriptures; let them take what the Holy Spirit has delivered; for the more we are led into an experience of the truth, the more we shall admire the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in the way whereby he has revealed it.

But what is this COVENANT that the Lord will show those who fear him? It is the covenant that "stands fast for evermore;" the everlasting covenant of grace, which stands in the Person, love, blood, and work of the Son of God; the covenant made by a Triune Jehovah, on behalf of the elect, before the world was.

Those, then, who cavil at this covenant, who deny there is such a thing, who abhor the doctrines that flow out of it, who resist and rebel against sovereign election, discriminating grace, particular redemption by the blood of Jesus, and justification by his imputed righteousness, cannot, we know very well, be among the people who fear God, for if they feared God he would show to them his covenant. And if the Lord showed to them this covenant, this everlasting covenant, they would not call it "everlasting nonsense." If ever they had been shown election, and had felt its weight and power, if they had ever known it as a blessed part of the covenant, they would not kick at it, nor call it a damnable doctrine. If ever they had seen Christ's righteousness, or the beauty and grandeur of those covenant engagements, whereby the church stood justified in Christ from all eternity, they would not call imputed righteousness "imputed nonsense." So that no man, kicking and rebelling against the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, which was all David's salvation and all his desire (and I am sure if God be our teacher, it will be all our salvation and all our desire)—no man kicking and rebelling against this covenant, we may be sure, can fear God; for if he did, God would show it to him; and I am sure if God ever showed it to him, he would convince him of its truth, reality, and blessedness.

This covenant God shows to his people. And how deeply they need it to be shown to them! For what are they? Always fluctuating and vacillating, ever ebbing and flowing, perpetually tossed up and down. We need something that will stand. If we look at the workings of our minds, they are scarcely ever the same; sometimes up, and sometimes down; sometimes cheered, and sometimes discouraged; sometimes tried, and sometimes comforted; sometimes tempted, and sometimes delivered; sometimes in the dark, and sometimes in the light. As far as we are concerned, we pass through perpetual changes. Thus we prove we fear God; those who fear him not, know no changes; but those who fear him, are like the tide of the Thames, perpetually ebbing and flowing, and going backwards and forwards. We need, then, something which shall not ebb and flow as we do; we need something permanent, on which our feet may stand, and be planted there for eternity.

The Lord, then, shows to those who fear him his covenant—he shows to them how stable it is; that it stands fast forever and ever; that it endures, like himself, unchanging, and unchangeable, because it stands in his own eternal counsels, and is founded upon the engagements, love, blood, and work of his dear Son. The Lord shows those who fear him, that this covenant stands for evermore, and that they have an interest in it. What a suitable foundation for a poor tottering heart! The Lord in showing this covenant unto those who fear him, shows them that it is all of grace, and therefore meets all their unworthiness, and superabounds over all the aboundings of their sin; that it is more than a match for their aggravated iniquities, and will land them safe in glory, because God has determined to bring them there. Nothing but a covenant of grace can suit a poor exercised soul, who knows his helplessness and worthlessness; and the Lord shows this to those who fear him.

He shows them, also, that his covenant abides forever; that there is "no variableness, nor a shadow of turning" in it; that a vessel of mercy is not a child of God today, and a child of the devil tomorrow; and that whatever stripes he brings upon his back, whatever painful feelings he gets into by the Lord's chastening, these things do not cast him out of the covenant which stands sure. As we read Psalm 89:30-35, "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor allow my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David."

As the Lord the Spirit, then, shows them this covenant, and brings it with power into their hearts, it becomes all their salvation and all their desire. To live by it, and under the enjoyment of it; to have it more opened up, and to have fresh discoveries of it, to feel its sweetness, and live in the blessedness of it—this forms the leading desire of the soul. So that so far from rebelling against the

covenant of peace, we want to have it more blessedly and powerfully revealed in the heart and conscience.

These, then, are the blessings which the Lord will show unto those who fear him. And what a mercy it is to be among those so taught and so led! But two characters will fight against these truths—those who know nothing beyond a servile fear, and those who know nothing but rash presumption and vain-confidence.

There are some in a profession of religion who have nothing beyond a servile fear; they have no divine teachings, but feel the workings of natural conscience, and the ebbings and flowings of fleshly conviction. But there is no promise for such; we know not what the Lord may do for them, but there is no promise for the workings of natural conviction, and the ebbings and flowings of servile fear. A man may have all the convictions of the damned, and yet be damned after all; he may have all the fears of Judas, and yet go where Judas is, unto "his own place."

Again. There is no promise made to those who are presumptuous and vain-confident, who rashly and recklessly rush into the solemn things of God. But the promise is to the poor, the needy, the exercised family of God, who by divine life, divine grace, divine leading and teaching, know something of spiritual fear, whose consciences have been made alive and tender before the Lord. To these it is promised, "The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him, and he will show them his covenant."

The Lord in mercy deepen this fear wherever it is implanted, and show us that where this fear is, there every mercy is connected with it; that those in whose hearts he has caused it to spring up, he will lead safely on, until at length he brings them to see him as he is, and to sit down with him in glory!

## Nave's Topical Bible: Fear of God

### REVERENCE

Genesis 35:5; Exodus 18:21; 20:18-20; Leviticus 22:32; Deuteronomy 4:10; 5:29; 6:2,13; 10:12,20,21; 13:4; 14:23; 28:49,58; Joshua 4:24; 24:14; 1 Samuel 2:30; 12:14,24; 2 Samuel 23:3; 1 Kings 8:40; 2 Kings 17:28,36,39; 1 Chronicles 16:30; 2 Chronicles 19:7,9; Ezra 10:3; Nehemiah 5:9; Job 28:28; 37:24; Psalm 2:11; 4:4; 15:4; 19:9; 22:23,25; 25:12-14; 31:19; 33:8,18; 34:7,9; 46:10; 52:6; 60:4; 64:9; 66:16; 67:7; 72:5; 76:7; 85:9; 86:11; 89:7; 90:11; 96:4,9; 99:1; 102:15; 103:11,17; 111:5,10; 112:1; 115:11,13; 118:4; 119:63,74,79; 128:1,4; 130:4; 135:20; 145:19; 147:11; Proverbs 1:7; 2:5; 3:7; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 13:13; 14:2,16,26,27; 15:16,33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; 24:21; 28:14; 31:30; Ecclesiastes 3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12; 12:13; Isaiah 2:10,19-21; 8:13; 25:3; 29:13,23; 33:6,13; 50:10; 59:19; 60:5; Jeremiah 5:22; 10:7; 32:39,40; 33:9; Isaiah 3:5; Micah 7:16,17; Zephaniah 1:7; 3:7; Zechariah 2:13; Malachi 1:6; 3:16; 4:2; Matthew 10:28; Luke 1:50; 12:5; 23:40; Acts 10:35; 13:16,26; Romans 11:20; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:21; 6:5; Philippians 2:12; Colossians 3:22; Hebrews 5:5,7; 12:28,29; James 2:19; 1 Peter 1:17; 2:17,18; 3:2,15; 1 John 4:16-18; Revelation 11:18; 14:7; 19:5

### CONSPICUOUS INSTANCES OF THOSE WHO FEARED

- Noah, in preparing the ark Hebrews 11:7
- Abraham, tested in the offering of his son Isaac Genesis 22:12
- Jacob, in the vision of the ladder, and the covenant of God Genesis 28:16,17; 42:18
- The midwives of Egypt, in refusing to take the lives of the Hebrew children Exodus 1:17,21
- The Egyptians, at the time of the plague of thunder and hail And fire Exodus 9:20
- The nine and one-half tribes of Israel west of the Jordan River Joshua 22:15-20
- Phinehas, in turning away the anger of God at the time of The plague Numbers 25:11; 25:6-15
- Obadiah, in sheltering one-hundred prophets against the Wrath of Jezebel 1 Kings 18:3,4
- Jehoshaphat, in proclaiming a feast, when the land was about To be invaded by the armies of the Ammonites and Moabites 2 Chronicles 20:3
- Nehemiah, in his reform of the public administration Nehemiah 5:15
- Hanani, which qualified him to be ruler over Jerusalem Nehemiah 7:2
- Job, according to the testimony of Satan Job 1:8
- David Psalm 5:7; 119:38
- Hezekiah, in his treatment of the prophet Micah, who Prophesied harm against Jerusalem Jer 26:19
- Jonah, during the storm Jonah 1:9

- The Jews, in obeying the voice of the Lord Haggai 1:12
- Levi, in receiving the covenant of life and peace Haggai 1:5
- The women at the grave Matthew 28:8
- Cornelius, who revered God with all his house Acts 10:2

## **CULTIVATED**

- Exodus 3:5; 19:12,13; Hebrews 12:18-24

## **GUILTY**

- Job 5:20-25; 18:11; Proverbs 1:24-27; 10:24; Daniel 5:6; James 2:19

## **INSTANCES OF GUILTY FEAR**

- Adam and Eve Genesis 3:8-13
- The guards at Jesus' tomb Matthew 28:4
- Judas Matthew 27:3-5
- Demons James 2:19

## **A MOTIVE OF OBEDIENCE**

Leviticus 19:14,32; 25:17,36,43; Numbers 32:15; Deuteronomy 6:13-15; 7:4; 8:5,6; 10:12,13,20; 13:4,6-11; 14:23; 15:9; 17:11-13; 19:16-20; 21:18-21; 28:14-68; 31:11-13; Joshua 23:11-16; 1 Samuel 12:14,15,24,25; Job 13:21; 31:1-4,13-15,23; Proverbs 16:6; Isaiah 1:20; Jeremiah 4:4; 22:5; Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4,5; 2 Corinthians 5:10,11; 2 Timothy 4:1,2; 2 Peter 3:10-12; Revelation 14:9,10

# **Thompson Chain Reference**

## **Fear of God**

### **Enjoined**

- Deuteronomy 10:12
- Deuteronomy 13:4
- Joshua 4:24
- Joshua 24:14
- 1 Chronicles 16:30
- 2 Chronicles 19:7
- Proverbs 3:7
- Ecclesiastes 12:13
- Isaiah 8:13
- Matthew 10:28
- Luke 23:40
- Romans 11:20
- 1 Peter 1:17
- 1 Peter 2:17
- Revelation 14:7

### **Promises Concerning**

- 1 Samuel 12:14
- Psalm 25:12
- Psalm 31:19
- Psalm 103:13
- Psalm 147:11

- Proverbs 1:7
- Isaiah 50:10
- Malachi 3:16
- Luke 1:50
- Acts 10:35

#### **Reverential** (Examples of Righteous Men Dominated by)

- Nehemiah 5:15
- Job 1:8
- Jnh 1:9
- Jnh 1:16
- Acts 5:11
- Acts 9:31
- Acts 10:2

#### **Servile** (Heathen Nations under the Power of)

- Genesis 35:5
- Exodus 15:16
- Exodus 23:27
- Joshua 2:11
- 2 Chronicles 14:14
- 2 Chronicles 17:10

## **The Topical Concordance**

### **Fear**

#### **Fearing The LORD**

Leviticus 19:14; Leviticus 25:17; Deuteronomy 6:1-2; Deuteronomy 6:13; Deuteronomy 8:6; Deuteronomy 10:12; Deuteronomy 10:20; Deuteronomy 13:4; Joshua 4:24; Joshua 24:14; 1 Samuel 12:24; 2 Kings 17:36-39; 1 Chronicles 16:25; 1 Chronicles 16:29-30; 2 Chronicles 19:7; Psalms 9:20; Psalms 22:23; Psalms 33:8; Psalms 34:9; Psalms 89:7; Psalms 96:4; Psalms 119:120; Psalms 130:3-4; Proverbs 3:7; Proverbs 23:17; Proverbs 24:21-22; Ecclesiastes 5:7; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Isaiah 8:12-13; Daniel 6:26; Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4-5; Romans 11:20-21; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Peter 2:17; Revelation 14:7 .

#### **Not Being Afraid**

Genesis 21:17; Exodus 20:18-20; Numbers 14:9; Deuteronomy 31:6-8; Joshua 1:9; 1 Chronicles 22:13; 2 Chronicles 32:7-8; Proverbs 3:25; Isaiah 8:12-13; Isaiah 41:10; Isaiah 43:5; Isaiah 44:2; Isaiah 44:8; Jeremiah 30:10; Jeremiah 46:28; Daniel 10:18-19; Joel 2:21-22; Matthew 10:26-31; Luke 8:50; John 14:27; 1 Peter 3:14; Revelation 1:17; Revelation 2:10 .

#### **The Fear Of Man**

Proverbs 29:25 .

#### **The Fear Of The LORD**

Job 28:28; Psalms 19:9; Psalms 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 8:13; Proverbs 9:10; Proverbs 10:27; Proverbs 14:26-27; Proverbs 15:16; Proverbs 15:33; Proverbs 16:6; Proverbs 19:23; Proverbs 22:4; Isaiah 33:5-6 .

#### **The Fear Of The Wicked**

Proverbs 10:24 .

#### **The Fearful**

1 John 4:18; Revelation 21:8 .

### **The LORD Delivering You From Your Fears**

Psalms 34:4 .

### **The Reward For Fearing Other gods**

2 Kings 17:7-23 .

### **The Reward For Fearing The LORD**

Exodus 1:21; 1 Samuel 12:14; Isaiah 8:13-14 .

### **Those That Do Not Fear The LORD**

Proverbs 1:20-29 .

### **Those That Fear The Commandment**

Proverbs 13:13 .

### **Those That Fear The LORD**

Job 1:6-10; Psalms 22:23; Psalms 25:14; Psalms 33:18; Psalms 34:7; Psalms 34:9; Psalms 103:8-11; Psalms 103:13; Psalms 103:17; Psalms 111:4-5; Psalms 112:1-3; Psalms 115:11-15; Psalms 119:73-75; Psalms 128:1-6; Psalms 145:18-19; Psalms 147:11; Proverbs 19:23; Proverbs 28:14; Proverbs 31:30; Ecclesiastes 7:16-18; Isaiah 66:1-2; Malachi 3:16-18; Malachi 4:1-3; Acts 10:34-35; Revelation 19:5 .

### **What Casts Out Fear**

1 John 4:18 .

### **What Is Fearful**

Hebrews 10:31 .

### **What Not To Fear**

Deuteronomy 1:17; 2 Kings 17:35-38; Psalms 56:4; Psalms 56:11; Psalms 118:6; Proverbs 3:25; Isaiah 8:12-13; Isaiah 51:7-8; Hebrews 13:6; 1 Peter 3:14; Revelation 2:10 .

### **What Should Be Done With Fear**

Psalms 2:11 .

### **Where There Is No Fear**

1 John 4:18 .

### **Who Fears The LORD**

Proverbs 14:2; Jonah 1:7-9 .

### **Who Not To Fear**

Numbers 14:9; Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4-5 .

### **Who Shall Fear The LORD**

Psalms 64:9; Psalms 67:7; Isaiah 25:1-3; Hosea 3:4-5 .

### **Who Shall Not Be Afraid**

Psalms 112:5-8; Proverbs 1:20-33; Isaiah 54:5-14 .

### **Who Shall Understand The Fear Of The LORD**

Proverbs 2:1-5 .

### **Who To Fear**

Leviticus 19:3 .

## Why Men Fear The LORD

Job 37:23-24 .

## Why You Should Not Be Afraid

Genesis 21:17; Exodus 20:18-20; Numbers 14:9; Deuteronomy 31:6-8; Joshua 1:9; 2 Chronicles 32:7-8; Psalms 23:1-4; Psalms 27:1-2; Psalms 46:1-11; Psalms 118:6; Psalms 138:6-7; Proverbs 3:25-26; Isaiah 12:2; Isaiah 35:3-4; Isaiah 41:10; Isaiah 43:3-5; Isaiah 44:8; Isaiah 51:7-8; Jeremiah 30:10; Jeremiah 46:28; Joel 2:21-22; Matthew 10:26-31; Luke 12:31-32; John 14:1-4; Hebrews 13:6; 1 Peter 3:12-14 .

### "The Fear of the Lord"

Charles Bridges

**Pr 1:7. The fear of the Lord is the beginning (Marg.—principal part) of knowledge** but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

The preface has stated the object of this Book of Wisdom. The book itself now opens with a noble sentence of instruction. 'There is not'—as Bishop Patrick observes—'such a wise instruction to be found in all their books, (speaking of heathen ethics,) as the very first of all in Solomon's, which he lays as the ground of all wisdom.' The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. So Job had pronounced before. So had the wise man's father.<sup>6</sup> Such is the weight of this saying, that Solomon again repeats it. Nay—after having gone around the whole circuit—after having weighed exactly all the sources of knowledge—his conclusion of the whole matter is this, that the fear of God in its practical exercise "is the whole of man"—all his duty—all his happiness—his first lesson and his last. Thus when about to instruct us as from the mouth of God, he begins at the beginning—the principal part. All heathen wisdom is but folly. Of all knowledge—the knowledge of God is the principal. There is no true knowledge without godliness.

But what is this fear of the Lord? It is that affectionate reverence, by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father's law. His wrath is so bitter, and his love so sweet; that hence springs an earnest desire to please him, and—because of the danger of coming short from his own weakness and temptations—a holy fear—anxious care and watchfulness, "that he might not sin against him." This enters into every exercise of the mind—every object of life. The oldest proficient in the Divine school seeks a more complete moulding into its spirit. The godly parent trains up his family under its influence.<sup>11</sup> The Christian scholar honors it as the beginning—the head—of all his knowledge; at once sanctifying its end, and preserving him from its most subtle temptations.

This is why the mass around us despise wisdom and instruction. Because the beginning of wisdom—"the fear of God—is not before their eyes." They know not its value. They scorn its obligation. Wise they may be in their own sight. But surely God here gives them their right name. For fools they must be to despise such a blessing—to rush into wilful ruin<sup>3</sup>—to treasure up work for despairing repentance. 'From hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word and commandment, Good Lord deliver us.'<sup>5</sup> May thy reverential, affectionate, child-like fear be my wisdom—my security—my happiness!

Pr 1:8. My son, hear the instructions of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother; 9. For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. = Next to the fear of the Lord—and always connected with it—is reverence to parents.

**Pr 8:13. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil:** pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

Such is the holiness of Divine wisdom! She dwells with prudence. But she cannot dwell with evil. Therefore the fear of the Lord, which is her very nature, is to hate evil. Thus of pride in all its branches—arrogancy of spirit, the evil way, and the froward mouth—the wisdom of God declares without reserve—I hate them. How clearly did he mark his hatred in the days of his flesh by the full exhibition of the opposite grace! "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." A proud disciple of a lowly Saviour! how offensive is this contradiction to our Master! What a cause of stumbling to the world!

**Pr 9:10. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:** and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. 11. For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.

The repetition of this weighty sentence deepens our estimate of its importance. The fear of the Lord was a lovely grace in the perfect humanity of Jesus. Let it be the test of our "predestination to be conformed to his image."<sup>8</sup> It is the genuine spirit of adoption. The child of God has only one dread, to offend his Father; only one desire—to please and delight in him. The fear of God is therefore connected with his love. 'The heart that is touched with the loadstone of Divine love trembles still with godly fear.' If this temper is the beginning, it is also (as the word imports) the head—of wisdom—not only its first rudiment, but its matured exercise. It is obviously combined with the knowledge of the Holy One. For if men did but know his holiness—"who would not fear thee, O

Lord?" Days multiplied were the Old Testament reward. And truly the value of life is only realized in the knowledge and service of God. Inconceivably joyous to us is the prospect of years of life increased into a boundless eternity—infinite desires, fully satisfied; yet excited unceasingly to more full and heavenly enjoyment.

**Pr 10:27. The fear of one Lord prolongeth days** but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.

The fear of the Lord is not a single grace. It includes the substance of all godly tempers. For all are radically one principle, from one source. It essentially differs from the fear of the wicked. They fear whom they hate. The child of God—whom he loves. Whether his temporal life be shortened or prolonged, he lives long in a little time. He is an infinite gainer by the contraction of life—his days prolonged and swallowed up in one unclouded day, of which "the sun shall no more go down." Justly is the fear of the Lord contrasted with the wicked; because the absence of his grace is their distinguishing mark, the principle of all their ungodliness.<sup>3</sup> And often do we see the letter of this curse realized in the shortening of their years. Excessive worldliness wears out the spring of life. Sin often brings to an untimely end.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes the God of vengeance breaks out, and "takes away the daring offender with his stroke." Yet if he be "visited after the visitation of all men," awful indeed is the course of a long life wasted in folly and sin—living little in a long time—"The sinner, being an hundred years old, shall be accursed."<sup>7</sup>

**Pr 15:16. Better is little with the fear of the Lord** than great treasure and trouble therewith. 17. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

Here are the sources of the merry heart—the fear of the Lord, and love to man. And here also is the continual feast, so satisfying, that the saint's little is better than the worldling's all. It is his Father's gift;<sup>2</sup> the fruit of his Saviour's love; enjoyed by special promise,<sup>4</sup> and sweetened with the "great gain of godly contentment." If it be only little, it is not from lack of his Father's care and love; but because his wisdom knows what he really needs, and that all beyond would be a temptation and snare. Truly "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."<sup>7</sup> The universe will not fill a worldly. while a little will suffice for an heavenly, heart. There must be trouble with great treasure, without the fear of the Lord. And far more destitute is its possessor in his unsubstantial happiness, than the man of God, who is eating his bread in the sweat of his brow. 'Jacob's ladder, which conveys to heaven, may have its foot in the smoking cottage.'<sup>11</sup> And as to this world's comforts—the dinner of herbs—the homely meal of love, is better than the stalled ox, prepared for a sumptuous. but unbrotherly, feast.<sup>13</sup> Love sweetens the meanest food. Hatred embitters the richest feast. How did the presence and converse of the Lord of angels dignify the humble fare!<sup>15</sup> How much more refreshing were the social meals of the Pentecostal Christians, than the well-furnished tables of their enemies! When the Lord's ordinance is marred by man's selfishness—When wealth, rank, or adventitious accomplishments, govern the choice of life's companion, rather than the fear of the Lord; what wonder, if the stalled ox, and hatred therewith, be the order of the house? Mutual disappointment is too often the source of criminal indulgence abroad; always the bane of peace and unity at home. Few alas! practically believe this divine testimony. Parents!—Do you seek the solid happiness of your children? Then lead them to expect little from the world; every thing from God.

[David Hocking on the Fear of God or the Fear of the Lord](#)

[Bob Deffinbaugh - Psalm 34- The Fear of the Lord - Bible.org](#)

### **Exodus 3:6 FEAR OF GOD**

"Slaves, in all things obey ... with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord." (Colossians 3:22)

"Perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).

Jesus commands us to love God (Matt. 22:37) , yet Paul enjoins us to fear Him (Col. 3:22). But if we love God, shouldn't we be free from fear? Doesn't perfect love cast out fear? My own experience can help answer this question. I love the Lord, but I still have some fear when I think of the day I will stand before Him. I'm not afraid He will send me to hell; I know that Jesus paid the price for my sins. Yet the thought of standing in the presence of a holy God awes me. This element of fear helps me to try to please God. The kind of fear that is cast out by love, though, is a cringing dread of eternal punishment. God has delivered me from that.

The Wind in the Willows, a children's allegory by Kenneth Grahame, illustrates the love-fear relationship.

Two animals, Mole and Rat, meet Friend and Helper, who personifies God. Mole shakes as he whispers,

"Rat, are you afraid?"

"Afraid," murmurs Rat, his eyes brimming with unutterable love—

"Afraid! Of him? Oh, never, never! And yet—and yet—oh, Mole, I am afraid!"



