

The Fear of the Lord

Introduction:

When I say to you 'the fear of God' it probably conjures up a wide variety of thoughts and emotions in different people. Possibly even questions around God. Today I would like to do a dive into this important uncommon virtue which is the fear of the Lord. I am going to unpack what it is not and explain what it is and of course, why it is so important for us as believers. I will also look at how we can grow in the fear of the Lord.

Before I get started, I want to share a scripture with you:

Isa 33:6 (NKJV) Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, And the strength of salvation; The fear of the LORD is His treasure.

Isa 33:6 (NLT) In that day He will be your sure foundation, providing a rich store of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge. The fear of the LORD will be your treasure.

Isa 33:6 (AMP) And there shall be stability in your times, an abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the reverent fear and worship of the Lord is your treasure and His.

A. What the fear of God is not:

1. *Natural fear*

It's not a fear like fear that you would experience when you are just about to crash in a vehicle, or fall off your bike, or something like that.

2. *Demonic fear*

It's not tormenting fear, like demonic fear. Tormenting fear is from the Devil and has no place in the life of a child of God.

2Ti 1:7 (NKJV) For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

1Jn 4:18 (NKJV) There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

3. Behaviour modification

Some people have an incorrect understanding of the fear of God. I am sure we have all experienced this, actually done this, and/or witnessed this....

An outward expression of religiosity.

For instance, when walking into a church building, or meeting church leaders, or praying or preaching, changing certain behaviours. Some examples of these could be:

- Standing and walking stiffly
- Removing all traces of joy from our faces
- Choosing to be silent
- Avoiding eye contact and cracking of jokes
- Wearing clothes we wouldn't be seen wearing anywhere else on earth
- Changing our tone of voice, or intonation, or adding sound effects when praying or preaching.

This type of behaviour modification is not reverence, its bondage! And let's be honest, sometimes it's just plain weird!

B. What the fear of God is:

*Exo 20:18-21 (ESV) Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, **the people were afraid** and trembled, and they stood far off [19] and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” [20] Moses said to the people, “**Do not fear**, for God has come to test you, **that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.**” [21] The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.*

Fear of God is not being afraid as natural fear. It is a reverential fear of God that keeps us from sinning. True reverence is born out of a revelation of who God is. It is not an outward expression of bondage.

Exo 20:18-20 (NIV) When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance [19] and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die." [20] Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."

Do not fear because God has come to see if His fear is in you. Sounds like a contradiction. The person who is scared of God has something to hide. The person who has a reverential fear of God has got nothing to hide. That's the fear that God is looking for. That fear that is terrified of being separated from God and his presence.

What else constitutes the fear of the Lord?

- We venerate Him.
- We honour, respect and hold Him in the utmost regard above all else in the universe.

When we do this, we will love what He loves and hate what He hates. What's important to Him, also becomes important to us. We begin to carry His heart. That's what this scripture depicts:

Pro 8:13 (NKJV) The fear of the LORD is to hate evil...

Do you tolerate sin in your life? The degree to which we tolerate sin and evil in our lives is the degree to which the anointing and manifestation of God in and through us is hindered.

2Co 7:1 (NLT) Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God.

1Pe 1:15-16 (NKJV) but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, [16] because it is written, "BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

C. Why fear the Lord?

1. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Pro 1:7 (NKJV) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

So you want to be wise? You want to know how to walk and live and what to do in different situations. What to say and not say. What to be engaged in and not to be engaged in. What deals to be a part of, what businesses partners to align yourself with, what to do? How to lead, parent, teach, counsel, shepherd, and so forth? You need wisdom. You know where we start if we want to be wise and have these answers? You got it. Cultivate and possess the fear of God.

2. Those who fear God are taught by God Himself

Psa 25:12-13 (NKJV) Who is the man that fears the LORD? Him shall He teach in the way He chooses. [13] He himself shall dwell in prosperity, And his descendants shall inherit the earth.

We can go to Bible school, we can read many books, listen to many messages, and have many teachers in men. But I want to know that the Lord Himself is teaching me. He may choose to use men, but I will recognise God in what they say. I will be able to eat the meat and spit out the bones so to speak. And I will be able to hear God in everyday life, teaching me, leading me, directing me. I will be able to heed the rebukes of life so to speak.

Pro 15:31-33 (NKJV) The ear that hears the rebukes of life Will abide among the wise. [32] He who despairs instruction despises his own soul, But he who heeds rebuke gets understanding. [33] The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, And before honour is humility.

