

“Fear the Lord, You His Saints” Pt 2

Christian Liberty

The Rev. Ted Wood

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Ted: The Lord be with you.

Men: And also with you.

Ted: Let us pray. Lord God, the fear of the Lord is pure. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The fear of the Lord leads to life. Therefore, Lord, we pray that You teach us to fear You. And in fearing You we worship You, and in worshiping You we love You. Grant this for Jesus Christ’s sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Ted: Last week I talked about the fear of the Lord and I’m going to continue and finish that up this week. I probably could have done a better job finishing up had Sig not talked so long. *(Laughter)*

Sig: I heard that.

Ted: But that’s the way he’s wired. *(Laughter)* The handout that you have actually starts in the second half of my talk which has to do with the benefits of fearing the Lord. But I’m going to go back and cover some ground that I did last week for those of you who weren’t here, or for any of you who need a refreshing. So the handout you have in front of you is not going to be the one that I’m going to deal with immediately.

I’m tying this in with Bruce’s teaching two weeks ago about Christian liberty and freedom in Christ. These are some of the things that Bruce told us two weeks ago. Man needs to be freed from himself and the tyranny of himself. He also said that we live in the internal constraints of the Holy Spirit. Let me say that again. We live in the internal constraints of the Holy Spirit. And he went on to finish up by saying, “Put yourself in a position to absorb grace.”

Now it seemed to me as Bruce was talking that absorbing grace and living in the internal constraints of the Holy Spirit has to do in part with the fear of the Lord. And I’ve been provoked to thinking about the fear of the Lord. It’s something I’ve really not thought about before until several months ago by a number of things.

First of all, I shared with all of you that I became convicted several years ago of the importance, in my daily prayers, of having a time of repentance and confession of sin. I think that was really pretty much absent prior to that, except for “God, get me out of this mess, and I’m sorry.” But it’s gone beyond that. And I actually discovered for myself, maybe not for you, that in the Lord’s Prayer there are six opportunities to confess your sins.

And the first one is ‘our Father, who art in heaven.’ And that made me think about sins against those who call God our Father, brothers and sisters in Christ.

And the second one, “hallowed be Thy name.” And I began to think, “How do I hallow God’s name?” How do I keep God’s name sacred and holy? How do I actually do that? What does that involve, except being just a nice expression? And I came to the conclusion and it just dawned on me that hallowing or keeping God’s name holy has to do with fearing the Lord—that if I fear Him, I will keep His name holy.

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In my time I also have another confession that I use, and that’s Psalm 51 as a confession, and then Psalm 103 as the declaration of forgiveness. So if I’m not going through the Lord’s Prayer as a confession, I’m going through Psalm 51 and Psalm 103.

I was disturbed to find, as I was saying the prayer of confession, that in Psalm 103 it says, *“As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him.”* So I said, “I sure hope that’s not conditional that the Lord’s compassion is for me if I fear Him.” But that line, that conclusion, appears many times in the Scripture. And it almost classifies those who are the receivers of God’s compassion and His blessings for those who fear Him.

And I also shared last week talking about John Piper’s response to the question “what does it mean for a Christian to fear God?” And I talked about John Piper. He is probably one of the leading Reformed thinkers today. He’s a Baptist. He’s a Puritan. We haven’t seen many of those since the seventeenth century. But he’s part of this Puritan revival that we’re seeing. Bruce Bickel is part of that.

Remember John Piper’s response to the question of what does it mean to fear God? What does it mean for a Christian to fear God? He said that “the fear of the Lord is a very important topic. It’s all over the Bible. The sheer majesty of God, as well as His holiness and justice and wrath cannot be approached in a cavalier spirit. It would be insane to think that we can just stroll up to the Creator of the universe. We are blind if we think we can do this without trembling.”

It’s interesting. This week I went to the website of a very large local church that has thousands of members. And I went onto the topics of the sermons. And I found nothing in any of the topics of the sermons that would even come close to dealing with the subject of the fear of the Lord. It mostly had to do with God’s blessings meant for us in this life.

