

The author inserts personal comments when quoting Scripture which are indicated by square brackets. All biblical references are quoted from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

We are studying Proverbs 1, on the fear of God. We are going to deal with three questions today. 1) What is the fear of God? 2) Why should we, in fact, fear God? 3) How do you fear God—if you do fear Him—how do you do it?

There is a lot in the Psalms and Proverbs that speaks about the fear of God. In Proverbs 1, we read:

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel:

To know wisdom and instruction,
To perceive the words of understanding,
To receive the instruction of wisdom,
Justice, judgment, and equity;
To give prudence to the simple,
To the young man knowledge and discretion—
A wise man will hear and increase learning,
And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,
To understand a proverb and an enigma,
The words of the wise and their riddles.
The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
But fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:1-7)

Prov 2:1-5

My son, if you receive my words,
And treasure my commands within you,
So that you incline your ear to wisdom,
And apply your heart to understanding;
Yes, if you cry out for discernment,
And lift up your voice for understanding,
If you seek her as silver,
And search for her as for hidden treasures;
Then you will understand the fear of the LORD,
And find the knowledge of God.

Prov 3:1-8

My son, do not forget my law,
But let your heart keep my commands;
For length of days and long life
And peace they will add to you.

Let not mercy and truth forsake you;
Bind them around your neck,
Write them on the tablet of your heart,
And so find favor and high esteem

In the sight of God and man.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.
Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the LORD and depart from evil.
It will be health to your flesh,
And strength to your bones.

I read that Proverb in a Bible study several years ago and an elderly lady said to me, “That’s for me. My bones hurt.” Well, if your bones hurt today, we have got good news for you!

Let’s look to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank You so much for Your Word. And I pray that the understanding of the fear of the Lord may come into us with great force because of the Word of God’s teaching. Lord, there are a lot of us who really need to understand this, in a generation that has forsaken You and a culture that has decided to make decisions and live life without any regard for You and Your purposes and Your plans. God, I pray that it will be different for us and for those in our audience who have never yet made a commitment to You that is personal, life-changing, and spiritually awakening. God help us to see the need of that and may lives be changed today because of it. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

What is the fear of God? You know there are many ways to answer this question. I said after doing a long study on the word “fear”, and by the way, it appears so many times in the Bible that one wonders how much time you would need to have to finish it. But if you study every passage where it is used, you come to the conclusion that, fear, in terms of its in-depth Hebrew grammatical understanding, “fear” means fear. Amen? Now all the books I have that comment on fear, kind of go the other way. In fact, I just did a quick review of that in preparation for this message—although I remember well what they all say. But anyway, I just did a quick review and ran through them. And almost every last theology and commentary on this subject of the fear of God says, “Well, it is not exactly fear. It is reverential trust. It is awe. It is an understanding of how God is great.” Oh I know there are a lot of reasons behind that, as you will soon see. But the truth of the matter, without trying to run away from it, is that “fear” does mean fear. And yet, the Bible very clearly wants us to love God and tells us that if we have God’s kind of love, it will cast out fear.

So are those mutually exclusive? Well, it depends. First of all, it depends on whether you are talking about the human reaction of fear, or whether you are talking about the biblical understanding of fear. I believe the biblical understanding of fear is never to be absent from the believer’s heart—never.

Now part of my relationship to God involves my fear of God. In fact, there is a sense of which I can tell you that all believers fear God and all nonbelievers do not fear God. The very term “to

fear God” is a statement about who is a believer and who is not. But of course, we need a lot more than this.

What is the fear of God? I am going to use the Bible alone to tell you. Number one, I read in Proverbs 1:7 that it is the key to knowledge and wisdom. Turn to Proverbs 15:33 and you will also find the same thing in Psalm 111:10, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. If you want to be smart, really smart, really understand life and what it is all about—the meaning and purpose of it and how everything functions and works—if you want wisdom and knowledge, the Bible says, “you need the fear of the Lord.” You might ask me, “What is the fear of God?” It is the key to wisdom and knowledge. Whatever it is, we desperately need it.

