

We come this morning to our seventh and final sermon in a short series entitled Gospel Fear, or that fear that a saving embrace of the gospel produces—thus far we've seen Its Blessedness, Its Definitions, and four sermons on Its Descriptions—this brings us this morning to Its Promotion—or, what are practical ways in which we can promote or increase this fear within our hearts...

Now—I trust that most of us are convinced that Fearing God is a good thing that the Scriptures speak often about—this should lead us then to ask the question—how can we increase and promote this blessed fear within our hearts...

I. Five Helps to Promote Gospel Fear

II. Three Motives to Promote Gospel Fear

I. Five Helps to Promote Gospel Fear

A. Understand what is and is not Gospel Fear

1. This is where we must begin—I think most people fail to grow in Gospel Fear because they're not clear on what it is...
2. I believe every true Christian fears God—but if were to ask them what exactly that entails, few could answer...
3. Now—to be fair, defining the fear of God is not easy, so I'm not trying to be overly critical of most Christians...
4. But—just like every truth of Scripture—the first way to grow in it, is to have a clear understanding of what it is...
5. And, it's because of this, that I feel constrained to say a few things that may possibly be offensive to some of you...
6. I fear, that sometimes all we want to hear is, do this and don't do that, or, here are three simply steps to success...
7. But—the primary problem with this mindset is that—Christian growth and maturity always begins with theology...
8. Theology understood, believed, loved, and lived—it starts with the mind, is embraced by the heart, and expressed in life...
9. Now—is it possible to simply study theology for the sake of studying theology—of course it is—unfortunately...
10. There has always been, and always be, those who merely want to learn more without any intention to living it...
11. But—and this is my point—it's impossible to grow in grace without also growing in understanding of Scripture...
12. Now—I'm here forced to ask you a question, and I want you to be honest—I want you to ask yourself this question...
13. Do I understand what Gospel Fear is and is not more, as the result of these 6 sermons, then I did before them...
14. Or, do I largely come to church, looking for the preacher to say what I think he should say, and if he doesn't, I tune him out...
15. Let me ask you another question—having heard the preaching, do you even think about it or talk about it again...
16. It would frighten me to no end, if the only time you ever mentioned the subject again is to criticize the preacher...
17. Let me—simply digress here for a few minutes and remind you something I've taught you many times over the past 10 years...
18. When you come to hear the word preached, you come to hear the voice of your Father and not merely the voice of a man...
19. By that I mean—don't get caught up on the preacher or the sermon—those are but shells that deliver the kernel...

20. Thus—when I speak to you after the service, I never ask, What did you think about that sermon, but, What did you think about that text or subject...
21. And what YOU have to do, this isn't the job of the preacher—YOU have to follow up on that text or subject...
22. That means—we need to take Sunday afternoon or Monday morning, and think back through the text or subject...
23. I mean brethren—what is most important—what is it that we think about as we leave the public worship of God...
24. What do we speak to our children about on Sunday afternoons or evenings—do we ever teach them these things...
25. Husbands—how often do you take time to speak to your wife about what you've heard—to explain and underscore things of eternal value...
26. Let me ask another question—think back over the previous months—what about the Lord's Days has been discussed between you and your wife...
27. Do you spend most of your time, discussing things that your "concerned" about, or things that God is teaching you...
28. Men—God holds us responsible to ensure that our wife and children, are understanding and growing in the truth...
29. Now—I hope that no one present is thinking, What does all this have to do with growing in the fear of the Lord...
30. For here's how they connect—if we are going to grow in these things—we must first understand what they mean...
31. Thus—having provided that important digression—here I want to provide a brief summery of what we've learned...
32. Christians or Gospel Fear is the soul's comprehension of God's character, brought to bear upon itself, as a fallen and redeemed creature...
33. Thus—necessarily to the fear of the Lord, is a knowledge of God—as holy, just, loving, gracious, and merciful...
34. Simply put—those who know God fear God, and those who fear God know God—the two necessarily go together...
35. It's because of this, those who fear God—tremble at His judgements, how at His word, stand in awe before His works, and walk carefully before His eyes...

B. Pray to God for the grace of Gospel Fear

1. If you remember, we started this series of messages with Jer.32:40—a prophecy that foretold the New Covenant...
2. Jer.32:40—"And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good, but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me..."
3. Here we learn—every Christian, without exception, already possesses a measure of Gospel Fear within their hearts...
4. This fear was put there by God, through the merits of Christ's redeeming work, within the new and eternal covenant...
5. Thus—Gospel Fear, just like every grace bought by Jesus' blood—is worked in us by the Holy Spirit of God...
6. Simply put—in the fullest and ultimate sense—Gospel Fear is something that God gives us for Christ's sake...
7. Now—remember, Scripture is very clear that while these are graces or gifts, we're responsible to grow in them...
8. And—first and foremost to all else, the primary means whereby ALL grace is increased, is through God's grace...
9. Ps.86:11-12—"Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forevermore..."
10. These two verses contain two petitions (prayers), and two results of those prayers when they are answered...