Daniel the prophet must have experienced that same feeling. His love for God was great, yet when he met the Lord in a vision he collapsed in fear (Dan 8:15-27) . One glimpse of God's holiness overwhelmed him with a sense of his own sinfulness.

We must love God, but we must also stand in awe of Him. The combination of love and fear is the key to holy living. —Herbert Vander Lugt (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.)

He who doesn't fear God should fear everything else

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## GOD'S HOLINESS

"And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God (Exodus 3:6).

According to a doctor at Johns Hopkins University, man is constituted "in nerve and tissue and brain cell and soul" to function best on faith. In other words, God made us so that we realize our greatest potential when we are free from the devastating effects of fear. Yet all of us have fears. Those who deny this are being dishonest with themselves. We are afraid of others, ourselves, the future, the past, unemployment, public opinion—the list is endless!

The Bible mentions no less than two dozen words relating to fear. They range in meaning from terror to timidity, and most carry a negative connotation. But one kind of fear—the fear of the Lord—is positive and health-producing. Scripture tells us that it is the "beginning of knowledge" (Pr. 1:7) , that it is "clean" (Ps. 19:9) , that it gives "strong confidence" (Pr 14:26) , and that it is "a fountain of life" (Pr 14:27). But most significantly, we can choose to be controlled by this fear (Pr 1:29).

Moses expressed this kind of fear when God confronted him from a burning bush that was not consumed. Moses "hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God" (Ex 3:6).

The fear of God is reverent trust. We stand in awe of God, His power, and His holiness. We believe His warnings, His commands, His promises. We hold His character in such high respect that we choose "to hate evil" (Pr 8:13) , knowing that all His commands are for our good. By fearing Him we express our devotion to Him. It is the one fear that overcomes all others. —D. J. DeHaan. (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.)

Only the fear of God can banish the fear of men

## Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature

### Fear Of God

I. Old Testament. -There is no mention in the Scriptures of the sentiment of fear in the relations between man and God before the fall of Adam. After the transgression, Adam says, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid" (Genesis 3:10). Fear of God (יִרְאַת ה' ) stands thus in close connection with conscience, and with the fact of actual or possible sin. We are probably justified in inferring from the narrative in Genesis that the sentiment of fear, in relation to God, is one of the consequences of Adam's sin. Since the Fall, fear is a natural and proper feeling on the part of dependent man with regard to the infinite God whom he has offended. Dependence alone, without the consciousness of sin, or of sinful tendencies and possibilities, would not engender fear. In sinful beings, however,. fear is useful and necessary as a preventive and safeguard against transgression. As such it is enjoined in the O.T. especially. (Compare Exodus 1:1; Exodus 1:17; Deuteronomy 6:2; Proverbs 3:7; Proverbs 14:2.) So in O.T. we find practical piety generally described as the fear of God: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7); Job 28:8, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding;" "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever" (Psalms 19:9). Fear, thus coming to be almost, if not quite, synonymous with piety, did not (under the old covenant) exclude filial and even cheerful trust in God, and delight in his law and in his worship; the Psalms abound in illustrations of this. Under this covenant, too, the law of love prevailed (Deuteronomy 6:5, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might"). The promise of a new covenant, also, added the grace of hope to the experience of O.T. believers (Jeremiah 31:31-34). But a fear which is conjoined with love and hope is not a slavish fear, but rather filial fear, veneration (compare Deuteronomy 32:6; Hosea 11:1; Isaiah 1:2; Isaiah 63:16; Isaiah 64:8). Nevertheless, the sense of the filial relation to God through Christ, such as appears in the N.T., was wanting in the old covenant, and fear was, perhaps, under that covenant, the prevailing element in the consciousness of believers, so far as their relation to God was concerned.

II. In the sphere of the N.T., the fear of God, in the sense of slavish or untrusting dread, is completely dispelled. True, in the economy of salvation through Christ fear finds a useful place as a preventive of negligence and carelessness in religion, and as an

inducement to penitence (2 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Philippians 2:12 Ephesians 5:21; Hebrews 12:28-29), and is enforced in this sense by Christ himself (Matthew 10:28). But as Christian experience deepens, and the soul is consecrated to God, the sense of fear vanishes, and love takes its place (Romans 8:15; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:18). On the other hand, where, there is nothing more than the form of Christian life, without its inward power, the old Jewish and even pagan fear springs up. So the Romish Church does not admit a free and direct approach to God, but demands the intercession of saints, etc., and makes of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in which Christians are lovingly to surround his table, a tremendous and fearful mystery. In Protestant theology, on the contrary, the fear to approach God is considered as a consequence of the Fall, and free access to him is held to be an essential element of true Christian life. Edwards, in his *Treatise on Religious Affections*, remarks as follows on the relations of fear and sin: "For so hath God contrived and constituted things, in his dispensations towards his own people, that when their love decays, and the exercises of it fail or become weak, fear should arise; for then they need it to restrain them from sin, and to excite them to care for the good of their souls, and so to stir them up to watchfulness and diligence in religion; but God hath so ordered that, when love rises and is in vigorous exercise, then fear should vanish and be driven away; for then they need it not, having a higher and more excellent principle in exercise to restrain them from sin, and stir them up to their duty."

There are no other principles which human nature is under the influence of that will ever make men conscientious but one of these two fear or love; and therefore, if one of these should not prevail as the other decays, God's people, when fallen into dead and carnal frames, when love is asleep, would be lamentably exposed indeed; and therefore God has wisely ordained that these two opposite principles of love and fear should rise and fall like the two opposite scales of a balance; when one rises, the other sinks. Love is the spirit of adoption, or the childlike principle; if that slumbers, men fall under fear, which is the spirit of bondage, or the servile principle; and so on the contrary. And if it be so that love, or the spirit of adoption, be carried to a great height, it quite drives away all fear, and gives full assurance; agreeable to that of the apostle, 1 John 4:18, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." These two opposite principles of lust and holy love bring hope and fear into the hearts of God's children in proportion as they prevail, that is, when left to their own natural influence, without something adventitious or accidental intervening, as the distemper of melancholy, doctrinal ignorance, prejudices of education, wrong instruction, false principles, peculiar temptations, etc. Fear is cast out by the Spirit of God no other way than by the prevailing of love; nor is it ever maintained by his Spirit but when love is asleep" (Edwards, *Works*, N. Y. edit., iii, 56). See, on the different dispensations of grace, Fletcher, *Works*, iii, 175 sq.; Stowell, *On Nehemiah*, lect. i; Herzog, *Real-Encyclopadie*, v, 280.

## Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible

### Fear

**FEAR** . In the OT 'the fear of the Lord' is frequently a definition of piety. The purpose of the giving of the Law is the implanting of this fear in the hearts of men ( Deuteronomy 4:10 ); it is the sum of religious duty ( Deuteronomy 6:13 ) and prompts to obedient and loving service ( Deuteronomy 10:12 ). 'Fear cannot be appraised without reference to the worth of the objects feared' (Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory* , ii. 184); hence it is on the revelation of the Divine nature as 'holy and to be feared' ( Psalms 111:9 ) that this fundamental principle of religion rests: those who know His name have learnt that to fear Him is true wisdom ( Psalms 111:10 ) and true blessedness ( Psalms 112:1 ). In the NT mention is made of a fear which has high moral quality and religious value. 'The fear of the Lord' was the rule by which the early Christians walked ( Acts 9:31 ), and when an uncircumcised foreigner became a devout worshipper of the God of Israel he was known as 'one that feareth God' ( Acts 10:2; cf. 2 Corinthians 7:1 , Philippians 2:12 , 1Pe 1:17; 1 Peter 2:17 , Revelation 14:7; Revelation 15:4; Revelation 19:5 ). Although the usual Gr. word for 'fear' is not used in Hebrews 5:7 , the reference to the 'godly fear' of the perfect Son emphasizes the contrast between reverent awe and slavish terror.

The fear which 'hath punishment' (1 John 4:18 ) is the result of sin ( Genesis 3:10 ). The sinner, under condemnation of the Law, is in 'bondage unto fear' ( Romans 8:15 ), and inasmuch as 'the sting of death is sin' ( 1 Corinthians 15:56 ), he is also through fear of death 'subject to bondage' ( Hebrews 2:15 ). Transgression may so completely deceive him that he has 'no terror of God' ( Psalms 36:1 ); the climax of human wickedness is the loss of any dread of God's judgments, though the Gr. and Eng. translations of the Heb. word for 'terror' ( pachadh , cf. Isaiah 2:10; Isaiah 2:19; Isaiah 2:21 RV [Note: Revised Version.] ) fail to bring out this thought in St. Paul's quotation of this verse ( Romans 3:18 ). To rouse men from this callous indifference to God's threatenings is the purpose of the appeal to fear, which is a primary and self-regarding emotion and a powerful spring of human action. This appeal is warranted by our Lord's words ( Matthew 10:28 ) as well as by Apostolic example ( Hebrews 4:1; Heb 10:31 , 1 Timothy 5:20 , Judges 1:23 ). The spirit in which this appeal should be made is that which inspired St. Paul, when he declares that, 'knowing the fear of the Lord,' before whose judgment-seat all must be made manifest, he is constrained by the love of Christ to persuade men to be 'reconciled to God' ( 2 Corinthians 5:11 ff.).

## Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology

### Fear

Of some ten Hebrew nouns and eight verbs that are regularly translated "fear, " "to fear, " "to be afraid, " and the like, only one of each is commonly used in the Old Testament and they both spring from the root *yr* (the noun being *yira* [יִרָא] or *mora* [מוֹרָא, מוֹכָה] and the verb *yare* [יָרָא, יִרָא]). The New Testament employs *phobos* and *phobeo* almost exclusively as noun and verb, respectively, and these are the terms consistently used by the Septuagint to translate Hebrew *yira* [יִרָא] or *mora* [מוֹכָה, מוֹרָא] and *yare* [יָרָא, יִרָא].

The fundamental and original idea expressed by these terms covers a semantic range from mild easiness to stark terror, depending on the object of the fear and the circumstances surrounding the experience. There is no separate Hebrew or Greek lexeme describing fear of God so presumably such fear was from earliest times, the same kind of reaction as could be elicited from any encounter with a surprising, unusual, or threatening entity. In time, however, fear of God or of manifestations of the divine became a subcategory of fear in general and thus developed a theological signification pervasively attested throughout the Bible. While the normal meaning of fear as dread or terror is retained in the theological use of the terms, a special nuance of reverential awe or worshipful respect becomes the dominant notion.

Fear of God or of his manifestations appears in the Bible either in the abstract, in which just the idea of God alone generates this response, or in particular situations such as theophany or miracle, the occurrence or performance of which produces fear. Examples of the latter are Israel's fear of the Lord following the exodus deliverance (Exodus 14:31) and the fear of Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, when he saw the angel of the Lord (Luke 1:12). More common by far are the reactions of fear by God's people as they contemplate who he is and what he has done.

Fear as a response to God and his deeds is so important an aspect of biblical faith and life that Fear actually occurs as an epithet of God himself. Jacob describes the Lord as the "Fear of Isaac" his father (Genesis 31:42; cf. v. 53), suggesting that Isaac had such reverential submission to the Lord that the Lord, to him, was the embodiment of fear. Usually, however, the fear of the Lord is an inducement to obedience and service: to fear God is to do his will. This equation appears most prominently in covenant contexts, especially in Deuteronomy, where the appeal is to serve the Lord as evidence of proper recognition of his sovereignty. The Lord as King demands and deserves the awesome respect of his people, a respect that issues in obedient service.

Fear of God also lies at the heart of successful living in the world. Wisdom literature makes it clear that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, a fear equated with the "knowledge of the Holy One" (Proverbs 9:10; 1:7; Psalm 111:10). To fear God is to know him and to know him is to fear him. Such healthy fear enables one to praise God (Psalm 22:23; Revelation 14:7); to enjoy benefits and blessings at his hand (Psalm 34:9; 103:11,13, 17); to rest in peace and security (Psalm 112:7-8); and to experience length of days (Proverbs 10:27; 19:23). But fear of God also produces fear of wrath and judgment in those who do not know him or who refuse to serve him. There are, thus, two sides of the fear of the Lord—that which produces awe, reverence, and obedience, and that which causes one to cower in dread and terror in anticipation of his displeasure. -- Eugene H. Merrill

## Holman Bible Dictionary

### Fear

A broad range of emotions that embrace both the secular and the religious worlds. Secular fear is the natural feeling of alarm caused by the expectation of imminent danger, pain, or disaster. Religious fear appears as the result of awe and reverence toward a supreme power.

**Terminology** The English word "fear" is used to translate several Hebrew and Greek words. In the Old Testament, the most common word used to express fear is *yir'ah*, which means "fear," "terror" (Isaiah 7:25; Jonah 1:10,16). In the New Testament, the word used most often to express fear is *phobos* which means "fear," "dread," "terror" (Matthew 28:4; Luke 21:26).

**Secular Fear** rises in the normal activities and relationships of life.

**Human Fear** Animals fear humans (Genesis 9:2), and humans fear the animals (Amos 3:8); individuals fear individuals (Genesis 26:7), and nations fear nations (2 Samuel 10:19). People are afraid of wars (Exodus 14:10), of their enemies (Deuteronomy 2:4), and of subjugation (Deuteronomy 7:18; Deuteronomy 28:10). People are afraid of death (Genesis 32:11), of disaster (Zephaniah 3:15-16), of sudden panic (Proverbs 3:25), of being overtaken by adversity (Job 6:21), and of the unknown (Genesis 19:30). Fear

can reflect the limitations of life (Ecclesiastes 12:5 ) as well as the unforeseen consequences of actions (1 Samuel 3:15 ).

Fear can be the regard the young owes to the aged (Job 32:6 ), the honor a child demonstrates toward parents (Leviticus 19:3 ), the reverential respect of individuals toward their masters (1 Peter 2:18 ), and to persons in positions of responsibilities (Romans 13:7 ). Fear also can be the sense of concern for individuals (2 Corinthians 11:3 ) as well as the respect for one's husband (1 Peter 3:2 ).

Fear as consequence of sin Fear may come from a strong realization of sin and disobedience. Man and woman were afraid after their act of disobedience (Genesis 3:10 ). Abimelech was afraid when he realized that he had committed an offensive act by taking the wife of Abraham to be his wife (Genesis 20:8-9 ). This sense of estrangement and guilt that comes as consequence of sin produces in the heart of individuals the fear of the day of the Lord because they will appear before the judgment of God (Joel 2:1 ).

Freedom from fear Freedom from fear comes as individuals trust in the God who protects (Psalm 23:4 ) and helps them (Isaiah 54:14 ). The New Testament teaches that perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18 ). Christians are no longer slaves of fear, for Christ has given them not a spirit of

timidity or cowardice, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-control (2 Timothy 1:7 ).

Religious Fear is the human response to the presence of God.

Fear of God A prominent element in Old Testament religion is the concept of the fear of God. Most often the sense of fear comes as individuals encounter the divine in the context of revelation. When God appears to a person, the person experiences the reality of God's holiness. This self-disclosure of God points to the vast distinction between humans and God, to the mysterious characteristic of God that at the same time attracts and repels. There is a mystery in divine holiness that causes individuals to become overwhelmed with a sense of awe and fear. They respond by falling down or kneeling in reverence and worship, confessing sin, and seeking God's will (Isaiah 6:1 ).

God as a fearful God The God of Israel is an awe-producing God because of His majesty, His power, His works, His transcendence, and His holiness. Yahweh is a "great and terrible God" (Nehemiah 1:15 ); He is "fearful in praises, doing wonders" (Exodus 15:11 ); His name is "fearful" (Deuteronomy 28:58 ) and "terrible" (Psalm 99:3 ). The fear of God comes as people experience God in a visible manifestation (Exodus 20:18 ), in dreams (Genesis 28:17 ), invisible form (Exodus 3:6 ), and in His work of salvation (Isaiah 41:5 ). God's work, His power, majesty, and holiness evoke fear and demand acknowledgment. The fear of God is not to be understood as the dread that comes out of fear of punishment, but as the reverential regard and the awe that comes out of recognition and submission to the divine. It is the revelation of God's will to which the believer submits in obedience.

The basis for God's relationship with Israel was the covenant. The personal relationship that came out of the covenant transformed the relationship from a sense of terror to one of respect and reverence in which trust predominated. This fear which produces awe can be seen in the worship of Israel. The Israelites were exhorted to "serve the Lord with fear" (Psalm 2:11 ). Fear protected Israel from taking God for granted or from presuming on His grace. Fear called to covenant obedience.

Fear as obedience Deuteronomy sets out a relationship between the fear of God and the observance of the demands of the covenant. To fear the Lord is one of the ways by which Israel expresses its obedience and loyalty to Yahweh and to His divine requirements: "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" (Deuteronomy 10:12-13; compare Deuteronomy 6:24-25; Deuteronomy 10:20; Deuteronomy 13:4 ). Fear becomes a demand that can be learned (Deuteronomy 17:19 ). Fear of God was part of the religious life of every Israelite, where the acknowledgment of it required a specific behavior from each individual. Fear of God was a requirement demanded from every judge (Exodus 18:21 ). The kings of Israel should rule in the fear of the Lord (2 Samuel 23:3 ); even the messianic King would live in the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2 ). To fear God was the beginning of wisdom and thus of the pathway to true life (Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 9:10; Proverbs 15:33 ).

"Fear not" The expression "fear not" (also translated "do not fear" or "do not be afraid") is an invitation to confidence and trust. When used without religious connotation (15 times), "fear not" is an expression of comfort. These words come from an individual to another providing reassurance and encouragement (Genesis 50:21; Ruth 3:11; Psalm 49:16 ). When "fear not" is used in a religious context (60 times), the words are an invitation to trust in God. These words appear in the context of the fear and terror that follows divine revelation. God invites His people not to be afraid of Him (Genesis 15:1; Genesis 26:24 ); the angel of the Lord seeks to calm an individual before a divine message is communicated (Daniel 10:12 ,Daniel 10:12,10:19; Luke 1:13 ,Luke 1:13,1:30 ); a person acting as a mediator of God invites the people to trust in God (Moses, Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua, Joshua 10:25 ).

The "God-fearers" The "God-fearers" were those who were faithful to God and obeyed His commandments (Job 1:1; Psalm 25:14; Psalm 33:18 ). Those who fear God are blessed (Psalm 112:1 ); they enjoy God's goodness (Psalm 34:9 ) and God's provision (Psalm 111:5 ). In the New Testament "God-fearers" became a technical term for uncircumcised Gentiles who worshiped in the

Jewish synagogue.

Fear in the New Testament Some Christians tend to de-emphasize the fear of God in the New Testament by placing the love of God above the fear of God. There is indeed a greater emphasis on the love of God in the New Testament. However, the element of fear was part of the proclamation of the early church.

Paul admonished believers to work out their salvation “with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12 ). The early church grew in number as they lived “in the fear of the Lord” (Acts 9:31 ). The fear of God is related to the love of God. The revelation of God to people in the New Testament contains the element of God's mysterious otherness calling for reverent obedience. The New Testament church stands in awe and fear in the presence of a holy God, for fear is “the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13 ). Claude F. Mariottini

## The Fear of the Lord

### Bible.org

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” (Proverbs 1:7)

Having addressed how sin works in our lives, we now turn to how we grow in holiness. Growth takes knowledge. When we talk about sanctification, we must emphasize knowledge. Sanctification is not a list of steps or self-help principles that we can check off. It calls for great knowledge to know how to walk with God through the diverse circumstances of life.

And to grow in knowledge, we need to fear the Lord; that is, to be whole, to be single-minded, and to live according to the biblical standard requires a continual process of learning who God is and realizing how desperate our situation is apart from Him.

In this session, keep in mind how a reverence for God helps you guard against failing in the areas of struggle you discussed in previous sessions and motivates you to pursue positive growth in holiness.

#### Session Aims

Individual Aim: To expand your understanding of and growth in the fear of the Lord.

Group Aim: To explore ways to incorporate an understanding of the fear of the Lord into the daily lives of group members.

#### Preparation

Read Session 7: The Fear of the Lord.

Complete Biblical Exercise: Genesis 20 and 22 beginning on page 46.

Biblical Exercise: Genesis 20 and 22

Read Genesis 20; 22:1-19. Also, review “A Method for the Biblical Exercises” beginning on page 15.

#### OBSERVATION—“WHAT DO I SEE?”

1. Who are the persons (including God) in the passage? What is the condition of those persons?
2. What are they saying or doing? (Look especially for statements or actions that are emphasized, repeated, related, alike, unlike, or true to life.)
3. When did this take place?
4. Where did this take place?
5. Why did it happen?

What changed between the beginning and the end of chapter 20?

What changed between the beginning and the end of chapter 22?

#### INTERPRETATION PHASE 1 — “WHAT DID IT MEAN THEN?”

1. Coming to Terms—Are there any words in the passage that you don't understand? Write down anything you found confusing about the passage.
2. Finding Where It Fits—What clues does the Bible give about the meaning of this passage?

Immediate Context (the passage being studied)

Remote Context (passages that come before and after the one being studied)

### 3. Getting into Their Sandals—An Exercise in Imagination

How did it look?

How did it sound?

How did it smell?

How did it feel?

How did it taste?

#### INTERPRETATION PHASE 2 — “WHAT DOES IT MEAN NOW?”

1. What is the timeless truth in the passage? In one or two sentences, write down what you learned about God from Genesis 20 and 22.

2. How does that truth work today?

#### APPLICATION — “WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE THIS TRUTH REAL?”

1. What can I do to make this truth real for myself?

2. For my family?

3. For my friends?

4. For the people who live near me?

5. For the rest of the world?

#### Introduction

When Abraham moved his family to the Negev region, he told residents there that his wife, Sarah, was his sister. The king of that region, Abimelech, took Sarah to become one of his wives. Before having Sarah as his wife, Abimelech had a dream in which God warned against it because she was Abraham's wife. Abraham admitted that the reason he lied about Sarah was because he thought, “There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife” (Genesis 20:11).

Abraham knew that the people of the Negev had no knowledge of his God and did not live according to His standards. He assumed God could not or would not take care of him in such a place, so he took matters into his own hands by lying about Sarah's identity. The irony of the story is that Abraham was the one who showed that he didn't fear God.

The situation was different in Genesis 22. In this situation, many years later, Abraham showed his obedience to God in his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. In Genesis 22:12, the angel of the Lord said, “Do not lay a hand on the boy... Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.” God reaffirmed His everlasting covenant with Abraham because He knew that Abraham feared Him.

What changed in Abraham? He gained faith. Earlier he didn't trust God to protect his life. Later he was willing to sacrifice his hope of descendants, trusting that God would honor His promise to raise up a nation through Abraham's offspring.

#### Content

There are two broad categories of Old Testament people who had “fear of the Lord.” The difference lies in how and why they feared Him. The first group feared the Lord in terror (see 1 Samuel 11:7; 2 Chronicles 14:14). They expected imminent destruction. They often hid in caves and holes to escape the day of the Lord and His terrible judgment (see Isaiah 2:10, 17, 21). In some translations the term dread captures this sense effectively.

The second group's fear was consistently associated with long life, knowledge, and wisdom (see Job 28:28; Psalm 19:9; Proverbs 1:7, 29; 2:5). To fear God in this way is to rightly ascribe to Him all authority and power. Generally, those who reject God will eventually dread Him, while those who are His prudently fear Him.

So what about us? What tension should we feel between intimacy with our Father and awe before Him as the Creator of the universe? Exodus 20 provides an interesting insight. Immediately after receiving the Ten Commandments, the Israelites were terrified by the thunder, lightning, and smoke that signaled God's presence. In response, Moses told them, “Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning” (verse 20).