In Proverbs 15:33 it says, “The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility.” The last phrase is a parallel statement. The “honor” here would be, “being wise.” And before that honor is humility,” which is the fear of the Lord. It is a type of parallelism in Hebrew poetry that shifts subject and direct object in the two parallel statements. The fear of the Lord is the humility and the wisdom is the honor. So before you get wisdom, before you are honored that way, you need humility, which is what? It is the fear of the Lord. So there you are getting some insight into what it is. But the key thing to notice is that whoever has the fear of God in his life is being constantly instructed in wisdom. So those who fear God are going to be much smarter and wiser, especially in terms of the application of knowledge, than those who do not.

Number two, turn back to Proverbs 2:5. You say, what is the fear of God? Well, it is the key to knowledge and wisdom. But the Bible teaches that it is the knowledge of God Himself. When you say “fear of God,” we are not talking simply about being scared; but we are actually talking about knowing God, and fear is the consequence of that. In verse 4 it says, “If you seek for wisdom, like you search for hidden treasure (you are really after it), then you will understand the fear of the Lord (parallel statement again) and find the knowledge of God.” What is the fear of the Lord? It is the knowledge of God.

Now turn to Proverbs 9:10 to read even a more pointed statement. It says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” That is how we started the book in Proverbs 1:7. Now Solomon picks it up again and says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (here is a parallel statement) and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

So, what is the fear of the Lord? It is the knowledge of God Himself. When you fear God, you have decided that knowing who God is is more important than anything else in life. Are you following? And isn't it interesting that our culture is bonkers—I mean, I am going to find another word to just describe their obsession—but they are bonkers with regard to learning about man and self. And we wonder why we are not wise. We wonder why we do not have the wisdom and knowledge of God. What is wrong? Well, the pursuit is wrong. If you are pursuing knowledge of yourself to find out who you are to really get your act together, first of all, it is a dead end street going nowhere. You are wasting your time, really. But if you are doing that, it is leading to that which is not wise. You will learn fast and rapidly that you will never discover the real wisdom that God wants to give you. It comes through knowing God.

Turn back to Psalm 33 for a third thing when you ask me, “What is the fear of God?” It is the key to knowledge and wisdom; it is the knowledge of God Himself. And number three, it is respect for the power of God's Word. Why do some people not pay much attention to the Bible and the Word of God in their life? Well, according to the Bible there is a problem here about the fear of God.

In Psalm 33:8–9 we read,

Let all the earth fear the LORD;
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
For He spoke, and it was done;
He commanded, and it stood fast.

You know, just thinking about Creation and how it came into existence is awesome. By the way, if you do not believe that the world was created by the direct Word of God, (guess what?) I am sorry, but you are not smart. And I am not discussing all the scientific theories that our world has come up with. If you do not believe that the universe was the result of the direct Word of God, it is heading you down a course of intellectual and moral blindness, whether you know it or not. “For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:9).

Okay, we Christians might argue over how long the days were, what the processes were and all of that. But listen, you remove God—In the beginning God created—and you are now on a road of moral and intellectual darkness. And the Bible speaks about that frequently. You don’t acknowledge God, you set Him aside, it is going to lead to the foolishness of your own imaginations—that’s in Romans 1. And God says you are without excuse once you do that. You are in big trouble.

So it is respect for the power of God’s Word. Now God spoke and it was done. Remember folks, when God spoke and created the world, which is a result of the creative breath of God Almighty. Well, so is man the result of the creative breath of God. The Bible says that the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into His nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. So the material, physical universe is the product of the creative breath of God and so is man and woman. By the way, so is the written Word of God. In 2 Timothy 3:16 it says, “All Scripture (*graphe*, writing, that which is written), every Scripture is inspired by God, is God breathed.”

