

“Fear the Lord” Pt 1

Christian Liberty

The Rev. Ted Wood

Various Scriptures

October 21, 2016

Ted: Lord God, we cannot count Your mercies, or Your grace to us. We ask You to forgive us for our easy and soft attitude to You and Your grace. We pray that You would fill us with the fear of the Lord, a holy fear that causes us to obey You and to worship You, and to seek You only, for we pray this in Your name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Ted: Okay. Thank you. Brother, I take your point. Quite well made. Remember Cyrus, king of Persia was God’s anointed. *(Laughter.)*

I want to talk about the fear of the Lord. And you can see on your handout from the Psalm that says, *“Fear the LORD, you His saints.”* And we’ve been going along in terms of the book of Galatians. And we’re not going to get completely away from that. We’re going to tie what Bruce has been teaching about the book of Galatians.

And I’m sort of pulling off on the lay-by of Christian liberty, because that’s the last thing that Bruce was talking about—Christian liberty or freedom. The lay-by. Now that’s interesting, because Sig wrote me and said, “Are you sure you got this word right?” Does anyone know what a lay-by is? No one knows what a lay-by is? What?

Participant: A lay-by is when you’re driving down the road and you need to get off the road. You’re waiting for your car to pull over and there’s a lay-by in the road.

Ted: That’s right. *(Laughter.)* Throughout England, if you’re traveling in England on the road, there are all these lay-byes. And sometimes there are places for rest, and sometimes there are places where they have stands set up for food and coffee and this kind of thing. They’re very common. And when my wife and I go to England we often look for the lay-byes because you get some of the local color there because the local fellow has set up this coffee shop in this kind of pull-off area.

Participant: Slip road.

Ted: What? Slip road?

Participant: Yes. Take the slip road.

Ted: Well, take the slip road. Right. So it’s a lay-by. And where we’re going is that we’re on this road that Bruce has laid out in Galatians on Christian liberty, and I’m pulling off on the lay-by that has to do with the fear of the Lord.

And as you can see, Bruce’s teaching, when he taught last Friday, he taught on Christian liberty and freedom in Christ. If you’re following along on 1A., Bruce was saying that *man needs to be free from himself and the tyranny of himself.* And I think, my gosh, that’s so true, because I think that’s the thing I struggle with. My problems are not so much with those on the outside as the problems with those within, the problem of myself.

He went on to say that we live in the eternal constraints of the Holy Spirit. That which was external has become internal. So you have the fact of being regenerate. You have the work of the law and the expectations upon us. But when we’ve been regenerated, we

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receive the new birth. We receive the Holy Spirit. And those constraints, those motivations become internal because they come by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Bruce also talked about *absorbed grace*. I liked that a lot when he said that. He used this expression—absorb grace. Put yourself in a position to absorb grace as part of being in Christ. So those are the things that Bruce was talking about.

But I began to wonder, as I was listening to him talk, how does one do that? And I began to think about several activities and forces in my own life that are moving me in that direction.

As I think I’ve shared with you, I have taken the Lord’s Prayer—and I do it every other morning—I use the Lord’s Prayer as a confession. And I break the Lord’s Prayer into six parts. I didn’t learn this from anyone; it just seemed to work out this way.

And so I go, “Our Father who art in heaven.” So “Our Father.” And then I ask myself the question. This is self-examination and confession. Is there any way in which I have disrespected or do not honor those who call God “our Father?” In essence, is there any way within the body of Christ that I, even in my congregation, do not show proper respect and honor that is appropriate for another member of the body. What?

Participant: How is that?

Ted: Well, you know, I’m sitting and listening to the person at church. And I say, “My gosh, I just wish he would shut up! He just talks way too much!” (*Laughter.*) “Our Father who art in heaven.” Is there any way in which I dishonor or disrespect another member of the body?

“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.” Is there any way in which I do not keep God’s name holy? And the more I thought about that, because this comes up with the expression “hallowed.” It almost sounds like Halloween. It’s like an Old English expression. Actually, it’s an Anglo-Saxon expression.

But “hallowed be Thy name.” Keep God’s name holy. And I began to ask myself the question. Why don’t I keep God’s name holy? Well I don’t think I keep God’s name holy because I don’t really fear Him. If I feared God, I would keep His name holy.