God didn't come simply to terrify them. He wasn't trying to get an emotional response just to prove His power. But He did want the people to fear Him for their own sake. He wanted to give them a glimmer of the One with whom they had made promises of loyalty. God intended for this revelation of who He was to affect them so deeply that they would take His instructions seriously, even when disobedience felt better. Author and theologian Craig Blaising described the balance for all of God's children: "God has not come maliciously, but neither has He come permissively; and in between the two is grace."

the fear of the Lord: an inward attitude of humble reverence toward God, in light of His self-revelation, that results in outward expression of Christlikeness

According to this definition, the fear of the Lord involves two parts. The first is the inward attitude. This attitude is humble because as the Lord reveals His character, His majesty, His power and holiness, we are humbled before Him. We realize that God alone is worthy of our devotion and reverence (see Job 38–41; Psalm 33:8; Hebrews 12:28-29). The second part is the outward obedience, which flows from this inward humility. God reveals Himself to us so we will obey Him (see Deuteronomy 6:2-13). The two parts are linked.

As Christians, we express obedience by modeling our lives on Christ's. Christ Himself, the greatest revelation of God, is the best example of how we can live properly fearing Him (see Philippians 2:5-16).

How can we grow in our fear of the Lord? Here are three suggestions:

1. We can immerse ourselves in God's Word (see Psalm 119). The fear of the Lord grows with revelation of how magnificent He is. As we see His character and authority through the events and teaching of Scripture, our hearts will be drawn to have a proper reverence toward God.
2. We can ask the Lord regularly to unite our hearts to fear His name (see Psalm 86:11). God desires to reveal Himself to us and to align our heads and hearts to His character. This is a prayer He longs to answer.
3. We can live moment by moment in the reality of God's presence (see Psalm 139:7-12). When we forget about God in our daily schedule, we are not living in reality. We must cultivate a mindset that is ever aware of God's presence.

Conclusion

The fear of the Lord is the product of God's revelation. This knowledge leads to an attitude of humility and exhibits itself in obedience. When we truly fear the Lord, we have union between mind (what we think), heart (what we value and treasure), and body (what we do).

[The Fear of the Lord - Bible.org](#)

## 1901 Jewish Encyclopedia

### Fear of God

The Hebrew equivalent of "religion." It is the mainspring of religion, morality, and wisdom, and is productive of material prosperity and well-being. Who fears God will refrain from doing the things that would be displeasing to Him, the things that would make himself unworthy of God's regard. Fear of God does not make men shrink from Him as one would from a tyrant or a wild beast it draws them nearer to Him and fills them with reverential awe. That fear which is merely self-regarding is unworthy of a child of God. The difference between fear of God and fear of man is contrasted in Isaiah 8:12-13 : "Call ye not conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and that which they fear, fear not ye, neither count it worthy of dread. Yhwh Sabaoth, Him count ye holy let Him be your fear let Him be your dread" (Hebr.).

Fear of God is identical with love and service. "And now, Israel, what doth Yhwh thy God require of thee but to fear Yhwh thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve Yhwh thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul?" ( Deuteronomy 10:12 ). "Thou shalt fear Yhwh thy God and Him shalt thou serve" ( Deuteronomy 6:13 , Hebr.) in acts of public devotion, the spontaneous outcome of sincere reverence (Exodus 23:25 Deuteronomy 10:12 , 11:13 , 13:4 comp. Job 15:4).

Fear of God implies hatred of evil and wrong, and makes for righteousness and peace. "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God" (Lev 19:14).

When Abimelech upbraids Abraham for having told him that Sarah was his (Abraham' s) sister, Abraham excuses himself by saying: "I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place and they will slay me for my wife's sake" (Genesis 20:11 comp. 42:18). Of Job it



is said that he was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil" ( Job 1:1 comp. Exodus 1:17 Proverbs 3:7 , 8:13 ). "The fear of the Lord driveth away sins" (Ecclus. [Sirach] 1:21).

There exists an intimate relation between fear of God and wisdom. The wise man knows how to value, while the fool despises, the fear of God. Ecclesiastes asserts that the fear of God is the whole duty of man (xii:13). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10 Ecclus. [Sirach] 1:18). Trust in God overcomes all fear and is a protection in time of danger. "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield" ( Genesis 15:2 ). "Except the God of my father Abram, He whom Isaac feared, had been with me, surely now hadst thou sent me away empty" (Genesis 31:42 ). "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Psalm 23:4 comp. Ps 112:7).

The fear of God is practical wisdom, productive of blessings in life and death. Thus long life is promised to him who fears Yhwh and keeps His laws and statutes ( Deuteronomy 6:2 Yoma ix. Psalm 128:1-2 Ecclus. [Sirach] 1:11 et seq. Proverbs 14:27). Blessings come not only to him who fears God, but also to his posterity (Jeremiah 32:39). Gratitude for help and deliverance from danger leads naturally to fear of God (Exodus 14:31 1Samuel 12:24 ).

Fear of God may also be dread of God's punishment in consequence of sin and shame. Thus Adam was afraid to meet God because he was naked (Genesis 3:10). Job feels "the terrors of God" and of the wicked it is said: "Terrors take hold on him as waters" (Job 6:4 , 27:20). At times fear is inflicted by God as punishment for man's disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:66 comp. Leviticus 26:17 ).

In the Talmud the conception of the fear of God ("mora shamayim") is similar to that in Scripture. Antigonus of Soko used to say: "Be not like slaves that serve their master to receive a reward be like those that serve their master without regard to reward, and let the fear of Heaven be upon you" (Abot 1:3). "Everything is in the hand of Heaven, except the fear of Heaven" (Meg. 25a Ber. 33b). "He who has the Torah without the fear of God is like a treasurer who has the keys to the inner treasure, but not to the outer how then can he reach the inner?" (Shab. 31b). "He who fears God may be likened to the wise artisan who keeps his tools always ready for work" (Ab. R. N. xii.). E. C. A. G.

## **Vital Godliness: A Treatise on Experimental and Practical Piety**

### **THE FEAR OF GOD**

**By William S. Plumer**

God's word clearly teaches that there is a fear which is consistent with true religion. Once the Scriptures assert that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge," Proverbs 1:7; and twice they say that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Psalm 111:10, and Proverbs 9:10. There is no higher wisdom than to fear God, as there is no true wisdom until he is feared. The fear of God is both alpha and omega in wisdom. "The very first, and indeed the principal thing, to be instilled into all men's minds, is a biblical sense of the divine Majesty, and a solemn regard towards him." With the foregoing well agrees the prophet Isaiah: "The fear of the Lord is his treasure." Isa. 33:6. It is the more important to dwell upon this grace, as it seems not to be much spoken of. Very seldom is it a subject of pulpit discourse; rarely do we find it treated of at length in modern books; yet the Bible is full of it. Not only the Old Testament, but the New also, insists upon reverence and godly fear as essential ingredients of Christian character.

Perhaps one reason why so little is said of it is, that many minds are confused respecting its qualities. It will therefore be wise to seek to understand its nature, and the difference between it and all those kinds of fear which are spurious. Godly fear does not at all consist in servility and guilty dismay, nor in mere dread and terror. This kind of fear is neither holy nor useful. Indeed it sadly perverts men, and fits them for a life of sin. "Fear, if it has not the light of a true understanding concerning God wherewith to be moderated, breeds superstition," says Hooker.

Godly fear consists with love. This is so true, that the more we fear God, the more we love him; and the more we love him, the more do we fear him. Godly fear is not a destroyer, but a regulator of other graces. Without it faith might become presumptuous, hope might lose its sobriety, love might degenerate into fondness or sentimentality, and joy might become giddy. But where the heart is full of godly fear, all these unhappy results are avoided. So far from agitating, it calms and quiets the mind. It seems to give both gravity and cheerfulness. It moderates without depressing; it animates without intoxicating. It is good ballasts to the ship in her passage through tempestuous seas.

This fear is a fruit of God's bounty. It is gracious. "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." Without an interest in God's favor, we can never make so excellent an attainment.

Godly fear is a saving grace. It is declared to be a part of true religion in all dispensations. "They shall fear you as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations." Psalm 72:5. So that religion without love is not more spurious than religion without



godly fear.

One of the most striking features of synagogue worship for centuries past has been an evident lack of profound reverence for God in the entire manner of conducting the religious services of the Jews. The basis of this fear is found in the nature, word, and works of God. Jehovah is "the great and dreadful God." We must gain a knowledge of him. "As the justice of God and his anger must be apprehended before he can be feared slavishly, so the majesty of God and his goodness must be understood before he can be feared filially. Who can stand in awe of a majesty he is ignorant of? Men, knowing not God's nature, have often presumed so much upon his mercy, that they have been destroyed by his justice."

Any right thoughts of God's amazing purity of nature will surely beget a pious fear of him. Because he is "glorious in holiness—he is fearful in praises." "As the approach of a grave and serious man makes children hasten their trifles out of the way; so would the consideration of this attribute make us cast away our idols, and our ridiculous thoughts and designs." And not only God's majesty and holiness, but also his love and mercy beget a great fear of him. So says the Psalmist, "There is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared." Psalm 130:4. So says Paul, "We receiving a kingdom, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." Heb. 12:28. The same is true of God's power and government. "You are great, and your name is great in might; who would not fear you, O King of nations?" Jer. 10:6, 7. Jesus Christ told us to fear him who had power to cast into hell. Luke 12:5. In like manner, to fear and tremble at God's word is an effect produced on the heart of all the pious. So the Scriptures teach; so God's people experience.

And how often does God awaken sentiments of fear, not only by exhibitions of his wrath and displays of his power, but by marvelous acts of his grace and mercy towards the rebellious and perishing. Psalm 40:3; Acts 2:43. There are some remarkable examples of the fear of God recorded in Scripture. One is that of Moses, mentioned in Heb. 12:21, where it is said that the giving of the law on mount Sinai produced the deepest awe and even terror. "So terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." A similar record is made by Isaiah: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, and His robe filled the temple. Seraphim were standing above Him; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; His glory fills the whole earth. The foundations of the doorways shook at the sound of their voices, and the temple was filled with smoke. Then I said: Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, and because my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." (Isaiah 6:1-5)

A still more remarkable effect, if possible, was produced on the prophet Habakkuk by an unusual display of God's glory. The song reads thus: "His splendor covers the heavens, and the earth is full of His praise. His brilliance is like light; rays are flashing from His hand. This is where His power is hidden. Plague goes before Him, and pestilence follows in His steps. He stands and shakes the earth; He looks and startles the nations. The age-old mountains break apart; the ancient hills sink down. His pathways are ancient. I see the tents of Cushan in distress; the tent curtains of the land of Midian tremble. Are You angry at the rivers, Lord? Is Your wrath against the rivers? Or is Your rage against the sea when You ride on Your horses, Your victorious chariot? You took the sheath from Your bow; the arrows are ready to be used with an oath. You split the earth with rivers. The mountains see You and shudder; a downpour of water sweeps by. The deep roars with its voice and lifts its waves high. Sun and moon stand still in their lofty residence, at the flash of Your flying arrows, at the brightness of Your shining spear. You march across the earth with indignation; You trample down the nations in wrath. You come out to save Your people, to save Your anointed. You crush the leader of the house of the wicked and strip him from foot to neck. You pierce his head with his own spears; his warriors storm out to scatter us, gloating as if ready to secretly devour the weak. You tread the sea with Your horses, stirring up the great waters. I heard, and I trembled within; my lips quivered at the sound. Rottenness entered my bones; I trembled where I stood." (Habakkuk 3:3-16)

A reason given by Paul for serving God with reverence and godly fear, is that he "is a consuming fire." Heb. 12:28, 29. A very high degree of holy fear is therefore well founded. There is cause for adoring reverence for the heavenly Majesty. Although there is not much said in modern writers respecting the fear of God, yet it is different with those who lived long ago. Thus says Hall, "There is a trembling that may consist with joy. Trembling is an effect of fear, but the fear which we must cherish is reverential, not slavish, not distrustful. I will so distrust myself, that I may be steadfastly confident in the God of my salvation. I will so tremble before the glorious majesty of my God, that I may not abate anything of the joy of his never-failing mercy."

So also Hopkins on the first commandment says, "Certainly we cannot have the Lord for our God unless we supremely fear and reverence him. Yes, as the love, so the fear of God is made the sum of all the commandments, and indeed the substance of all religion; for, although it be but one particular branch and member of that worship and service which we owe to God, yet it is such a remarkable one, and has such a mighty influence upon all the rest, that oftentimes in Scripture it is put for the whole."

How clearly too does John Bunyan describe this virtue in his account of Mr. Fearing. As he says, "No fears, no grace. Though there is not always grace where there is the fear of hell, yet to be sure there is no grace where there is no fear of God." Where this fear of God is genuine, it is not an occasional exercise, but an abiding principle. "Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long." Proverbs 23:17.

"Happy is the man who fears always." Proverbs 28:14. "Rejoice with trembling." Psalm 2:11. "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." 1 Pet. 1:17. We are to "perfect holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. 7:1. We are to work out our "salvation with fear and trembling." Phil. 2:12. When the Holy Spirit rested on Christ, it "made him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." Isa. 11:2, 3. So that it is clear that there is, there can be no genuine piety—without the fear of God.

Someone may ask how these views agree with the statement of John, that "there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment. He who fears is not made perfect in love." 1 John 4:18. The proper answer is, that John is here speaking of servile fear, which, as he says, "has torment;" whereas we are speaking of a fear which has no torment.

John Newton says, "The Lord bids me 'fear not'—and at the same time he says, 'Happy is the man who fears always.' How to fear and not to fear at the same time is, I believe, one branch of that secret of the Lord which none can understand but by the teaching of his Spirit. When I think of my heart, of the world, of the powers of darkness—what cause of continual fear! I am on an enemy's ground, and cannot move a step but some snare is spread for my feet. But when I think of the person, grace, power, care, and faithfulness of my Savior, why may I not say—I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. I wish to be delivered from anxious and unbelieving fear, which weakens the hands and disquiets the heart. I wish to increase in a humble jealousy and distrust of myself and of everything about me."

Charnock says, "Men are apt to fear a just recompense for an injury done to another; and fear is the mother of hatred. God being man's superior, and wronged by him, there follows necessarily a slavish fear of him and his power; and such a fear makes wrathful and embittered thoughts of God, while he considers God armed with an unconquerable and irresistible power to punish him." But the fear which arises from just views of the whole of God's character produces very different effects, and is in fact very different in its nature.

The benefits of godly fear are many and of great value. It is the best preservative against sinful and dangerous alliances with the wicked. "do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the Lord Almighty—him you shall regard as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Isa. 8:12, 13. How many wicked alliances are formed; and for no other reason than that men are led into them through a lack of sterling religious principle. The consequence is, misery forever. From how many distressing entanglements men would be rescued by the fear of the Lord. It also drives away that fear of man, which brings a snare. Christ says, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him, who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear him." Luke 12:4, 5. Christ himself proposes the fear of God as the great remedy for the fear of man. Nor is there any other that is found adequate. But this is enough.

How justly does God rebuke that fear of man: "Have you forgotten the Lord who made you, who stretched out the heavens and laid the earth's foundations? Why should you live in constant fear of the fury of those who oppress you, of those who are ready to destroy you? Their fury can no longer touch you." Isa. 51:12. It is not possible for us to fear God too much, or man too little. And so surely as we have just conceptions of the eternal power and majesty of God, we shall have no tormenting fear of the puny arm of mortals.

The fear of the Lord inspires confidence and boldness in a righteous cause. That this is experienced by all God's people, has been illustrated in a thousand striking cases in history, and is clearly declared in Scripture. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and his children shall have a place of refuge." Proverbs 14:26. The fear of God is the great preservative against sin. Nothing could be more important than this. "Keep yourself out of sin, and fear nothing." If we can resist all temptations to sin, and be pure from iniquity, nothing can harm us. This may be done by a proper fear of God. "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." Proverbs 14:27.

The care of godly men in all ages has been against sin. And as their spiritual enemies are very many and insidious, they have learned to be much afraid of that which in others awakens no apprehension. They are cautious about little sins, and their cry is, "Catch the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes." Song 2:15. In ancient vineyards a tower was erected, and a watch set there for birds, foxes, and thieves—the three great enemies of the vintage. Birds always, and thieves sometimes, approached vineyards in the daytime; but foxes commonly came at night. Larger foxes preyed much on poultry and on smaller animals, but the young foxes that ventured abroad resorted much to the vineyards. This they did both day and night. They were numerous, cunning, greedy, and destructive. If there were many of them, they ruined the vintage. They did their work slyly. Great vigilance was therefore requisite. Some suppose that in the passage just quoted, "tender grapes" represent young converts. The truth is that all Christians, and especially those who have but little knowledge of the deceitfulness of sin and of the doctrines of Scripture, should be ever on their guard.

But why should we give good heed to little things in the Christian life? It is a fair question; let it be answered. Many things which seem to us little are followed by the greatest consequences. One spark of fire has kindled a flame that burned down a city. A word has often shaped the course of an empire, or determined the destiny of a soul. Until we see the end of a thing, we cannot tell whether it is to be great or small in its effects. On earth we see the end of nothing in moral causes. They are mighty. They take hold

on eternity. Their sweep is everlasting. Their effects are much more certain than those of natural causes. They work incessantly. Our greatest rivers have their rise in little springs whose streams are often buried under leaves and shrubs. The causes now at work in forming men's character seem contemptible to many. But a leak, though not larger than a straw, will sooner or later sink a ship. The smallest opening made by a mole in the bank of a canal, will of itself grow to a waste of all its waters. One weak link in a chain, causes the vessel to drift on the rocks. One of the most heroic deeds ever performed was suggested by the perseverance of the ant. A little white powder or a drop of some poisons is fatal to human life. A scratch has brought on inflammation that ended in death. A glance of the eye has led to crimes that will not be forgotten while eternity endures. A sentence has subverted the labors and schemes of a lifetime. The greater part of human life is made up of acts that do not seem great in themselves, but the whole series completes the character. What is lighter than a word? Yet for every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account to God. What is quicker than thought? Yet as a man thinks in his heart, so is he. As "sands form the mountains, and minutes make the year," and as syllables compose the web of the greatest speeches, so many comparatively trivial acts determine the character.

One harsh word now, another an hour hence, and so on, will prove a man a churl. A few irreverent words scattered along through a day mark a man as profane. One stealthy act of pilfering proves a man a thief. He who would not be convicted of grand larceny, must avoid petty larceny. He who would not defile his soul with perjury, must shun lying. He who would not be found a liar, must beware of evasiveness. The sum of human character is made up of many apparently small things. Every great stream is fed by many lesser ones.

But what are the "little foxes?" One says they are worldly thoughts. This is true. Another says they are wrong opinions. This is as true. Another, no less wisely, says they are our hidden corruptions, our sinful appetites and passions—which destroy our graces and comforts, quash good motions, and crush good beginnings. When men fear not little sins—they will soon fall into presumptuous iniquities. When they are not conscientious about minor duties, they will soon fail in weightier matters. He who cannot walk well, cannot run well. Envy is the forerunner of murder, and naturally leads to it. Covetousness is the fountain of all theft. As a grain of sand will fret a sound eye and make it weep—so the least sin perceived will tenderly affect a good conscience. We must take and destroy these little foxes by a right use of the word of God. The Scripture is clear. It is pure. By it are all God's servants warned. We must watch day and night. We must pray frequently and fervently. We must have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. We must make constant application to the blood of cleansing. Above all, we must be in the fear of the Lord all the day long. Blessed is the man who avoids little sins and minds little duties; in the great events of life he shall not be covered with dishonor. His heart is right. God is with him. Christ will never forsake him. "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever."

Another benefit flowing from the fear of the Lord is freedom from worldly anxiety. In the passage quoted from Habakkuk we saw how wonderfully the fear of God took possession of the prophet. In the words immediately following he gives us, that triumphant song: "Even though the fig trees have no fruit and no grapes grow on the vines, even though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no grain, even though the sheep all die and the cattle stalls are empty, I will still be joyful and glad, because the Lord God is my savior. The Sovereign Lord gives me strength. He makes me sure-footed as a deer and keeps me safe on the mountains." (Habakkuk 3:17-19)

Thus the greatest degree of holy trembling was followed by the highest degree of freedom from carking care about temporal affairs. All this is according to the promise, "The fear of the Lord leads to life, then contentment; he rests and will not be touched by trouble." Proverbs 19:23. The fear of God also quiets the afflicted soul, and hushes all its agitations on the bosom of the Eternal. Thus David speaks: "O God, you have rejected us, broken our defenses; you have been angry; oh, restore us. You have made the land to quake; you have torn it open; repair its breaches, for it totters. You have made your people see hard things; you have given us wine to drink that made us stagger. You have set up a banner for those who fear you, that they may flee to it from the bow. (Psalm 60:1-4)

The fear of the Lord also leads to communion with God. This is abundantly taught in Scripture. "The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him; and he will show them his covenant." Psalm 25:14. Again, "The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his mercy." Psalm 147:11.

The cultivation of the fear of the Lord is the best means we can use to promote and retain revivals of genuine religion. Thus Luke, describing the state of the early church, says, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied." Acts 9:31. On the other hand, if religion be not revived, if the love of many wax cold, and wickedness abound, here is the way to avoid guilt and to please God. The prophet Malachi lived in times of unusual and dreadful apostasy and sin, when men called the proud happy, when they that wrought wickedness were set up, when those who tempted God were even delivered. Yet he says, "Then those who feared the Lord spoke often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for those who feared the Lord, and who thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, says the Lord Almighty, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spares his own son that serves him." Mal. 3:16, 17.

In fine, without the fear of the Lord no service is acceptable, however decent, however costly, however painful. But with the fear of

God, any commanded service is pleasing to God, however poor our offering may otherwise be. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter—Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

## **Those Who Fear God!** **William Nicholson, 1862**

"I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him!" Ecclesiastes 8:12

The Scriptures everywhere preserve that great and important distinction of character, which divides the whole of mankind in all ages, and which alone shall exist at the last day — the righteous and the wicked. This too is mentioned in such a manner, as if no account was to be made of any other distinction.

In the concerns of the present life, men are distinguished by nation, by birth, by rank and title; but God distinguishes them only by character, for he is no respecter of people.

Great importance is attached to the "end" of things — and we are always taught, that only is well, which ends well. Wickedness, however it may delight the sinner, will have an awful result. Piety, however it may be neglected and despised, will have a glorious termination. "Surely I know that it will be well with those who fear God!" This is powerfully described by Solomon in the context.

### **I. The Character Here Mentioned: "Those who fear God."**

The fear of God is that principle which reverences God, and respects his authority. It is one of the great blessings of the new covenant, produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Jeremiah 32:39, 40; Malachi 4:2. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances!" Ezekiel 36:27

He who fears God, reverences him in the manifestation of ...

- his perfections,
- his majesty and glory,
- his omniscience,
- his omnipresence,
- his justice and holiness,
- his infinite goodness.

But observe:

1. Such a fear is the result of regeneration. An unrenewed man does not fear God. "There is no fear of God before their eyes!" Romans 3:18. But regeneration turns the heart from unlawful objects — to God as the chief good. Galatians 6:15, 16.

2. Such a fear is the result of adoption. God is regarded as a Father, worthy of reverence and love. Before, his fear was the dread of a slave; now it is a filial fear, working by love. Romans 8:14, 15. That love has ...

