

Time to Reset

- Update on holiday

Morning is my favourite time of the day:

- The whole day stretches out, with opportunities and possibilities.
- His mercies are new every morning.
- It's an opportunity to reset.

We got a smart exercise bike in the holidays. It is in need of calibration! The readings and measures it gives me are not accurate indications of reality.

And so it is with us. Morning reset time was wonderful during the holiday.

We have a chance right now – the beginning of the year on a much grander scale. It's an opportunity to recalibrate our lives. To hit the reset button, to make sure we are measuring things accurately and with the correct measures. So that we have an accurate indication of reality.

2Co 5:9-10 (NKJV) Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. [10] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

A great way to make sure we are heading in the right direction and measuring our lives correctly is to view our lives from God's perspective. If you continue on the same trajectory you're currently on, and in a number of years you stand before that judgement seat, how will you have fared?

We see Paul's ambition in 2 Cor was not to have a better house, better holidays, better means of transport, bigger bank account, better qualifications and education. Nothing wrong with these ambitions. But as we look at our lives from heaven's perspective and from the perspective of having run our race, may we share Paul's sentiments. These things are worth nothing next to Christ. At the end of our race, to have gained all these things and not having been pleasing to God will not be worth it. And may our goal be to please Him.

E.g. of my race:

“This race is not forever. Only I am forever”.

If we want to live our lives to please Him, and with the understanding that we have limited time, we must grow in the fear of God..

Rom 11:22 (NKJV) Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness.

Otherwise you also will be cut off.

Our natural tendency is to look only at his kindness. His compassion. His mercy. His grace. He is infinitely kind and compassionate and we do need to look to that, especially if we are discouraged. However, if we keep looking at that and not at the severity of God, we can lose many things (including salvation if someone persists in habitual sinning. We see this in the NT). The grace of God is not the only thing mentioned in the NT. NT also speaks of the reverence of God and the fear of God. If we understand both, we are healthy.

Rom 11:22 (MSG) Make sure you stay alert to these qualities of gentle kindness and ruthless severity that exist side by side in God—ruthless with the deadwood, gentle with the grafted shoot. But don't presume on this gentleness. The moment you become deadwood, you're out of there.

When we come to understand the grace of God from a perspective of understanding the reverence and fear of God, we have a healthy outlook and balanced outlook.

When we come to understand the grace of God without an understanding of the fear of God, we are immature and live our lives out of kilter. We need both.

- E.g. of early Christians who came from strong Jewish background.
- ego of OT prophets
- Habitual sin?

No. Because of fear of God.

Rom 6:14 (ESV) For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

We need a revelation of His grace to be holy. Grace helps us to overcome our fallen nature and keeps us from falling. But we need to look to both the kindness and severity of God to grow up healthy and balanced in Him.

2 Corinthians 7 teaches us that if we want to perfect holiness, we can do that only in the fear of God.

2Co 7:1 (ESV) Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

So we need both. Revelation of grace and a revelation of the fear of God.

When we look at Jesus:

*Heb 5:7-8 (NKJV) who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was **heard because of His godly fear**, [8] though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.*

He wanted to be saved from death...I not physical death, not the death of a martyr, but according to Thayer's: *in the widest sense, death comprising all the miseries arising from sin, as well physical death as the loss of a life consecrated to God and blessed in him on earth, to be followed by wretchedness in hell.*

Jesus wanted to be saved from any sin. He desired to walk in holiness as a man. He feared God. His prayers (vehement cries and tears) were to be saved from death... not for more money and prosperity and success. Interesting. And He was heard because of His Godly fear.

He possessed the fear of God. Jesus suffered certain things and learnt obedience through these things.

Luk 2:40 (CEV) The child Jesus grew. He became strong and wise, and God blessed him.

Jesus grew. He wasn't born an old man. He learned things. He wasn't born with all knowledge. He wasn't born with all wisdom. He grew in it.

He must have increased in His fear of the Lord to grow in wisdom.

Can I share an open secret (it's not really a secret) with you regarding The Lord?

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

Do you want to know things from the spirit realm, from God's heart? Do you want to walk with God?

Cultivate the fear of God.