That word in Greek—*hallowed*, from the Lord’s Prayer—make holy, treat as holy, set apart as holy, sanctify, hallow and purify. Those are all ways of translating that word.

So that’s one thing I began to wonder about in my brain. Why don’t I hallow God’s name? And I would say that it’s because I don’t tremble in His presence.

Then, as part of my morning devotion, I pray Psalm 51 as a confession and Psalm 103 as absolution and forgiveness for what I’ve just confessed. And as I read through Psalm 51 and prayed it, and wrote it out—I actually have it on a card!—I notice that there are a number of times in Psalm 51 that end, “*to those*” or “*for those who fear the LORD.*”

For instance, Psalm 103 verse 13. “*As a father shows compassion to His children, so the LORD shows compassion.*” Oh boy, is that a great verse! “*As a father shows compassion to His children.*”

I had a good dad. And when he showed compassion to me, that was a wonderful sense of being. And if that’s what the heavenly Father is like, a father like mine or even better fathers who show compassion to their children, “*so the LORD shows compassion.*”

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Now up to this point, I’ve got good feelings. But then I hit the last clause of that verse. *“So the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him.”* What I thought went up short, because I thought to myself, “My gosh! Is this a qualification, If somewhere along the line I’m not receiving God’s compassion because I don’t deeply, and truly fear Him?”

I was listening to John Piper the other day. Do you know John Piper, a great, great Reformed Baptist teacher, probably one of the best along with R. C. Sproul who is kind of on the Presbyterian side? John Piper is on the Baptist side. But when it comes to the Reformed faith, he and Bruce would hold almost everything in common.

But John Piper has short little teachings of eight, nine, ten minutes. And I listened to one of his teachings, and it was called “What Does It Mean For a Christian To Fear God?” And this is his opening introduction and his response. It was a ten-minute response.

Piper says, “This is a very important topic. It is not marginal. It’s all over the Bible. The fear of the Lord is a pervasive topic. It’s muted today because we are so quick to solve the problem of God’s fearsomeness with the gospel that we may not let people get a chance to really let it sink in how deeply sinful they are and how fearful God really is.”

Now that’s a very long sentence. I’ve tried to break it up. But let me give you that sentence again—what Piper says.

“The fear of the Lord is muted today because we are so quick to solve the problem of God’s fearsomeness with the gospel that we may not let people get a chance to really let it sink in how deeply sinful they are and how fearful God really is.”

We understand. As I’m reading Psalm 103, *“As a father shows compassion to His children, so the LORD shows compassion.”* Ah, yes! *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son.”* That’s so sweet! And then I get *“to those who fear Him.”* And we’re so quick in the face of the fear of God, in the fearsomeness of God, in the awfulness of God, in the terror of God, we’re so uncomfortable with that that we run immediately to the gospel and say, “Oh, but Ted, it’s all covered by the Blood. We don’t need to worry about that.”

Piper goes on to say, “The sheer majesty of God, as well as the holiness and justice and wrath of God, cannot be approached in a cavalier manner.” Do you understand *cavalier*? We don’t need to talk about the fear of God. The Blood takes care of it. That’s a very cavalier manner.

“It would be insane to think that we can just strut up to the Creator of the universe. We are blind if we think we can do this without trembling.”

Think about that. We came out with our guns blazing on this subject, because it began to strike me that indeed we *do* talk about the fear of the Lord. Every day we examine ourselves and say, “Do I really fear God? Do I tremble in His presence?”

And yet this quality is so important that it was one of the qualifications for the Messiah in Isaiah 11:2-3. This is what it says about the Messiah, prophesying about the Messiah to come.

“And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding.” Okay, I get that. *“The Spirit of counsel and might.”* Okay, I get that. *“The Spirit of knowledge and the Spirit of the fear of the LORD. And His delight shall be*

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in the fear of the LORD.” The fear of the Lord is so important that one of the clear qualifications for the Messiah and His character was that His delight would be in fearing God.