So in the Bible, we have learned three things that are the result of the simple word of God: the creative power of God by the simple spoken word; the physical, material universe (including people—man and woman); and third, the Word of God itself—the written Word of God. So you see the fear of God is a key even to your whole response to the Word of God.

You say, what is the fear of God? It is the key to knowledge and understanding and wisdom. It is also the knowledge of God Himself, and it is respect for the power of God’s Word. You stand in awe. You fear, why?—because He spoke and it was done.

Turn please to Proverbs 8:13 to see a fourth thing that the Bible says is the fear of God. It says,

The fear of the LORD is to hate evil;
Pride and arrogance and the evil way
And the perverse mouth I hate.

When you fear God, you hate what He hates. You hate sin. You say, “What is the fear of God?” It is the hatred of sin. And what do we see in our culture? We see a giant toleration of sin. We see also a redefinition of sin—things that God says are wrong, people are saying that it is okay. Listen, if you fear God, what that fear of God is, is a hatred of sin. Not sinners, sin. We love people but we hate what they do—hatred of sin. If you do not hate sin, you in fact are not described in the Bible as one who fears God. And you are living very dangerously as a believer if

that is what you claim to be. People who really love the Lord and are really committed to Him, hate evil and sin. They know what it does. They know the damage and destruction, and they hate it wherever it is. But they love people.

For point number five, turn to Proverbs 14. You say, “What is the fear of God?” It is the key to wisdom and knowledge, the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. It is the knowledge of God Himself. It is the respect for the power of God’s Word. It is the hatred of sin. Proverbs 14:27 adds another aspect. It says, “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life to avoid the snares of death.” You say, “What is the fear of God?” It is a fountain of life. Whatever this is, the fear of God, it is the root so to speak, or the fountain out of which gushes all that is what we call life—and especially as it relates to eternal life. Because obviously, the person is alive about whom he is saying it. So it is not simply the physical life problem. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life to avoid the traps of death. And what he is saying is referring to a believer. All of that life is being promised to the believer by our Lord. Everlasting, eternal, wonderful life and all of its blessings, is really rooted in the fear of the Lord. So, that is why the fear of the Lord is sometimes a statement just simply indicating a believer in contrast to a nonbeliever. All believers should fear God. All unbelievers do not fear God. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, out of which all life springs.

Turn to Proverb 23 and I will give you one more aspect of the fear of God. When you say, “What is the fear of God?” It is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. It is the knowledge of God Himself. It is a hatred of sin. It is a fountain of life. But according to Proverbs 23:17–18, it is also “hope in the Lord.” And here is where we begin to understand a little bit of what the fear of God means. It says,

Do not let your heart envy sinners,
But be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day;
For surely there is a hereafter,
And your hope will not be cut off.

When you have fear in the Lord, it is hope in the Lord. So you do not envy what the world is offering or what they say is cool or neat or sharp or wonderful or tremendous for you. You do not envy it. You do not want anything to do with it. The world is passing away. What the fear of God is, is hope in the Lord. You know that what He has promised will come true.

Hebrews 6 says that hope is a sure anchor of the soul. Our souls are in so much turmoil. Why? Because there is no anchor of the soul. We are bouncing on the water, so to speak. We are not anchored down. And the anchor is the hope and confidence that we have that God cannot lie; and He has promised to us wonderful things, so we trust Him.

Now I begin to learn a little bit more about what the fear of God is. It is the key to knowledge and wisdom. It does mean to hate sin and all of that, but it is hope and it is confidence in the Lord. It is not confidence in what life presents to me, but in the Lord Himself. And you can almost see when the fear of God is dribbling out of your life when you lose confidence in the Lord, and all of a sudden your circumstances and the events of your life and even people in your circle of ministry, become the key focus and you are getting your hope from them. Soon you will see that the fear of God is lacking. You are more worried about what people think about you. You are more worried about how the circumstances of your life are turning out. And if they are in your “category negative”—that is, you do not like what is happening—all of a sudden, you are getting bent out of shape. Yeah, things are getting worse. You are losing your confidence. You are losing

your trust. What is happening? Well, your problem is lacking the fear of the Lord. We need to fear God.