So I then began to look into it, into the question of the fear of the Lord and how often this expression, or an expression like it, appears in the Bible. And I found that the expression “the fear of the Lord” or “fear God,” or similar expressions, appears 103 times that I could find. You can probably find more. It appears 103 times in the Bible. And the love of God appears twenty-nine times. So the idea of the fear of the Lord appears three-and-a-half times more frequently in the Scriptures than the expressions of the love of the Lord and the love of God, or something like that.

So what does the fear of the Lord mean? In the Old Testament in the translation of the word *fear*, there are two words that are used. They have to do with dread, to put in fearful reverence, an idea of terror in the face of God. In the New Testament we have the word *phobos*. We get our word *phobia* from that. And a *phobos* is meant as a reverence or awe. But it also comes across as being translated as dread or terror, or, interestingly enough, putting to flight, something you flee from.

So therefore the fear of the Lord is linked together in the Bible with such ideas as “bowing down before Him”—2 Kings 17, “standing in awe of Him”—Psalm 22, “rejoice with trembling,” whatever that means—you rejoice while you’re trembling for Him in fear—Psalm 2, “much trembling”—1 Corinthians the second chapter, or “work out your salvation with fear and trembling”—Philippians the second chapter.

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We are commanded to fear the Lord. *“You shall fear the LORD your God.”* Deuteronomy 10. And the natural man, that person who has not been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, who has not been born again, that person who has not received the new life, who has not received the gift of the Holy Spirit, that person does not fear God. The natural man simply does not fear God. And that is found in that great section of Paul, talking about what it means to be a natural man. What that means is a person who has not been saved or regenerated, in that section in Romans the third chapter, beginning in verse eleven. And that section ends with *“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

So that is the statement. I’ve been in a conversation with a client, one of my clients that I’ve had for several years, and we’ve formed a very close relationship. You know, this fellow really has the desire to know the Lord in his heart. And he’s very frustrated with his wife because she has no interest in spiritual things.

And I said, “Well Tom”—that’s not his name—I said, “Tom, she can’t help herself. She can do nothing else but seek after the things of this world. She does not fear the Lord. And all your talking and arguing and trying to point things out to her is not going to do any good until the Lord decides to quicken her spirit.” So that shouldn’t prevent him from doing it. But if he just comes to that realization, he’s not going to be very frustrated. I mean there are enough things in our marriages to frustrate us, but we don’t need to add that frustration to it, that we have a spouse who really doesn’t care for spiritual things. So he shouldn’t get angry with her, because *“we struggle not against flesh and blood.”* But we struggle against spiritual issues. And I’m sure our spouses feel that way about us as well.

So on one hand, the New Testament tells us not to fear. And there were a number of questions asked of me. I received some emails about this question. I’m going to try to resolve this issue about fearing or not fearing.

On the one hand the New Testament teaches us not to fear. *“Jesus spoke to them, saying,”* (this happens many times in Jesus’ ministry.) When the disciples or the followers are set in terror, He says, *“Take heart; it is I! Do not be afraid.”* So Jesus tells His followers when He appears either in resurrection accounts or in His own miracle working, He says, “Don’t be afraid.” That was the message to the shepherds on the day of the announcement of Jesus’ birth. In 2 Timothy *“God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power, and of love and self-control.”* And in 1 John *“there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.”*

So we hear those sayings, as if we’re not to fear the Lord. But on the other hand, we are commanded to fear God also in the New Testament. So on one hand it says, “Don’t fear.” But on the other hand, in the New Testament it says that we are to fear God. In 1 Peter it says, *“Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God.”* It’s pretty straightforward.

Also in 2 Corinthians, *“Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of the Lord.”* So as we grow and mature in our faith, we’re going to bring that holiness to completion, the kind of holiness that God is already working in us supernaturally. That’s brought to completion, or that’s

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matured, that’s brought to an end because of or through the fear of the Lord, or the fear of God.