It’s also interesting that in the first century in Judaism—the first century A.D., at the time of the apostles—that the Jews had a two-step process for a Gentile, that is a Non-Jew, to become a Jew, to enter into and become a part of the synagogue. The first step was to be a proselyte. And that’s where they took on circumcision and all the Jewish laws. But if you didn’t care to be circumcised, and you didn’t want to be *kosher*, the first step to getting into the synagogue and becoming a Jew, since you were a Greek or you were a Spaniard or somebody of that sort, the first step was to go to the synagogue and be under the teaching. And that step was called *God fearer*.

So the first step for your incorporation into the children of Israel was called *God fearer*. It doesn’t say, “Be instructed in the teachings of Moses.” It didn’t say to become a follower of the Ten Commandments. It didn’t say to become a believer in the Prophets or the history of the deliverance of the Exodus, or any of those things. The first step was to become a God fearer, to show the fear of God, because the Gentiles did not fear God. So that was the first step to becoming a true Jew.

It’s interesting. I don’t know if you remember. It was either the last teaching of Bruce or the teaching before that. Bruce talked about what for him was his greatest sin. Do you remember what he said his greatest sin was? And it wasn’t looking at women.

Participant: Presumption.

Ted: Well, he said presumption. And what does presumption mean? What do we do when we presume?

First Participant: Everything is okay.

Second Participant: We assume something.

Ted: We assume. So often we presume upon the grace of God and His mercy and His kindness, His compassion to us as a Father. “As far as the east is from the west, that’s how far I’m going to separate Your sins.” That’s all we hear. That’s what we hear in evangelical churches. It’s a great and beautiful message. It’s the culmination. But before then, we begin to presume upon the grace of God because we do not have a correct fear of who He is.

So I ask myself. Do I fear God? And to what extent and how do I fear Him? I read a passage in 2 Kings and it talked about the Samaritans. You remember that the Samaritans were the kind of the half-breed brothers of the Jews. They were not true Jews according to the Jews in the South in Judea. The Samaritans were in the North, and they had kind of a half-baked faith. And in 2 Kings 7:10 it says, “*The Samaritans feared the LORD, and appointed priests of the high places who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. So they feared the LORD, but they also feared other gods.*”

That’s what it says about the Samaritans. They feared the Lord. But they did not fear Him enough not to appoint priests to offer sacrifices on high places, just as the pagans did. So you could go to a Samaritan believer and say, “Do you fear the Lord?”

“Oh yes. I fear the Lord.”

“Well why are you doing this other stuff?”

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“Well you know, to be honest with you, I really fear other gods as well.”

How many of you—and myself—are in the same position? Yes, I fear God. But there are other things I fear as well.

When I talk and when I have a chance to talk, my mind is going a hundred miles an hour. And I’m thinking about all kinds of things. There are all kinds of discussions going on in my brain, pro and con. That’s why we had a little of that in the beginning of the meeting. That’s why this political election has been very volatile, in part, I think, because many of us are not carrying on that debate in our heads. We’re not thinking, “Well this is what I believe. But what about the other side?” What about the fact that one of us would say, “Oh, Obama is an awful president!”? But many black Christians in black churches voted for him—the majority. What’s wrong with those black Christians that voted for him? Are they somehow less Christian, less educated? Do we carry on with an open mind a debate between the two sides so we get a fair picture?

So what I’m doing all the time is that I’m always debating those things in my head, all kinds of issues. And I know as I’ve shared with you, I’ve talked about things that you won’t hear preached in a church. You will not hear a sermon about these things. I try to talk about them because I’m thinking about them. Talking with you helps me to think through all of these issues.

So I talk to you about the unity of the church. How important is it that Christians are one, and how does that work? Or is it only basically symbolic or theoretical that we’re one? Is there anything more that we can do? I’ve talked about that.

I’ve talked about the seduction of wealth. I hear evangelicals say, “It’s okay if you’re wealthy just as long as you use it for God’s purposes.” But I’m telling you. Wealth can be as seductive as looking at a sexy woman! “Well, I can look at her. But I’m appreciative that she’s God’s creation.” (*Laughter.*)

Participant: Amen.

Ted: Right. I just read *Playboy* for the articles, right? (*Laughter.*)

Participant: Right.