Very often God speaks without speaking. He doesn't often use a voice to speak. He uses many creative means to speak to us. He needs to help us to recognise when He is speaking. One of the keys to this is to fear Him. A reverential fear of Him.

3. God reveals His secrets to those who fear Him.

Psa 25:14 (NKJV) The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, And He will show them His covenant.

Psa 25:14 (AMP) The secret [of the sweet, satisfying companionship] of the Lord have they who fear (revere and worship) Him, and He will show them His covenant and reveal to them its [deep, inner] meaning.

Who do you share your secrets with? You don't share them with everyone. You share them with those you trust. You share them with your close friends and confidants. Do you think God is any different?

Jhn 15:15 (AMP) I do not call you servants (slaves) any longer, for the servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you My friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from My Father. [I have revealed to you everything that I have learned from Him.]

When we don't know what God is doing, could it be that we are operating in the realm of servant? Could it be that there is another level of relationship available to us, that we are not walking in? That of friend? Where we know and understand His ways?

Psa 103:7 (NKJV) He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.

Interesting.

*Num 12:6-8 (NKJV) Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. [7] Not so with My servant Moses; He is **faithful in all My house**. [8] I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?"*

Jhn 15:14-15 (NKJV) You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. [15] No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

They were once servants, now He calls them friends. Why? Obedience to His Word. Faithfulness. This means that we can be servants or friends. The choice is ours. The differentiator and qualifier for the latter (friendship) is reverential fear of the Lord resulting in obedience to His Word.

Jas 4:8 (NKJV) Draw near to God and He will draw near to you....

- Who does the drawing near?
- Who determines the level of relationship?

That is amazing! We are the ones that determine the level of our relationship with God! What is even more amazing is that we read in James:

Jas 4:5 (NKJV) Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

- God is more passionate about my relationship with Him than I am. He is more passionate about your relationship with Him than you are. He longs for it!

Pro 15:33 (NKJV) The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, And before honour is humility.

We were praying this week that God would raise us up as prophetic people. Those with whom He can share His secrets, reveal things to, even in work places and business. The sad things is, I know that our prayers simply won't make an impact on certain people. Because God shares His secrets with those that fear Him. If you do not walk in the fear of God, you are disqualified from this in many ways.

4. The fear of the Lord prolongs your life.

Pro 10:27 (NKJV) The fear of the LORD prolongs days, But the years of the wicked will be shortened.

1Co 6:19-20 (NKJV) Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? [20] For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

1Co 3:16-17 (NKJV) Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? [17] If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

When I have a revelation of this, I am careful:

- What I put in my mouth
- What I put on my body
- How I exercise and discipline my body in terms of fitness, strength and health.

In so doing my days will be prolonged. This is just the natural version of it.

There is a spiritual component too.

The fear of God protects me from making rash and foolish decisions: going where I shouldn't, doing what I shouldn't, partnering with those with whom I shouldn't. And also results in spiritual life, vigour and energy.

Jesus was the one who said:

Jhn 10:10 (NKJV) The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

Jhn 10:10 (AMP) The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows).

5. The fear of the Lord brings riches and honour and life.

Pro 22:4 (NKJV) By humility and the fear of the LORD Are riches and honour and life.

Pro 19:23 (NKJV) The fear of the LORD leads to life, And he who has it will abide in satisfaction;

6. In the fear of the Lord is protection

*Pro 19:23 (NKJV) The fear of the LORD leads to life, And he who has it will abide in satisfaction; **He will not be visited with evil.***

7. God is found amongst those who fear Him.

Psa 89:7 (NKJV) God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, And to be held in reverence by all those around Him.

- You won't find God abiding in an atmosphere where He is not held in utmost reverence, respect and honour.
- We can settle for His omnipresence. Or we can desire His manifest presence.

His Omnipresence:

Psa 139:7-8 (NKJV) Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? [8] If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

God is ever present. There is nowhere that we can hide from Him. He is in any secret place.

His manifest presence:

*Jhn 14:21,23 (NKJV) [21] He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and **manifest Myself to him.**" ... [23], "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and **make Our home with him.***

His manifest presence is that presence that is spoken of in John 14. It's when God manifests or reveals Himself to us via our 5 natural and or spiritual senses. He makes His home, His abode in our lives.

8. *There are major consequences for lack of fear of the Lord.*

Pro 1:25-33 (NKJV) Because you disdained all my counsel, And would have none of my rebuke, [26] I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, [27] When your terror comes like a storm, And your destruction comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. [28] "Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. [29] Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD, [30] They would have none of my counsel And despised my every rebuke. [31] Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, And be filled to the full with their own fancies. [32] For the turning away of the simple will slay them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them; [33] But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, And will be secure, without fear of evil."

