

# Communion with the Father

## Loving God with all your Heart Part 8

2 Corinthians 13:14 7-31-11

Summary: Thoughts are real deeds, deserving punishment or praise. Failures to love God with the mind include mindless meditation (superstitious mysticism), worship, wisdom (superstitious interpretations of thoughts, coincidences, and impulses), and teaching (failure to study). Every point of sanctification requires the mind. Gain information for the sake of insight for the sake of intimacy. Love involves enjoying the person (use your mind to discover how to experience God's attributes) and bringing joy to the person (please God with the right use of the mind).

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**2 Corinthians 13:14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

## Introduction

We are in the midst of a study of the most important topic in the entire Bible – Loving God. We began by looking at the Greatest Commandment and thinking through what it means to love God with your heart (the emotional aspect of love), with your soul (the desire aspect of love), with your mind (the mental aspect), and with your strength (the action aspect of love). Now, after seven weeks of that, hopefully we all have a grip on what love is. So what I would like to do now is turn the corner and talk about how to do it. Having looked into the definition of love, now we turn to the activity of love. What does the Bible teach about how to enjoy God's love for you, and how to express and increase your love for Him?

### Dead Orthodoxy and Superstitious Mysticism

This matter of how to have daily, hourly interaction with God is so incredibly important, and yet it is clouded with so much confusion. If you were not here last week I would urge you to listen through that message, because what I have observed so often is people running back and forth between two deadly errors – superstitious mysticism and dead orthodoxy. Dead orthodoxy turns Christianity into an intellectualized, theoretical, impersonal system of doctrines that make God a king who reigns over our behavior and our thoughts but not our emotions or desires.

People get tired of that. They get tired of lots of truth and information and structure, but no heart and soul. God made us with a need to be moved. Following a religious system is not enough. We want to be moved and deeply touched by real experiences of God that penetrate our entire being. And so they fall out of the back door of dead orthodoxy and run into the front door of superstitious mysticism, where truth takes a back seat and everything is driven by emotion and subjective experience. It feels like the voice of God? – It must be the voice of God. It moves your soul deeply? – it must be the presence of God. It feels like a powerful impulse? – it must be God’s guidance. You have a vision with lots of light and wonderful things? – must be heaven. People who are disillusioned by stale, dead, emotionless orthodoxy are attracted to that.

But when they get into it, they often realize that their experiences may feel powerful, but they are not real. God has given us an appetite for moving experiences, but He has also given us an appetite for reality. The soul gets tired of pretend transcendence that you have to talk yourself into, and that leaves you empty afterward. Superstitious mysticism leaves you empty the moment it is over. After a while people figure that out, and they sense that it is not really real. And their God-given craving for truth draws them out of the mystical churches into churches that feel stable and true and that carry rich, solid tradition and definite authority. So people get thrown back and forth between empty-hearted religion to empty-headed religion.

But if you look at the interactions with God described in the Psalms you see that the most moving and most profound mystical experiences with God are also the ones most deeply rooted in truth. And this study is all about how to have those experiences. The problem with the superstitious mystics is not that they look for a direct experience with God. Their problem is they want to just invent their own ideas of what that looks like. So what we want to do in this study is discover biblical mysticism. What does the Bible say about how to express love for God, how to enjoy God’s expressions of love for you, and what those kinds of interactions with Him look like and feel like? What, exactly is all this eating and drinking and tasting of God?

So let’s begin by defining these terms. We need to do that because fellowship with God and experiencing the presence of God are both concepts that can easily become meaningless abstractions or platitudes.

## The Presence of God

Let’s start with the idea of God’s presence. Have you ever thought about what it means when Scripture speaks of drawing near to an omnipresent God? “Omnipresent” means He is everywhere all the time. How do you draw near or come closer to Someone who is everywhere?

To answer that we have to understand the biblical concept of presence. Is God here in this room with us right now? Yes. Is He also out in the field out there? Or in the 7-Eleven across the street - or on the moon? Yes. However, His presence in this room right now is not the same as His existence in the field or on the moon. So in what way is God present on the moon? In what way is He present everywhere?