Ted: So—

Participant: Don does. (*Laughter.*)

Transcriber’s Note: Don is blind.

Ted: Don does. (*Laughter.*) And you know, that’s true. In some ways, it’s still in the head, Don. But in some ways that’s a blessing for Don because he doesn’t have to deal with some of the stuff that others of us have to deal with. But there’s a down side and there’s an upside on that for all of us.

But I’m saying that I promise you that wealth is very seductive! I’m trying to think about that the Reformed teacher, a fellow who has written this. I wish I could grab his name right now. He’s said that the only way to do something about it is to get rid of it. The thing to do about the seduction of wealth is not to have it, in the same sense that the way to deal with not lusting after a woman is not to put yourself in a position where you can look at a lot of them, like this kind of thing. I think the conversation is degenerating at this point. Yes, Mike?

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Mike: I have a comment and a question, and you may not have the answer. But our nation and our culture is increasingly encouraged to disrespect authority.

Ted: Oh, absolutely!

Mike: We’re seeing it everywhere, including in the last debate, but also in the area of children and just about every other way. I see the fear of the Lord as a respect for the Lord and the authority of God and all the rest is fading out.

Ted: Right.

Mike: So how do we as a nation even begin to rationalize the—

Ted: Right. Well the fact of the matter is that a disrespect for authority and a cavalier attitude toward God is invented in the human heart. That’s where it starts. I believe that the nation, per se—I mean we’ve only been around for two- or three hundred years, whereas the Roman Republican Empire was around for a thousand years. I mean we’re newcomers on the block. We may not be long for this world as a country. And do you know what? There’s very little we can do about that! And those of you who think you can well underestimate the rebellion in the unconverted heart, because every one of us doesn’t want to do what God says. And we want to thumb our noses at God, because God says, “I am holy. I’m a perfect God. Here’s My standard. Come up to it.” And man, natural man, says, “No.” What does it say in Romans the third chapter? “No one fears God.”

Participant: No one seeks for God.

Ted: What? No one seeks God. And no one fears Him. I’m going to use that in a moment.

Participant: *“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

Ted: There is no fear of God in their hearts. Let’s not get off on that, okay? Good question. But I don’t want to deal with the issue of the renovation of America. Yes, Don?

Don: A lot of people—and I assume you’re going to get to this—but a lot of people have the notion that the fear of God is just something in the Old Testament.

Ted: Well, I—

Don: But if you go into the New Testament, Jesus said, “Don’t fear him who is able to just kill the body. But fear Him—that is God—who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” He said that to His disciples. And then in Hebrews 12:29 it says that we must worship God *“with reverence and fear, for our God is a consuming fire”*, not that our God of the New Testament is different from the God of the Old Testament.

Ted: Yes, right. Well, Don, you’ve just covered Item #4 on the outline. *(Laughter.)* Okay. We won’t go over number four, because Don has already covered it.

What I’m trying to do in this opening message, because I’m going to talk about this next week in more detail—what I’m trying to do first is to lay out the foundation and the reason to fear God, bringing in the fact that the fear of the Lord is a critical element in the teaching of the Bible.

So I’ve been looking at this question of the fear of the Lord and similar kinds of expressions—the fear of God, fear of the Lord, all of those kinds of variations. And you’ll be interested to know that the expression “the love of God,” or “love God,” or something about love that pertains to our action toward Him, not His action to me. I understand that

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the first thing I am commanded or instructed, or it’s perceived as a good thing to love God, or to be loved by Him, or however you want to say it, I’ve found in a quick survey, in the Old Testament and the New Testament, that kind of idea is mentioned twenty-nine times.

But the fear of the Lord, or the fear of God, and all the expressions related to that, I found a hundred and three times in the Bible--three-and-a-half times more often than “love the Lord.”

But how many sermons have you heard preached on fearing God? How many have you heard preached on loving God? Oh yes, that’s a big hit! But fearing God doesn’t get the same kind of coverage. We find that expression of the idea of our fear toward God three-and-a-half times more frequently in the Bible. It is true that in the New Testament that the love of God is mentioned fourteen times and the fear of God is mentioned eight times. Yet the preponderance is still to the idea of fearing God.