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

We can be satisfied on this earth by seeing God answer our prayers. He is making known His acts. But there is another level I am talking about. Knowing His ways. Walking with Him. Moses had some key.

Num 12:6-7 (AMP) And He said, Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make Myself known to him in a vision and speak to him in a dream. [7] But not so with My servant Moses; he is entrusted and faithful in all My house. [Heb 3:2, Heb 3:5-6]

Moses was faithful. He feared the Lord. To be faithful, requires obedience. The Lord desires obedience.

1Sa 15:22 (NKJV) So Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.

Moses grew in his submission too. Moses of the palace at 40 possibly would have taken the Lord's plans of a tabernacle and said to him, "I know a better way to build this". Moses had been involved in building pyramids in Egypt after all. The only ingredient missing to the tabernacle would have been the glory of God. Moses of 80 years old, said, "ok. I will build it how you want. Period."

There is a place of complete dependence, total surrender, humility that comes with the fear of the Lord.... Along with wisdom.

The problem with many of us today is that we think in terms of all the big sins that we don't do. We believe we are generally faithful in the things that we think are important:

- I don't murder
- I don't commit adultery
- I don't get drunk
- I don't....

And we honestly believe that is ok.

But I want to ask you a Q. When we test the obedience of our children, is it tested in the big, or little things at first? Is it that they didn't murder a teacher or fornicate with someone? No. Its tested in the little things first:

- Come now from playing soccer outside and help your mom.
- Pack away your clothes.
- And so forth.

And so it is with God. The little things. What are the little things that you know you need to sort out or do that God has been asking you to? Maybe it's to:

- return money you borrowed
- to make a relationship right
- to give or sow what God impressed on your heart to do
- to give back a book you borrowed
- to run an errand for someone
- to change your schedule during the day to include time with God
- To do the things that God has asked you to do...
- To follow his instructions in the Bible... forgive, don't be embittered, don't take vengeance, speak the truth in love, speak out, maybe it's to be quiet when you would usually say something.
- Maybe it's to come in the opposite spirit.

- Maybe it's to spend a season in fasting,
- To take the high road in conflict and not try to vindicate self
- Maybe it's in doing what He has been asking you to do.

It's in the little things that we can often measure and determine our fear of God.

It's in our daily routine.

Fear of God. It's a powerful thing to have.

Psa 111:10 (NKJV) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments.

The Fear of the Lord is a great way to ensure we are recalibrating and measuring our lives and progress correctly.

I would like us to look at the first man in the Bible who received this certificate from God: A God Fearer. Or one who feared God. Abraham. Lessons we learn from one who God classified as a fearer God:

1. Listen to God

Gen 22:1-22 (NKJV) Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

- Do we drop everything when God speaks? I don't have God at my beck and call.
- Sometimes I am sleeping and wake in the early hours of the morning, but I am tired. I sense his presence, but say to myself, "in the morning". When I wake, that presence is not there.
- Sometimes I am in the Word and He is speaking to me and I haven't turned off my phone. A call comes through. I take it and return to the Word. Silence.
- Sometimes I am spending time with him and one of the boys calls me.... I return and silence.

Isa 55:6 (NKJV) Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.

- Do we listen more or pray more when we are in our times of prayer? Do we pray from having heard God?

When you are in the presence of someone who is so much wiser than you, so much holier than you, do you speak more or listen more? How much of an insult is it when someone picks up the phone and speaks non-stop for 30 mins and then says, "ok, goodbye".

We need to learn to cultivate a lifestyle of listening to Him.

When we sit in the presence of a Godly man, or one wiser than us, we gain a whole lot more by listening more than by talking more.

The less we fear God, the less we listen to Him.

2. Display immediate obedience

[2] Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." [3] So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

God didn't tell Abraham when to go. Abraham could have said, "I have important things to do now, maybe I'll do it next week. Maybe next month." No. Abraham woke up the next morning early and went. Sometimes we use spiritual language to justify our delayed obedience: "I am praying about it". Or we say, "We are thinking about it". What it really means often is, "I don't feel like obeying right now". When we are sluggish in obedience, we will remain that way all our lives unless we determine to choose immediate obedience. And often we need to choose that before God has given us his instruction.

