



Empowering People to Change the World

The Fear of God

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Holy Week: Experience it all with us.

- Good Friday at 1 p.m.
- Easter Sunday! Invite someone, invite a family; we will have an Easter Egg Hunt for the kids and even have baptisms.
- If you have committed your life to Christ recently, get baptized.

Road Declaration

1 Peter Graphic:

Peter's Principles for Prevailing over Problems

Last week: The Power of Focusing our Mind.

We talked about four ways we focus for action:

- 1) Focus on God's Grace,
- 2) Focus on Emotional Sobriety,
- 3) Focus on Holiness, and
- 4) Focus on the Fear of God. I have waited until today to cover.

The Fear of God

It appears from even a cursory look at 1 Peter, that Peter understood one of the key principles for prevailing over problems is the "fear of God."

- Definitely a theme of Peter.
- Five times Peter writes about "fear" and its importance,

Turn to 1 Peter

1 Peter 1:17

"And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear."

1 Peter 2:17-18

"Honor all *people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Servants, *be* submissive to *your* masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh."

- Isn't it interesting that we have "honor," "love," and "fear" in the same sentence.

1 Peter 3:2

"When they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied by fear.*"

1 Peter 3:15

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*"

- The fear of God can definitely keep one out of a lot of trouble!
- The fear of God can prevent one from looking at things one shouldn't look at, going where one shouldn't go, and doing things one shouldn't do!
- Very few in the church talk about it, few pastors teach on it, and lots of people are confused by the topic.

**"Fear God and Your Enemies will Fear You"
(Benjamin Franklin)**

- **Fear God and you will have nothing else to fear!**
- **The modern Church of the past forty years has shied away from topics that deal with the fear of God, because of a fear of man.**
 - We are afraid we might offend people or might paint the wrong picture of God.
 - No one is offended by the love of God message.
 - Not one is offended by the grace of God message.
 - The love and grace of God messages are always necessary!
 - But not to the neglect of the fear of God.

**Two Unhealthy Extremes in our View of God:
Hyper-Grace and Hyper-Legalism**

- On the one side there is the grace and love of God, and it's so important to teach on the grace and love of God.

- But we can go so far on that side we forget on the other side is the holiness, severity, and discipline of God, and of course we can go too far on that side as well.
- If we only focus on the love and grace of God, it leads to a flimsy **hyper-grace message** where sin, especially sexual sin, is swept under the carpet under the rubric of God forgives.
 - This is the laughing Jesus, the open arms Jesus, and *the accept everyone no matter what* Jesus.
 - This leads to pastors and leaders in the church not walking in holiness.
- On the other side, is the extreme of constantly focusing on holiness and the Law of God, which leads to **hyper-legalism**, and an angry God that's just out to get you!
 - This is the stern Jesus, the angry Jesus, and the *you better clean up your act* Jesus.
 - This leads to pastors and leaders who condemn everyone who doesn't believe the way they do.
- Both extremes are inaccurate and not the biblical Jesus!

**“In Our Natural State We Have
No Fear of God”
(Romans 3:10-18)**

Turn to Romans 3:9-18

“...For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one;

There is none who understands;

There is none who seeks after God.

They have all turned aside;

They have together become unprofitable.

There is none who does good, no, not one.’

‘Their throat is an open tomb;

With their tongues they have practiced deceit’;

‘The poison of asps is under their lips’;

'Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.'

'Their feet are swift to shed blood;

Destruction and misery are in their ways;

And the way of peace they have not known.'

'There is no fear of God before their eyes.'

- "None of us seek God...none of us are righteous...none of us do good."
- Now of course, there is a kind of civic good, there is a type of common goodness in the sense that we are all created in the image of God.
- But Paul is saying that we do not have a natural fear of God. Left to ourselves we like sin; we actually love sin.
- We can't understand the knowledge and wisdom of God.
- With no fear of God we are prideful, arrogant, self-confident, and self-absorbed. We naturally curse God and people.
- David writes, in Psalm 36, "An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes."

Top Seven Benefits of Fearing the Lord

1) The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge.

- You can't know God's wisdom; and you can't have godly knowledge without the fear of God!
- This means that you understand things; you have anointed insight.

2) The fear of the Lord is clean, it is what leads you into purity.

3) The secret of the Lord is revealed to those who fear Him.

4) The eye of the Lord is upon those who fear Him.

5) The mercy of the Lord is upon those who fear Him.

6) The fear of the Lord brings life.

7) The Lord favors those who fear Him.

"Learn to fear the Lord his God" (Deuteronomy 17:19).