And we’re commanded to fear God. *“You shall fear the LORD your God.”* Deuteronomy 10:20. *“Fear the LORD, and serve Him in sincerity and faithfulness.”* Joshua 20:4. Ecclesiastes, an interesting summary statement. *“The end of the matter is this.”* I mean the Preacher in Ecclesiastes who has talked about the vanity of life and the vanity of all things in the world, he ends up, he wraps it up, and he says, *“The end of the matter is this.”* “Here, guys, I’m going to give you the summary.” *“All has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”*

After a total analysis of the meaning of life, the writer of Ecclesiastes says, “Do you want to know what the whole duty of man is? Fear God and keep His commandments.” That’s it.

But the natural man, as I’ve said, does not fear God. We find that in Romans three. I’ve already talked about it. And it’s taking parts from that whole section in chapter 3, verses 11-19.

“None is righteous, no, not one.’ ‘No one understands.’ ‘No one seeks for God.’ ‘All have turned aside.’ ‘Together they have become worthless.’ ‘No one does good, no, not even one.’ ‘The way of peace they have not known.’ ‘There is no fear of God before their eyes.’”

When Paul quotes from the Old Testament and wraps that statement up, at the very end he says that the bottom line is that *“there is no fear of God before their eyes.”* That’s the problem. Natural man does not fear God.

“Well,” you might say, “But Ted, doesn’t the New Testament teach us not to fear the Lord?” Well, listen to these verses.

Matthew 14:27. “Jesus spoke to them, saying, *‘Take heart; it is I! Do not be afraid.’*” This is a stirring message of Jesus. He goes into a situation. The angels appear on the day of the announcement to the shepherds. *“Fear not, for I bring you tidings of great joy.”* This is the message. Whenever Jesus appears or there’s a catastrophic situation that occurs, the message is “Fear not.” So don’t fear. Don’t be a-scared at this point, or skeered. *(Laughter.)*

Transcriber’s Note: Pittsburgh colloquial expressions.

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Ted: It’s part of my Southern roots coming up. Or 2 Timothy. *“God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”* Or a favorite one in 1 John. *“There is no fear in love. But perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment. And whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”*

So we have those verses that would seem to say, “Well listen. We really don’t need to fear God because we’ve already been saved. The blood has been shed over you. You’ve been adopted. You’ve been regenerated. You’re a child of God. So therefore you don’t have to fear anymore.”

But we’re commanded to fear God in the New Testament, as Don has pointed out. And it says that Jesus said, *“Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

1 Peter. *“Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood.”* Remember these instructions from Peter, giving a list of things to do. “Okay, Christians.” *“Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God.”*

2 Corinthians. *“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive his due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.”* So Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians that “my motivation, one of my motivations for reaching out and trying to persuade others to believe, being an ambassador for Christ with the message ‘be reconciled to God,’ is because I fear the Lord.”

And finally, in his instruction to servants and bondservants, *“Obey in everything those who are your earthly masters with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.”* Don’t fear your master. Fear the Lord.

So what does it mean to fear the Lord? And in this part I’ve become very dissatisfied with what I hear in a lot of teaching, because basically what I hear is that the fear of the Lord is simply respecting and reverencing God. I mean it’s much more than that. I think that is, as Piper would say in his statement, about getting people off the hook about the fear of the Lord. We’re quick to solve the problem of the fearsomeness of God. And I say that if it simply means reverencing and honoring God and respecting Him, that’s solving the problem of the fearsomeness of God in a totally inadequate way, and not in a Biblical way.

So in the Old Testament there are two words in Hebrew for *fear*. And they can mean the following. One of them means to be affright, to be afraid, dreadful, to put in fearful reverence in the face of a terrible act. And the other word means dread, great fear and terror.

Now Sig, I respect you. That’s one message. But fear? Sig, I dread you. I’m terrorized by you.