So how do we resolve this seeming contradiction in Scripture? Well first of all, as I began to think about it this week, it seems that the fear of the Lord is different from other fears.

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.”* Now who is the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell? Who is that One that can do that, the One that Jesus says we’re to fear? I mean who is that? Who can do that?

Does He say it’s the devil who can do that? Well, only in a distant, instrumental fashion, where God would command him to do that. But it’s God who can do that. So that’s the One. Jesus says, *“Don’t fear the one who can kill the body.”* Don’t fear Caesar. Don’t fear ISIS or that kind of thing. But fear the One who can actually do you eternal damage. And that’s God Himself. That’s in Matthew 10.

So the fear of the Lord is different from other fears. And Jesus Himself is saying this. There is one kind of fear—fear of Caesar, fear of the forces that collude against Christianity. And then there is another fear, fear of the One who can do you permanent damage.

There is also an improper fear of God. I believe—and Don, you can correct me!—it’s called and I think it’s referred to as a slavish fear. It’s the fear of a slave of a cruel master. And that’s not the kind of fear we’re to have.

So we find that kind of a fear, which is basically an ungodly fear of a master, we find that in Matthew 25. Remember that story of the talents, the giving of the talents to the servants. A man going on a journey called his servants. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. And then he came back and he had an accounting of what had been done with the talents or those pieces of gold, those bars of gold that he had given to his servants, which is what a talent would be at that time. It was a denomination.

And the one who had received the one talent came forward to the master, saying, *“Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. So I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.”*

So the servant who received the one talent of gold—that denomination, that kind of money—he went, and rather than investing it or putting it to work, he hid it in the ground because he was afraid of his master.

And the master calls him a worthless servant. And he casts the worthless servant into the outer darkness, in that place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Now I’m going to come back to this later. But there is an interesting idea of our reaction to the fear of the Lord, because when we are faced with the fear of the Lord, we can either run toward Him or flee from Him.

The natural man has only one recourse because he has no friend in God. He must flee from God. Those of us who have come to believe and know the truth, we know we have

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no other option but to flee toward Him. So the very thing that would terrorize us we run toward.

John Piper tells an interesting story, an anecdote about this in terms of explaining the fear of the Lord. I may get this a bit mixed up. But he talks about a fellow who went and took his child and visited a friend. Well the friend had a great dog, a great large dog. And as the friend comes up to meet his friend with the child, the dog comes running out too. And the child sees the dog.

Now I have a fear of dogs, so I know what this is like. I mean, all I’ve got to do is to hear a dog barking and that grabs me right here someplace. I’ll sit down with a shrink sometime and figure out why that’s the case. (*Laughter*)

But as the dog comes forward, the child runs away from the dog. And the dog follows the child, growling. And the owner of the dog says, “Don’t run away. Stop and come toward him, because my dog does not like people to run away from him.”

And Piper says that’s the way God is. He doesn’t want people to flee from Him, but to go to Him. And then Piper goes on to tell the story that the dog turned out to be very friendly. But he says, “My dog doesn’t like people to run away.”

So that’s what this servant with the one talent did. He fled from the master because he feared him. He put that talent in the ground. And it didn’t do what the master wanted it to do.

Also, just kind of thinking about this—the fear of God and just fear in general—there is no command or teaching not to fear God. We say, “Perfect love casts out all fear.” Well that must not mean literally all fear. And there are many meanings to the word *all* in the original language, because there is no commandment not to fear God. We are told not to fear, but we are not told not to fear God. It doesn’t say, “God gave us a spirit not to fear Him.” It says, “God gave us a spirit not to fear,” but it doesn’t say “not to fear Him.” Also Scripture does not say, “Perfect love casts out the fear of the Lord.” It doesn’t say that. It says, “Perfect love casts out fear.”