Now, let me give you some reasons to answer the second question: “Why should we fear God?” Why? Turn to Proverbs 10:27, please. Why should we fear God? And there are a lot of wonderful reasons why. One is that it prolongs days. You say, “Man, I can hardly get through a day now, you are telling me it is going to be longer?” It is amazing when you read a verse, what you think. That is why study is good. The Bible says, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman who has no cause to be embarrassed or ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). At first glance sometimes you wonder.

Proverbs 10:27 says,

The fear of the LORD prolongs days,
But the years of the wicked will be shortened.

Now, right away comes forth a doctrine that I believe is incorrect, but is taught by many, many Christians. It teaches that if you fear God, you will live longer than the guys who do not fear God. That is what a lot of people believe that verse says. Looks like it, doesn't it, on the surface? Do you know any wicked people who have lived a long time? Do you know any people who have walked with the Lord who have, so to speak, had their lives cut short—did not live very long on the earth? No, Proverbs is not presenting the earthly life as the big deal. The hope of Proverbs, the wonderful joys and blessings of Proverbs, are not rooted in whatever this life has.

Remember the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians. “If only in this life we have hope, we are of all men most [what?] miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19, paraphrased). That does not sound like somebody who has the fear of the Lord in his life, who thinks prolonging days means just living longer. Hey, there are a lot of reasons why one does not want to live longer.

Let me give an example. I was thinking about this the other day. When a loved one has a heart attack and dies, sometimes it is a shock—especially if there is no warning and they just die. And you know we almost all, in hearing that go, “Gasp!” But you know, if they know the Lord, the response ought to be, “Wow, that's great!” Imagine that. I mean, it is like one day you are here and “bang,” the next moment you are in heaven. “Boy, that lucky guy! Man, wasn't that something? Praise the Lord that he died of a heart attack!” You know, if you say that, they will call for the guys in the white coats. They will ask, “Why aren't you more grieving?” But listen, if we are absent from the body and present with the Lord, though we sorrow over missing the loved one, isn't it true that that is a very sweet and gracious thing of God?

Now on the other hand, have you not also seen what I have seen and still live with every day, the suffering and agony of a loved one? They are not going to get better. The suffering gets worse. And you tell me to rejoice because the fear of the Lord prolongs days and all that means is that they may live to be ninety. Hey, they might have wanted to die when they were seventy, if they had only known what the next twenty years would have been.

No, God's Word here is not promising earthly extensions. God is talking about the hope that we have in the Lord. You talk about prolonged days! We are talking about living with the Lord forever! So why should we fear God? Because it prolongs days and that means we are going to be with the Lord forever. It is a statement again about those who have come to believe in Him. If you fear God, you put your hope in the Lord and your confidence is in Him. And what a wonderful promise we have of living forever with God. That is special.

Turn to Proverbs 14 again. A second reason *why* we should fear God is because it protects us from some very serious problems.

Proverbs 14:26 says,

In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence,
And His children will have a place of refuge.

We are leaning on God's everlasting arms. "Oh God, You are our shield and our fortress. You are the lifter up of our head" (Psalm 3:3, paraphrased). And there are so many wonderful declarations of God's protection. "The Lord is a sun and shield. He will give grace and glory. No good will He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11, paraphrased). The Lord will deliver us.

The fear of the Lord protects us. In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence. If you understand that it is putting your confidence in God, in who He is and not who man is, then you realize how you can have strong confidence—no matter what happens. If you really fear the Lord, there is a refuge there. "He hideth my soul." There is a place of refuge.

Proverbs 14:27 says,

The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
To turn one away from the snares of death.

Turn to Proverbs 19. God has promised protection to those who fear the Lord—confidence and a refuge. A place to go when it looks like all hell is breaking out around you. Hey, in the Lord there is strong confidence, no matter what happens.