Your God is the thing or person you fear.

- If you fear lack, that is your God.
- If you fear people's opinions, that is your God.
- If you fear sickness, that is your God.
- Whatever you fear, will be your God.

D. How do I grow in the fear of the Lord?

Pro 2:1-5 (NKJV) My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you, [2] So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding; [3] Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, [4] If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; [5] Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God.

If. It's all conditional. If you do the day's work, I will pay you x. Can you come to collect payment if you didn't do the work? No. The payment is dependent upon completion of the work. This is the same. It's conditional. It's not a free handout.

1. Receive His words and treasure His commands.

Psa 119:9-11 (NKJV) How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. [10] With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! [11] Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.

2. Apply yourself to understand how His Word applies to your situations.

Psa 119:105 (NKJV) Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

3. Be found in prayer asking, seeking, knocking.

Jas 4:2-3 (NKJV) You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. [3] You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Jas 1:5-8 (NKJV) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. [6] But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. [7] For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; [8] he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Luk 11:9-10 (AMP) So I say to you, Ask and keep on asking and it shall be given you; seek and keep on seeking and you shall find; knock and keep on knocking and the door shall be opened to you. [10] For everyone who asks and keeps on asking receives; and he who seeks and keeps on seeking finds; and to him who knocks and keeps on knocking, the door shall be opened.

1Jn 3:22 (NKJV) And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

4. Search the scriptures as for treasures.

Isa 33:6 (NKJV) Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, And the strength of salvation; The fear of the LORD is His treasure.

The fear of the Lord is His treasure. Treasure is something that is hidden.

5. Realize the fear of the Lord is taught.

Psa 34:11 (NKJV) Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

- That's the Holy Spirit speaking.
- The fear of the Lord is taught.
- If we don't listen to Him, he won't teach us.
- In this passage, he is teaching us the basics of the fear of the Lord.

6. Depart from evil.

Let's continue with that passage of scripture:

Psa 34:11-14 (NKJV) Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. [12] Who is the man who desires life, And loves many days, that he may see good? [13] Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking deceit. [14] Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.

Come children, these are the basics of the fear of the Lord. In other words, Fear of the Lord class 101:

- Watch your mouth.
- Don't speak evil.
- Depart from evil.
- In other words, flee. Take your leave completely from it. Leave it behind. All of it. It's not talking about dancing around the edges to see how far you can go whilst not doing what you shouldn't.

Job 28:28 (NKJV) And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.'

Pro 8:13 (NKJV) The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.

- We are to depart from evil! Included in what the Lord considers evil is pride, arrogance, any evil way, and perverse mouths.
- Depart from these things!

God's wisdom and engaging in evil are not partners. They do not co-exist. They are mutually exclusive because the fear of God and evil are mutually exclusive.

Therefore, engaging in evil behaviour, or that which the Lord counts as evil, disqualifies one from walking in the fear of the Lord. It disqualifies one from walking in the wisdom which is from God. As such, it disqualifies one from being a friend of God. It disqualifies one from knowing the secrets of God. It disqualifies one from all of the benefits afforded one who walks in the fear of God.

7. Do good.

Psa 34:14 (NKJV) Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.

- Seek peace. Not only seek it, but pursue it. Run after it. Hunt it down. Make it happen.

It's not passive. It's active. It's intentional. Do good. Intentionally.

Conclusion

Today we explored:

A. What the fear of God is not:

- natural fear,
- demonic fear or torment,
- behaviour modification.

B. What the fear of God is:

- a reverential fear of God born out of a revelation of who God is.
- honouring, respecting and holding Him in the utmost regard above all else in the universe.

- veneration of the Lord.

C. Why we should fear the Lord:

- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
- Those who fear God are taught by God Himself
- God reveals His secrets to those who fear Him.
- The fear of the Lord prolongs your life.
- The fear of the Lord brings riches and honour and life.
- In the fear of the Lord is protection
- God is found amongst those who fear Him.
- There are major consequences for lack of fear of the Lord.

D. How do we grow in the fear of the Lord?

- Receive His words and treasure His commands.
- Apply yourself to understand how His Word applies to your situations.
- Be found in prayer asking, seeking, knocking.
- Search the scriptures as for treasures.
- Realize the fear of the Lord is taught.
- Depart from evil.
- Do good.

Altar Call.