Sig: I’m sure you are. *(Laughter.)*

Ted: In the New Testament we have the word *Phobos*, from which we get our word *phobia*. And that word is translated “fear, dread, reverence, terrified or frightened.” And interestingly enough, when the word *Phobos* was used in classical Greek—that is the Greek that proceeded the New Testament Greek. New Testament Greek as well as common Greek was spoken throughout the world. It was kind of like the common

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language. If you were from Spain, if you were from Palestine or Persia, if you spoke *koine* Greek or common Greek, you could communicate. But prior to that, the Greek written by the great Greek philosophers—Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, those fellows—sometimes the word has a different meaning in classical Greek than it does in *koine*.

And interestingly enough, in classical Greek, the earlier Greek, it means to reverence or venerate, to treat with deference, or to put to flight. So the idea is that the fear of the Lord has to do with running away from something, probably because you’re terrified by it. And I’m going to come back to this whole idea of fleeing from the fear of the Lord.

So as you can see, in the Scripture the fear of the Lord is tied in with a lot of other things that are going on. So what I do is that I try to capsule them all in seven words—holy, bow down, praise, glorify, awe, joy, trembling—all combined together under the head, the category, the umbrella of the fear of the Lord.

So listen to this. *“You shall fear the LORD. You shall bow yourselves to Him.”* The fear of the Lord is bowing down.

“You who fear the LORD, praise Him! Glorify Him and stand in awe of Him!” So anyone who fears the Lord in the midst of that fear is going to praise Him, glorify Him and stand in awe of Him.

“Let all the earth fear the LORD. Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.” And once again that Hebrew word for “stand in awe” has the sense of fear, shrinking, of being afraid, falling away from.

“Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” Rejoice with trembling. How interesting! Rejoicing and fearing the Lord are put in the same sentence.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians the second chapter. *“I was with you in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling”*, in terms of the Corinthians to whom he preached. So he’s saying, “When I came to speak to you, I had fear and great trembling.”

Philippians the second chapter. *“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you both to will and to do His good pleasure.”* I mean, isn’t it interesting? How does fear and trembling figure with God working in you? I mean we have interesting ideas all wrapped up in the Word.

I’m going to talk next about the benefits of the fear of the Lord, and I’m just going to go over a few of them and continue them, and go on to other things next week. But let me just stop there. Any thoughts at this point? Everybody looks doubtful and depressed. Not you, Don. Not yet. Okay.

Participant: I never really thought of it in terms of the fear of the Lord. But it’s like my son. He wants to get his motorcycle license and he’s got his permit. But he can’t drive at night. But he wants to drive at night because that’s when he has time to do so.

Ted: Right.

Participant: And I tell him, “The law says you shouldn’t. You can’t.” And whether you agree with the law or not is not the issue. But it’s the consequences that could pursue you if you do. You could be pulled over. They’re pretty small in many ways. But part of the fear of the Lord for me has always been to recognize the consequences if I sin or break the law, whether I agree with the law or not.

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Ted: Right. I agree. And what I want to talk about next week is how you come to the place of fearing God. So consequences is one. But where we want to end up is fearing God for who He is, and then fearing the consequences. Consequences are secondary. For most of us it’s a primary reason to fear God. We’ll hear Don and then I’ll get to the others of you. Don?

Don: Luther distinguished—and I don’t know if you find this helpful or valid—but I think he distinguished between a *servile fear* and a *reverential fear*.

Ted: Right.

Don: And I agree with you. I think we use the word *awesome* much too flippantly. You know, “our God is an awesome God.” (*Laughter.*) *Awful* would be better, although I know that the term *awful* means bad in our vocabulary.

Ted: Yes.

Don: But you know, what does it mean to fear the Lord? Is it a servile fear, where He’s going to unleash His wrath upon me and I’m cowering before Him every second? Or is it respect and reverence, knowing that He could send me to hell, but knowing at the same time that He won’t because He’s my Father? How do we reconcile those?

Ted: Right. Well that’s an excellent point. How do we reconcile it? Because on the one hand, okay. I know I need to respect Him and all that. But I know it will turn out all right. He is My Father who loves me, so that’s pretty much going to trump everything I’ve said. Excuse the expression! (*Laughter.*)

Transcriber’s Note: A pun referring to a Presidential candidate at that time.

Ted: Just joking! It’s going to trump everything else. But to me that’s what Piper calls a cavalier attitude, or a presumptive attitude. I’ve got a lot going up. Go ahead, Bishop, and then Jim.