While it is proper to fear God, there are times when it just doesn’t serve His purposes. Think about this. I found this in the book of Revelation. Remember the beginning of the book of Revelation, where John has the vision of Christ. And He’s got the brilliance, the hair that’s whiter than the whitest, and just an awesome and fearful image of Jesus that John the revelator, the one who wrote down the book of Revelation, sees.

And it says in Revelation 1:17, “*When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead.*” And so he fell at the feet of the Lord as though dead. “*But He laid His right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not! I am the First and the Last, the Living One. I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore. I have the keys of Death and Hades.’*”

So the One that John saw is clearly Jesus Christ. He is the First and the Last. Jesus says in the book of Revelation, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega,*” the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. “*I am the Living One. I died,*” as Christ did, “*but behold, I live forevermore*”—resurrection and ascension, and seated in glory. “*I have the keys of death and Hades.*” He says, “*Fear not! Write, therefore, the things that you have seen—those that are, those that are to take place after this.*”

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So while John the revelator was correct in falling down and fearing God in sheer terror, at the same time Jesus said, “Get up! I’ve got a job for you to do. I want you to write everything you’re about to see.” And so there are times when the fear of the Lord is absolutely appropriate. Well actually, it’s always appropriate. But there are times when Jesus said, “Okay. You’ve got the fear part. You’re done with that. Let’s go on. I’ve got something else for you to do. So get off your feet, John, and start writing.”

And we see this a number of times in Scripture. In all cases, though, there is a good reason to fear the Lord for what He has the power to do if He so chooses. So at all times it is right to fear the Lord, because He has the power to do what He wishes to do if He chooses.

And we have that in Psalm 51. “*Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.*” Why would David, the writer of the Psalm, say that if it weren’t a possibility, because it says, “Lord, I’m praying. I’m asking You. I’m beseeching You. Cast me not away from Your presence. Don’t throw me out of Your presence. And don’t take Your Holy Spirit from me.”

What if the Lord were to take His Holy Spirit from us? What would that mean? What would it mean if the Lord were to remove His Holy Spirit?

Participant: Death.

Ted: Death. It would mean it would be eternal death in hell. That’s what it would mean, because the only entry ticket into heaven is the Person of Christ living with us and in us, and we in Him. That’s the only ticket. If He were to take that away, that would be eternal damnation and death. That’s what that would mean.

So David the Psalmist is saying, “Don’t take Your Holy Spirit from me.” That’s a fearful thought. And also, “Do not cast me away from Your presence.” So if God chose to do that, if He chose at any moment to take His Holy Spirit from me, He could do it. And He would be absolutely justified in doing it. But by grace in His love, He chooses not to do that.

Also remember Ananias and Sapphira. Remember the two that came to the apostles when the disciples were giving all their goods and selling them for the sake of the community, and giving that money to the community. And there were two people who sought to collude and cheat God of the money that they had promised Him. And that was Ananias the husband and Sapphira the wife. And God struck them both dead not because they kept the money, but because they had promised the money and they didn’t give it. And the Scripture says in Acts that “*great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.*” So God at any time could strike people down if He wished. And He chose to strike down Ananias and Sapphira.

The Greek is *phobos magnus*. Do you get that? Great fear! And that is the fear that grabbed the church. And that was a godly fear, because I say that God can do as He pleases. I’ve gone nonstop because there’s just so much to cover. Yes?

Participant: Ted, back to David. You say that he personally witnessed that happening with the Holy Spirit being taken from Saul.

Ted: Right. He did. That’s an interesting thought, because the Holy Spirit was taken from Saul. I mean the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Old Testament saints is

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difficult. I mean it has some challenges just sorting it out as to what actually happened. We're in a different situation in that when God gives us the Holy Spirit, that Holy Spirit is there to stay, based on His promise alone and not on our deserving.

Okay. I'm just unloading a lot of stuff very quickly, because there's just so much. I'm on to number 7 now. I'm going to start to catch up with the benefits of the fear of the Lord.