A couple ways. God’s presence to observe is everywhere (Jer.23:24). He sees everything. And God’s presence to uphold and sustain is everywhere (Col.1:17). God has to constantly uphold every molecule in the Universe; otherwise it would go out of existence - because nothing has the power to exist in itself. So God exists everywhere, and God is observing everything everywhere, and God is upholding all things everywhere, but those are not the things the Bible is talking about when it uses the word “presence.” The word translated *presence* in the Old Testament is the normal, everyday word for *face*. That is why in verses like Psalms 105:4 some translations say “Seek his face always” and others say, “Seek his presence always.” The face of God and the presence of God are exactly the same thing. And understanding that should give you an idea of the flavor of that word. Being in God’s presence does not just mean God exists in that place or that God can see you or that God is at work there. Being in His presence means His face is turned favorably toward you. It is a personal, relational thing. You

are in God's presence when God has turned His attention toward you in a way that enables you to have a favorable, personal interaction with Him. So in that sense God is not present everywhere. God is not present that way in the 7-Eleven right now (unless there happens to be a Christian in the store).

Proverbs 15:29 says, **The Lord is far from the wicked.** Does that mean God does not exist within five feet of a wicked person? Does it mean He cannot see that person or is not active in dealing with that person? No - it does not mean any of that. It only means God's face is turned away from them. He is not showing them His favor, and they cannot have positive, personal interactions with Him.

So God's presence refers to His special, relational nearness that enables His people to enjoy the favorable benefits of His nature. God is always merciful, but you cannot enjoy the benefits of His mercy unless His face is turned toward you. God is a guide and a refuge and a giver of strength, but you cannot receive guidance or protection or strengthening unless you are in His presence.

### **Aren't We Always in His Presence?**

At this point someone might say, "Wait a minute - aren't we always in His presence - with His face turned toward us?" Didn't Jesus say, **"Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"** (Mt.28:20)? Didn't David say, **"Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there"** (Ps. 139:7)? Yes - there is a sense in which the believer is always in the presence of God. But then what do we do with passages that seem to indicate that God's presence comes and goes? If we are always in God's presence 24/7, then why are we told to seek His presence?

### **Psalms 105:4 Seek his presence always.**

Think of God's face shining on you as being like the sun shining on the earth. (It is a biblical illustration, because Scripture frequently speaks of God's face shining on us.) If God turned His face away altogether, so you were not experiencing His presence at all, it would be like if the sun went out of existence. The earth would be a lifeless, desolate, pitch-dark ball of ice. No life form could exist even for one second.

So in a very real way the earth is being shined on and warmed by the sun all the time. However, there is a huge difference between a really overcast, cloudy, rainy day and a bright, clear, sunny day. When David says God's face is always shining on us that is like the sun always shining on the earth. But when you read passages about God turning His face away from a believer, that means it is a cloudy day. The rays of direct blessing from God are being blocked and defused in some measure. Enough of them still penetrate through the clouds so you are not in hell. Hell is when the sun goes out completely - total separation from the face of God. Not one ray of His blessing or favor goes there. If God were to remove His presence from you altogether you would quite literally be in hell. But a cloudy day is when you are still receiving thousands of life-giving rays from the sun of God's face, but it is not shining on you as directly as other times. So when the Bible tells us to seek His face it means to come out of the cave you are in, come out from under the rocks, and into the sunlight. (And if you are having trouble appreciating this illustration because you don't like being in direct sunlight - think winter, not summer. When God turns His face away, it is twenty below zero and you get hypothermia, and you would trade everything you own for an hour in the direct sunlight.)

It is a wonderful truth that we always, always have access to the sunshine of God's presence. Even in His most severe chastisement and even in your driest desert, God's tender, gracious, life-giving, life-supporting, strengthening, encouraging, motivating, awe-inspiring, healing, upholding, guiding, enlightening, joy-giving, delightful, soul-satisfying presence is there in great measure. The worst moment of depression you have ever experienced in your life is actually infused with a certain amount of joy and hope. Otherwise you would be in hell. And if we ever tasted that even for a split-second we would praise God every day for the joy of His presence. God forgive us for how lightly we

take the grace of His presence every day.

## Fellowship with God: Seeking His Presence

So yes, we are always in God's presence as believers. The sun is always shining on believers. However the thick clouds of our sin are always forming, and we must continually strive to step back out into the direct sunlight of God's presence. So drawing near to Jesus, having fellowship with God, communion with the Lord; is simply when you seek that - seek the experience of Him turning His face toward you, so that His face shines on you.

Fellowship with God takes place whenever you have any positive, personal interaction with Him. I say "positive" interaction because unbelievers can have negative interactions with God. If God commands a person to do something and that person disobeys or blasphemes God – that is an interaction, but it is not a good one. Fellowship with God is any positive, personal interaction with the Lord. God does something toward you, you respond to Him in a positive way, He responds to that - that kind of interaction is fellowship, or communion.