Bishop Rodgers: I think that there are really two ways in which the fear of the Lord is discussed. One is *attitude*, which often comes up. But another use of it we see in Isaiah 6. It’s not just an attitude, but it’s what happens when the Lord appears to Isaiah. He says, “*Woe is me, for I am undone!*” In his case it was sin. But he was literally overwhelmed! It wasn’t something he had to choose.

Ted: That’s correct.

Bishop Rodgers: That’s what happens to him when he sees the living God in front of him. And that part we can all say that we’re pretty sure that’s going to happen to us when we see God face to face. So we’ll be overwhelmed in one sense. But our attitude in terms of our relationship to the Lord as His is in another sense.

Ted: I agree. And what I’m trying to do this morning is first to establish the fact guys, that we need to think about it. I mean, I have a problem with fearing God. Do you? I mean, do we all have that problem of truly standing before the Lord and trembling in awesome terror of what God is capable of? I’m like the Samaritans. “Oh yes, I do.”

“Well then, why are you doing that?”

“Well, you know, I also fear those other gods as well.” Jim? Just one second.

Jim: It seems to me that it isn’t just an irrational response, like anger or fear often are.

Ted: Right.

Jim: But it starts with a rational assessment of who this Being is.

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Ted: Yes.

Jim: And fear is the result of that.

Ted: Yes. I mean it’s correct because it’s true. When I come into the room, we have these cats, okay? And the minute I come in, one cat just shrivels up because of fear. I’ve never done anything to that cat. That’s an irrational fear. But if I came in and stomped on that cat, that wouldn’t be irrational. That would make sense. Bill, I think you raised your hand there. Go ahead.

Bill: Yes. I wonder if it would be helpful, and Dr. Bickel has helped us to understand this, that God is sovereign. And I think maybe that comes first.

Ted: Oh, absolutely. It comes out of His sovereignty. I mean you don’t fear Someone who is not sovereign. You look for someone else who is sovereign. This is tough. Go ahead.

Participant: There’s a great depiction of God and His attributes in the story that C.S. Lewis wrote, *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*.

Ted: Yes.

Participant: So he depicts God as the lion, as Jesus is referred to in the Bible as “*the lion of the tribe of Judah*.” If you’ve read the story or you’ve watched the movie, when he comes onto the scene as a lion, the people are kind of cautious of him.

Ted: Yes.

Participant: But then the children realize that he’s gentle, so they are able to walk up to him. But at the same time there are scenes in the book and the movie where he commands fear and respect.

Ted: Right. And in some of the things I read in preparation for this, I quoted Lewis. Yes?

Participant: I think it’s important to realize that we’re not in a position where we are being afraid of negative reactions, that God is just going to come down on us in a negative way. But if we look at Romans 8, he says, “*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*”

Ted: Yes.

Participant: “*For you did not receive the spirit of slavery, to fall back into fear.*”

Ted: Right.

Participant: “*But you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons*” to be prized.

Ted: Right.

Participant: So recognizing your position with God, even that you’re saved and now you’re a son, it still makes your mouth drop.

Ted: Well it does, right. And I agree, Tom. That’s good. If all of you don’t mind, I’ve got three more things to mention. I want to get to the benefits of fearing God, if you don’t mind.

7. *The benefits of the fear of the Lord.* There are many benefits. But the first benefit is that *the fear of the Lord is a demonstration that you’ve been born again.*

Participant: Amen.

Ted: Yes. “*None is righteous, no, not one.*” “*There is no fear of God before their eyes.*” So if you have the fear of God to any degree, it’s a demonstration that you’ve been

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born again. You are indeed a child of God. One would not be a child of God without having that fear. It says in Psalm 85 that *“Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him.”* So not only there, but even to begin to come to saving faith, you have to have some holy fear of God. So the first benefit of fearing God is that it demonstrates that you are born again.

The second thing is that the fear of the Lord *makes us friends of God.*” Psalm 25. *“The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear Him, and He makes known to them His covenant.”* So if you fear God, it makes us friends of God.