Learn the Fear of the Lord Four Principles

1. The Fear of the Lord Does not Mean we are Afraid of God

Turn to Exodus 20:18

- Moses has gone up on Mount Sinai and been given the Ten Commandments and the people are watching what is happening on the Mount.

Verses 18-19

“Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, ‘You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.’”

- The people are afraid of God! They don’t have an intimate knowledge of God, they don’t have a loving relationship with God.
- They see the power, the presence, the holiness of God and they recognize that they are sinful, unclean, and unable to relate.
- When people are in sin, they become afraid of God! Adam runs from God because of his sin. People don’t want to be around God and His Church when they are in sin.

Verse 20

“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.’”

- Moses makes an interesting statement, watch this!!
- He says: Don’t be afraid of God...but fear God!
 - He says: God is testing you! He is showing you His magnificent power and presence, and this should activate a holy fear of sinning.
 - Moses is saying—don’t be afraid of God but realize that God is testing you...testing the motivations of your heart!

2. The Fear God Means We Love God

- Paul writes, “The love of God leads us to repentance.”
- John writes, “We love Him because He first loved us.”
- “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”
- “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”
- John continues, “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in Him.”

But the Scripture is also clear that we are to have a fear of God. We are called to an intimate loving relationship with God our Father and with that intimacy is also a holy reverence for God and His presence.

God Wants us to Have a Healthy Fear of Him

- Paul tells us to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling.”
- It was said of Cornelius in Acts 10:2: “a devout man, and one who **feared God** with all his household, and gave many alms to the people, and prayed to God continually.”
- Ephesians 5:21 “submitting to one another in the **fear of God.**”
- 1 Peter 2:17 “Honor all *people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God.”

My Thesis today:

3. The Fear of God and Love of God are the Boundaries to Intimacy with God

You have to have boundaries to truly experience intimacy with Jesus!

As a kid growing up, I loved my father and knew that he loved me. But there was also this fear component. I feared my dad’s wrath when I disobeyed him. My father is one of the most gracious men you could ever meet, but there were times when I tested his patience and grace. I felt this dread hearing “when your father comes home,” remember those words?

In the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, when the children first encounter Aslan, they have this fear of Him:

“People who have not been in Narnia sometimes think that a thing cannot be good and terrible at the same time. If the children had ever thought so, they were cured of it now. For when they tried to look at Aslan’s face they just caught a glimpse of the golden mane and the great, royal, solemn, overwhelming eyes; and then they found they couldn’t look at him and went all trembly” (C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*).

Moses even explains to the people that the love of God and fear of God go together.

“[Moses:] 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: (Deuteronomy 10:12).

- So, the love of God and the fear of God are two sides of the same coin of our relationship with Christ.
- What I feared with my father was the broken relationship, the disconnection, the disappointment, and also, to be fair, there was usually some kind of discipline or punishment involved.
- My dad disciplined me because he loved me!

My Thesis today:

God disciplines us (fear) because He loves us.

Jesus says to the woman caught in adultery, “I don’t condemn you (love of God); go and sin no more (fear of God)” (John 8:11).

So, on one side is the dread of sinning, breaking off our relationship with Him and on the other is a passionate loving pursuit of God.

- Jesus is our loving friend, but He is also a holy King.
- Jesus is our grace brother, but He is also our disciplining Father.
- Jesus is our merciful healer, but He also gives us the Holy Spirit.

- God is coming with a Kingdom of God Revolution that will be sparked by a fear of God.
- **The fear of God is the fear of not being in communion with God! The fear of God is a fear of sinning and breaking our intimacy with God.**
- **Proper fear of God keeps us away from sin!**

**Learn the Fear of the Lord
Four Principles**

- 1. The Fear of the Lord Does not Mean we are Afraid of God**
- 2. The Fear God Means We Love God**
- 3. The Fear of God and Love of God are the Boundaries to Intimacy with God**
- 4. The Fear of God Guides Us into The Righteousness of God**

Look at Romans 3:22-26

“Even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

- The fear of God is a revelation from God through experiencing God’s righteousness in our heart.
- It starts through faith in Christ Jesus.
- Even God the Father sending His Son to die for our sins on the Cross is all about the holy fear of God because we see the seriousness of sin to the Father. The Father understood that sin has chained us down and we could not seek Him.
- The payment for our sin was through the death of His Son! Sin has enslaved us, but Christ was given by the Father in order to set us free from sin.

- And He wants us to experience this same revelation—the revelation of our sin and the revelation of His love for us.