Imagine waking up in eternity and discovering that what you did in 40 years of your Christian life was actually what should have been accomplished in 1 year, and you missed a large portion of what God had for you because of your sluggish obedience.

3. Be unmoved by ungodly family influences.

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I don't see Abraham consulting with his extended family beforehand. I don't even know if he told Sarah what the Lord had required him to do. But the point is this, he obeyed without spending time consulting and explaining himself and bringing everyone on board and checking with a vast array of family members who were not godly.

4. Obey 100% even if it's inconvenient

Moriah. It was a 3 day journey. Very inconvenient. He could have tried to bargain in his heart, saying, "OK, Moriah is far. Let me obey God in principle... so I'll offer my son, but I'll just travel half a day and do it on the mountain out back." How often do we bargain with the instructions of God in our minds?

[4] Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.

How often does God ask us to do something, whether a principle in His Word or something specific He has spoken to us, and we try to negotiate the details. We agree to do it in principle, but because its inconvenient, we try to change it up a bit for ourselves to make it easier, maybe paint a bit outside the lines, but sort of get in the ball park area. Abraham, one who feared God, didn't do this. He did exactly what God asked of him. And he did it immediately.

5. Live for the audience of One

[5] And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you." [6] So Abraham took the

wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.

It is interesting how obedience and the fear of God are so intertwined in the act of worship. This is the first time worship is mentioned in the bible. The first time someone gets a certificate from God regarding being one who fears God and at the same time, he qualifies for this because of his act of worship. Makes the nature of true worship clear. We can't separate true worship from a fear of the Lord that manifests itself in obedience.

When Jesus taught that the Father is looking for worshippers who worship in spirit and truth, He didn't mean the Father is looking for those who play drums and keyboard and can sing beautifully.

Worship for the audience of One.

When we live for the audience of one, things become much clearer. The fear of the Lord brings about a dimension of living for an audience of One. The more you know God, the more you understand the fear of God, the less you are buddy-buddy with Him and the more you worship Him in the fear of God as Lord of your life. The more you live your life before Him as Lord, not before man.

2Co 5:10 (ESV) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

We will appear before Him alone. Without hubbie, or kids, or friends, or bosses or work colleagues.

Look at the lyrics of many current worship songs: so buddy-buddy. God is my best friend or Jesus is my lover. Or "worship songs" where none of the lyrics are really focused on worshipping God, but rather focused on me and my soul needs being fulfilled and met. Written by people who don't necessarily exhibit understanding of the fear of God but have musical ability. And many of those songs are loved by us as Christians because we also don't have an understanding of the fear of God. And so we placate each other in our ignorance and immaturity and lack of fear of God.

First time worship is mentioned. Interesting that Abraham left his servants and the many people and went alone with his son. True worship is often seen in those moments of aloneness when no one else is looking and God requires obedience. The Bible says God desires obedience above sacrifice. And to heed than the fat of rams (being offered to him). Few people understand what worship is. If you think all there is to worship is singing and enjoying his presence, you have missed something. Worship is connected to the fear of God. Praise and thanksgiving and offering the fruit of our lips and singing is important. Yes. But that is not necessarily worship.

6. Give everything to God

It's His anyway.

*[7] But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" [8] And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together. [9] Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. [10] And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. [11] But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." [12] And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, **since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.**"*

His son was everything. Abraham understood that everything He had was God's. Therefore to offer to God what He requested, was giving to God what God had given and owned anyway.

People say Abraham gave Melchizedek 10%. So we give 10% tithes. No. Abraham understood everything was God's. He feared God and gave everything to God. I am not meaning that we take everything and put it in the offering basket. No. I mean it's a revelation that all we have and all we are belongs to Him. What I give, I give because he owns it anyway and I am merely a steward. It's a deep heart attitude

that comes from understanding God is Lord and all I am and all I have belongs to Him. He can do with me as He desires.

[13] Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. [14] And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided." [15] Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, [16] and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— [17] blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. [18] In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

The wonderful thing about God is that He is so good. We can never outgive Him.

Conclusion:

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Pray.