

The Fear of the Lord (Part 1 of 2)

Deuteronomy 10:12 (New American Standard Bible)

¹²“And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul,...”

Fear is a powerful word. The notion of fear elicits a response from virtually everyone. --Derek Prince.

Introduction

When you first read today’s sermon title, what thought did come to your mind? Was it something like, “*Hmm...I am not really interested*” or “*Yes, this is a great topic. I always wanted to know more about it?*” To be honest with ourselves, most of us would have a negative reaction to this topic, because none of us likes ‘fear,’ therefore, we all try to avoid it, including the fear of the Lord. Some of us even believe that the fear of the Lord is an Old Testament concept, therefore, we in the New Testament Church no longer need it. After all, we’re taught by the Church that our Heavenly Father is so loving and caring that we don’t need the fear of the Lord. However, we must overcome such negative and unscriptural reactions because if we truly understand the fear of the Lord and put it into daily practice, we will be truly blessed by it, both in this life and in the life to come. In other words, a life with no fear of the Lord would bring a detrimental effect on our walk with God and on our wellbeing, both spiritual and physical.

So, for the next two Sundays, I am going to do a two-part series on the fear of the Lord. In Part 1, today, I will explain what the fear of the Lord is and what it is not. In Part 2, next Sunday, we will examine the blessings the fear of the Lord brings to us when we walk in it all day long (Proverbs 23:17).

Before I dig deeper, I would like to give a proper credit to Derek Prince, a great theologian and Bible teacher in the 20th century. To him, I am deeply indebted for his insight on this topic: the fear of the Lord.

Content

To better understand the true fear of the Lord, let’s begin by ruling out

What the Fear of the Lord Is Not.

First, the fear of the Lord is not ‘natural fear.’ By ‘natural fear’ I mean the fear that is instilled by God in us to avoid any danger. This fear everyone has. For instance, if you are

standing on a high-rise mountain, and with one step taken wrong, you are afraid to fall and die. Then, that fear is natural. Another example, imagine a soldier gripped by the fear of death right before the battle: sure, his fear is real and natural. Or, if you stand in front of a lion who just roared, of course, you will have a fear. Those are the natural fears. Natural fear in us is designed to warn us of imminent danger before us. However, all these natural fears are totally different from the fear of the Lord.

Next, the fear of the Lord is not ‘demonic’ or ‘tormenting’ fear (2 Timothy 1:7, 1 John 4:17). By ‘demonic’ fear, I mean, the fear that is influenced and thrown into our hearts by a spirit of fear—a demon. By ‘tormenting’ fear, I mean, the fear that torments us; mentally, spiritually, or even physically. Some of us suffer from unnecessary oppressions rooted in the fear that comes from our spiritual enemy who wants nothing but to steal, kill, and destroy us (John 10:10). Derek Prince points out three marks of such demonic fear. Number one, it is from Satan, not from our Heavenly Father. Therefore, we must reject and resist it. Number two, it holds us back from obeying God instead of bringing us closer to God. In other words, the true fear of the Lord motivates us to love God and obey His voice. Number three, it torments us. E.g. Claustrophobia. Listen. Our God never gives us any fear that enslaves us. Neither is His will for us to stay in unhealthy and tormenting conditions. Listen to God’s promise: *For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline* (2 Timothy 1:7). Listen to another promise of God: *There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love* (1 John 4:18).

Remember, no godly fear torments us or makes us timid before life’s challenges.

Thirdly, the fear of the Lord is not the fear of man. *In fact, the fear of the Lord delivers us from the fear of man* (Derek Prince). Proverbs 29:25: *The fear of man brings a snare, but one who trusts in the Lord will be protected*. When we become afraid of any man, it will throw us into a snare. Those who fear God can overcome such snare. Those who fear man make humans more important than God, therefore, they lack the trust in the Lord. The same fear of man holds them back from obeying God. It also keeps them from walking in the ways of the Lord—the path that is pleasing to God. The fear of the Lord is not the fear of man.

Now, let’s think about

What the Fear of the Lord Is.

First, it is **awe and reverence** before the Holy God. All of us know what awe is. *It is a feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear or wonder* (Online dictionary). Imagine that you are standing on the summit of Mt. Everest. Everything around you is beneath you. The Sun brilliantly shines on all the surrounding mountains covered with snow. You are overwhelmed with its beauty and inspiration. You feel uplifted and elated by this once-in-a-lifetime experience. You also realize that one step taken in the wrong direction would

plunge yourself into the deep valley. Now, that's awe. Wonder and fear mixed at the same time.

I personally experienced such awe some years ago. E.g. One year, around Thanksgiving time, with my family, I was driving through countryside in Nova Scotia, Canada. It was a crispy November night and not many cars were on the road. Neither were many streetlights on. Everything was pitch dark except my headlights. Before me there was the vast universe—the black clear sky studded with countless stars. It was breathtaking. I felt I was being sucked into this “black” space. That night before the Creator of the universe I felt the awe in my soul—wonder mixed with fear. Now, if we apply such awe to spiritual world, that's the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the ‘feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear or wonder’ before the Creator.

Next, the fear of the Lord means **submission to the Lord**. Humble submission to God's greatness is a proper reaction to the fear of the Lord. When we have the fear of the Lord in our hearts, we naturally obey God's voice and willingly do so out of love. The fear of the Lord is “*to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul*” (Deuteronomy 10:12).

It would be an oxymoron if we claim that we fear the Lord yet never submit ourselves to Him in our words and actions. If we are self-sufficient, arrogant, then we are not submissive to the Lord, therefore, there's no fear of the Lord in us. Proverbs 14:2 says, “*One who walks in his uprightness fears the Lord, But one who is devious in his ways despises Him.*”

The fear of the Lord is a humble walk with the Lord in His ways (Micah 6:8).

Thirdly, the fear of the Lord means the Lord alone is the object of our worship. Remember this truth: what we fear can become our god (Genesis 31:42, 53). What we fear most is our god. Cancer, man, failure, or even COVID-19. Anything or anybody that we fear becomes our god to whom we give a total preeminence and obey their calls. That's why, in the first commandment of the Ten Commandments, God commands us: *you shall have no other gods before Me* (Exodus 20:3). Simply put, God commands us not to fear anything or anybody but the Lord, because it will become our god, which is an idol worship. Never ever put anything or anybody else before the Lord. Never ever put any influence, person, motivation, on the same level as God. Otherwise, they become your god.

So, ask yourself: what is or who is my true God? Is it the Lord God alone? Is He the only One whom I fear? Or is there something/somebody else that I fear that they become my god? In Genesis 31:42 and 53, we see Jacob talking to his father-in-law (uncle as well) Laban. Pay attention to the phrase ‘the fear of Isaac’: *If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and **the fear of Isaac**, had not been for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, so He rendered judgment*

last night.” ⁵³ *The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.” So Jacob swore by **the fear of his father Isaac.***

Do you see here that the object of Isaac’s fear? It was the Lord his God, wasn’t it? Remember, whatever you fear is your god. “If you fear people’s opinion, that’s your god,” Derek Prince writes. “If you fear poverty, that’s your god. If you fear disease and sickness, that’s your god” (*The Teaching Legacy of Derek Prince, The Lord’s Treasure*, p. 2). Whatever you fear is your god. Fear the Lord alone. Let Him be your God. No one else. Nothing else.

Conclusion

Next week, we will think about the benefits of the fear of the Lord.