There are a number of reasons. I mean, we may be in sheer terror of God when we're faced with Him, face to face and seeing Him. Yet there are a number of good reasons to want to fear God.

The first one is that *the fear of the Lord is a demonstration that we are born again and a friend of God*. You don't have that on your sheet. I'm going to get to these benefits in a moment. *“Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him.”* That's in Psalm 85. In Psalm 25 it says, *“The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear Him. He makes known to them His covenant.”* And so the fact of the matter is that because you fear God, that's a good sign that you are a friend of God, because those who desire God will also fear Him because they know who God truly is. Remember, the unregenerate person, the natural man, does not fear God. He has no desire for God at all.

So we ought to look at ourselves and say, “Well how do you know you're born again?” We look and see. Are you behaving correctly? What's the old expression? Don't cuss, smoke or chew, or go with girls that do. (*Laughter*) You've cut that out.

But if you've cut out all the bad behavior but you don't fear God, then there's a question mark. You've improved yourself morally. But have you really been born again? Because when you're born again, you clearly see who God is.

Another blessing is that *those who fear the Lord are blessed, and they receive His pleasure and mercy*. Psalm 115: *“He will bless those who fear the LORD, both small and great.”* Psalm 147: *The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His steadfast love.”*

Now it's interesting in that verse that we are tying in the fear of God with His steadfast love, His *chesed* in Hebrew, His everlasting love. And we're going to get to that later.

Also Luke 1:50. *“His mercy is for those who fear Him, from generation to generation.”* So fearing the Lord gives us God's blessing, His pleasure and His mercy.

The fear of the Lord is also the starting place for wisdom and knowledge. I mean, if you want to figure things out—how they are, the reality of things, get insight into things and know what to do about them, which would be some of the characteristics of wisdom and knowledge—then you begin by fearing God, not by seeking the wisdom. You know Psalm 111 and Proverbs 9. *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. All those who practice it have a good understanding.”* *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.”* Proverbs 1:7: *“Who is the man who fears the LORD? Him He will instruct in the way that he should choose.”* So if you need to know which way to choose, don't sort out which way to choose. Start out with fearing God because it says, *“Who is the man who fears the LORD? Him He will instruct in the way that he should choose.”*

Also *the fear of the Lord causes you to hate what God hates*. Proverbs 8: *The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil.”*

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The fear of the Lord gives life and improves it. Proverbs 19: The fear of the LORD leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied. He will not be visited by harm.” So I mean if we find ourselves restless, dissatisfied with the things of life, maybe we need to start by going to the fear of the Lord, seeking that out. And that will bring satisfaction. It would certainly bring satisfaction when we consider the alternative, that is to experience the terror of the Lord. Yes? Sorry.

Participant: I’m curious because, if you think about it, the fear of the Lord allows rest. And I wonder if that fear of the Lord isn’t really driving us all to realize the sovereignty of God? And once we realize and understand the truth that God is sovereign, it’s not “let go and let God,” but He’s got this. We can absolutely rest in Him.

Ted: Well, I mean that’s an excellent point. And once again, people say, “What’s kind of unique about what Bruce is teaching, and folks like him who subscribe to his understanding of the faith?” And it has to do with the fact that we start off—and I tell people this who are saying, “Well, what is it all about that we do here?”—we start off with who God is and then we go from there. You’ve got to find out who God is before anything else follows. And any issue in life of confusion or agitation or unhappiness or anger, or anything else we have, begins with not knowing who God is, or not reckoning who God is.

I think I’ve shared this story before. I was staying at a bed and breakfast, and I got into a conversation with another one of the people who was there. And this woman who was in her thirties talked, and all the conversation was about was finding a husband and a boyfriend. And she was so agitated and yelled, “Men are all pigs!” And she went on and on.

And I said, “That’s an accurate statement.” (*laughter*) I mean it was just nonstop whining and moaning about the fact. And I said, “Well I think your problem is that you don’t know who God is.” And I mean that came right out of the blue. Boyfriends, husbands, who God is. What’s the connection?