And in Proverbs 19:23, it says,

The fear of the LORD leads to life,
And he who has it will abide in satisfaction;
He will not be visited with evil.

God is promising protection of the believer. Even Paul prayed, in 2 Thessalonians 3:1–3,

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

When Jesus, in John 17, was praying to his heavenly Father, he said, "Holy Father, keep those whom You have given to me." He said, "Keep them from the evil one." And I read throughout Scripture that those who put their confidence and trust in the Lord are protected in unique and special ways from evil and the evil one, more than perhaps any of us have ever really recognized. Thank God for it. God takes care of us.

This brings me to a third reason why I should fear God. Turn to Psalm 33. Not only because it prolongs days and involves living forever with the Lord; not only because it protects us from evil

and the evil one; but also, it provides for our needs. It provides for our needs. It is interesting that there are a lot of people who wonder if God will provide for their needs.

In Psalm 33:18–19 it says,

Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, [I like that]
On those who hope in His mercy,
To deliver their soul from death,
And to keep them alive in famine.

Look at Psalm 34:8–10 please,

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good;
Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!
Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints! ...
[Parallel statements here. Trust in the Lord. Fear the Lord.]
There is no want to those who fear Him.
The young lions lack and suffer hunger;
But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.

They will not lack any good from the Lord. What a fascinating statement that is. God is going to provide for all of our needs. You say, “Man, I knew it! That new house, we got it.” Wait a minute. A lot of us struggle with how God provides for our needs. Isn’t it interesting that this passage in Psalm 34 is rooted in the goodness of God? Oh taste and see that the Lord is good. This is rooted in our trust in Him and that there is no lack. God will always give what is good.

Now isn’t it possible, my friends, to have something happen in our lives (or not happen that we expected) that we would regard as “bad” and He would regard as “good”? Oh yes. The thing that causes one to have the fear of God and trust in the Lord is that everything—no matter whether it is my perspective of how bad or good it is—everything God does, will be and is good. Do you believe it was good for you to lose that job? Do you believe it was good for you to face that trial and that circumstance and that pain and that sorrow and that fear? You know, sometimes God is gracious and in our lives He gives us understanding of those things. But I am to trust Him to the point that even though the understanding never comes, I will still put my confidence in the Lord that everything He has done is good.

You see, that is rooted also in my understanding of the sovereignty of God. All things are being worked together for good to those who love God. If I fear the Lord then I will recognize that. I know God provides all my needs, no matter what it is. Now, I may come up with my own list. I do not know if in marriage you have this problem, but I used to teach (until I realized what a problem it was) that you ought to make a list of things to do. You know, you call it a “honey do” list. You know, instead of worrying about communication and getting hurt, just make a list of things. The trouble is with preaching this, my wife took me seriously and started making a list of things I ought to do or not do. And so I have dropped that out of my teaching and preaching.

But anyway, it is interesting because in our list of things that we might make and then say, “This is really my need.” You know, we make a list and pray about those needs. And then we fail to recognize what God is in fact doing to answer the prayers requests on our little list—sometimes He is telling us “No.” And sometimes He is not even responding to us because He has something else He wants to do. But He doesn’t get glory. He doesn’t get trust. There is no fear of God because our list is the biggie. And we say, “God, as soon as You do something about my list, then

I'll know that You exist." Hey wait a minute. In the beginning God created. The Bible does not set out to prove to you the existence of God. It assumes it. It asks you to respond to it, to believe in Him and to trust Him no matter what. And if you never see anything in your life that is in your "category good," would you still trust Him? Job said, "Though He slay me, yet I will trust Him." If He takes everything away from me (it will look like He did), I am still going to trust the Lord because of who I know the Lord is, from the Bible. He always does good and He will take care of us. That is what He said.

Now turn to Psalm 147. Let me give you a fourth reason why you should fear God. Not only because it prolongs your days, which involves living forever with God, it protects us from evil and the evil one, it provides for all of our needs, and God does good constantly for us; but folks, it also pleases the Lord to fear God. It pleases the Lord. Psalm 147:10.