### God desires it

And God desires that. He does not need it. God is perfectly fulfilled by fellowship within the Trinity, and He has zero need of us. He does not need fellowship with us, but He does desire it.

**Revelation 3:20 I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.**

John Owen: "Certainly this is fellowship, or I know not what is. Christ will [eat] with believers: he refreshes himself with his own graces in them, by his Spirit bestowed on them. The Lord Christ is exceedingly delighted in tasting of the sweet fruits of the Spirit in the saints."<sup>1</sup>

The reason God desires fellowship with us is because the things we offer Him as we interact with Him come from the Holy Spirit. And God the Father and God the Son LOVE everything that comes from the Holy Spirit.

### Experiencing attributes

So fellowship with God is any positive, personal interaction.<sup>2</sup> So what is that like? And how is it

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<sup>1</sup> John Owen, *Of Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, ch.1.

<sup>2</sup> The day you became a Christian you entered into a state of communion with God. So there is one sense in which you are always in communion with Him as a believer. But the day-to-day experience of that varies. Positionally, we are His children. But the closeness of our relationship with Him varies from hour to hour. The wonderful truths of our positional status in Christ are precious beyond words to us. However, it is a grave mistake to become so focused on our positional status that we downplay the ups and downs of daily fellowship with God. When I say "positional status" I am talking about those things that are true all the time – 24/7. And when I say "daily experience" I am talking about things in your relationship with God that change from hour to hour and day to day. Both are very important, and they can be illustrated, once again, with the marriage relationship. Some aspects of the marriage relationship are positional and legal and unchanging. In the eyes of the State of Colorado Tracy and I are legally husband and wife.

I could be in China and she could be at the North Pole and we would still be just as married as ever. Legally, we are just as married if we are in a heated argument, or in a loving embrace. So that part of our marriage is positional and legal, and it never changes. But other parts of our marriage change from hour to hour and day to day. All day every day we are married, but we are not always talking to each other. We are not always enjoying each other. We are not always paying attention to each other. And we are not always all that happy with each other.

It is the same way with our relationship with God. 24/7 we are constantly His children, Scripture speaks often of God sometimes being near and other times being afar off. Sometimes turning His face toward you and other times away. Sometimes drinking and being full and refreshed and satisfied, and other times being empty and dry and thirsty. Some times He is grieved with us and other times He is pleased. He is pleased far more than He is grieved, and if it does not seem that way to you, you probably need to have your eyes opened to appreciate all the amazing things the Holy Spirit is working in your heart. But rest assured - God does not have any trouble appreciating the work of the Holy Spirit in you. He loves it and is deeply pleased by it, and for that reason is mostly pleased with you - far more than he is grieved by you. But when He is grieved, there are times when He will discipline you by turning His face away, and withdrawing His presence. **Jonah 2:8 Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.** There is an enjoyment of God's presence that gets forfeited every time we sin. In fact, the most powerful way to overcome sin in your life is to become so delighted by your experiences of God's presence that the thought of forfeiting it terrifies you and is not worth the pleasure of any sin.

done? And how do you know when it has happened? I told you before that it is not some strange, hokey, far-out thing where you have some kind of out-of-body experience, or go into a trance, or whatever. Experiencing the presence of God should be something that takes place numerous times every single day. It can be as simple as this: Is God kind - yes or no? Are those chairs you are sitting in comfortable? Is comfort in this world an expression of God's kindness? Yes it is. So if you are able to appreciate the comfort of the chair you are in - if you are capable of enjoying that.(sometimes you are capable of enjoying comfort and other times you are not, but if this is one of those times when you can) - and you recognize it for what it is (an expression of God's kindness to you - actually two expressions of God's kindness - one is the chair, and the other is the ability to enjoy it) - if you are able to enjoy those two things as expressions of God's kindness to you; then you are experiencing the kindness of God, which means you are experiencing His presence. Any time you experience an attribute of God, you experience God.

In fact, I would go so far as to say that this is the only way to experience the presence of God. If you have some really profound, amazing religious experience where you saw visions, and travelled to heaven, and saw blinding light, spoke in tongues, fireworks were going off, and the whole thing has totally changed your life forever - if it was not an experience of one of God's attributes, then it was not an experience of God. The ONLY things we can possibly know about God are His attributes as revealed in Scripture. Nothing else can be known about Him, and so there is no other way to experience Him. (That is why it is so important to learn as much as you possibly can about His attributes.)

### **The Results**

So, how do you know when this has happened? How can you tell when you have actually had an experience of the presence of God?