And I said, “Well, you can’t possibly find out what God wants for you in your life, or who he wants for you in life, if you can’t find out who God is.”

So that’s where we start. That’s why we start with what? The twenty-eight attributes of God. That’s where we start and everything else flows from that.

Once again, as we’ve shared before, we don’t start with a human need. What is your need? What do you want? We start off with what God wants because in the end, what I want is irrelevant. It really is.

Participant: Amen.

Ted: It’s absolutely irrelevant. And in the final analysis, at the judgment seat God will not say, “Well, did you get all you wanted?” (*laughter*) He’s going to say, “Did you know Me? Depart from Me, you evildoers into outer darkness. I never knew you, because you never knew Me.” Yes, Sig?

Sig: Is that the point of the story with the dog, that if you ran away from God you would be running into outer darkness?

Ted: Well yes, right.

Sig: Because you know what’s out there. There’s no one better than God.

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Ted: Right.

Sig: But I still have a hard time embracing that fear that I would turn around, because I always think that fear is something evil, bad, ugly, dangerous, harmful.

Ted: Right.

Sig: To turn around, like you just said, the outer darkness would be scary. But if I have a sense of who God is, I would turn toward Him even in my fear.

Ted: Piper has another story about that. And I’m going to finish up with that story. He’s got a great analogy. He had one analogy of the dog and the little boy running away from the dog. He says, “Stop running and come toward him. He doesn’t like people to run away from him.” Yes?

Participant: I just want to quickly put this into perspective. I was looking at Hebrews 4:14-16.

Ted: Yes.

Participant: Speaking of Jesus, the writer says, *“But we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness. But we have One who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

Ted: Right. And that’s the compassion and love of God. And what I’m trying to do, guys, is to get you to think about this. We know about the compassion of Christ. He was tempted in every way, as we are. What I’m trying to get you to think about, and what I’m trying to get myself to think about, is the fact of the matter, that God is a fearful and awesome and terrorizing God.

Participant: Amen.

Ted: Because of His great power and His wrath against those who oppose Him. So that’s good. But we’ll get to that in future lessons, you know. Yes?

Participant: Here is a good verse in John that speaks about and kind of reveals the comment about the understanding of why when you run away from the dog it gets angry.

Ted: Right.

Participant: That analogy. I think it’s a good analogy. I just think it has a little bit of imperfection there.

Ted: Sure.

Participant: If you read John 3:19, it says, *“And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come into the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that His works have been carried out in God.”*

Ted: Yes, that’s good. That’s excellent. Right. I know the analogy is imperfect.

Well I’m looking at the clock right now and I want to be sure that I get to the end of this thing. And you can follow along with the different benefits. I think it’s 7E. *The fear of the Lord causes you to hate what God hates. The fear of the Lord gives life and improves it. The fear of the Lord leads to true bounty and prosperity. The fear of the Lord is your protection and security.*

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I love that. Once again, running away you don't get security. That's what Jonah thought. If he would simply flee from God, he would be safe. He needed to come to God, where God wanted him to be. You see that in 7H. *“You shall fear the LORD your God, and He will deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.” “In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence, and His children will have a refuge.” “You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD. He is your help and your shield.”* And this great verse: *“The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him and delivers them.”*

I mean, do you have enemies? Do you have opposition? Are you being attacked? The angel of the LORD encamps around those of you who fear Him. And that's the place to start, not like Jonah running away from God, or the little boy running away from the dog.

The fear of the Lord also motivates and produces results. And I've got them listed there.

So I'm getting on to number 8. How does one acquire the fear of the Lord? And the first thing I need to realize is that I need to have the fear of the Lord because I'm like those Samaritans. I talked about the Samaritans in the book of 2 Kings, the seventeenth chapter. I talked about that last week. It says in 2 Kings 17 that the problem with the Samaritans is that they had the fear of the Lord, but they also feared their own gods. They feared the Lord, but they also feared other gods.