He does not delight in the strength of the horse;
He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man.

Do we have any guys who are into being buff? Go down to the club, man, work out. Hey, get into the weights. I did that as a young man. In fact, for quite a long time I really went after it and I loved it. I became a life member of a gym and all that stuff. You know, I never told my kids to do that but they did it too. And I know the grandkids are going to do it too. I will never forget one day I was working out in the gym on the leg machine—pumping it up, you know. And we were kind of having a little contest, a few of us that were playing ball together. We were trying to see who could push the most with our legs, you know. I remember a little kind of a thin guy who was not into sports or anything, but he was in the gym and he was a Christian. He was always talking about the Word. He came up to me and he quoted this verse. "God takes no pleasure in the legs of a man" and he walked away. Man, what a bummer!

Psalm 147:11 says,

The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him,
in those who hope in His mercy.

Isn't that neat? Hey you know folks, it pleases the Lord when you fear Him. And in this passage you've got even another definition of the fear of the Lord. It involves hoping in the mercy of God. Mercy is holding back from us what we really deserve and getting His loving kindness and tenderness. Hoping in that is the same thing as fearing the Lord. When you fear the Lord, you recognize that were it not for His mercy, you would be zapped right now. What a neat passage. It pleases God.

And we have all this busyness going on. We are into everything and trying to prove that we can handle everything. All of life is like that. The Bible says that God does not take pleasure in that. He takes pleasure in those who fear Him.

Let me give you another reason. Turn to Psalm 25. You say, "Why should I fear God?" Well, it prolongs days. Eternal life is an issue there. It protects us from evil and the evil one. It provides for our needs. God will always do good to you. It pleases the Lord. But number five, it provides special blessings from the Lord, to fear God. And these are some of the neat things that God does throughout our lives. And we look back sometimes over the years and we say, "God has been so good." Count your blessings. Name them, one by one.

In Psalm 25:12–14 we read,

Who is the man that fears the LORD?
 Him shall He teach in the way He chooses.
 He himself shall dwell in prosperity,
 And his descendants shall inherit the earth.
 [Look at this next statement.]
 The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him,
 And He will show them His covenant.

God promises in these verses that He is going to really show a man the way that the Lord chooses. He is going to show him also things that a lot of folks do not understand or see. God is going to bless him. God is going to show him the impact of all the promises He has made to him. God is going to reveal things to this man that he never would have seen, had he not first of all, feared the Lord with all his heart. How interesting!

Turn to Psalm 31:19.

Oh, how great is Your goodness,
 Which You have laid up for those who fear You,
 Which You have prepared for those who trust in You
 In the presence of the sons of men!

Again, God is promising wonderful, special blessings that He has laid up and that He has prepared for those who fear the Lord. Again, trust in Him.

Turn to Psalm 85:9. Talk about special blessings. The Bible says,

Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,
 That glory may dwell in our land.

Salvation is near to those who fear Him.

Turn to Psalm 103, please. I love these verses.

For as the heavens are high above the earth,
 So great is His mercy toward those who [what?] fear Him;
 As a father pities his children,
 So the LORD pities those who fear Him.
 [Special blessing from God.]
 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting
 On those who fear Him,
 And His righteousness to children's children. (Psalm 103:11,13,15)

It is like a statement of belief in the Lord. It is referring to believers and the blessing that God will bring.

Turn to Psalm 115, please. Look at verses 13 to 15.

He will bless those who fear the LORD,
 Both small and great.
 May the LORD give you increase more and more,
 You and your children.

May you be blessed by the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.

Why? Because you fear the Lord. Wow!