- chosen him,
- redeemed him,
- regenerated him,
- justified him,
- pardoned him,
- sanctified him,
- and will glorify him!

3. Such a fear is manifested by hatred to that which is hateful to God. Sin in all its ramifications. Intemperance — falsehood — injustice — evil association — all the works of the flesh. "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!" Galatians 5:16-21.

4. Such a fear is manifested also by delighting in that which is pleasing to God.

The fruits of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-

control!" Galatians 5:22, 23. Delight ...

- in God himself,
- in his word,
- in prayer,
- in his worship,
- in his people,
- in his service, etc.

5. Such a fear is the submission to his will in every state. God's will is revealed in his word — it is manifested in his providential appointments. As to doctrines, commands, and precepts, I do not follow my own mind. In afflictions, I do not resist or repine. "It is the Lord, let him do as seems good in his sight!"

## **II. Their Happiness: "It shall be well with them."**

1. All is well with them already. Are they not saved from guilt and condemnation? Are they not renewed — and adopted? Have they not a sure hope of eternal glory? It is well with them. They "fear God," and from that principle, arises their happiness.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom!"

"Blessed is the man who finds wisdom (who fears the Lord), the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed!" Proverbs 3:13-18

The fear of the Lord is of heavenly origin; it comes down from the Father of lights, and prepares us for the enjoyment of him. The fear of the Lord promotes our true interest, and confers upon us the highest honors, Nehemiah 7:2.

The fear of the Lord produces a good conscience — preserving us from crimes which would distress us. 2 Corinthians 1:12; Hebrews 10:22.

The fear of the Lord inspires with courage and fortitude. Nehemiah 6:11. All less fears are swallowed by this great fear — the fear of God.

The fear of the Lord prevents compliance with sinful temptations, and criminal indulgences. It stands as a sentinel over the soul and warns it of approaching dangers, and suppresses the first risings of corruption, before they issue in actual sins.

The fear of the Lord leads to associations and services which yield unspeakable delight. "I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord!" "I am a companion of all who fear you." "

Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name.

The fear of the Lord leads to communion with God.

"Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. "They will be mine," says the LORD Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him." Malachi 3:16-17

2. It shall be well with them.

They are under the oversight of Divine Providence. God appoints the bounds of their habitations.

(1.) It shall be well with them in adversity. "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior!" Isaiah 43:1-3

(2.) It shall be well with them in the furnace of affliction. In their trials the wicked have no refuge; but the believer recognizes God in them. "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them!" Romans 8:28. "I have refined you in the furnace of affliction!" Isaiah 48:10

(3.) It shall be well with them in death. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." Revelation 14:13

The retrospect of life will give no pain. "The righteous has hope in his death."

(4.) It shall be well with them in the resurrection. The fearers of God will be raised to immortal life. "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body!" Philippians 3:20-21. "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you!" Romans 8:11

(5.) It shall be well with them in the judgment day. "Then the King will say to those on his right: Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world!" Matthew 25:34

3. It shall be well with them forever. "Their sun shall no more go down." "And they will reign forever and ever!" Revelation 22:5

### **III. The Certainty of Their Happiness. "Surely I know."**

1. I know from, experience. I never found happiness in sin — I have found it in the fear of God.

2. I know it from observation. I have watched the righteous and the wicked — I have seen them die. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness — but the righteous has hope in his death!" Proverbs 14:32. "Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright — or the future of that man is peace!" Psalm 37:37. "Let me die the death of the righteous!"

3. I know it from reason. Holiness is bliss. Bliss here, and hereafter.

4. I know it from God's promises. The mouth of the Lord has spoken it. How abundant are they!

"I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him!"

## **The Heart United to Fear God**

### **William Nicholson, 1862**

"Unite my heart to fear Your name." Psalm 86:11

Nothing can render man truly happy, but the fear of God — or true religion. Whatever a man may enjoy of this world, even though it is the dignity and wealth of royalty itself — he can have no solid bliss without the fear of God. Thus David, the king of Israel, properly estimated the matter, when he uttered this prayer, "Unite my heart to fear Your name."

On the other hand, the fear of God is connected with every Christian enjoyment, privilege, and anticipation of eternal bliss. The rich and incalculable advantages of a holy life are sufficient to give fervent importunity in the adoption of this prayer, "Unite my heart to fear Your name."

### **I. It is the Duty and Privilege of a Christian to Fear God.**

If "the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him," it must be no slight honor to serve God. God has been feared in every age, by all ranks and degrees of men, who have found it pleasant and advantageous. We might point to the patriarchs, the prophets, etc.

Consider:

1. The object of Christian veneration. "Your name."

This term denotes GOD HIMSELF, his nature as revealed to us in all his glorious perfections. It is said, "May the name of the God of Jacob defend you!" that is, May God himself defend you!

By the names Jehovah and Jah — God conveys to us the knowledge of his absolute, eternal, and immutable essence.

By the names Lord and God — we are to understand his sovereign authority.

And by the names Father, Son, and Spirit — we are to understand his essential relations.

The name of God also includes his TITLES. The first person in the Trinity is styled the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The second, "King of kings," etc.

The third, the "Comforter, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation."

The name of God implies his PERFECTIONS. Eternity, immortality, and invisibility, are his attributes. Hence, he is called "the King eternal," etc. 1 Timothy 1:17. God is often named by his attributes of wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

God's name sometimes means his WORSHIP and ORDINANCES. When God says he will "put his name in Jerusalem, and in the temple," it means his worship. When the priests "despised God's name," they despised his worship, and offered the blind, the lame, and the sick on the altar.

Sometimes it means his WORD and WILL, "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world!" John 17:6. That is, I have revealed your will. When the Church of Pergamos is said to "hold fast the name of Christ," it denotes that it adhered to the word and truth of Christ.

His name also signifies his WORKS, Psalm 8:1, 2.

2. The nature of the duty, fearing the name of the Lord.

(1.) The fear of God is distinct from slavish fear, which characterizes the wicked, Romans 8:15.

(2.) The fear of God, is filial fear, induced by Divine Sonship. John 1:12.

By the ransom of Christ,

by the renovation of the Spirit,

by the adoption of grace —

the sinner becomes the child of God. He loves his Almighty Parent, and he fears to offend him. He fears God as a friend — and not as an enemy; as a Father — and not as a judge.

(3.) The fear of God, is reverence. There is something solemn in the attributes of Deity — they inspire the mind with awe. See Genesis 28:17; Jeremiah 10:6, 7; Daniel 4:34, 35.

(4.) The fear of God, is delight in his worship and ordinances.

(5.) The fear of God, is hatred to sin, as offensive to him — and the pursuit of holiness as pleasing in his sight.

(6.) The fear of God, is submission to his will. Our belief, practice, and experience are now regulated by his word. There is submission to all his providential allotments as wise, and intended for good.

## **II. This implies that the Heart of Man Is Naturally Indisposed to Fear God, and Requires Divine Power to Produce It. "Unite my heart to fear Your name."**

The heart is naturally disaffected towards God. It has no relish for his service, nor delight in his ways. "The carnal mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so!" Romans 8:7. All its powers are out of course.

The judgment is darkened,

the will is perverted, and

the affections, instead of cheerfully fixing upon God the chief and infinite good — oppose and rebel against him.

The heart of man, while carnal, is supremely attached to other objects and idols. It is divided, separated from God. Its affections are scattered and divided among a thousand different objects. "Ephraim," says the prophet, "is a silly dove, without heart." "Their heart is divided." Hosea 10:2. Divided between ...

- God — and mammon,
- sin — and holiness,
- the trifles and the vanities of this world — and the blessedness of the next.

The lives of sinners are full of inconsistencies, running into opposite extremes, and becoming everything by turns. They are ...

- halting in their opinions,
- inconstant in their affections,

- and unstable in their conduct.

Sin has ...

- disjointed the whole frame of the heart,
- rendered it irresolute and unfixed,
- emptied it of everything that is good,
- and filled it with all manner of evil. Genesis 6:5; Matthew 15:9; Jeremiah 17:9.

Even believers constantly feel within them, an evil heart prone to depart from the living God; and therefore they pray, "Unite my heart to fear Your name."

This prayer implies:

#### 1. Sensibility ...

- of natural disaffection to God,
- of wandering from God,
- of indecision about God,
- of coldness to God,
- of danger from God's justice.

A divided heart is a great curse — scattered affections are a miserable plague.

2. Dependence. The prayer is to God, who alone can unite the heart to fear him. He has promised to do it. Jeremiah 32:39; Ezekiel 11:19. Feeling themselves helpless, they apply unto him.

#### 3. Detachment from other objects as unprofitable and ruinous. Detach my heart ...

- from the world,
- from the creature,
- from sin,
- from vanity, etc.

Destroy the spell and break the chains that bind me. Let the superlative glory of your service eclipse the service of sin. Render carnal objects hateful and distasteful to me. Let the glories of your eternal kingdom induce me to part with all the trifles of earth, etc. etc.

4. Renovation. "Create within me a clean heart, and renew a steadfast spirit within me!" Psalm 51:10. Fulfill your promise: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." Ezekiel 36:26-27. Renew me in the spirit of my mind; then I shall delight to fear you. Then I shall have a relish for your service. Then I shall delight in your law after the inward man.

5. Love. There can be no real and abiding union without love to God. Dispose my heart to love you as the chief among ten thousand, etc. Let your love to me, by Christ, be shed abroad in my heart. Cause me to love you, because you have first loved me. Let all the powers of my heart be collected by your hand, and be concentrated in you. May neither father, nor mother, nor brother, nor sister, nor houses and land, nor gold and silver — ever divert me from you. Operate on my heart until I can say, "Whom have I in Heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!" Psalm 73:25-26

6. Sincerity. "Unite my heart." Let my heart fear you.

7. Lastly. Decision, fixity, permanence. Let me be unhesitating, decided, neither turning to the right hand nor to the left, but "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Like Paul, may I feel, "None of these things move me," etc., and like David, "My heart is fixed. O God, my heart is fixed!"

### **APPLICATION.**

1. The advantages resulting from the fear of the Lord are incalculable.



2. Let all Christians pray for the application of Divine power to the heart, for nothing but heart-work can be pleasant and acceptable to God.

3. How suitable is this prayer for the penitent! Let him go to the cross for mercy, and there invoke God to unite his heart to fear him.

## **He is the one you are to fear!**

**James Smith, 1859**

"The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy — he is the one you are to fear — he is the one you are to dread!" Isaiah 8:13

Slavish fear is forbidden to the Lord's people. They are required to be hopeful, courageous, and confident. The Lord is on their side. The covenant secures all their best interests. The Lord Jesus as their advocate appears for them above.

Yet they sometimes fear men. They fear great men, or crafty men, or cruel men; but they forget that men and their works are in the hands of the Lord.

They fear suffering, imagining that their strength will fail, or their patience give way; but they forget the promise, "As your days — so shall your strength be." Nor have they learned to reckon aright or they would unite with Paul, whose sufferings were greater than theirs are ever likely to be; yet he said, "I reckon that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us!"

They at times fear death. Now death as a penal evil, is terrible enough — but as taken into the covenant, as deprived of its sting, as changed into a sleep, or transformed into a porter to open the gates of glory to the poor weary pilgrim — there is nothing terrible in death, nothing to fear.

Therefore, our gracious Lord, bids us, "Fear not! Fear not men, for I am with you, and no man shall set on you to hurt you. Fear none of these things which you shall suffer, for I am with you, and will comfort you in all your tribulations. Fear not death, for I am with you, and will give you the victory."

But we are to fear God — the Lord Almighty, who rules all worlds, and exercises all power. He is, in our minds, to be separated from all creatures, and all idols; as infinitely superior to them, and immeasurably above them. He is the one you are to fear — and he alone. We are only to fear offending him, or grieving his loving heart. If we do so, it will be our daily study, our habitual aim to please him. We shall seek above everything else to honor and glorify his dear name. If with a filial child-like fear, we fear God as he is revealed in Jesus — we need fear no one beside. Indeed it is wrong to do so.

Therefore says the prophet, "He is the one you are to fear!" Others may fear men — you fear God. Others may fear Satan — you have only to fear the Lord. Fear him — for he is able to preserve and deliver you. Fear him — for he has promised to aid you, and is faithful to his Word. Fear him — for he is always attentive to your prayer of faith, and that may ascend to Heaven at any moment, from any place. Fear him, for he is always kind to, and careful of his people — and he will be kind to you. Fear him, for he will guard, and take care of his chosen ones, though they may be considered foolish, base, or contemptible by man. "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But fear him, who when he has killed — has power to cast into Hell! Yes, I say unto you, fear him!"

Slavish fear, in a Christian, is sinful; because God prohibits it, and has taken away all real cause for it. Our God would have us calm and peaceful. Hence the sweet words of Jesus, "Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." We ought therefore, in this respect to differ from others. They have no precious promises to dispel fear. They have no present Savior to impart comfort. They have no sweet assurance that all things work together for their good.

We should keep the eye fixed on God, as our Father; our ear open to God, as a present help in trouble, speaking words of comfort to our souls; and our hearts sacred for God, who made them for himself, and claims them as his own. We should exercise confidence in God ...

- in trouble, who bids us to call on him and be delivered;
- in danger, who promises to keep us by his power;
- and in need, who engages to supply all our needs.

Beloved, let us fear God ...

- as Joseph did — and it will preserve us from sin;
- as Nehemiah did — and it will teach us self-denial; and
- as David did — and it will enable us to wait God's time for deliverance. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and his people have a place of refuge." If we fear God — we are sure of supplies, for "there is no lack to those who fear him." If we fear God we are sure of a friend, for "the eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear him, and his ears are open to their cry." If we fear God, all will be well, for "I know that it shall be well with those who fear God." "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man!"

## ON GODLY FEAR

Thomas Reade

Fear is a most powerful passion in the human breast. Its natural effect is painful; hence we instinctively fly from every thing which excites its agitating influence. Our minds are easily wrought upon by sensible objects, or imaginary evils; while those which are remote or unapprehended give us little concern.

If we receive the alarm of some approaching danger, how readily do we magnify the dreaded calamity beyond its real extent. Some people, indeed, are so bold and daring, that they seem to rise above the influence of every fear, and to face danger and even death in all its forms, with a coolness and intrepidity which are truly astonishing. Yet, in general, this natural passion operates in almost every case of serious apprehension but one, which of all others should awaken its sensibility.

We can fear almost any thing more than the wrath of God; and any event more than approaching death and judgment. Strange infatuation and obduracy! An unregenerate man will sit unmoved and unawed under the most awful displays of divine vengeance as exhibited in the preached word; while a slight shock of an earthquake, or the falling of a steeple, would cause him to start from his seat, and fly with fearful steps to some place of safety. Unbelief lies at the bottom of our indifference to eternal things; and is the true cause of that stupid unconcern, that fearless state of heart, which we manifest towards the infinitely important realities of a future world. There are, indeed, checks of natural conscience; but these are transient and seldom felt, except when our misconduct has sensibly affected our worldly prospects, our health, our reputation, or something of an earthly nature.

The immediate apprehension of death and judgment may appall the sinner, and awaken all his solitudes. Like Felix, the proud worldling sometimes feels an involuntary tremor, an inward misgiving of heart; but, like him, he labors to overcome the painful sensation, by removing, if possible, the cause of his uneasiness; "go your way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for you." Thus he goes on until death strikes the blow, and hurries him into the abyss of endless horrors.

Lord, deliver me from this most awful state. How distressing that my foolish heart should be so little affected by those rich displays of divine grace, and those tremendous exhibitions of divine wrath, which are revealed in the word of God. Blessed Lord! give me a stronger faith, that I may continually realize to my mind those great things which you have done, and still promise to do, for your believing people; and more solemn fear of those awful threatenings which you have denounced against thine enemies.

There is a fear, of which excellent things are spoken, and to which many precious promises are made. This holy fruit of the Spirit is peculiar to the children of God. It is one of the blessings of the new covenant, (Jer. xxxii, 49.) It is the beginning of wisdom, (Ps. iii, 10.) It tends to life, (Prov xix, 23.) In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, (Prov. xiv, 26.) "Happy, then, is the man who fears always;" who is in "the fear of the Lord all the day long." "The Lord's delight is in those who fear him." He has promised to look with peculiar favor to him who trembles at his word.

This heavenly grace is quite different from that slavish fear which tends to bondage. The fear which grace implants in the heart, harmonizes with love and joy. The first Christians, on whom the Spirit was poured in such rich effusion, walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. To such renewed souls the apostolic command is, "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." The admonition of the Savior is most impressive; "I will forewarn you whom you shall fear; fear him, which, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say unto you, fear him." The Scriptures abound with exhortations to this duty. The most solemn appeals are there made to the heart and conscience; while promises of the most delightful nature are given to those who walk humbly with their God.

It is characteristic of the wicked, that "there is no fear of God before his eyes." If; then, I would form a part of the assembly of the saints, I must daily seek by fervent prayer a reverential fear of God. "Let us have grace (says the apostle) whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire."

John saw a multitude of the heavenly host, "having the harps of God; and they sang the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying; Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are your ways, Oh king of saints. Who shall not fear you, Oh Lord, and glorify your name? for you are holy; for all nations shall come and worship before you."

I must cultivate a cautionary fear. "Let us fear," says Paul, "lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." "Do not be high-minded, but fear."

I must possess a filial fear, which, combined with love and obedience, forms that spirit of adoption, which is the sweetest evidence of admission into the family of God. For perfect love, while it casts out that servile fear which has torment, cherishes a holy fear of grieving the Spirit, wounding the Savior, and displeasing the Father of mercies.

Oh blessed Lord, give me this holy preservative against falling into sin; that, fearing you from a principle of filial, reverential love, I may go on steadily in the narrow way of faith and holiness, until I reach with joy and gladness the holy hill of Zion.

How happy is the humble soul,  
Who lives in holy fear;  
While troubles in succession roll,  
He feels the Savior near.  
While others climb the dangerous steep,  
And build their Babels high;  
He loves that lowly path to keep,  
Which leads him to the sky.  
Content with all his God bestows,  
He needs not wealth nor power;  
Perpetual blessing round him flows,  
Increasing every hour.  
Rich with the riches of his grace  
Who saved him by his blood;  
He views by faith the Savior's face,  
And knows that God is good.  
Through life's uneven path upheld,  
Preserved from every ill;  
He views at length the heavenly field,  
And reaches Zion's hill.  
Oh may I thus be sweetly blest,  
With humble souls below;  
Then enter the eternal rest,  
Where endless pleasures flow.

## **The fear of the LORD**

### **Derek Prince**

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. NIV Psalm 111:10

The psalmist there speaks about two wonderful qualities, qualities which are very rare amongst men and women today—the qualities of wisdom and understanding. The psalmist points out that each of these has a moral foundation. The foundation for

wisdom is the fear of the Lord; the foundation for understanding is following the Lord's precepts. So it's fear of the Lord, expressed in obedience, that is the key to true wisdom and true understanding.

We need to observe a distinction between wisdom and understanding on the one hand, and education and cleverness on the other. There are many educated, clever people who do not have wisdom or understanding. Cleverness is a matter of the mind, but wisdom goes deeper than that. It's possible to have high education and in many ways to be a fool. An American president once said that if a man is a thief and uneducated, he may steal a railroad car, but if you educate that man he'll steal the whole railroad!

So you see, cleverness and education are no substitute for the moral foundation of wisdom and understanding which are the fear of the Lord and obedience to His precepts.

## **Walking in Fear of the Lord**

### **Warren Wiersbe**

"The fear of our God" is not the servile dread of a slave toward a master but the loving respect of a child toward a parent. To fear the Lord means to seek to glorify God in everything we do. It means listening to His Word, honoring it, and obeying it. "The remarkable thing about fearing God," wrote Oswald Chambers, "is that when you fear God, you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else." Because Nehemiah's life was motivated by the fear of the Lord (Neh. 5:15), he did not fear what the enemy might do (vv. 14, 19). The fear of the Lord moved Nehemiah to be a faithful servant of the Lord.

To walk in the fear of God, of course, means to walk by faith, trusting God to deal with your enemies and one day balance the accounts. It means claiming Matthew 6:33 and having the right priorities in life. "The fear of the Lord leads to life, and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; he will not be visited with evil" (Prov. 19:23).

Christ says: "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33, niv).

### **Real Wisdom**

#### **Psalm 111:1-10**

We live in a world with a great deal of knowledge but not a great deal of wisdom. So-called smart people do stupid things. David tells us the secret of wisdom and understanding in Psalm 111. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever" (Psalm 111:10). Here we have three secrets of wisdom, and a person doesn't have to go through a university to learn them.

Fear God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." This is not the fear of a slave before an angry master. This is the reverence and respect of a loving child for a loving Father--showing respect for God, His Word, His presence and His will for our lives.

Obey Him. "A good understanding have all those that do His commandments." The Word of God is given to us not just to read and study but to obey. We are to be doers of the Word, not just auditors who sit in class and take notes. When we obey God, we begin to understand what He is doing. Obedience is the organ of spiritual understanding.

Praise Him. "His praise endures forever." Praise takes the selfishness out of our lives. It takes us away from idolatry, from living on substitutes.

The more we fear Him, the more we obey Him. The more we obey Him, the more we praise Him. These are the ingredients of a happy and successful life.

\* \* \*

The world's wisdom is based on faulty foundations. Genuine wisdom begins by fearing God. You increase your wisdom as you obey His Word and praise Him. As you walk with the Lord today, do so with the wisdom that comes from fearing Him.

### **One Legitimate Fear**

#### **Psalm 112:1-10**

Psychiatrists call the fear of certain things phobias. There are people who fear heights (acrophobia) and people who fear closed-in places (claustrophobia). There are people afraid of water, dogs and even other people. But there is one fear that drives out all other fears, and we find it in Psalm 112. "Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments" (Psalm 112:1).

All kinds of fears are taken care of if we fear the Lord. One is family fears. "His descendants will be mighty on earth; the generation of the upright will be blessed" (Psalm 112:2). Commit your children to Him and you won't have to worry about their lives.

Fear of the Lord also drives out financial fears. "Wealth and riches will be in his house" (Psalm 112:3). This doesn't mean we will all be millionaires. It means we'll always have what we need. If we fear the Lord, we can let go of our financial fears.

Some fear the dark. "Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness" (Psalm 112:4). Fear God and you'll always have light when you need it. You will have His guidance and direction.

Some fear the future and change. "Surely he will never be shaken; the righteous will be in everlasting remembrance" (Psalm 112:6). God says, "Don't be afraid of the changes that are going on around you or in you. I am the God of the universe. Fear Me, and I'll take care of the changes."

Finally, some people have a fear of bad news. But verse 7 reads, "He will not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord." No news is bad if you're walking in the will of God.

\* \* \*

When you fear the Lord, every other fear is conquered. Walk today in the fear of the Lord, trusting Him with your future. He will give you peace.

### **Fearing God and Delighting in God**

As we all know, the "fear of the Lord" isn't the servile terror of a slave before a cruel master; it's the awesome respect of creatures before the Creator and obedient children before the Father. The fear of the Lord balances our delight with the Lord so that we don't become so overly familiar with God Almighty that we forget "it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves" (Ps. 100:3). This balance is perfectly expressed in Psalm 2:11: "Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

The proper attitude for us is **fear of the Lord** (Eccl 3:14), which is not the cringing of a slave before a cruel master, but the submission of an obedient child to a loving parent. If we fear God, we need not fear anything else for He is in control.

Worship is the believers' response of all that they are—mind, emotions, will, and body—to what God is and says and does. This response has its mystical side in subjective experience and its practical side in objective obedience to God's revealed will. Worship is a loving response that's balanced by the **fear of the Lord**, and it is a deepening response as the believer comes to know God better.