That's me. I fear the Lord, but I also fear other gods as well. Now you know I'm not talking about gods. I'm talking about other things that I fear. So that is my need. I need to get the fear of the Lord. And the question is how do I get that?

Well I think it's in 8A. *It's a learning and growing process.* You don't get it right away. Deuteronomy says, *“that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.”* Or *“Come, O children, listen to me. I will teach you the fear of the LORD.”* So this is a learning experience. We're going to learn to fear the Lord. It doesn't come to us suddenly.

I've added this. You don't have this on your list—*praying for the fear of the Lord.* It says this in Psalm 86. David is praying and he says, *“Teach me Your way, O LORD, that I may walk in Your truth. Unite my heart to fear Your name.”*

And it's interesting because John Piper has a series of verses he reads before he reads Scripture and meditates on it. And this is one of the verses he has. This is the verse. *“Teach me Your way, O LORD, that I may walk in Your truth. Unite my heart to fear Your name.”*

So one of the things we need to start with if we're convinced that we need to fear the Lord, if we see its benefits, if we see how it motivates us, we need to get to the place where we begin to say, *“Lord, teach me to fear Your name. I need to know what that means.”*

Reading Scripture also causes us to come to fear the Lord. *“The king shall read the law all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God.”* Deuteronomy 17.

It's also *a community experience.* That means that when we get together as Christians, we reinforce each other. We learn to fear the Lord. *“Assemble the people, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all His law.”*

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Meditating on God’s great works and the consequences causes us to fear the Lord. “Only fear the LORD and serve Him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things He has done for you.” As we begin to consider the great acts of God, it causes us to fear Him.

And finally I also have this: *Identify yourself as one who fears the Lord.* We often say, “Well I’ve been born again. I’ve been saved. I’m a Christian,”—any of those terms that we use. How many of us say, “I’m one who fears the Lord?”

And that’s what Jonah said. It’s interesting. When Jonah was caught in the boat and he was in a great storm, and the sailors on the boat were trying to figure out what the cause of the storm was. “We’re going to drown!” And they looked at Jonah and they said, “Well, who are you?”

“Jonah said to them, ‘I am a Hebrew and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.’” I mean that was an act of faith on Jonah’s part, because he immediately said, “I’m one who fears the Lord.” And we need to think about identifying. Who are you? I’m one who fears God. I’m a God fearer.

But in the end,—number 9—it’s not all or nothing. It’s both the fear and the love of the Lord. And we see these in the following verses.

“What does the LORD your God require of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul?” (Deuteronomy.) Well what does the Lord require? He requires that you fear Him and that you love Him.

Psalm 33. *“Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, and those who hope in His steadfast love.”* So the eye of the Lord is on those who both fear and love Him.

“As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love to those who fear Him.” God’s love and His fear.

And I love this. It’s kind of a summary, a wrap-up. Psalm 118: *“Let those who fear the LORD say, ‘His steadfast love endures forever.’”* It’s the fear of the Lord and the love of the Lord.

Now in this tape John Piper gives one more analogy and tells one more story. He says that he thinks of it this way, the fear of the Lord and the love of the Lord.

He sees it this way. He sees himself climbing a great mountain range. He says, for instance, that it could be the Himalayas. Imagine the majesty of the great, huge rock faces. And you don’t get it so much here. But if you go out West and you travel out West in some of the Glacier National Parks and other places, I mean you stand in awe and you go, “Oh, my gosh!” I mean just the immensity of the mountains in some places just causes you to stand in awe and a certain amount of fear and terror, especially those who are agoraphobic, who are absolutely terrorized by anything that’s high.

So in his analogy he says, “I’m climbing the mountains. And I can see a great storm coming. It’s a vicious, terrifying storm. And it’s rolling down the alley to where I am. And I’m in great fear and trembling.”

But he notices in the face of this great rock, this great mountain, he notices a cave. And he races into the cave and he finds shelter.