Look at Psalm 128:1 which says,

Blessed is every one who fears the LORD,
Who walks in His ways.
Behold, thus shall the man be blessed
Who fears the LORD. (Psalm 128:1,4)

How will he be blessed? Verse 3 says, your wife will be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house. Your children, like olive plants, all around your table. Listen to me, people, the Bible promises a happy marriage and a happy family life to those who fear the Lord. And you want to know why there is so much trouble? It is because we do not fear the Lord. We do not trust the Lord. We do not depend on the Lord. We do not hope in the Lord. And we wonder why things are a mess. God promises special blessings from His gracious hand if we will fear the Lord.

Psalm 145:19 says,

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

You say, "I've got a lot of desire." Psalm 37 says, "Delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4, paraphrased). Make Him the joy of your heart. You will find your desire system is radically changed by the Lord Himself. The Bible says that to all those who fear Him, He will fulfill the desire of their heart. Wow! Tremendous promises!

Let me give you one more. Turn to Malachi 3. You say, "Why should we fear God?" Well, it prolongs days—talking about living forever with God. It protects us from evil and the evil one. It provides for our needs. God is always doing good. It pleases the Lord Himself. It provides special blessings from the Lord, abundant blessings. And number six, it promises future salvation. It promises future salvation. That is why we should fear the Lord.

In Malachi 3:16 it says,

Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another;
And the LORD listened and heard them;
So a book of remembrance was written before Him
For those who fear the LORD
And who meditate on His name.

Malachi 4:2 says,

But to you who fear My name
The Sun of Righteousness [It's a title of the Messiah] shall arise
With healing in His wings;
And you shall go out
And grow fat like stall-fed calves.

He is talking about the future blessings of the Lord when the Messiah comes again. For whom is all of this done? Whose names are written in the book of the remembrance of God? Who are those who will find total, complete, absolute, perfect healing from the Messiah Himself forever and ever? It is for those who fear God.

Now let's ask the last question—we have three questions: 1) What is the fear of God? 2) Why should we fear God? And now 3) How do we fear God?

Turn to Deuteronomy 6, the fifth book of the Old Testament. How do you fear God? I mean, what does it actually mean if we are applying this in our life lives? Number one, you fear God by keeping His commandments. Obedience. Don't tell me that you fear God if you do not keep His word. God says this over and over and over again. I will hit some highlights.

Deuteronomy 6:2 says,

That you may fear the Lord your God to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you.

Deuteronomy 6:24 says,

And the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive as it is this day.

Deuteronomy 8: 6 says,

Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.

Deuteronomy 13:4 says,

You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.

Deuteronomy 17:19 says,

It shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart may not be lifted up above his brethren, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

Deuteronomy 28:58 says,

If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the Lord your God, then God would bring judgment.

What does it mean to fear the Lord? In Deuteronomy 31:12–13 it says,

Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.

I hope all of this Scripture tells you one thing: we are not talking about learning to be afraid and scared of God. But we are learning to recognize God in such a dominate way in our lives that obedience flows out of it. I want to do what God tells me to do. Those who fear God are geared towards obedience always.

Number two, turn to Exodus 20. You say, “How do you fear God?” First, by keeping His commandments—obedience. The Second way is by staying away from sin. Staying away from sin.

In Exodus 20:20 Moses said to the people,

And Moses said to the people, “Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.”

You know that is almost a paradox. He tells the people not to be afraid. And then tells them that they would fear God. So we learn that fearing God is not simply being scared. And they were scared at this point because they saw a visible demonstration of God—fire, all of this. They were scared, really scared, frightened by what God did. And He said, “Hey, don’t be scared. Don’t be scared at all. I have come to test you. I want My fear to be before you, so that you may not sin. He had just revealed the consequences that could happen to somebody who disobeyed the Ten Commandments, which are found in Exodus 20. You see, the fear of God is staying away from sin.

In Proverbs 3:7, we had read that verse earlier, but it says,

Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the LORD and depart from evil.

In Proverbs 16, verse 6 it says,

In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity;
And by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.

You may ask, “What does it mean to fear God?” We are to do it with all of our heart, mind, and soul. It means keeping His commandments. And it means staying away from sin.