The Bible's nature is perfect and pure. The Bible is called the fear of the Lord because we need a reverential, holy, awesome fear of God (Psalm 19:9).

### **We Must Walk in the Fear of the Lord**

The phrase "fear of the Lord" is found twenty-seven times in the Bible, fourteen of them in the Book of Proverbs alone. It is a key concept in biblical theology. I especially like the definition that Charles Bridges gives in his masterful exposition of Proverbs: "It is that affectionate reverence by which the child of God bends himself humbly to his Father's law." It is not a paralyzing fear that stuns us but an energizing fear that stimulates us and motivates us to seek to please the Lord in everything. If you want to understand the fear of the Lord, start by reading and obeying Proverbs 2:1–5. I suggest you pause right now and do it.

The fear of God must always be joined with the grace, love, and mercy of God. If we are honest with ourselves, we know what sinners we really are. That God should love us and in His mercy and grace save us is astounding. The longer we walk in the light, the easier it is for us to see the sinful blemishes in our lives and the more we realize how undeserving we are to be called the children of God. But there is another consequence. The more we see ourselves, the more we love the Lord and want to do everything to please Him. The fear of the Lord is not only a healthy fear of divine discipline but also a fear of missing the wonderful blessings God has prepared for us. I like the phrase "affectionate reverence" that Bridges used. Wrapped up in that word "affectionate" is our feeble understanding of the cross of Christ and the love that put Him there. He loved me! He gave Himself for me! Psalm 2:11 says it perfectly: "Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

"No one can know the true grace of God," said A. W. Tozer, "who has not known the fear of God." The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28–29).

### **OLD TESTAMENT WORDS FOR TODAY: FEAR**

You must not fear them, for the LORD your God Himself fights for you. DEUTERONOMY 3:22

When Moses spoke these words, he was reviewing for the new generation Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan. Their ancestors had defeated the two great kings, Sihon and Og (Deut. 2:26–3:11), and Moses used these triumphs to encourage Joshua to trust the Lord, go into the Promised Land, and conquer it. You and I aren't warring against great nations, but we do have to face "the rulers of the darkness of this age" (Eph. 6:12) as we claim our inheritance in Christ. We must not fear the enemy so much as our own failure to claim all that God has for us (Heb. 4:1–9). This means we must understand three kinds of fear.

There are normal fears that must energize us. Every child must be warned about the dangers involved in crossing the street, playing with electricity or knives, going into deep water, or swallowing poison. Fearing injury and death is normal, and when we are in dangerous situations, this fear energizes us to make changes and seek help. Frightened soldiers spread discouragement, and discouraged soldiers are not likely to win a war (Deut. 20:3–4, 8).

There are also abnormal fears that can paralyze us. My thesaurus lists four pages of phobias, with four columns of phobias on each page! My dictionary defines a phobia as "an exaggerated, usually inexplicable and illogical fear of a particular object, class of objects, or situation." If you are afraid of bathing, you have ablutophobia, but if you are afraid of dirt, you have mysophobia. Some people have lachanophobia, which is fear of vegetables, but even more suffer from acrophobia, the dread of high places.

But there is a fear that stabilizes us that every believer must cultivate, and that's the fear of the Lord; for the fear of the Lord is the fear that cancels every other fear. "Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who delights greatly in His commandments" (Ps. 112:1). Read that entire psalm and you will discover that the fear of the Lord cancels our fears about our family (v. 2), poverty (v. 3), darkness (v. 4), dumb decisions (v. 5), and a host of other fears.

To fear the Lord does not mean to cringe and crawl for fear our Father will destroy us, but to practice loving respect and joyful obedience toward our heavenly Father because we love him and want to please him. Because of who God is, what his character is, and what his authority is over us, we must respect him and obey him. A. W. Tozer wrote in *The Root of the Righteous*, "No one can know the true grace of God who has not first known the fear of God." Once we know the fear of God, we need not fear the enemy; for the Lord will be fighting for us!

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7). Knowledge is a grasp of the facts of the world, but wisdom is knowing how to use those facts to do God's will and glorify his name. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10). Our greatest enemy is our ignorance of spiritual wisdom as found in the Word of God.

He will bless those who fear the LORD. Psalm 115:13

## The Fear of the Lord

### Charles Stanley

#### **Psalm 112:1-9**

As we saw yesterday, the fear of the Lord does not have to do with terror or trepidation, but rather refers to appropriate awe and reverence for who God is. It is a quality that we as Christians should seek and nurture. Though we don't hear the expression often enough today, it should still be a great compliment to be known as a God-fearing man or woman.

To fear God produces all manner of fruit in the Christian's life. It leads to our hating evil as God does, and the Bible also tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (Psalm 111:10) The more we acquire divine understanding, the greater will be our love for the Bible and God's commandments.

In addition to all these assets, we find that the person who learns to fear God will have a strong family (v. 2), with children who grow to be courageous for the truth.

God-fearing people also find that "light arises in the darkness for the upright." (v. 4) This doesn't mean that we will never have dark times or periods of distress in the valley - we will have trials, headaches, and tears like the rest of mankind. But in our hardships, we are promised the light that comes from God's angels of deliverance. These protective messengers encamp around those who fear the Lord. They surround believers above and beneath so that nothing can get at you without divine permission. Ask God to help you have a proper, reverential fear of Him. It is a request He will be pleased to honor.

#### **Proverbs 8:13**

People are oftentimes confused by talk that has to do with fearing God. On the one hand, the Scriptures admonishes us to fear the Lord, but at the same time, we are told that God has not given us a spirit of fear. So how are we to understand this phrase?

Fearing God does not mean always looking over your shoulder in anxiety to see what He will do next. The fear of the Lord is something positive and healthy that is clearly defined in several different scriptures. A particularly helpful one is Proverbs 8:13, where we are told that "the fear of the Lord is to hate evil."

Many people are bothered by the thought of hating anything. Yet God says we are to hate evil because He Himself hates it in all of its forms. He abhors it because He clearly sees its corrupting and destructive influence. We often fail to see any corruption at all. In fact, we sometimes look at evil and think that it's not really too bad.

Satan's job is to camouflage wickedness until it appears quite innocent or even attractive. The Enemy is so successful in his deception that we often fall into his snares with out any compunction. That is why we must learn to view things as the Lord sees them. We need to develop such a holy hatred for iniquity that we shun and refuse it at every turn. When we get God's view of transgression, the Devil will be stymied in his efforts to seduce us. Although it may not be a popular stance, we can choose to love the Lord and to hate evil.

## **The Fear Of The Lord**

### **Andrew Murray**

"Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid" Psalm 102:1,7,8.

"So the Church, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied" Acts 9:31.

The Scriptures use the word "fear" in a twofold way. In some places it speaks of "fear" as something wrong and sinful, and in the strongest terms it forbids us to "fear."<sup>1</sup> The word occurs in almost one hundred places--"Fear not." In many other places, on the contrary, fear is praised as one of the surest signs of true godliness, acceptable to the Lord, and full of His blessing for us.<sup>2</sup> The people of God bear the name--those who fear the Lord. The distinction between these two lies in this simple fact--the one is unbelieving fear, the other is believing.

Where fear is found connected with lack of trust in God, there it is sinful and very hurtful.<sup>3</sup> The fear, on the other hand, that is coupled with trust and hope in God is, for the spiritual life, entirely indispensable. The fear that man has for what is worldly is condemned. The fear that with childlike confidence and love honours the Father is commanded.<sup>4</sup> It is the believing fear of the Lord--not as a slave, but as a child--that the Scriptures present as a source of blessing and power. He who fears the Lord will fear nothing else. The fear of the Lord will be the beginning of all wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the sure way to the enjoyment of God's favour and protection.<sup>5</sup>

There are some Christians who, by their upbringing, are led into the reverent fear of the Lord even before they come to faith. This is a very great blessing. Parents can give a child no greater blessing than to bring him up in the fear of the Lord. When those who are thus brought up are brought to faith, they have a great advantage. They are, as it were, prepared to walk in the joy of the Lord. When, on the contrary, others that have not had this preparation come to conversion, they need special teaching and vigilance, in order to pray for and awaken this holy fear.

This fear is composed of many great elements. The principal are the following:

Holy reverence and awe before the glorious majesty of God and before His almighty holiness. These guard against the superficiality that forgets who God is and takes no pains to honour Him as God.

Deep humility that is afraid of itself, and couples deep confidence in God with an entire distrust in itself. Conscious weakness that knows the subtlety of its own heart always dreads doing anything contrary to the will or honour of God. But just because he fears God, such a believer firmly depends on Him for protection. And this same humility inspires him in all his dealings with his fellow men.

Cautiousness or vigilance. With holy forethought, it seeks to know the correct path, to watch against the enemy, and to guard against all frivolity or hastiness in speech, resolve, and conduct.<sup>8</sup>

Holy zeal and courage in watching and striving. The fear of displeasing the Lord by not conducting one's self as His servant in all things encourages faithfulness in that which is least expected. The fear of the Lord takes away all other fear and gives inconceivable courage in the certainty of victory.<sup>9</sup>



And out of this reverent fear is then born joy. "Rejoice with trembling" (Psalm 2:11). The fear of the Lord gives joy its depth and stability. Fear is the root, joy is the fruit. The deeper this fear, the higher the joy. On this account, it is said, "Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him" (Psalm 22:23). "Ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord" (Psalm 135:20).

Young disciples of Christ, hear the voice of your Father. "Fear the Lord, ye His saints." Let reverent fear of the Lord, and dread of all that might displease or grieve Him, fill you. Then you will never have to fear any evil. He who fears the Lord and seeks to do all that pleases Him, for him God will also do all that he desires. The childlike, believing fear of God will lead you into the love and joy of God, while slavish, unbelieving, cowardly fear is utterly cast out.

O God, unite my heart for the reverent fear of Your name. May I always be among those who fear the Lord, and who hope in His mercy. Amen

## **Humility and the Fear of the Lord**

### **Bob Hoekstra**

By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches and honor and life ... with the humble is wisdom ... The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. (Proverbs 22:4; 11:2; and 9:10)

Many of our previous meditations have clearly demonstrated that walking in humility is the pathway for living by the grace of God. "God ... gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). In our present verses, we see that humility and the fear of the Lord are related.

Humility and the fear of the Lord result in the same blessings. "By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches and honor and life." The closing trio ("riches and honor and life") are an Old Testament description of a life that is fully blessed by God. The New Testament counterpart would be fullness of spiritual life. "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Humility and the fear of the Lord also result in wisdom. "With the humble is wisdom ... The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."

Humility is the candid acknowledgment of our absolute need for the Lord to work comprehensively in our lives day by day. The fear of the Lord is respect and reverence toward our great God. It is not a fear involving terror or apprehension. Rather, it is based upon profound admiration and dependent devotion.

Those who humbly fear the Lord (by placing their admiration and devotion in Him) also embrace His perspectives and values. They develop a hatred for the things that He hates. "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate" (Proverbs 8:13). Correspondingly, those who have respect and reverence for the Lord develop a love for all that He loves. The Lord loves for His people to walk in righteousness and justice. "The LORD loves the righteous ... the LORD loves justice" (Psalm 146:8 and 37:28). The Lord loves Israel, His chosen nation. "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples" (Deuteronomy 7:7). The Lord loves His church, the children of God. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1). The Lord loves the world, those who need to know Him. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Lord God almighty, I humbly bow before You, acknowledging my absolute need for You to work comprehensively in my life day by day. I want to walk in the fear of the Lord, placing my admiration and devotion in You. I want to hate all that You hate and love all that You love, in Jesus name, Amen.

## **"The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"**

### **A. W. Pink**

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 1:7). Happy the soul that has been awed by a view of God's majesty, that has had a vision of God's awful greatness, His ineffable holiness, His perfect righteousness, His irresistible power, His sovereign grace. Does someone say, "But it is only the unsaved, those outside of Christ, who need to fear God"? Then the sufficient answer is that the saved, those who are in Christ, are admonished to work out their own salvation with "fear and trembling." Time was when it was the general custom to speak of a believer as a "God-fearing man." That such an appellation has become nearly extinct only serves to show whither we have drifted. Nevertheless, it still stands written, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" (Psalm 103:13).



When we speak of godly fear, of course we do not mean a servile fear, such as prevails among the heathen in connection with their gods. No, we mean that spirit which Jehovah is pledged to bless, that spirit to which the prophet referred when he said, "To this man will I (the Lord) look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. 66:2). It was this the apostle had in view when he wrote, "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Pet: 2:17). And nothing will foster this godly fear like a recognition of the Sovereign Majesty of God.

## **The Worth of Wisdom, and the Fear of the Lord**

**William Arnot**

"Receive my instruction, and not silver: and knowledge rather than choice gold." ... "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil."—Pr 8:10, 13.

IT is not necessary to inquire whether the wisdom that cries here be an attribute of God, or the person of Emmanuel. We may safely take it for both, or either. The wisdom of God is manifested in Christ, and Christ is the wisdom of God manifested. The cry, concentrated in the Scriptures, and issuing forth through manifold providential ministries, is public, "She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city;" impartial, "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men;" perspicuous, "They are plain to him that understandeth."

The very first warning uttered by this wisdom from above is the repetition of a former word, "Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold." The repetition is not vain. Another stroke so soon on the same place indicates that He who strikes feels a peculiar hardness there. The love of money is a root of evil against which the Bible mercifully deals many a blow. There lies one of our deepest sores: thanks be to God for touching it with "line upon line" of his healing word. When a man is pursuing a favourite object with his whole heart, it is irksome to hear a warner's word continually dropping on his unwilling ear, telling that the choice is foolish. A father who is merely fond will discontinue the warning, that he may not displease his wilful child. Not so our Father in heaven. He is wisdom as well as love. He wields the same sharp word until it pierce the conscience and turn the course. It is only while you kick against this warning that it pricks you: when you obey it, you will find it very good.

A ship bearing a hundred emigrants has been driven from her course, and wrecked on a desert island far from the tracks of men. The passengers get safe ashore with all their stores. They know not a way of escape; but they possess the means of subsistence. An ocean unvisited by ordinary voyagers circles round their prison, but they have seed, with a rich soil to receive, and a genial climate to ripen it. Ere any plan has been laid, or any operation begun, an exploring party returns to head-quarters reporting the discovery of a gold mine; thither instantly the whole company resort to dig. They labour successfully day by day, and month after month; they acquire and accumulate heaps of gold. The people are quickly becoming rich; but the spring is past, and not a field has been cleared, not a grain of seed committed to the ground. The summer comes, and their wealth increases, but the store of food is small. In harvest they begin to discover that their heaps of gold are worthless. A cart-load of it cannot satisfy a hungry child. When famine stares them in the face, a suspicion shoots across their fainting hearts that the gold has cheated them; and they begin to loathe the bright betrayer. They rush to the woods, fell the trees, dig out the roots, till the ground, and sow the seed. Alas, it is too late! Winter has come, and their seed rots in the soil. They die of want in the midst of their treasures.

This earth is the little isle, and eternity the ocean round it. On this shore we have been cast, like shipwrecked sailors. There is a living seed; there is an auspicious spring-time: the sower may eat and live. But gold mines attract us: we spend our spring there—our summer there: winter overtakes us toiling there, with heaps of hoarded dust, but destitute of the bread of life. Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! Seek first the kingdom of God, and let wealth come or go in its wake. He who, in the market of a busy world, gains money and loses his soul, will rue his bargain where he cannot cast it.

He formally defines here the fear of the Lord. The definition is needful, for the subject is often grievously misunderstood. I know not an emotion more general among men than terror of future retribution under a present sense of guilt. To vast multitudes of men, this life is embittered by the fear of wrath in the next. To dread the punishment of sin seems to be the main feature in that religion which under many forms springs native in the human heart. This is the mainspring which sets and keeps all the machinery of superstition going. It was a maxim of heathen antiquity that "Fear made God." It is chiefly by the dread of punishment that an alienated human heart is compelled in any measure to realize the existence of the Divine Being. In proportion as that terror is diminished by a process of spiritual induration, the very idea of God fades away from the mind.

To fear retribution is not to hate sin; in most cases it is to love it with the whole heart. It is a solemn suggestion that even the religion of dark, unrenewed men is in its essence a love of their own sins. Instead of hating sin themselves, their grand regret is that God hates it. If they could be convinced that the Judge would regard it as lightly as the culprit, the fear would collapse like steam under cold water, and all the religious machinery which it drove would stand still.

All the false religions that have ever desolated the earth are sparks from the collision of these two hard opposites—God's hate of sin, and man's love of it. As they strike in the varied evolutions of life, strange fires flash from the point of contact—fires that consume costly and cruel sacrifices. In Christ only may this sore derangement be healed. It is when sin is forgiven that a sinner can hate it. Then is he on God's side. The two are agreed, and "He is our peace" who hath taken away sin by one sacrifice. Instead of hating God for his holiness, the forgiven man instinctively loathes the evil of his own heart, and looks with longing for the day when all things in it shall be made new. Such is the blessed fruit of pardon when it comes to a sinner through the blood of Christ.

## **The Root of Knowledge**

### **William Arnot**

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."—Pr 1:7.

THE royal preacher begins his sermon at the beginning. He intends to discourse largely of knowledge and wisdom in all their aspects, and he lays his foundation deep in "the fear of the Lord." This brief announcement contains the germ of a far-reaching philosophy. Already it marks the book divine. The heathen of those days possessed no such doctrines. Solomon had access to a Teacher who was not known in their schools.

"The fear of the Lord" is an expression of frequent occurrence throughout the Scriptures. It has various shades of meaning, marked by the circumstances in which it is found; but in the main it implies a right state of heart toward God, as opposed to the alienation of an unconverted man. Though the word is "fear," it does not exclude a filial confidence, and a conscious peace. There may be such love as shall cast all the torment out of the fear, and yet leave full bodied, in a human heart, the reverential awe which creatures owe to the Highest One. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." "Oh, fear the Lord, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him!" "I am the Lord thy God;" behold the ground of submissive reverence: "which brought thee up from the land of Egypt;" behold the source of confiding love. What God is inspires awe; what God has done for his people commands affection. See here the centrifugal and centripetal forces of the moral world, holding the creature reverently distant from the Creator, yet compassing the child about with everlasting love, to keep him near a Father in heaven. The whole of this complicated and reciprocal relation is often indicated in Scripture by the brief expression, "The fear of God."

"Knowledge" and "wisdom" are not distinguished here; at least they are not contrasted. Both terms may be employed to designate the same thing; but when they are placed in antithesis, wisdom is the nobler of the two. Knowledge may be possessed in large measure by one who is destitute of wisdom, and who consequently does no good by his attainments, either to himself or his neighbours. A lucid definition of both, in their specific and distinct applications, is embodied in a proverb of this book, 15:2, "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright." The two terms taken together indicate, in this text, The best knowledge wisely used for the highest ends.

What is the relation which subsists between the fear of the Lord and true wisdom? The one is the foundation, the other the imposed superstructure; the one is the sustaining root, the other the sustained branches; the one is the living fountain, the other the issuing stream.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: the meaning is, he who does not reverentially trust in God, knows nothing yet as he ought to know. His knowledge is partial and distorted. Whatever acquisitions in science he may attain, if his heart depart from the living God, he abides an ignorant man. He who in his heart says "No God," is a fool, however wise he may be in the estimation of the world, and his own.

But how does this judgment accord with facts? Have not some Atheists, or at least Infidels, reached the very highest attainments in various departments of knowledge? It is true that some men, who remain willingly ignorant of God, who even blaspheme his name and despise his word, have learned many languages, have acquired skill in the theory and application of mathematics, have stored their memories with the facts of history, and the maxims of politics—this is true, and these branches of knowledge are not less precious because they are possessed by men whose whole life turns round on the pivot of one central and all-pervading error; but after this concession, our position remains intact. These men possess some fragments of the superstructure of knowledge, but they have not the foundation; they possess some of the branches, but they have missed the root.

The knowledge of God—his character and plans, his hatred of sin, his law of holiness, his way of mercy—is more excellent than all that an unbelieving philosopher has attained. If it be attainable, and if a Christian has reached it, then is a Christian peasant wiser than the wisest who know not God. It is a knowledge more deeply laid, more difficult of attainment, more fruitful, and more comprehensive, than all that philosophers know.

What right has an unbelieving astronomer to despise a Christian labourer as an ignorant man? Let them be compared as to the point in question, the possession of knowledge. Either is ignorant of the other's peculiar department, but it is an error to suppose the

astronomer's department the higher of the two. The Christian knows God; the astronomer knows certain of his material works. The Christian knows moral, the astronomer physical laws. The subjects of the Christian's knowledge are as real as the heavenly bodies. The knowledge is as difficult, and perhaps, in its higher degrees, as rare. It reaches further, it lasts longer, it produces greater results. The astronomer knows the planet's path; but if that planet should burst its bonds, and wander into darkness, his knowledge will not avail to cast a line around the prodigal and lead him home. He can mark the degrees of divergence, and predict the period of total loss, but after that he has no more that he can do. The Christian's knowledge, after it has detected the time, manner, and extent of the fallen spirit's aberration, avails further to lay a new bond unseen around him, soft, yet strong, which will compel him to come in again to his Father's house and his Father's bosom. The man who knows that, as sin hath reigned unto death, even so grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord, possesses a deeper, more glorious, and more potential knowledge than the man who calculates the courses of the planets, and predicts the period of the comet's return.

Men speak of the stupendous effects which knowledge, in the department of mechanical philosophy, has produced on the face of the world, and in the economy of human life; but the permanence of these acquisitions depends on the authority of moral laws in the consciences of men. If there were no fear of God, there would be no reverence for moral law in the bulk of mankind. If moral restraints are removed from the multitude, society reverts to a savage state. Inventions in art, though once attained, are again lost, when a community feed on venison, and clothe themselves with skins. So, "the fear of the Lord" is a fundamental necessity, on which high attainments, even in material prosperity, absolutely depend. True knowledge in the spiritual department, as to the authority, the sanction, and the rule of morality, is a greater thing than true knowledge in the material department, for the moral encircles and controls the economic in the affairs of men.

The man whose knowledge begins and ends with matter and its laws, has got a superstructure without a foundation. In that learning the enduring relations of man as an immortal have no place, and the fabric topples over when the breath of life goes out. But this beginning of knowledge, resting on the being and attributes of God, and comprehending all the relations of the creature, is a foundation that cannot be shaken. On that solid base more and more knowledge will be reared, high as heaven, wide as the universe, lasting as eternity.

The knowledge of God is the root of knowledge. When branches are cut from a tree and laid on the ground at a certain season, they retain for a time a portion of their sap. I have seen such branches, when the spring came round, pushing forth buds like their neighbours. But very soon the slender stock of sap was exhausted, and as there was no connection with a root, so as to procure a new supply, the buds withered away. How unlike the buds that spring from the branches growing in the living root! This natural life is like a severed branch. The knowledge that springs from it is a bud put forth by the moisture residing in itself. When life passes, it withers away. When a human soul is, by the regeneration, "rooted in Him," the body's dissolution does not nip its knowledge in the bud. Transplanted into a more genial clime, that knowledge will flourish for ever. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, what it will grow to.

## **Mercy and Truth** **William Arnot**

"By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil"—Pr 16:6.

This purging of iniquity is the first and great constituent of the gospel; and the second, which is like unto it, is, Let the pardoned depart from evil. Only "by the fear of the Lord" can this command be obeyed. In preceding expositions we have pointed out that the fear of the Lord means the mingled awe and confidence of a dear child. Fear of the Lord is a very different thing from fright at the Lord. The reverential love which keeps you near tends to practical holiness; but the terror which drives you to a distance permits you to wallow there in everything that is unclean.

