

Subject: Living in the Fear of God

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:15-25

Fearing God is way of life. It's not a part-time thing; it's an all-time, a lifetime thing, an every day thing. Fearing God is not something that *some* Christians should do. Fearing God is what *all* Christians must do. It is a way of life for all believers. In verse 17, "if you call on the Father" means if you are a Christian. If you are a Christian "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear (of God)." (NKJV) "Conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear." The word sojourning or stay can be translated "pilgrimage." A Christian is living here in this world as a temporary resident.

1. What does it mean to fear God?

As we have seen before, the Bible teaches us that God gives us a heart to fear Him. By nature we do not fear God. **Romans 3:18** *There is no fear of God before their eyes.* The dying thief asked, "Don't you fear God?" The answer is, "No we do not." In salvation God gives us a new heart.

Jeremiah 32:38-40 ³⁸ *And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:* ³⁹ *And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:* ⁴⁰ *And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*

Three things are essential if we are to fear God:

- A Biblical view of God's character

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved. In salvation we move from a dread and terror of God's judgment to an awe and reverence of His mercy.

Psalms 130:3-4 ³ *If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* ⁴ *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*

If you were in a court of law standing before the judge and there was enough evidence to convict you of a serious crime, you would have a legitimate fear of the judge who could condemn and sentence you. But if the judge said "The evidence proves your guilt, there is no doubt, but my son is willing to take your guilt and accept your penalty. Therefore, I declare that you are acquitted of the crime and you may go free." Then you would have a different kind of fear. You would have a deep sense of awe and respect for the judge because He was both just to uphold the law and punish his son and at the same time he was merciful to you.

God redeemed us at an infinite cost. **1 Peter 1:18-19** ¹⁸ *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;* ¹⁹ *But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

- An awareness of God's presence

God is holy and He calls us to be holy. **1 Peter 1:14-16** ¹⁴ *As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:* ¹⁵ *But as he which hath*

called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; ¹⁶ Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

How can I live a holy life at all times? I must be aware of God's holy presence with me. God is not distant. He is near. Here is how the principle works. When you're driving and you see a policeman, what's the first thing you do? You probably look to see how fast you're driving, then you slow it down a little. As long as that policeman is in the flow of traffic you drive the speed limit and make sure you give a signal and do everything right. The presence of the policeman makes a difference. In the same way the presence of the Lord makes a difference.

Proverbs 15:3 *The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*

- A desire for God's approval

1 Peter 1:17 *And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*

Now is the time when some churches have what is called a "Judgment House." We know that God is going to judge us. For unbelievers it will be a horrible judgment. But for believers it is not a judgment for our sins, but for our service. It is not a judgment of condemnation, but a judgment of evaluation.

1 Corinthians 4:5 *Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.*

2. How can we maintain and develop our fear of God?

- Think often about God's character, His ways, and His will

A. W. Tozer said: "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." Don't settle for a low view of God or a dim view of God. Have a high view and a clear view of God. We get a high view of God as we read and study Scripture. In His Word God reveals Himself, His ways, and His will.

Psalms 19:7-11 *⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. ⁸ The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. ⁹ The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. ¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. ¹¹ Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.*

- Spend some time with God-fearing people

Proverbs 13:20 *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*

Psalms 119:63 *I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.*

There are different ways to do this. You can spend time in person. You can listen to cds, dvds, or radio. You can read books.

- Live each day with eternity in mind

Have an eternal perspective on life. Realize how fragile and uncertain life is. Remember how brief life is. It is like a vapor. Know that you will give account of your life. **Romans 14:12**
So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

One of the best things about coming to church on Sunday and Wednesday is getting our focus back on eternity. But it's up to us to keep that focus every day, and we do that in our devotional time. Every day we need to remember these things:

Think often about God's character, His ways, and His will.

Spend some time with people who fear God.

Live every day with eternity in mind.

When a person truly fears God, you can see the evidence. It shows up in the way they talk and the way they act. Their attitude is different. As you go through your week at work or school wouldn't it be great if people asked what was happening in your life because they noticed the difference it was making? And wouldn't it be great if you could tell them you had been learning and thinking more about God and you want to honor Him more in your life? That's why it is so important to live in the fear of God.