Number three, it means to serve the Lord. Those who fear God are not trying to find a way out of service. They are committed to service because they fear God.

In Deuteronomy 6:13 it says,

You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him.

In Deuteronomy 10:12 it says,

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 to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Joshua challenged the people of Israel in Joshua 24:15 with the same thing. If you fear God, you will serve Him. He said, “Choose you this day whom you will serve.” Those who fear the Lord are going to serve the Lord. They are going to do whatever they can to be a blessing to others and to do what God wants them to do.

So you see, when you ask me: “How do you fear God?” Keep His commandments and be obedient. Stay away from sin. And serve the Lord with all your heart; that is fearing God.

Turn to Deuteronomy 14. This one is going to hurt a little bit, so you better turn to the Bible. You know how you fear God in your life? It is by giving to the Lord a portion of your income. You might say, “I knew he would talk about money.” I always love to talk about the man who visited here at Calvary Church on three occasions. He has not been back in several years, but he visited here on three occasions. He said to me, “I’ve been here three times.” And he named the occasions. He said, “All three times you spoke about money and giving. I checked my records. It was the only three times I had spoken on money. He said, “Well, the way I see it, you always speak on money. I said, “You know, since I checked the records and those are the only three times I spoke on money, obviously you have only been here three times. And by the way, isn’t it interesting that in the sovereignty of God, He would bring you on the Sundays that I would be speaking on giving?”

You know, you talk about giving, people back up. Wait a minute. Deuteronomy 14:22 says, “You shall truly tithe.” Yes, tithe was like a taxation. I understand all that. Israel was a theocracy.

You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

Did you know that giving a portion on a regular basis of your income to God, keeps God on the front burner of your focus and perspective? That is what it means to fear the Lord. You recognize His sovereignty over all that you have. That is why a portion of your income is given to Him, to honor the Lord with the first fruits of your substance, as Proverbs 3:9-10 says. It is a recognition that all I have comes from God. And it is a commitment to God to honor Him, to worship Him, to say, “Lord, I know where all this comes from.”

Number five as to how you fear God is by keeping His commandments, staying away from sin, serving the Lord, giving to the Lord and also by praising the Lord, which we will talk about more in our next message.

Psalm 22:23 says,

You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, and fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

Psalm 135:20 says,

Bless the LORD, O house of Levi!
You who fear the LORD, bless the LORD!

If you fear the Lord, you praise Him, you bless Him, and you give glory to Him.

And there is one last thing. Turn to Psalm 115:11. How do we fear God? It is by keeping His commandments, by staying away from sin, by serving the Lord, by giving to the Lord, and by praising the Lord. But here is the heart of it: by trusting in the Lord. We fear Him by trusting in the Lord.

In Psalm 115:11, it says,

You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord.
He is their help and their shield.

The choir sang that God is a shield about us. We learned in the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence. He is a place of refuge, as we are leaning on the everlasting arms.

I do not know where you stand today, but I will tell you that we need to trust the Lord with all of our hearts and not lean to our own understanding.

In Psalm 119:74 it says,

Those who fear You will be glad when they see me because I
have hoped in Your Word.

Do you trust in the Lord? Let's close with prayer.

Father, You know who in this audience fears You and who does not; who trusts and hopes in You; who recognizes You in all that they do and say; and who relies upon You daily. God, I pray for those in our audience who have never come to make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. I pray that You would, right now, by the Holy Spirit of God, draw them to Yourself. Bring them, Father, by Your power, to see that we are sinners and cannot save ourselves and we need the Savior, who died on a cross 1900 years ago to pay for our sins and rose again from the dead, that we might live forever with Him. God help us to learn to fear You all of our days and to trust with all of our heart and not to lean on our own understanding. Father, work in our hearts to make those commitments that we know we should make. I pray for Your people, who claim to be Christians, who are not walking in the fear of the Lord. God bring us to a place of repentance and change so that we would come back to Your loving heart. Thank You, Lord, for what You are going to do. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.