The fear which produces obedience is generated by mercy and truth united in the manifested character of God. Mercy without truth would beget presumption: truth without mercy would beget despair. The one manifestation would not touch the conscience of the transgressor, and therefore he would not obey; the other manifestation would crush him so that he could not. It is by the fear of him who is at once a just God and a Saviour that men depart from evil. The emotion that fills a disciple's heart is, like the atmosphere, composed mainly of two great elements in combination. These are love and hate. Together in due proportion they constitute the atmosphere of heaven, and supply vital breath to believers on the earth. Love of the Saviour who forgives his sin, and hatred of the sin that crucified his Saviour,—these two, in one rich and well-proportioned amalgam, make up the vital element of saints. Separated they cannot be: to dissolve their union is to change their essence. As well might one of the atmosphere's constituent gases sustain the life of a man as one of these emotions satisfy a saved sinner. The separation indeed is impossible,—perhaps we should say inconceivable. Hatred of sin is but the lower side of love to the Saviour, and love to the Saviour is but the upper side of hatred to sin. In the new nature there is a twofold strain or leaning, acting constantly like an instinct, although much impeded in its exercise,—a strain or bent of heart towards the Lord and away from sin. They who are near to God depart from evil; and they who really depart from evil draw near to God. The man in the Gospel (Luke 12:45) "said in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming;" and then began in

his practice to “beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken.” At the two extremities stand the “Lord” and “evil;” in the midst, this man. He cannot move nearer this side without departing further from that. If he draw near the Lord, he will depart from evil: if he draw near to evil, he must put the Lord far away. When a man determines on a course of actual transgression, he puts God out of all his thoughts: when he desires to escape the snares of Satan, he must walk closely with God. A people near to him is a people far from wickedness: a people far from wickedness is a people near to him. Absolutely and in origin, there is none good save one, and that is God: comparatively among men, the more godly, the more good. In their course over a parched land, those streams continue longest full which maintain unimpeded their union to the fountain. Our goodness will dissipate before temptation like the morning dew before the sun, unless we be found in him and getting out of his fulness.

## **The Place of Refuge** **William Arnot**

“In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence; and his children shall have a place of refuge.”—Pr 14:26.

FEAR is confidence: the words sound strangely. They are like that blessed paradox of Paul, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” They are strange indeed, but true: to fear God aright is to be delivered from all fear. “His salvation his nigh them that fear him:” to have such a neighbour is strong consolation to a human spirit in this howling wilderness. The fear which brings a sinner submissive and trustful to the sacrifice and righteousness of the Substitute is itself a confidence. The great and terrible God becomes the “dwelling-rock” of the fugitive. Those who went early to the sepulchre and looked into the empty grave where the Lord lay, departed from the place with “fear and great joy.” A human soul, made at first in God’s image, has great capacity still; in that large place fear and great joy can dwell together. There are different kinds of fear; there is a fear that “hath torment,” and perfect love, when it comes, casts that kind out (1 John 4:18). Like fire and water, these two cannot agree. The fear that hath torment by its very nature keeps or casts out confidence from a human heart; but the filial fear of the dear children may be known by this, that it takes in beside itself a great joy, and the two brethren dwell together in unity. When the fear of God, which a sinner feels, is plunged in redeeming love, the torment is discharged, and confidence comes in its stead.

“His children shall have a place of refuge.” God is their refuge and their strength: they will not fear though the earth be removed. They “are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (1 Pet. 1:5).

There are two keepings very diverse from each other, and yet alike in this, that both employ as their instruments strong walls and barred gates. Great harm accrues from confounding them; and therefore the distinction should be made, and kept clear. Gates and bars may be closed around you for the purpose of keeping you in, or of keeping your enemy out;—the one is a prison, the other a fortress. In construction and appearance the two places are in many respects similar. The walls are in both cases high, and the bars strong. In both it is essential that the guards be watchful and trusty. But they differ in this,—the prison is constructed with a view to prevent escape from within; the fortress to defy assault from without. In their design and use they are exact contraries: the one makes sure the bondage, the other the liberty, of its inmates. In both cases it is a keep, and in both the keep is strong,—the one is strong to keep the prisoner in, the other strong to keep the enemy out.

The fear of the Lord to those who are within, and have tasted of his grace, is the strong confidence of a fortress to defend them from every foe; to those who look at it from without, it often seems a frowning prison that will close out the sunlight from all who go within its portals, and waste young life away in mouldy dungeons. Mistakes are common on this point, and these mistakes are disastrous.

Life to the Christian is a warfare, all the way. He is safe, but his safety is not the peace of home; it is the protection of a strong tower in the presence of enemies. The children of the kingdom are safe though weak; not because none seek their hurt, but because greater is He that is for them than all that are against them. This is the condition of all who have turned to the Lord, and have not yet entered into rest. They are out of the kingdom of darkness, but have not reached the presence of God. In all this middle region they are safe, but their safety cometh from the Lord.

Danger surrounds them: but they are kept in safety. Before they were converted they did not desire this keeping; when they are glorified they will not need it. But in all this passage through the wilderness, after they have burst forth from Egypt, and before they have reached the promised land, “His children” need and get “a place of refuge.”

This is their best estate on earth, His children though they be. It is good to know precisely what we have a right to expect. If we carelessly count on advantages which have not been promised, and not provided for us, we shall be thrown off our guard, and suffer loss. The utmost request that Jesus made for his disciples was, not that they should be taken out of the world, but kept from the evil (John 17:15). This, therefore, is the utmost that will be given. Enemies swarm around—His children are feeble; the safety provided is confidence in Himself, the strong tower into which the righteous run.

But often a trembling fugitive mistakes the fortress for a prison, and refuses to go in. A single soldier in an enemy’s country is crossing the plain in haste, and making towards a castle whose battlements appear in relief on the distant sky. A man, who appears

a native of the place, joins him from a bypath, and asks with apparent kindness whither he is going. To yonder fortress, says the soldier, where my Sovereign's army lies in strength. The stranger, under pretence of friendship, endeavours to persuade him that it is a prison. He is an emissary of the enemy, sent to detain the fugitive until it be too late, and then cut him off. In this way many are turned back from the place of refuge after they seemed to have turned their faces thitherwards. Agents of the enemy, under various disguises, join themselves to the young, and insinuate that to be seriously religious is to throw their liberty away. Multitudes, whom no man can number, are thus cheated and lost. They would like to be safe, but cannot consent to go into a dungeon yet. When they grow old, and the appetite for pleasure is comparatively weak, they think they can submit to the sombre shade of those towers where the regenerate have taken refuge; but as yet they love life too well to plunge into a living death.

A little religion is a painful thing. It destroys one pleasure, and supplies no other in its stead. In this land of light and of privilege, many go as far forward in a religious profession as to embitter the joy of the world; few seem to advance far enough in the "new and living way" to reach a refuge in the joy of the Lord. Safety lies in drawing near to God; and the distinguishing mark of an unbelieving heart is that it departs from Him. If the fortress were some pile of self-righteousness, or even a huge, unshapely heap of penances and fastings, men with their corruption all about them would be content to take shelter there; but since the offered resting-place is under the eye, and even in the bosom, of the Holiest, they will not and cannot go in, unless they are made willing to put off the old nature and leave it behind. "His children shall have a place of refuge;" and the refuge is such that only the children count it a boon. The Great Teacher told Nicodemus first about seeing the kingdom of God, and next about entering it (John 3:3, 5). No man will go into the kingdom until he has some spiritual perception of what it is. Though the Refuge is provided, and the gate standing open, and the invitation free, poor wanderers stand shivering without, because a suspicion clings to the guilty conscience, that the "strong tower," offered as a safe dwelling-place, will turn out to be a place of confinement from genial society and human joys. We must take up Philip's simple prayer, "Lord, show us the Father:" if the prodigal could know the Father's love, he would arise and go to the Father's bosom.

## PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

### Psalm 25:14

C H Spurgeon

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"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant."—Psalm 25:14.

THIS text is a great deep, but at the outset we must say that we have neither the time nor the skill at this time to attempt to fathom it. Our business just now is not so much to dive into its profound mystery, as to skim over its sparkling surface, to touch it with our wing as the swallow sometimes does the brook, leaving its soundings still unexplored. The current of thought here is too deep and too broad for the short meditation of a week-day evening. But where the very surface is rich, as it were, with "dust of gold," we cannot fail, if God the Holy Spirit bless us, to be enriched by even the superficial reflections we may gather up from it.

**"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."** Mark the word used—**"THE LORD"**—Jehovah in the original;—the I AM THAT I AM. The very name is associated in the thought of every right-minded person with awe. Is it not the name of the one only living and true God; and none that take it in vain shall be held guiltless? The gods of the heathen are no gods, but our God made the heavens. It is by him that the heavens were outstretched as a curtain, and as a tent to dwell in. He is the Preserver of all things. In him "we live, and move, and have our being." As we find him manifested, both in the book of Nature and in the book of Revelation he is a God "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." The Lord is a good God, and we cannot think of him without awe. If you have ever heard his voice in pealing thunder or the rolling avalanche, or if you have seen the flashing of his spear in the lightning of the tempest, or if you have marked his going upon the mighty waves of the tempestuous sea, you must have felt within yourselves that he is high and mighty—in truth, a terrible God! Yet it seems from our text that there are some persons in the world in whom all emotions of dread in connection with God are suppressed by feelings of quite another kind. Though clouds and darkness are round about him, they have evidently passed through the clouds, and have come to the other side of the darkness, for "the secret of the Lord is with them." Before him goes the pestilence, and hot burning coals are cast forth at his feet; but these persons must evidently have been preserved from the devouring pestilence by some mysterious power, and have escaped those burning coals by some gracious deliverance. They have come into familiarity with God; they know his secret, and he shows to them what he does not make known to other men, his covenant, the counsel of his will. There are such persons in the world now, to whom the Eternal Majesty is so tempered by Infinite Mercy that they can devoutly sing:—

The God who rules on high,  
And thunders when he please,  
Who rides upon the stormy skies,  
And manages the seas.

This awful God is ours,  
Our Father and our Love;  
He shall send down his heavenly powers  
To carry us above.

Think of “**the Lord**,” then, according to this grand revelation of his name—Jehovah. Oh! that your thoughts of him might bow you down with the lowly worship of the bright cherubim, and make you veil your faces as they do! Oh! that you might be led to feel how great God is, and how little you are! Oh! that grace were now given you to draw near to God, and that the passage on which we have alighted might become a place of communion with him.

Observe, then, first of all, a glorious privilege which may be possessed; secondly, a favoured class of people who do possess it; and thirdly, a choice and peculiar manifestation which God makes to them.

### **I. THERE IS A GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE WHICH MAY BE POSSESSED.**

The word “**secret**” here might, with greater propriety, be translated “friendship.” “The friendship of the Lord is with them that fear him,” but it also signifies in its root that conversation which familiar friends hold with each other. Conversation in its most cherished exercise, that homely intercourse which springs from mutual confidence, and is on the part of one man the unbosoming of himself to another, is thus implied. If I may open it up in a phrase, it means, “The amity of true friendship.” Such is the favour vouchsafed to those who fear God. But taking the word as it stands (for I dare say the translators weighed all these variations well before they chose the one before us), we will endeavour to give amplitude to the sense, while we keep to the word “secret.”

Beyond a doubt, then, those who fear God have the secret of his presence revealed to them. If a man rambles amidst the wonders of nature with an atheistic heart, he may look up to the snowy peaks, and down again upon the sweet grassy slopes; he may listen to the music of the waterfall; he may stand and admire the eagle as he soars aloft, or watch the wild goat as he leaps from crag to crag, and all these things may be to him but so much animated nature—matter in so many various shapes, and nothing more. I suppose it is possible for men to be familiar with all that is beautiful and sublime in the world of nature, that “living visible garment of God,” and yet never catch the secret of his presence, the traces of his handiwork, or the whisper of his voice. How different it is with the man who fears God, who has bowed before God’s justice, and seen it satisfied through the atoning sacrifice of Calvary! Such a man, as he looks upon the things that are made, those silent witnesses of the eternal power and Godhead, says, “My Father made them all!”

“Not hear God?” saith he; “I as distinctly heard God speak in the thunder-clap, as I have heard my own father’s voice!” Not see God? Why, the veil seems thin that hides his glorious features, while the works shine transparent that unveil his wondrous attributes; so that to the Christian it becomes a moral phenomenon that there should be people in the world who can survey the gorgeous plan, the unfailing order, and the ample furniture, as it were, of this earth, with its wonderful adaptation of the means to the end, and then peer upwards to the heavens so grandly garnished, and contemplate the celestial bodies, ever restless, ever orderly in their motions, yet fail to apprehend the greatness, the wisdom, the goodness of the Creator. To us he is apparent everywhere:—

These are thy works, Father of good, Almighty!  
Thine this universal frame!

He knows, he feels that, fallen as he is, he can, while walking through this world, commune with God, as Adam did ere Paradise to him was lost. The secret of God’s presence is with them that fear him. We have heard of some who have said that they have never had any consciousness of the existence of spirit. Very likely; very likely. I do not suppose, either that pigs or asses, or any dumb driven cattle, ever had any spiritual apprehensions. But some of us have a very clear consciousness thereof, and, as honest men giving testimony, we claim to be believed. Nay, what is more, we are certain that we have not only a consciousness of the existence of spirit, but of a great and all-pervading Spirit we have a like clear knowledge. We cannot be mistaken about it. We are as sure that there is a God as we are that there is a world; nay, sometimes more persuaded of the one than of the other. It is a part of our real consciousness. We have come to feel it, not merely in our imaginative moods, but when all our faculties were in full play; the secret of the existence of the pervading presence of God is with us if we fear him. Nay, it is not only in the open fields, amidst the enchanting scenery of the world, but much more in shady nooks and secluded places that we have found that Presence. Some months ago, I sat by the side of a woman who had not left her bed for several years. It was in a sloping room at the top of a cottage; the only walls were just the plastering that roofed it in. The room was hung round with texts of Scripture, which she had painted as she had been lying there. She was always full of pain; restless nights and weary days were her constant lot. When I sat down to talk



to her, she said, "You cannot tell how the presence of God has made this room seem to me, sir! It has been such a palace that I have not envied kings upon their thrones when I have enjoyed the visits of Christ here. Though I have not known a wakeful hour free from pain for years, I assure you this chamber has been a very heaven to me." She was not an excitable, hysterical, silly, weak-minded woman. Far from that, she was as simple and sincere a creature as you might have found in fifty miles' walk. The daughter of an honest, smock-frocked labourer, and his quiet, godly wife. There was this poor woman declaring that God was ever in her room. As I talked with her, I began to feel that her witness was true, and to think that I had not felt more conscious of the presence of the Almighty among the baseless, boundless mountains, or upon the watery plain of the vast ocean, where mighty waves in ceaseless concert roll, or even in the midst of the vast congregation, when on the Sabbath our solemn hymns, the outflow of feeling hearts, have swelled to heaven with music such as pleases well the ear of God. Thus I did then perceive the mysterious secret of his presence when I lingered by the lowly couch of his suffering saint. Why, had some sceptic called in there, and merely suggested that "there is no God," we should have laughed him to scorn; or else, peradventure, our pity for this ignorance might have turned our laughter into tears. Truly the secret of God's presence everywhere is with them that fear him. They trust him, they love him, they lean upon him, and they get to feel that he is, and they have communion with him as a man communeth with his friend.

And this secret of God's presence leads to the discerning of his hand. To the man who looks no higher than second causes, things that baffle his shallow wits like a continued drought in spring, or unintermitting rain in harvest, seem alike dreadful and bewildering. Though he cannot understand, perhaps, the laws of fluidity, he is likely enough to murmur at the dispensations that frustrate his conjectures; but the Christian says, "I believe that God ordains every drop of rain, or withholds every genial shower, when he binds up the bottles of heaven. I can find philosophy in faith. And here he is right. It has well been said, "There is more wisdom in a whispered prayer than in the ancient lore of all the schools"; and wonderful it is how this simple, silent trust gives the Christian man calmness and composure. At sea, when the tempest rages and the billows roar, the man who knows of nothing but the devouring element beneath and around him, full of alarm, may sigh to the winds; but the Christian, who firmly believes that God holds the sea in the hollow of his hand, and that "all must come, and last, and end, as shall please his heavenly Friend," waits the leisure of the righteous God, commits his way unto him, assured that he hath control over the storm and fulfils his great decrees, unmoved by threatening clouds or scolding winds. Faith feeds his fortitude. Listening with the ears of faith, he constantly hears the footfalls of Jehovah. In the loneliness of his sorrow, he catches a sweet whisper, saying to him, "It is I; be not afraid." The divine presence, and the divine hand, mysteriously hidden though they be from all mortal eyes, are discerned by such as live in fellowship with God, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."

Hence it is that the child of God carries on a secret intercourse with heaven. See him on his knees: he talks with God; he pours out his heart before the Lord; and in return—whether the world chooses to believe it or not, it is a matter of fact with us—in return the great Invisible Spirit pours into the praying heart a stream of sacred comfort, stays it in its time of trouble, and gives it to rejoice in its moments of sadness. Oh! some of you are living witnesses that God talks with men. Had you never talked with him, you would not be qualified to speak upon this question, but knowing that he hears you, and being conscious that he also answers you and speaks to you, you can declare, and rejoice in the declaration, that the secret of the Lord in this respect is with you. Why, the Christian makes communications to God of such a sort as he would not venture to make to his fellow-men. I consider the confession of sins to a priest most degrading to that priest. To make his ear the common sewer of all the filth of a parish is horrible, and for any man to tell out his sin at all to another is depraving to his own mind. But to tell it to God is a different matter; to lay bare his bosom, to let its inmost secrets be exposed to the great Searcher of hearts, to pour out what one cannot say in words, nor even perhaps convey with signs before the great eye which still sees, the great Searcher who discerns it all. Oh! this is blessed! Every child of God can say, when he is in a right state, that there is no reserve or disguise in the dealings of his soul with God. Is there a care which I dare not cast on him? Is there a sin which I would not humbly and tearfully confess before him? Is there a want for which I would not seek relief from him? Is there a dilemma in which I would not consult him? Is there ought so confidential that I may not divulge to man, which I may not breathe out to my God? Oh! when we are in spiritual health, we do verily pour our hearts before the Lord to the very dregs. We wear our heart upon our sleeve as we draw near to the Most High. I tell him all my woes and weaknesses, and all my sorrows, and sins likewise, so my secret is with him. Then the Lord is pleased in return to manifest himself unto his people. He shows to his trustful saints what he never shows to faithless sinners. When the sinner reads the Bible, he sees only the letter, that is all he can see; but the Christian sees the Spirit of the Word. He perceives that "within this awful volume lies the mystery of mysteries"; and he is one of those:—

"Happiest of the human race,  
To whom their God hath given grace  
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,  
To lift the latch to force the way."

Thus he enters into the secret chamber of revelation, while the unconverted, the unregenerated, the unsanctified, stand in the outside court, and find no entrance within the veil. The heart of God is poured out into the Christian's heart, so far as the infinite can discover itself to the finite; and as we tell the Lord what we are, he is pleased to tell us what he is. Surely, dear friends, as these

intercommunications go on, it would be hard to say how richly the inmost secrets of God may become known to his privileged people. Shall I be understood if I say that man may know a great deal more than he thinks he knows; he may know more of God than he knows he knows; for it is one thing to know, and another thing to know that we know. Do you notice how John says, "That we may know that we know him"?—as if we might know him, and yet be hardly able to recognise how much we know him. Now, many a time you have known the secret decrees of God, though you have not known that you knew them. "Oh!" say you, "how is that?" Well, God decreed, purposed, and determined to save such and such a soul; you felt an irresistible impulse to go and pray for that soul as you had never prayed before. You mentioned that particular person by name before God, and then you went out and exercised all the spiritual grace you had in order to bring that soul to the knowledge of the truth; and God blessed your endeavour, and that soul was saved. Now, how was this? Why, the secret purpose of God had been made to act mysteriously upon you; you have become God's instrument, his conscious instrument, in the fulfilment of it; and thus you were made privy to the decree, though scarcely aware that you were so. I do think there is such a harmony between the feeling of Christians and the purposes of God that you and I can never tell where these twain do unite, or where they separate. It often seems as if the Lord said to his people, "Now, I have ordained such and such things, in the volume of my book they are written, and you shall desire and purpose just such things in your heart; and so the things that are in your heart shall carry out the things that are in my book; I will not let you know it so as to go and tell it to others, but I will make you so know it that you will go and act upon it; I will let the secret of the Lord be with you." We know not how often God gives his people premonitions of what he is about to do, nor how frequently, unknown to ourselves, we take a course of action which is precisely the right course, without our knowing why we took it, only that we are led and guided by the Holy Spirit into such a track. I believe that this is especially the case with the ministry of the Word. I have sometimes been very sharply taxed about this matter. I was a few days ago upbraided by a good soul for exposing all her faults from the pulpit. I have been, not merely now and then, but very often, thought by some people to be so dreadfully personal that they did not know how they could bear it; and yet I never saw those people, except from the pulpit, and did not know anything at all about them. The Word of God is quick and powerful, and "is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." When, therefore, we ask God to direct us in speaking his Word, it is no marvel that the effect is searching. Ah! and did we always, with all our hearts, give ourselves up to the motions of his Holy Spirit, we should be led and guided in a mysterious manner which we ourselves should scarcely understand, and make full proof of the fact that the "secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."

I will venture to say that the Christian gets to know more of God, of the real essence of God, by grace than all the philosophies in the world could ever have taught him. I read of God that he is a loving Father; that he is gracious towards the children of men. Now, if I fear him with a filial reverence, he disposes me, by his grace, to love the souls of men: makes me tender and compassionate. Thus I get to apprehend, by a devout sympathy, something of what his love, and tenderness, and compassion must be. To meditate upon the attributes of God is one means of seeking knowledge; but to be conformed to his image is quite another way of understanding him. Not till God makes you like himself can you know what he is. In proportion, then, as we grow in grace, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit more abundantly, we shall be more and more admitted into the secret of the Lord. The day is coming, beloved, when we shall know more of God by our hearts—to say nothing of our heads, which probably never will be able to find out the Almighty to perfection—we shall know more of God by our hearts than we ever thought it possible to know, because our hearts shall be filled with himself; everything obnoxious to him shall be chased out, and we shall be like his only begotten Son, dwelling in his light, and basking in his love for ever. "The secret of the Lord," as to his very character, "is with them that fear him. As they thus go from strength to strength, their heart pulsates with a love like the divine love; their souls yearn towards sinners with a benevolence like the divine benevolence; they begin to make sacrifices comparable, in kind, though not in degree, to the great sacrifice of God when he spared not his only-begotten Son. Their bowels move; their spirit yearns; they cry over souls, as God is said to cry over them. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together. Whenever God would picture himself to us, he uses words suitable to our nature. But oh! how passing wonderful shall it be when God shall be seen in us, and we shall see God in ourselves; and so shall see God! That blessed promise, "The pure in heart shall see God," is but another rendering of our text—"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." I wish it were in my power to explore this testimony of the Lord more fully, and expound it more clearly; but for the present I must leave these few simple thoughts with you, and pass on to observe that we have:—

## **II. A REFERENCE TO A FAVOURED CLASS OF INDIVIDUALS.**

A peculiar privilege is conferred on a peculiar people; for it seems that the secret of the Lord is with some men, but not with others. Who are they who possess this sacred boon? A great outcry has been raised in this country of late about class and class interests. In our manufacturing districts particularly, the rights of the upper class, who find the capital, and the claims of the working class, who bring their skill and labour into the market, are paraded before us in hot debates, which often lead to an angry lock-out on the part of the employers, or a sullen strike on the part of the employed. Such feuds seldom bring much credit to either party. A great deal may be said concerning some of each to their praise, and not a little concerning some of both to their censure. So long as the struggle lasts, it must cause much heart-burning. I would the day were come when all this class-talk was over, that we felt and acknowledged the common ties and mutual obligations by which all men depend upon all men; each class being dependent for its welfare and prosperity upon each other class, even as "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell upon the face of the earth."