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Now I began to think about that. And I said, “What are the analogies there? What does that mean? And at first I thought, “Well, you know, God is the great mountain. And the storm is adversaries—demonic, fleshly, worldly—that come against us. And God provides me a place to hide.”

But you know, God is the mountain, but He’s also the storm. God is awesome and terrifying. But He’s also a shelter.

And then I thought about this analogy and what came to my mind. What was that hymn that would come to my mind if I heard that? (Ted sings):

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

So that’s the way God is. God is both that awesome, huge, inspiring, maybe terrorizing mountain face. But He’s also the storm in His righteousness and justice and His wrath against sin. And to flee the terror of God, I must hide in God, in that cleft for me. And let me hide myself in Thee.

So that finishes my remarks. Sorry, very fast this time. I hope this is a quick question.

Participant: I thought you did a great job today. But I got hung up on one statement you made on the Lord’s Prayer. You said there were six points to give thanks for on what “Our Father” means.

Ted: I said six things not to give thanks for, but as a way of analyzing my sin and me in order to repent. That’s exactly what it is.

Participant: You said, “Our Father.”

Ted: “Our Father.” This is just Ted Wood. This is not you guys. It’s just me. It may not apply to you. But when I say, “Our Father,” I’m saying our, us. And I ask myself the question. In what way have I offended or sinned against the body of Christ, fellow believers? “Our Father.” So basically, I’m sinning against you and I’m saying, “Well He’s my Father, but He’s really not your Father,” because if we have the Father, who is the Head of the household, He wants all the kids to get along. And He wants us to make up with each other. So that’s why I said that.

Participant: Is it just a matter of semantics?

Ted: I mean it’s obscure. Please don’t get hung up on that, because that’s just my—Thank you. We can talk later in private counseling. (*laughter*)

Participant: Hearing some of these Scriptures is making me think that I’m like the unrighteous guy who was burying his treasure. He didn’t have an accurate assessment of who God was, and that when you think of pagans, they worship all these gods who were kind of like an aid to rational means. It’s in one day, and the next day out, and not really understanding who God was in order to have the right fear of who He is.

Ted: Right. I think we come and we flee to God. I think we flee to God not so much because of our faithfulness or our commitment. But we flee to Him out of desperation. We have no other alternative. “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*” I mean at some point or another, in your conversion, or in your walk and maturing in Christ, you need to come to that position. You need to come to that conclusion. To whom else shall we go? To whom else can I go? I come to You, Lord, out of desperation,

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because I’ve looked at all the other alternatives, and none of them work. None of them carry water. Yes, Bill?

Bill: I’m kind of slow. My mind takes a while to digest things. Last week, when you came up with the verse about the Samaritans, fearing God and fearing other gods too.

Ted: Yes.

Bill: I looked at the contrary of that, which would tell you about the love of God.

Ted: Yes.

Bill: We love God, but we love other things too.

Ted: That’s right. Absolutely.

Bill: As much or more.

Ted: And remember that Bruce says that every time we sin we say that we’re not loving God. I mean that’s what Bruce would say. But that didn’t fit with your analogy.

Bill: I just think of all the things. It could be golf, Frank. It could be hunting, fishing, politics. It could be anything.

Ted: Or our own skin.

Bill: Yes.

Ted: I want my own skin. And I’m going to save my skin. I’m going to see how little I can do to get by. Yes, Bishop?

Bishop Rodgers: It seems to me that we can’t really appreciate His forgiveness unless we are fleeing from His wrath.

Ted: Absolutely. Did you hear that? We can’t appreciate God’s forgiveness until we flee from His wrath. Yes. Let us pray. Lord God, we ask of You that You will teach us to fear You, and that in fearing You we may love You. Give us a clear understanding and an idea, clear sight to see that there is no one in heaven and earth but You. And who else do we have to go to? Only You have the words of eternal life. And we pray this in Your name. Amen. *(Applause)*