And those who fear God are blessed and receive His pleasure and mercy. Psalm 115. *“He will bless those who fear Him, both the small and the great.”* Psalm 147. *“The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, and those who hope in His steadfast love.”* Interesting—fear and steadfast love—*chesed*, steadfast love-- put together in the same sentence. Luke the first chapter. *“His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation.”*

So those are three benefits. And I’m going to go into about five or six more benefits next week, and also how one comes to fear the Lord. How do you acquire the spirit of the fear and trembling before an awesome God, because I need it. And I need to pray for it every day and confess to God, “I do not fear You as I ought.”

Okay, we’ve got a minute or two left.

Participant: There’s one thing about the character of God.

Ted: Yes.

Participant: If you look through the Bible, you can see a number of things that He has done. You think about Adam and Eve being cast out of Eden.

Ted: Yes.

Participant: There was the Flood.

Ted: Yup.

Participant: There was Sodom and Gomorrah.

Ted: Yup.

Participant: There was the judgment on Israel in the Exile.

Ted: Right.

Participant: And they were His covenant people.

Ted: That’s right.

Participant: I think that we need to reconsider the character of God with respect and fear. We need to fear Him in that way.

Ted: Right. And don’t presume. This is the whole presumption business. Right. Go ahead.

Participant: I know for myself that I struggle with this aspect, because oftentimes, for me, it’s either/or instead of both/and.

Ted: Yes.

Participant: So I either fear or I love.

Ted: Yes.

Participant: And I need to fear and focus on whether or not I’m a Christian, right? It’s not necessarily true.

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Ted: Right.

Participant: But the Spirit, when we study Scripture, allows us to reconcile things that often seem so different from one another.

Ted: Right.

Participant: Because our minds can't comprehend what God can do.

Ted: Yes.

Participant: And so we need the Spirit in studying the Scripture so we are competent not to make things an either/or, but—

Ted: And I'm going to get to that next week. *“The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who take pleasure in His steadfast love.”* We'll come back to that again, Bill. Any other comments?

Participant: We've talked about the fear of the Lord and the mindset. I think it helps us as guys to also make it a verb, an action. Anything we can do proactively helps. Tithing, for instance. I don't know if tithing can be considered proactive. How do you fear the Lord? It's like loving Jesus. How do you love Jesus? You obey Him and love His commands. So that will help.

Ted: Bruce says to put yourself in a position to absorb grace. And I think that is done with tithing, yes, but in many other areas, when you stretch beyond human ability, when you stretch beyond what your inclination and your human strength is, that causes you to fear God, because you know that if He doesn't come through, there is no hope.

And the problem is with the way we live today. I mean, my wife and I have gotten into what we call “argie bargie.” We go after each other about something or other. Diana pinches me and she says, “It's a first world problem.” Do you understand what I'm saying? The things we're worried and concerned about are not what the Christians in the Southern Sudan are worried about.

Participant: Amen.

Ted: So that's a fact. Diana says, “It's a first world problem.”

And I say, “Amen, honey.” And then that puts it all in the right perspective. So we all live too safe in our own strength. Is the fellow's name Trapp? Is he the Christian writer? He has written a number of things on finance.

Participant: Tripp.

Ted: Tripp. That's it. Paul Tripp.

Participant: Captain von Tripp.

Ted: Thank you very much. I knew we'd get there. You know, he says that if it's a problem, if your substance is a temptation, the easy way is just to give it away! And when I hear that, I say, “Oh, that sounds glorious! But not me!” (*Laughter.*) Because you know what? I fear God. But I also fear other gods. What?

Participant: We fear poverty.

Ted: Yes, we fear poverty. Right.

Participant: That other guy is Randy Alcorn.

Ted: Well I don't know if it's Randy. Bill, one last thing.

Bill: This is from Dr. Tony Evans.

Ted: Yes.

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Bill: He says, first off, that love is sacrifice, giving of ourselves.

Ted: Right.

Bill: And that’s the test of the family.

Ted: Right. That’s good. Let us pray. Lord God, we thank You for the gift of the fear of Your name. And we pray that You, this week, would show us ways, means and attitudes that would lead us to fear You, and to leave behind the fear of the other gods. For we pray this in Your name. Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause.*)