Still, there always will be a favoured class. God has so ordained it. But let me say they will neither be accepted because they are rich, nor rejected because they are poor. The favoured class before the Lord hath nothing to do with any position in society.

“None are excluded thence, but those  
Who do themselves exclude;  
Welcome the learned and polite,  
The ignorant and rude.”

Neither hath this secret of the Lord ought to do with education. It is not with every Oxford graduate; it is only with a very few of them! The secret of the Lord is not with every Cambridge M.A., nor with every man who has taken his degree at any university. You may read the Scriptures in the original languages; with Hebrew and Greek you may be familiar. Excellent and profitable studies they are, but you cannot discover the secret of the Lord by mere classical attainments. No mathematical researches or astronomical observation can discover it to you. In vain does one mount to heaven and thread the spheres; alike in vain does another walk the earth, and conjure the old rocks to tell him what happened before Adam held the lease of its broad acres, or tilled its soil. No, it is beyond the province of human learning, as it is foreign to the privilege of creature rank. Some people think that the secret of the Lord is lodged in mystic rites, and draped in gorgeous ceremonies. There is among us a sect of ritualists, which professes to have acquired it. They pretend to derive it from some man in lawn sleeves who put his hand on their heads; and if they cannot exactly communicate it themselves, yet they can communicate a great deal, for they affirm that every little child sprinkled by them becomes, without more ado, a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven! With their guild I have no fellowship; of their weird arts I know little. Still, they say it is so, and it is all right with the little ones, no doubt, if they die in infancy, for are they not buried in consecrated clay? Listen to these gentlemen, these “successors of the apostles,” these men who have “gifts” which empower them to declare and pronounce absolution and remission of sins. Do you hear the Gospel from them? Well, you may from some of them, but then they tell you that they do not believe in the literal construction of the words they are paid to repeat, so they deliberately utter a lie! Or listen to others of them. Do they give you the gospel? Nay; they display themselves in petticoats and embroidered vestments, and such apparel as it were unlawful to appear in, save only when they are acting in their ecclesiastical theatres. You get no gospel truth from them, nothing but priestcraft from beginning to end. Were they honest they would go at once to Babylon, to Rome, to the Mother of Abominations, and consort with their own kindred. Thus we say the rite of ordination confers no privileges, and restrains no abuses. It does not teach a man the secret of the Lord, for the best ordained priest in England may still be as ignorant of God, our enemies themselves being judges, as if he had never been ordained at all. To whom, then, is it given to know the secret of the Lord, but to those who fear him, and hallow his name? To be conscious that I have sinned; to be humbled before God on account of it; to behold Jesus Christ as the way of atonement; to accept Christ as my Saviour; to come to God blessing him that I am saved through his dear Son; to feel a love to God because of his grace to me; to yield up myself to his service; by his Holy Spirit to be led to live to his Glory—this it is to fear him, and thus it is that his secret is with me. “Why,” says one, “then the secret of the Lord may be with any poor servant-girl!” Bless the Lord it may! “Oh! then,” says another, “the secret of the Lord may be with any humble workman, even though he be an illiterate and uneducated man?” Yes, certainly it may! “Then,” says yet another, “what becomes of the priesthood?” Why, I answer, we are all made priests. If we fear the Lord, we are admitted and initiated into the secret mysteries of religion; we become instructed in the way of the Lord, the Holy Spirit having promised that he will teach us all things, and bring all things to our remembrance, whatsoever Christ has told us. Though we cannot claim rank, nor wealth, nor diploma, we can yet humbly say, “The secret of the Lord is with us, for he has taught us, by his grace, how to live upon him, how to trust him, how to serve him.” “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.”

Dost thou answer to this description, my dear hearer? Dost thou walk in the fear of the Lord? Says one, “I am a member of a Dissenting church.” I do not inquire about that, for it has nothing to do with the secret. Dost thou fear God, I ask thee? “Well,” says another, “I have always done my duty ever since I can remember, from my youth up.” That is thy duty toward man, and it is well that thou shouldst never neglect it. But dost thou fear the Lord? Is the Lord the subject of thy thoughts, the object of thy love? And dost thou, therefore, revere and worship him? If so, the promise is thine, and the privilege shall not be withheld from thee. “I want to know,” says one, “which is right among all the contending sects.” Well, go thou to the Bible; search the Scriptures; yet not as one who is proud of his own wits, but rather as one who feareth the Lord greatly, and inquires at his holy oracle prayerfully. Then, although you may not find every knotty point solved, or every quibble settled, you shall surely find this saying good, “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.” Come to the Lord for instruction, and there is nothing in his Word which he will keep back from thee any more than from others, for “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.” And come to the Lord for guidance, and thou shalt not be left in doubt what fellowship of believers to join, for “it shall come to pass that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord God.” The last thing we have to notice is:—

### III. THE CHOICE AND PECULIAR MANIFESTATIONS WHICH GOD MAKES TO HIS PEOPLE.

He will show them his covenant. What a soft, sweet, encouraging assurance this covenant gives us! To see God in covenant is to find grace in his eyes. To serve a covenant God is perfect freedom and exquisite delight. God out of Christ is a consuming fire. Luther was wont to say, “I will have nothing to do with an absolute God.” The fear with which we think of God is all terror, dread, and

fright, in which we exceedingly tremble and quake, until he unveils himself in this mellow light of the covenant of peace. For what could the vision do but scare me to destruction? But God, in the covenant of his dear Son, is the hope, the desire, the delight of everyone that is godly; and their fear is not that of horror, but that of homage. What, then, does God teach his people concerning his covenant? Much every way. He shows them that his covenant is everlasting. It was made in Christ before the world began. It abides steadfast, and will for ever remain unchangeable. So sure is it, that every blessing it provides is unconditional and irrevocable, being entailed upon all those who have an interest in its gracious provisions. He teaches them the fulness of this covenant, that it contains all that is necessary for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. He teaches them the freeness of this covenant; that it was made with them in Christ Jesus, not because of their good works, but because of the abounding of his grace towards them. He teaches them that this covenant is not the result of their tears or vows, their penitence or prayer, but that it is the cause of all these; ordered in all things and sure, it comprises all that their needs could lack, and all that their hearts could crave; it is all their salvation and all their desire. The Lord then shows his people that this covenant was made on their behalf. Ah! there is the beauty of it!

Each one of the blood-bought trophies of mercy is led to see that the covenant was made with David's Lord for him. So each heir of heaven sets to his seal that God is true, and makes David's protest his own—"Though my house be not so with God, yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." He also shows his people that this covenant is made with them by sacrifice through the precious blood of Jesus, wherein God smells a sweet savour of rest. No covenant could avail them, except it were a covenant made with blood and based on propitiation. They understand that the old covenant of works broke through because the first Adam was not able to carry out his part of it. God spoke to Adam after this manner, "If thou wilt be obedient, thou and thy children shall be happy." That "if" proved fatal. Adam could not observe the condition. The second covenant is on another footing. It was made with Christ. "If thou wilt be obedient, thou and those in thee shall be blessed." Christ was obedient; he kept the law; he suffered to the death his Father's will; and we come, without an "if" or a "but" to inherit the blessing which Christ has merited for us. Now it is no more, "If you do this, I will do that"; it is, "You shall do this, and I will do that." "A new heart will I give you; and a right spirit will I put within you; you shall repent of sin; you shall follow in my ways; you shall love me; you shall serve me; you shall persevere in holiness; and I will bless you." There is not an "if," nor a "but," nor a "per-adventure" to foul the stream of God's loving-kindness. The covenant was made with every elect soul in Christ beyond the hazard of a doubt, and beyond the chance of a forfeiture.

Oh! soul, hath God ever shown thee this covenant? Do I hear anyone murmur that it is a horrible doctrine? Then I am quite certain he has never been shown it. Or do I hear another affirm, that were he to believe it, he should live in sin? I think very likely he would; I do not doubt it. To sin is your propensity, whatever you believe. But mind this, I do not exhort you to believe in that which has never been revealed to you, and has nothing to do with you. But yet another voice greets my ear; it is that of a penitent, who says, "I do come to Christ just as I am; I welcome the promise; I thank God there is now nothing left for me to do in order to make the promise sure, or to make the covenant fast; I am a poor, lost, undone soul, and throw myself at the foot of the bloody tree; I look up to the Saviour and say, 'Jesus, I trust thee to save me; I altogether trust thee; I believe thou hast saved me—saved me in such a way that I can never be lost, for the covenant that was made with me never can be broken, and I shall never be cast away.' " Sure, then, dear friend, thou hast no wish to pamper with the lusts of the flesh, or to wallow in uncleanness. The doctrine does not instigate thee to live in sin. Thou wouldest be a monster indeed if it did. Nay, thou wilt say, "If God has made a covenant with me, saved me from the curse, and endowed me with blessing, out of gratitude to him, what is there I can render to him for all his benefits? Nothing shall be too hard, nothing too heavy:—

“ ‘Loved of my God, for him again  
With love intense I burn;  
Chosen of him ere time began,  
I choose him in return.’ ”

Let slaves go and work under the rod of the task-master if they will! Let the sons of the bondwoman pour contempt on the inheritance of the seed of promise if they like; but a seed shall serve him, and it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. The child of God has been shown the covenant; hence he knows he shall never be cast out of the family, for the love of the Father towards him will never change. He cannot love us more; he will not love us less. Such love in him begets more love in us. What manner of men ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness! "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant."

I can only pray that some hearts may be led to look to Jesus, that they may discover the choice secret. Christ is not only a party to the covenant, and the Representative of the covenant, but he is the very impersonation of the covenant itself. "I will give him," saith the Lord, "to be a covenant for the people." Oh! if you have looked to Christ, you need not despair. He is holy, he is true, he hath the key of David, which can unlock the secret treasury in which are stored all covenant blessings. Fear him; it is the beginning of wisdom. Trust him; it is the first breath of faith. Desire him, as new-born babes crave milk. Oh! that the fear of the Lord may haunt you through the watches of the night, and abide with you all the day long. So may the Lord bless you now and for ever. Amen.

## James Hasting's THE SECRET OF THE LORD

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;  
And he will shew them his covenant.—Ps. 25:14.

WHEN the Hebrew poet spoke of the secret of the Lord he meant the knowledge of the God of Israel, the unseen and eternal Jehovah. When he thought of them that fear Him, he remembered the stalwart saints who shall ever be the heroic leaders of the faith. He recalled Abraham coming out of Ur of the Chaldees with a wisdom and a knowledge that no Babylonian star-gazer ever divined. He thought of Jacob rising from his midnight dream at Bethel, saying in penitence and awe, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." He saw Moses at the burning bush, putting off the shoes from his feet, for the place whereon he stood was holy ground. He remembered Samuel coming out of the temple in the morning light, having heard the voice of God, with a message he dared not tell to Eli. Each of these had entered into a solemn experience. Each of them had come forth with a secret. A new and deeper understanding of God's ways, and thoughts, and purposes had been given them. He marks the law of their experience. It was the law of fear. They had that fear of God which is an awe and a reverence, a passion of desire to know, and a willingness to submit and to obey. Therefore God made known the secret to them.

¶ Thompson dwells on St. Paul's unspoken message, which, designated by the name of wisdom, he withheld from many of the Corinthians because they were not fit to hear it. He communicated it to the spiritual not to the animal man. Origen says that that which St. Paul would have called wisdom is found in the "Canticle of Canticles." Thompson dwells further on the hidden meanings of the Pentateuch, believing that there was "an inexhaustible treasure of divine wisdom concealed under the letter of Holy Writ." Thompson saw wise men whispering, and guessed that there were secrets; their presence discovered, they were open secrets for such as he. "You have but to direct my sight, and the intentness of my gaze will discover the rest."

¶ There were three courts in the Temple at Jerusalem. There was the outer court, where even the Gentiles who cared nothing for the God of Israel or the faith of the Hebrew people might freely come. There was the holy place with its sacred things, where only the Hebrew worshipper might walk. There was the most holy place, over which the veil of the Temple hung, and into whose unseen and unknown seclusion the high priest entered once every year, alone. There are these three courts in the life of a Christian man. There is the outer court, where a man who is living his life in the world must keep company with all who enter its circle. He must rub shoulders with the crowd, although he never forgets that they cannot enter into his secret. There is the holy place, where fellow-believers may pass, and speech and thought of the things of God have a gracious liberty. But there is the most holy place, and what passes there between God and the soul is to be kept with a guarded reticence until there is need for its being told.

¶ When the ancient Jew approached his sanctuary, he found an outer court of the Temple full of activity with the coming and going of those who touched the whole natural life and the daily sacrifice on the altar. But behind lay the still silent room where the golden lamp burned and the bread of life was resting on the golden table. And behind again the silence of the Holy of Holies where man and God merge in union. Even so it is not the great activity, touching national issues—it is not even the sacrificial life of Dr. Paton that has most attracted me and, I believe, others. But here was a priest of the Most High God, in the sanctuary of whose heart the light burned and the bread of life was broken. And with reverent awe we knew that behind lay communion with the Inspirer and Hearer of Prayer. So that out of him from the Divine source flow "rivers of living water." Thus heaven touched earth through our intercourse, and the passion for service of his soul entered ours.

The secret of the Lord, as the Psalmist conceives it, may be held to include (1) Knowledge; (2) Character; (3) Happiness. Knowledge is the secret of the Teacher, Character is the secret of the Friend, Happiness is the secret of the Lover.

### I KNOWLEDGE

**1. Every teacher has his secret.** He scans his scholars, eager to find a receptive mind to whom he can reveal it. When the responsive glance, the significant word, or the searching question reveals the student's promise, the teacher has an exquisite joy in revealing his secret.

¶ The great painters of the Middle Ages took pupils into their studios. To every aspirant they gave honest attention. When one came who was swift to understand his master's conceptions, eager to imitate his strength of line and purity of colour, humbly and patiently reverent in his zeal, the secret was disclosed. In our own day Edward Burne Jones became a disciple of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. He spent still and strenuous hours in

copying his master's works, studying their distinction, and aspiring after their spirit. With a trembling heart young Burne Jones took his drawings to Rossetti to receive his judgment upon them. The honest painter looked at them in silence, and with a word of emotion he said, "You have nothing more to learn from me." He had entered into the master's secret. But mark the law. It is not to the carping critic, the scorning and cynical scholar, the contemptuous idler, that the secret is revealed. The secret is "with them that fear."

God keeps His holy mysteries  
Just on the outside of man's dream....  
Yet, touching so, they draw above  
Our common thoughts to Heaven's unknown;  
Our daily joy and pain advance  
To a divine significance.

**2. There is a mystery in every Christian life** When the words are said in our hearing, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," they seem to give a momentary glimpse of the truth. There is a secret in such lives, and that secret is God's. He has to do with them. There is a communication between their souls and Him. He has told them a secret, and they keep it. Others may see that they have a secret; but intermeddle with it they cannot. There is only one way to attain it—by going through the same process as these have gone through. We may not at present think it worth our while to do so, or we may have an undefined dread of the supposed difficulty and irksomeness of that process: but at least let us lay it up well in our hearts that there is such a process, and such an end; that the Christian's life is a reality, whether we ever attain that life or not; a mystery, whether we be ever initiated into that mystery or not; let us accept and reverence the inspired declaration that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."

¶ The more of a man a man is, the more secret is the secret of his life, and the more plain and frank are its external workings. A small and shallow man tries to throw a mystery about the mere methods of his life, he tries to make his ways of living seem obscure. Where he goes, how he makes his fortune, whom he talks with, what his words mean, who his friends are—he is very mysterious about all these, and all because the secret of his life is really weak, because he is conscious that there is no really strong purpose of living which he himself understands. It is a shallow pool which muddies its surface to make itself look deep. But a greater man will be perfectly frank and unmysterious about these little things. Anybody may know what he does and where he goes. His acts will be transparent, his words will be intelligible. Yet all the while every one who looks at him will see that there is something behind all, which escapes the closest observation. The very clearness of the surface will show how deep the water is, how far away the bottom lies. There is hardly a better way to tell a great man from a little one.

¶ He always lived with his blinds up, and you saw all the workings of his mind. Had he not been steeped in the spirit of love he could never have survived the self-exposure which was a habit with him. But his very caprices were always unselfish, and he could afford to let his friends look him through and through.

As in some cavern dark and deep,  
My soul within me here lies low,  
Where, veiled, she dreams in wondrous sleep  
Of things I may not know.

And if perchance she wake awhile,  
I probe her radiant eyes in vain:  
She turns from me with misty smile  
And, sighing, sleeps again.

**3. God may be expected to keep some things hidden.** In the most intimate and sacred of our friendships it is not for us to say what secrets shall be made known to us, and what secrets shall be guarded from our cognizance. A government reserves to itself the right of saying what information may be imparted to its friends, and what, for sufficient reasons, shall be kept back. A general on the battle-field, whilst putting safe and suitable selections of news at the service of authorized war correspondents, cannot allow them unlimited access to his plans. It is necessary to respect official reserve. And is not the temper which accepts such conditions binding on a true servant of God? Let God Himself choose the things He sees fit to make known to us. If we live in reverent and believing fellowship He will treat us as confidants, and our knowledge of His methods and purposes will surpass that of the world; but at the same time we need to be told once and again that He cannot admit us to equality with Himself by making known the veiled things we petulantly demand. It ought to satisfy us if His heart trusts us, and He comes to us in forms of revelation withheld from the world. He who is thus initiated into His deep counsels and led to know His will makes few mistakes in his prayers, and the faith he cherishes does not suffer the bitterness of disappointment or betrayal.

¶ I have heard Sir Clifford Allbutt and Signor agree that the necessity or, perhaps better, the love of the mysterious, was an essential and valuable part of the human mind; far from being all disadvantageous or an impediment to progress, it had been in the main a stimulus towards something transcending man's best efforts. Signor said: "It is in fact the poetic element; and what in the superstitious mind is mere dread, in Browning and Tennyson is aspiration. You cannot take away the mysterious from man, he cannot do without it."

¶ One of the most beautiful of the Bishop's sonnets was composed at Trondhjem on August 12, 1888. It runs thus:—

And was it there—the splendour I behold?  
This great fjord with its silver grace outspread  
And thousand-creeked and thousand-islanded?  
Those far-off hills, grape-purple, fold on fold?  
For yesterday, when all day long there rolled  
The blinding drift, methinks, had some one said  
"The scene is fair," I scarce had credited;  
Yet fairer 'tis than any tongue hath told.  
And it was there! Ah, yes! And on my way  
More bravely I will go, though storm-clouds lour  
And all my sky be only cold and grey;  
For I have learnt the teaching of this hour:  
And when God's breath blows all these mists afar,  
I know that I shall see the things that are.

**4. Knowledge comes by obedience.** It would be hopeless to try to tell the secret, even for the sake of inducing others to treasure it for themselves. The fact is that the secret might be told, and told in the best of words, without its ceasing to be a secret to those who heard. Words are necessary in religious as in other matters; but there is no fear of their telling anything which ought not to be told: first, because the secret is designed for all, and revealed to all who will listen to it; and next, because it lies deeper far than the understanding, and never becomes the possession of any man till he takes it into his heart. For the obedience by which comes knowledge is the obedience of the heart. Obedience to law, and acts of worship arising out of fear of penalty, are merely hiding from God among the trees of the garden. Even obedience from duty can never be a satisfactory or final state; it is merely educational, to make manifest defect of life. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." When the glory of the Lord has filled all the 'courts of His temple, man's outward nature becomes reconstituted, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless or indissoluble life. The tree of knowledge becomes one with the tree of life which is in the midst of the city, and on both sides of the river of life, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

¶ I have known more than one Highland saint who never had any intellectual training. They had had little schooling, they never were at college, and their libraries were of the scantiest kind. Yet in every true sense of the word they were men of culture; their language was choice and their thoughts large and just; and they had singular power in complicated questions of seizing on the things that really mattered. What was the secret of that mental clarity?—"If any man willeth to do his will." To God they had prayed—in Christ's name they had wrestled—they had clung to the right and beaten down the wrong; until at last that life of deep obedience—that faithfulness to God in what was least—all unexpectedly had reached their intellect, and made it a sphere of mastery and joy.

Just to ask Him what to do  
All the day,  
And to make you quick and true  
To obey.  
Just to know the needed grace  
He bestoweth,  
Every bar of time and place  
Overfloweth.  
Just to take thy orders straight  
From the Master's own command.  
Blessed day! when thus we wait  
Always at our Sovereign's hand.

**5. Obedience is rendered easy by sympathy and an open mind.** The man who is full of himself, bent on his own will, seeking his own ends, is not in a frame of mind to have the secret of the Lord revealed to him: probably he does not want it, or wish to have it revealed to him. It is a check upon him. He does not want the key to the Kingdom of Heaven, because he has no wish whatever to enter into it. To enter into the Kingdom of God is to do the, will of God, and to try to love it, and the will of God is human duty—what is due from us to God as poor, weak, ignorant creatures at the best; coming we know not whence, going we know not whither; seeing but a little way into things; living by faith, by trust in the power over us, trust in the good about us, trust in the good in other people; and what is due from us to others, for we are related to each other as brethren, because we are all related to God as the Father over all.

¶ “See how that noble fellow Collingwood leads the fleet into action!” exclaimed Nelson at the battle of Trafalgar, as he looked on the ship of his second bearing down upon the French line under a press of sail. “Ah! what would Nelson give to be here!” exclaimed Admiral Collingwood at the same moment. It seemed as if the two heroic men were animated by one spirit; as if by completeness of sympathy they knew each other’s thoughts. And have we not all seen something like this in our own experience? Have we not known persons so congenial in thought and feeling that scenes in nature lighted up their faces with the same delight, or cast over them the shadows of thoughtfulness and awe; sights of distress and tales of sorrow drew forth from them kindred tears of compassion; a noble poem or an eloquent oration awakened in their bosoms the same pure and generous emotions? And such, too, is the power of sympathy between man and God. Just as a man tells his secret only to his friends, knowing that it would often be unsafe, and at other times impossible, to tell it to others; and just as they, knowing his great aim and motive, can make more of a nod or look or word than others can of a lengthened statement; so God reveals, as He did to Abraham His friend in the matter of Sodom’s destruction, the depth of His mind and will to them who fear Him, and who by fearing Him have been made like Him; and they, loving in general as God loves, and hating in general as God hates, enter as others cannot into the meaning and spirit of God’s declarations.

## II CHARACTER

**1. God unveils His character by entering into friendly relations with man** It is always a sign of deepening friendship when people begin to open their inner rooms to us. To be made the depositary of a rare secret is to be sealed as a friend. When any one tells us a secret joy, it is a mark of intimacy; when any one unveils to us a secret grief, it is a proof of the closest fellowship. When we are taken from the suburbs of a man’s being to the centre, it is a proof of an enriching communion. “No longer do I call you servants; but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you.” Is there not something tenderly suggestive in the word which tells us that “when they were alone, he expounded unto them”? When He had His familiar friends to Himself, He told them His secrets and showed them His covenant.