Remember way back at the beginning of this whole sermon series when I talked to you about the hunger and thirst of the soul? When you find yourself unhappy, discouraged, depressed, upset, unfulfilled, restless – those feelings are what Scripture describes as the thirst of the soul. You have built-in appetites that are going unsatisfied. And throughout Scripture God describes Himself as being like food and drink. He satisfies those appetites with His presence. So the way you can know that you have actually had an encounter with the presence of God is the same way you can tell if you have had lunch or not. If what used to be hunger and thirst is now fullness and satisfaction, then you have experienced food. And if the emptiness, restlessness, dissatisfaction, and unhappiness in your soul have turned to fullness and joy and contentment and delight – then you know you have experienced the presence of God.

Anytime anyone experiences any joy it is because God has granted a sampling of what it is like to be in His presence. The reason there can be no joy in hell is because there is no other source of joy than the presence of God. But when you do experience His presence, the effect is always joy.

### **Psalms 16:11 ...fullness of joy is in your presence**

If you comb through Scripture and catalogue the various effects that the presence of God has on the human soul here is what you get: Joy, Peace, Encouragement, Strength, Love, Comfort, Insight, Trust, Delight, Confidence, Assurance, Courage, Zeal, Motivation, Passion/Drive, Rest, Refreshment, Security, Desire, Patience, Fear of God, Reverence, Awe, Satisfaction, Fulfillment, and Amazement. Those are the effects of the presence of God on the human soul. And the greater the experience of His presence the more of those results will be enjoyed by your soul. Nothing is more productive, more healthy, more profitable, more beneficial, more important, or more delightful than experiencing the presence of God. And nothing honors and glorifies God more. Nobody has ever been disappointed by an experience of genuine fellowship with God - ever.

## **Fellowship with the Trinity**

Fellowship with God, then, is any positive, personal, interaction with God. But that is done in different ways for each member of the Trinity. Our interactions with the Father mainly have to do with His love, our interactions with the Son mainly have to do with His grace, and our interactions with the Holy Spirit are where we receive the benefits of the Father's love and the Son's grace.

**2 Corinthians 13:14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

I believe that verse summarizes what Scripture teaches about how to interact with the individual Persons in the Trinity. Now, in case someone is not familiar with the doctrine of the Trinity, let me give you a quick explanation. The word "trinity" is not in the Bible. It is just shorthand we use to refer to five doctrines that are in the Bible:

1. The Father is God.
2. The Son is God.
3. The Spirit is God.
4. All three of those persons are distinct. They talk to one another and love one another and interact – they are not the same person – they are three distinct persons.
5. There is only one God.

None of those five doctrines are hard to understand. The only thing that is hard to understand is how they all fit together. We cannot comprehend that, because there is nothing else in existence to compare it to. However we can understand each of those five doctrines, which means we can understand what God wants us to understand about the Trinity.

### **Worship one and you worship all**

One other thing I want to emphasize about the Trinity is this – when you are interacting with one member of the Trinity you are not interacting with one-third of God. You are interacting with the entire Godhead. Any act of adoration of Jesus is an act of adoring the entire Trinity. Any experience of one member is an experience of the entire Trinity. If you worship one person in the Godhead, you have worshipped the entire Godhead. If you pray to one person you are addressing the whole Trinity. However, each of the persons in the Trinity deals with us in different ways and we have fellowship with them in different ways.

## **Fellowship with the Father**

So let's begin with the Father. How do we have fellowship with Him? Fellowship is when God does something toward us and we respond and there is an interaction. So, what is it that God does toward us, mainly?

### **Enjoying His love**

The primary thing we receive from God the Father is love.

**1 John 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us**

**Romans 5:8 God demonstrates his own love for us**

**Romans 8:39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God**

**John 14:23** Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me...My Father will love him

**Ephesians 2:4** But because of his great love for us, God ... 5 made us alive

**Titus 3:4** when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 He saved us

**1 John 4:8** God is love. **9** This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son ... **10** This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us ... **11** since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ... **16** we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.

Scripture speaks of the Father's love constantly. Can you even think of anything in all of creation that has a loving, tender nature that God has not compared Himself to? A father, a mother, a husband, a shepherd – even animals caring for their young. When God revealed Himself to Moses, of all the millions of different things He could have revealed about Himself, this was the summary:

**Exodus 34:6** The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.”

And that description of God reappears again and again all through the Old Testament. When I went through the Psalms verse-by-verse picking out all the attributes of God that I could find, I came up with a list of 378 attributes. And almost every one of them would fit under the category of God's love. God as a refuge, God as Savior, God who redeems, God who grants justice, God who gives light, God who reveals Himself, God who guides His people – they are all expressions of His love for His people.