Are these the tracks of some unearthly Friend,  
His foot-prints, and his vesture-skirts of light,  
Who, as I talk with men, conforms aright  
Their sympathetic words, or deeds that blend  
With my hid thought;—or stoops him to attend  
My doubtful-pleading grief;—or blunts the might  
Of ill I see not;—or in dreams of night  
Figures the scope, in which what is will end?  
Were I Christ’s own, then fitly might I call  
That vision real; for to the thoughtful mind  
That walks with Him, He half unveils His face;  
But when on earth-stain’d souls such tokens fall,  
These dare not claim as theirs what there they find,  
Yet, not all hopeless, eye His boundless grace.

**2. Fellowship with God is the secret of the highest character in man.** If a man admires, reveres and attaches himself to any one, he is naturally led to imitate him; and the tendency of all worship is to make a man like his God. The deities of heathendom are the product of the vain imaginations, unholy passions and guilty fears of their votaries, and the contemplation of them continues to quicken the foul source whence they have issued. The sins as well as the sorrows of those who follow after other gods are multiplied. And the worshippers of the true God are, in accordance with this principle of our nature, brought to godliness, induced and taught to love and hate, to approve and condemn, according to the perfect model. In every one that fears God, there is a real and growing assimilation.

¶ Some words of Kingsley's written in 1872, in which he defines a "noble fear" as one of the elements of that lofty and spiritual love which ruled his own daily life, may explain why he speaks of entering the married state with "solemn awe and self-humiliation," and why he looked upon such married Love as the noblest education a man's character can have: "Can there be true love without wholesome fear? And does not the old Elizabethan 'My dear dread' express the noblest voluntary relation in which two human souls can stand to each other? Perfect love casteth out fear. Yes; but where is love perfect among imperfect beings, save a mother's for her child? For all the rest, it is through fear that love is made perfect; fear which bridles and guides the lover with awe—even though misplaced—of the beloved one's perfections; with dread—never misplaced—of the beloved one's contempt. And therefore it is that souls who have the germ of nobleness within, are drawn to souls more noble than themselves, just because, needing guidance, they cling to one before whom they dare not say, or do, or even think an ignoble thing. And if these higher souls are—as they usually are—not merely formidable, but tender likewise, and true, then the influence which they may gain is unbounded—both to themselves, and to those that worship them."

**3. To enjoy this fellowship we must "fear" the Lord.** In order to read any one's secret we must respect him. You cannot show the real secret of your life, the spring and power of your living, to any man who does not respect you. Not merely you will not, but you cannot. Is it not so? A man comes with impertinent curiosity and looks in at your door, and you shut it in his face indignantly. A friend comes strolling by and gazes in with easy carelessness, not making much of what you may be doing, not thinking it of much importance, and before him you cover up instinctively the work which was serious to you, and make believe that you were only playing games. So it is when men try to get hold of the secret of your life. No friendship, no kindness, can make you show it to them unless they evidently really feel as you feel, that it is a serious and sacred thing. There must be something like reverence or awe about the way that they approach you. It is the way in which children shut themselves up before their elders because they know their elders have no such sense as they have of the importance of their childish thoughts and feelings.

¶ You must believe that there is something deep in nature or you will find nothing there. You must have an awe of the mystery and sacredness in your fellow-man, or his mystery and sacredness will escape you. And this sense of mystery and sacredness is what we gather into that word "fear." It is the feeling with which you step across the threshold of a great deserted temple or into some vast dark mysterious cavern. It is not terror. That would make one turn and run away. Terror is a blinding and deafening emotion. Terror shuts up the apprehension. You do not get at the secret of anything which frightens you, but fear, as we use the word now, is quite a different emotion. It is a large, deep sense of the majesty and importance of anything, a reverence and respect for it. Without that no man can understand another. And so "the secret of a man is with them that fear him."

¶ We have listened to some sweet melody, and we cannot escape from its gracious thralldom. It pervades the entire day. It interweaves itself with all our changing affairs. We hear it in our work and in our leisure; when we retire to rest and when we awake. It haunts us. The analogy may help us to some apprehension of what is meant by the fear of God. The man who fears God is haunted by God's presence. God is an abiding consciousness. God is "continually before him." Everything is seen in relationship to God. The Divine presence pervades the mind and shapes and colours the judgment. Here are two descriptions from the Word of God, in the contrast of which the meaning will be made quite clear. "God is not in all his thoughts." The Eternal does not haunt his mind. Everything is secularized, and nothing is referred to the arbitrament of the Divine Will. He is not God-possessed. "Pray without ceasing." Here is the contrasted mind, from which the sense of God is never absent. Like an air of penetrating music the Divine presence pervades the exercise of all his powers. He is God-haunted, and in the consciousness of that presence he lives and moves and has his being. He fears God.

### III HAPPINESS

**1. The secret of happiness is love.** The people of God love Him, and He loves them; their habitual feeling is that their affection and gratitude bear no proportion to the greatness of His claims. Like the penitent disciple who had had much forgiven, they can solemnly appeal to His omniscience and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." And He loves them with a love which has a height and depth, and length and breadth passing knowledge—a love which has thrown open to them the book of Nature that their eyes might be filled with its beauty and their souls with its truth—a love which sings sweet songs in the carol of the bird, in the murmur of the brook, in the whispering of the breeze, and in the joyous music of the domestic hearth—a love which covers the earth with golden grain, and casts abundance into the lap of life—a love which has toiled, and bled, and died that the soul of man might be taken from the spoiler who has held it under his cruel and polluting sway, and be brought under the dominion of its rightful Lord and made fully happy, and that for ever, in His fellowship.

¶ He looked out on the world through the eyes of Love, and that is why it was to him ever beautiful in its infinite variety, and in its amazing friendliness. He lived to be seventy-one as the world counts years, but even then he was Youth and Joy—in the best sense of the word he refused to grow up.

¶ Though Mr. Paynter was a deeply spiritual man, there was nothing in his life or speech to suggest gloom; certainly there was not in his looks. Many a laugh have we had together, over some amusing incident or story, in the lighter interludes of life; and though he himself rarely told a story, yet sometimes he would make a “dry” remark, which showed that the sense of humour was not absent. He was a happy man—happy in all the domesticities of his home and family life—happy among his flowers—happy in his work—happy always in doing good to others, and all because he was happy in God, and had learned what St. Paul meant when he said, “All things are yours.”

Just to recollect His love,  
    Always true;  
Always shining from above,  
    Always new.  
Just to recognize its light  
    All-enfolding;  
Just to claim its present might,  
    All-upholding.  
Just to know it as thine own,  
    That no power can take away.  
Is not this enough alone  
    For the gladness of the day?

**2. We learn the secret of happiness as we try to express our love in noble character and unselfish conduct.** Men are so constituted that obedience is its own reward. There is no delight so deep and true as the delight of doing the will of Him whom we love. There is no blessedness like that of the increasing communion with God and of the clearer perception of His will and mind which follow obedience as surely as the shadow follows the sunshine. There is no blessedness like the glow of approving conscience, the reflection of the smile on Christ's face. To have the heart in close communion with the very Fountain of all good, and the will in harmony with the will of the best Beloved; to hear the Voice that is dearest of all ever saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it”; to feel “a spirit in my feet” impelling me upon that road; to know that all my petty deeds are made great, and my stained offerings hallowed by the altar on which they are honoured to lie; and to be conscious of fellowship with the Friend of my soul increased by obedience—this is to taste the keenest joy and good of life, and he who is thus “blessed in his deed” need never fear that that blessedness will be taken away, or sorrow though other joys be few and griefs be many.

¶ To Florence Nightingale, communion with the Unseen meant something deeper, richer, fuller, more positive than the fear of God. The fear of God is the beginning, but not the end, of wisdom, for perfect love casteth out fear. It was for the love of God as an active principle in her mind, constraining all her deeds, that she strove.

¶ The income from his books and other sources, which might have been spent in a life of luxury and selfishness, he distributed lavishly where he saw it was needed, and in order to do this he always lived in the most simple way. To make others happy was the Golden Rule of his life. On August 31 he wrote, in a letter to a friend, Miss Mary Brown: “And now what am I to tell you about myself? To say I am quite well ‘goes without saying’ with me. In fact, my life is so strangely free from all trial and trouble that I cannot doubt my own happiness is one of the talents entrusted to me to ‘occupy’ with, till the Master shall return, by doing something to make other lives happy.”

**3. And thus we are brought round again to knowledge.** For the final verdict upon the realities of religion rests not with the highest intellect, but with the purest heart. Humboldt tells that the Arab guide employed in one of his desert journeys had such a keen and highly trained power of vision that he could see the moons of Jupiter without a telescope, and that he gave the date when one of those moons was eclipsed, a date afterwards verified by the traveller on his return to Europe. The watchmaker, the line-engraver, the microscopist, who for years have been poring over minute objects a few inches from the face, could not emulate the feat of the Arab whose eye had been trained for a lifetime by use in the desert, and might possibly doubt the fact. In that respect the man of science himself, with his wide knowledge, exact observation, many accomplishments, was inferior to his unlettered guide. A devout soul seeks wistfully after God, accustoms its faculties to discern and interpret His signs, and acquires a vision penetrative beyond that of his neighbour.

¶ In one of his saddest poems—in the series entitled “Men and Women”—Browning tells the story of Andrea del Sarto, who was called the faultless painter of Florence. In his youth he had loved and married a woman of rare and radiant beauty. He rendered to her an almost worshipping homage. He longed to lift her to the high



plane of thought and desire and holy ambition on which he moved. But she was a shallow, thin-natured, mean-souled woman. She was the woman who smeared with a careless fling of her skirt the picture he had painted in hours of spiritual ecstasy. She was the woman who craved him for his hard-earned money that she might spend it at the gaming-table with her dissolute companions. Browning sets down the tragedy of their years with his usual unerring insight. It was not that she disappointed him, robbed his hand of its power, dulled his mind, shadowed his heart, and, as he foresaw, would sully his fame. It was this more piteous thing, that he could not disclose himself to her. She was not able to see and to understand him at his highest and noblest. She never discerned the moral majesty of his mind or the spiritual hunger of his heart. The poet sets the sorrow of it all in a sigh, which is the climax of his story.

But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,  
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,  
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird  
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—  
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!

Lover he was, with the lover's secret, but she brought no mind, and the lover's secret she never knew. For the lover's secret is only with them that fear.

**4. The nearer we live to Christ, the further shall we see into the Unseen and discern the secret of God.** The vision of the godly man, like that of the prophet at Bethel, pierces into the unseen, and he is sensible of things to which others are blind. If he cannot envisage horses and chariots of fire, the vindicating ministries of the covenant, he can read the terms of the covenant in letters clear as the stars, and these revelations are enough, and assure as perfectly as glimpses of the hosts God leads. Doubts and misgivings are dispelled by spiritual insight. In the things which, to a worldly mind, suggest the anger of Heaven, he is made to see occasions which discipline the character into higher fitness for receiving the awaiting blessings of an immutable covenant.

¶ For many years a lady made her livelihood by taking Greenwich time round to the jewellers' shops in the small towns to the west of London. She was the daughter of a watchmaker, and possessed an excellent chronometer which had been bequeathed by her father. When necessary, the authorities of the Observatory kindly regulated it. Every Friday she went to Greenwich, got the standard time, and carried it to her clients, who paid a small fee for the service rendered. She belonged to the old dispensation, and may stand for one of its types. Many provincial towns, and even private firms of watchmakers, are now in direct electric connexion with Greenwich, and get the standard time every day.... In the United States of America, every post office is linked with the Observatory at Washington. Under the earlier Covenant, men who wished to learn of the things of God had to avail themselves of the ministries of the prophets, or sit at the feet of scholars, whose office it was to interpret the books of the law. But under the New Covenant the regenerate soul is brought into direct contact with God, and acquires Divine wisdom, not by listening to a neighbour, but by heeding swift inward impressions wrought by the wonderful Spirit of God.

Love touch'd my eyes—these eyes which once were blind,  
And, lo! a glorious world reveal'd to view,  
A world I ne'er had dream'd so fair to find.  
I sang for gladness—all things were made new.

'Twas Love unstopp'd my ears, and every sound  
Borne through the silence seem'd a psalm of praise:  
Bird-song, child-laughter—yet o'er all I found  
Thy voice the music of my happy days.

Love chang'd life's draught and made the water wine,  
And through my languid senses seem'd to flow  
Some pow'r enkindled by the fire divine,  
Some inspiration I can ne'er forego.

Love rais'd the dead to life—and never more  
Can many waters quench th' eternal flame.  
Love open'd wide the everlasting door,  
And bade us enter, called by His name.

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## The Secret of the Lord

### Dr. John Kennedy

Scripture: Psalm 25:14 The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him.

**Introduction:** The older versions of the Bible use the word “peculiar” to describe Christians. Some of us are certainly peculiar, but I hope all of us are peculiar in the biblical sense—special, different, unique, people of singular character and exclusive privileges. Into our souls Christ infuses life; into our ears He whispers secrets. Fearers of God are favorites of God; and as such we are a peculiar people.

#### 1. Christians differ from others because they fear the Lord.

A. Those who fear the Lord are quickened souls, once dead in sin, but now alive to God, “quickened together with Christ.” There are Godward movements in our hearts. We have crowned Him King of our hearts.

B. Those who fear must be near to God. We were once “far off,” but have been brought near by the blood of Jesus. The Spirit thus guides us to the throne of grace—not as rebels who dread the king’s approach or as strangers who have never visited a sovereign, but as courtiers and children who are already in the palace. Only His loving children and His loyal servants can honor the Lord as a Father and fear Him as a Master.

C. In approaching God on His throne, we mingle reverence of His glory with hope in His mercy. This is a combination only found where the true fear of God is. The same view of God that inspires hope also produces reverential fear. The glory of God, as seen in the cross, commands our admiration as well as our trust. It is at once solemnizing and encouraging. It bears us down while it draws us near. It breaks our heart as surely as it cheers it.

D. They who fear the Lord seek to do His will. That the Lord may be pleased and glorified is the end to which we aspire. We cannot be happy without respecting all God’s commandments (Ps. 119:6). It is then in reverent obedience that those who fear the Lord may expect His secret to be with them.

**2. True Christians differ from others because with them is “the secret of the Lord.”** This means more than that we have the Bible in our hands. The Bible contains the complete revelation of the will of God, but many who have the Bible in their hands don’t have the fear of the Lord in their hearts. Those who fear the Lord have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, to know the things freely given to them of God. Thus we are “peculiar.” The Lord shines the gospel light on us, and He also shines into our hearts the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). His Spirit guides us into daily lessons about His promises, presence, and power. In the process we are changed into the image of Christ, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

A. He acquaints us with His everlasting purpose to save us.

B. He reveals intimations of His will while we pray, providing inner peace regarding problems and opportunities.

C. He gives us secret burdens for others for whom we should plead, often suggesting the case of a particular individual to the mind of one who is pleading at the footstool of mercy. With it may come a suggested portion of Scripture to plead on their behalf.

D. He reassures us by reminding us of His providential governance over our lives and over history. We watch and walk with God while others live without Him in the world. We speak with Him about His doings, while others are dumb and deaf before Him.

**Conclusion:** The Lord shares His secrets with those who fear Him, imparting wisdom and peace in difficult times. He gives them guidance during times of decision. He gives reassurance as needed. Fear the Lord. Let His Word be precious, and use it for the ends for which it is given. Aspire for a clearer view of its wonders, a simpler faith in its truth, a ravishing sense of its sweetness, and a deeper experience of its power. Be guided by its light, molded by its form, fed by its manna, and cheered by its comforts, fearing Him and learning His secrets day by day.

## Reverence for God

### Tim LaHaye

### Embracing Eternity

Today's Reading: Psalm 24:1-10; 25:14 Friendship with the Lord is reserved for those who fear him. Psalm 25:14

YEARS AGO I had friends in college who liked to call God "Daddy" during their prayers. They pointed out that when Jesus prayed "Abba, Father," he was using a term of endearment. In effect, he was calling God "Dad." It was a common phrase in Jewish culture. They took this idea and made it their own. My friends had good hearts, and I'm sure God knew that. But something about their prayers made me uncomfortable. I couldn't really put my finger on it, though. Their prayers went something like this: "Hey, Dad, this

is me, Randy. You know I have this test coming up, and I could really use your help. And thanks for letting me meet Sandy. I really like her. She's pretty cool. I'm thinking of taking her out sometime. Let me know what you think.... Anyway, I gotta go to class, so see you later. Love you, Daddy! Talk to you later." It wasn't as if these types of prayers were offensive to me, they just didn't feel right. There was a casualness to them that I wasn't used to. In some ways I wondered if it wasn't simply a backlash against the rigid, formal prayers that they had grown up with. And there seemed to be a sense of competition developing to see who could be the least formal. One friend decided that he would no longer bow his head or close his eyes during prayers, and others quickly took the same approach. There's nothing inherently offensive about any of this. I've always taken comfort in the father-heart aspect of God, and I love the idea of seeing him as our Father. I'm thrilled that we are able to connect with God on a real and personal level. Yet somehow it seems that in our effort to embrace the nearness of God, we have run the risk of overlooking his holiness. While it is true that God is our Father, he is also the Creator of the universe. The maker of heaven and earth.

"Friendship with the Lord is reserved for those who fear him," writes David (Psalm 25:14). A reverence for God's deity and supremacy is critical to a deep relationship with him. He is our Father, but he is also worthy of our respect and honor. When we become too casual in our relationship with him, we tend to forget who God is. He is the God of Abraham and Isaac. The great "I AM." The One who is, who always was, and who always will be. The King of glory!

## THE CHRISTIAN'S PRESERVATIVE

### James Smith, Streams in the Desert, 1849

It is a melancholy truth, which every day's experience corroborates, that **the seed of every evil still lurks in our fallen nature, and is ready to break out into action if an opportunity presents itself**; and, notwithstanding the promises made in the good word of God, and the privileges to which free grace introduces us, we shall certainly turn aside and sow the seeds of darkness, distress, and desertion, **without constant watchfulness and holy fear**.

**God has promised to put his fear in our hearts as a preservative against apostasy, Jeremiah 32:40; and believers in every age have found, that it is a choice preventative to many sins.** When Joseph had imprisoned his brethren as spies, and kept them there for three days, he at length comes to liberate nine of them, and gives this as a reason, "I fear God." Genesis 43:18. And when Nehemiah speaks of the conduct of former governors, and opposes his own to theirs, the reason he assigns for the difference is the same, "But because I feared God—I did not act that way!" Nehemiah 5:15

**The fear of God is the watchman upon the walls, the sentinel at our gates, and the crier in our streets! Its place is to watch against temptations, to guard us against being surprised into sin, and to sound an alarm when any evil approaches!** Therefore the Holy Spirit by Solomon exhorts, "By the fear of the Lord—men depart from evil." Proverbs 16:6. "A wise man fears—and departs from evil." Proverbs 14:16.

A filial fear of God springs from a spiritual knowledge of God as our Father; from the love of God shed abroad in the heart. When we take in gospel views of Jehovah's covenant character, believe his precious promises as made to us in Christ Jesus, and enjoy his love as the fountain of true happiness—we find liberty and are at peace; we love our God with ardor, and desire to please him in all things. Nothing appears so distressing as the loss of his presence or a sense of his love; and the soul, like the spouse, is ready to give charge to everything, to be careful not to disturb or cause the Lord to depart. As the Lord rests in his love to his people, so the favored believer desires to rest with God in the same.

But we have often found that we have been betrayed by some foe, or led away by some temptation, and have lost this blessedness for a time; we have seen that our departures from the Lord have been grievous in his sight, and exceedingly injurious to us. The Holy Spirit has made use of this to produce self-loathing, penitence, and caution; and a greater measure of fear has been experienced and exercised. The young Christian knows but little of commended carefulness, 2 Corinthians 7:11; or of that hesitation which is often felt and manifested by more advanced believers.

But the experienced follower of Christ not only fears and departs from evil, on account of the effects which sin has on himself and his comforts—but also because he would not dishonor his good and gracious God; he sees that every act of transgression, or every departure from his God, dishonors the dear name by which he is called. It is his glory his happiness, his constant aim to honor it in all things; but it always distresses him if he is the cause of its being spoken against, or in any way dishonored. He desires to walk after the Lord, and imitate him in all his imitable excellences, that so he may glorify his Father in heaven. He fears to offend God, or in anything to displease him; he knows on the one hand that nothing will go well if God manifests his displeasure; and, on the other, that if his Father refuses him comfort no one else can bestow it, however ready they may be.

Carnal-minded professors often rush forward with but little consideration of what they are about to do, or but little concern whether

they shall glorify God or not; but the right-minded Christian fears, hesitates, and prays; he examines his motives, distrusts his own heart from a knowledge of its deceitfulness, waits on the Lord, watches the motions of Divine Providence, looks for intimations from heaven, and prays, "Teach me to do your will; for you are my God; your Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." Psalm 143:10. He waits, watches, hopes, fears, and begs that he may not be allowed to walk contrary to his God.

O! he thinks, if I should proceed without the pillar and the cloud; if I should be left to myself in this dreary desert; if I should have my desire, and leanness in my soul—how distressed, how miserable, how wretched I should be! If your presence goes not with me—do not let me proceed, or turn to the right hand or the left.

None but a believer can tell the painful cogitations, distressing exercises, and multifarious thoughts which often agitate the Christian, under the sovereign dispensations of his God. He fears doing wrong; he wishes, he longs, for an alteration; his flesh, his connections, all seem to say, "Proceed," but he knows not the mind of his God; he fears lest he should draw false conclusions, and proceed when the Lord would have him Stand Still; or stand still, when the Lord would have him Go Forward. He searches his Bible and his heart, and often feels at a standstill; concludes, and then changes his mind; thinks he sees his way, then he is in a labyrinth; takes a step or two, and is obliged to recede with sorrow, if not with shame.

All this time fear preserves him, his patience is exercised, his faith is tried, his jealousy appears, and he is kept from the paths of the destroyer. By these things Christians live, and by these things are they kept from presumption, lukewarmness, and a worldly state. Isaiah 38:16. Thus often the Lord proceeds with man, to keep him back from folly, and lead him into truth and peace. Job 33:12-33.

Godly fear always produces and preserves a tender conscience, and a tender conscience preserves from many follies and sins. When conscience is enlightened by divine truth, and penetrated by sanctifying grace—a concern for God's glory, and a fear of grieving his Holy Spirit, are always predominant. Lust may work, and corruptions roar, and the Christian may for a time be led captive; but back he must come with heartfelt confession and prayer, before he can find peace or enjoy any of his privileges or mercies.

A clear view of truth, a tender conscience, a godly fear, and a humble mind, are blessings of incalculable value: they will garrison the heart, and keep the mind in a holy, Christ-like, lovely frame.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of true wisdom; the evidence of real holiness, and a proof that we are the Lord's.

As a grace—it flows from divine love, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus, and is produced by the power and presence of the Holy Comforter.

As a duty—it is required by our heavenly Father and gracious Savior, for the illustration and proof of gospel principles, for our own welfare, and his eternal praise. It is promised as a grace, to be sought as a blessing, to be practiced as a duty, and all to the glory of our God.

My brother, have you the fear of God ruling in you, reigning over you, and preventing you from falling in with temptation, or into sin? If so, bless your God: some of the exercises connected with it may be truly painful and cross to your nature—but its operations upon the mind are beneficial and sanctifying.