It is extremely important to God that we understand and delight in His love, because our enjoyment of a His love is the main way He has provided for us to glorify Him. Do you want to show the world the greatness of God? Do you want to be the tool He uses to publish His goodness far and wide in this world? There is no more effective way of accomplishing that than delighting in His love. John Piper's motto is true: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." God is exalted and honored and glorified and magnified when we praise Him, but praise is not genuine unless it rises out of delight and joy. If you regard Him as a hard master (like the guy in Mt.25), or if you see serving Him as burdensome (like the priests in Mal.1), that dishonors Him.

Last week I told you about that devotional book, *What's So Great about God?* That book is designed to help the reader experience and enjoy eighty-four of God's attributes. If that book succeeds in its purpose, and it enables you to experience and enjoy those eighty-four attributes of God – every one of them would be an enjoyment of God's love. I cannot think of any satisfying experience of any attribute of God that is not an enjoyment of God's love. So all fellowship with God fits inside this category. You honor God by enjoying fellowship with Him, and you enjoy fellowship with Him by delighting in all the various expressions of His love and responding with joy and gratitude and expressions of your love.

### ***Enjoying God's Temporal Gifts***

And this is where enjoyment of earthly pleasures comes in. Earthly pleasures are designed to be an expression of and proof of God's love.

**Acts 14:17** [God] has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.

The supply of food and provisions and the ability to enjoy those things are gestures of God's love. Ephesians 1:23 refers to God as the one who fills everything in every way. Whatever fullness a thing has – whatever ability it has to satisfy you – comes from God. When you are enjoying a banana split and it makes you happy, and you think that happiness came from the banana split – you are wrong. If ice cream were the source of joy then it would always make you happy, one hundred percent of the time, and no earthly pleasure does that. But if a dessert makes you feel happy and satisfied and you realize at that moment you are in the presence of a God who makes things that taste so good, and you just find yourself loving it that God is like that and the fact that the God who is like that is right there next to you and will not ever stop giving you good things, then you are having communion with God.

### **Father/Child relationship**

Now, let's zoom in even further and make it even more specific. We need to be specific when we talk about God's love, because there are different kinds of love relationships. You love different things and different people in different ways, and each kind of love relationship has its own, unique characteristics. So what sort of love relationship best describes the Father's love for us and the love we should have for Him? Answer: The father/child relationship. Over and over He is called our Father, and when we pray we address Him as Father, and the Holy Spirit, in Romans 8:15, is called the **Spirit of sonship** who works in us to **cry out, "Abba, Father!"** We enjoy fellowship with God the Father by relating to Him as a child relates to his dad. And there are four aspects to the father/child relationship that Scripture emphasizes as the model of how we are to relate to God the Father: delighting in His presence, trusting Him, fearing Him, and obeying Him.

#### ***1. Delighting in His Presence***

We have already talked about that first one – delighting in His presence. A child who loves his daddy loves it when his daddy is around. He loves it when his dad pays attention to him, and he loves interacting with him. We are having fellowship with the Father when we take delight in being in His presence.

#### ***2. Trusting in His providence and wisdom***

Secondly – a child trusts his father. You put your 2-year old in the car and start driving; he does not freak out and say, "Oh, no, what if dad is driving me to some horrible place? What if dad crashes the car? What if we get lost? What if he drives too fast or too slow or fails to use his turn signal?!?!?" He trusts his dad.

And while they are driving, if he sees something he does not understand, and he asks his dad about it, dad's answer is truth – period.

"Dad, why does that car have flashing lights?"

"Because he's a policeman, and he's using his lights to tell the person in front of him to pull over."

That child doesn't say, "Hmmm – sounds like a possibility. When we get to church I'll ask around and see if I can verify it with three independent sources." In fact, it is just the opposite. They can get to church and every person in the whole church could tell him some other answer and he will say, "No. My dad told me..." and that is the end of the discussion for him.

We have fellowship with God the Father when we trust in guidance, His wisdom, His providence, and His provision. We have fellowship with Him whenever worry is chased out of our hearts by confidence that "If He feeds all the birds every day then He is kind enough and powerful enough to take care of me." We have fellowship with the Father when we say, "This is the path God's Word says is best – it does not look best in this instance, but there is no doubt in my mind that it is best, and so I am taking it." We have fellowship with the Father when we say, "These hard, painful circumstances



are the work of His hands and He knows what He is doing. I am not going to second-guess it. I am not going to complain about it or resist it. I love it, because it is the handiwork of my Father, who never makes any mistakes.” When you lean on the Father in those ways, you are interacting with Him as a father, and so you are having fellowship with Him.

### **3. *Fearing Him***

We enjoy fellowship with God the Father when we fear Him. Fear of God is mentioned well over one hundred times in Scripture, and God is said to be the object of fear even more often than He is said to be the object of our love. God requires all people to fear Him, and He forbids us to fear anyone or anything else.

**Isaiah 8:12-13 do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. 13 The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread**

Fearing someone other than God is tantamount to forgetting the Lord.

**Isaiah 51:12,13 Who are you that you fear mortal men...that you forget the LORD?**

Some people have a hard time with the idea of fearing God because they think of it as being like their fear of an impossible-to-please father who abused them or who was angry all the time. That would be an evil kind of fear of God. The wicked, lazy servant of Matthew 25:25 who thought of God as a hard master had that kind of fear. So how do you know if you have the wrong kind of fear of God? One answer to that is in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 – any time your fear pushes you toward laziness, disobedience, or reluctance to draw near to God; that is the wrong kind of fear. If it has a paralyzing effect on you, or makes you less inclined to seek God – that is an evil kind of fear.

But there is another kind of fear – a good kind. In Exodus 20 both kinds of fear are mentioned in the same verse. The people were afraid God would harm them, and so they told Moses, “Tell God to stay away – we don’t want Him to speak to us anymore.”

**Exodus 20:20 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. (This fear you have is the bad kind. We are forbidden to have that kind of fear of God.) God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."**

That is the good kind. The bad kind drives you away from God; the good kind keeps you from sin. In an ideal father/child relationship, the child fears his father’s displeasure because he longs to be close to his father. He takes his father’s authority very, very seriously because he loves his dad so much he absolutely does not want anything to alienate him from his dad in any way.

All of our sin is the result of a lack of the good kind of fear. When we think, “I know this is wrong, but I’m going to do it anyway,” what we are saying is, “God’s discipline, if there is any, and whatever distance this will put between me and the presence of God – isn’t any big deal. I’m not afraid of it.”

There is a verse in Psalm 130 that really throws a lot of people for a loop.

**Psalm 130:4 with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.**

If God is so forgiving, isn’t that a reason to be less afraid of Him? Why does it say that God’s forgiving nature increases our fear of Him? Here is why: If God is the only source of forgiveness then He is not to be taken lightly. If the only place we can find forgiveness of sins is God, then being alienated from Him means being alienated from forgiveness, which is a terrifying thought. The person who has nothing good to offer you is not to be feared, because he has no power to withhold anything

good. But the more precious the benefits of a person, the more afraid you are of the prospect of being alienated from that person, and so the more seriously you take the relationship.

The most terrifying threat in all of life is to have God turn His face from you. That is something that is far worse than any sickness or even death. If you are suffering but you know you have God's approval and favor, you can endure it. But if you are suffering and you know that suffering is the result of God's displeasure toward you; if He has turned His face away from you and you can sense His anger with you; nothing is more painful than that. It is more terrifying than even the worst torture and pain the world could possibly inflict on you. When God turns His face away, all ability to enjoy life drains away, and that is something to be dreaded above all.

So how do you increase the good kind of fear of God? - by increasing enjoyment of all His benefits. The more you enjoy them the more you will fear losing them. This is why fearing God is equated with waiting for His future love.

**Psalm 147:11 the Lord delights in those who fear him, who wait for his love.**

#### ***4. Obeying Him***

Obedience is the most basic responsibility of a child toward his father. One of the most blessed and delightful interactions between you and God, is when He directs you to do something and you express your love for Him by gladly doing it.

But how do you make yourself gladly do something that is the opposite of what you really want to do? There is some sin that you know is wrong, and you have promised yourself a thousand times that you will never do it again, and yet when the temptation hits, you cave in over and over and over. You hate that thing in your life, and yet you just cannot seem to stop choosing it. How can you change the inner workings of the heart so you will not be so inclined to always choose that sin? That is next week.

For now, let's resolve to spend this week seeking fellowship with the Father – enjoying His love, delighting in His presence, trusting Him, fearing Him, and expressing your love for Him through happy, willing, eager obedience. And do it all not to carry out a duty, but to draw near to a Person – your Father who loves you.

**Benediction: Romans 8:38 I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**