11. [a] v11a—"Teach me Your way, O LORD"—the result follows—"I will walk in Your truth"—that is, as a result of being taught...
12. Now—obviously, the teaching in this verse is what we call effectual teaching, that teaching that brings results...
13. Thus—the David understood that if he was to walk in God's truth, ultimately speaking, God had to enable him...
14. [b] vv11b-12—"unite my heart to fear Your name"—and then the result—"I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forevermore..."
15. Again—we find the same thing—David understood that if he was to worship God in fear, He needed God to unite his heart...
16. Now—the imagery behind this phrase—"unite my heart"—means that our hearts, even as Christians, are often divided...
17. That is—they are focused on many objects—thus David asks God to unite His heart—to have a single object...
18. Jerry Bridges—"An undivided heart denotes singleness of purpose, aim, and affections. This is what David prayed for. He recognized the tendency of his heart to be divided, to seek to serve two masters—himself and God—so he earnestly sought help from the Lord, that he might fear Him..."
19. Albert Barnes—"The end which he desired to secure was that he might truly fear God, or properly reverence and honor him; the means which he saw to be necessary for this was that his *'heart'* might be *'united'* in this one great object; that is, that his heart might be single in its views and purposes; that there might be no distracting purposes; that one great aim might be always before him..."
20. Now—I want to suggest that behind such prayers as this, there's at least three things, that need to be cultivated...
21. [1] A sense of our utter helplessness—this is evidenced in a total and complete dependence of God's grace...
22. [2] A desire to obey and worship God—why does David pray these things—that he might obey and fear God...
23. [3] A sense of God's mercy toward us, v13—"For great is Your mercy toward me, and You have delivered my soul from the depths of sheol..."
24. Now—I agree in the first place, this phrase likely refers to David's deliverance from what could have resulted in physical death..
25. But—brethren—such deliverances, were but shadowy of a greater deliverance—salvation from eternal hell...
26. Oh brethren—how important this is—for us to pray effectively—we must have a sense of God's mercy toward us...
27. That is—we need confidence that God is our Father, that our sins are forgiven, and Christ intercedes for us...
28. Jerry Bridges—"This is where growth in the fear of God begins. God the Holy Spirit is the energizer of all spiritual motion in our lives. Without His work in our hearts we cannot work. So our first step in growing in the fear of God is to pray for a heart single in purpose to that end..."

C. Meditate on God's word, works, and name

1. To meditate means—to think deeply, to ponder, or muse—to fill the mind with truth, to examine it from all angles...
2. Now—this brings me to another increasing concern of mine—I fear some of us want results without labor...
3. For example—many people want to lose weight or improve their health, without changing their diet or lifestyle...
4. By friends, few things are obtained without work or effort—true Christian holiness takes time and it takes work...
5. Remember, true Christian holiness concerns conformity to the image of Christ in heart and life, and whole-hearted compliance to His law...
6. This is what holiness—and brethren—we will hardly make any progress in this—if we are not willing to work...

7. Now—of all the various elements or dimensions of work—I suggest few are more necessary than meditation...
8. So this is what we need to do—we need to think deeply or specifically—on the word, works, and Person of God...
9. [1] Word—that is—we must think deeply upon Scripture—the threats, promises, commandments, and gospel...
10. Deut.17:18-19—"Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from *the one* before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes..."
11. Now—what was necessary for kings within Israel's kingdom—I suggest is also necessary for NC priests and kings...
12. [a] WHAT they were to do—"he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book...and it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life..."
13. [b] WHY they were to do it—"that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes..."
14. Ps.19:9—"The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether..."
15. The Psalm speaks of both general (vv1-6), and special revelation (vv7-11)—Scripture is described with six terms—the law, the testimony, the statutes, the commandment, the fear of the LORD, the judgments of the LORD...
16. Jerry Bridges—"Regular, prayerful, personal exposure to Scripture is the most effective means of growing in the fear of God..."
17. [2] Works—if you remember, the works of God are three—His work of creation, providence, and redemption...
18. Ps.111:2—"The works of the LORD are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them"—to study is to carefully examine...
19. John Brown—"Nothing is so well fitted to put the fear of God, which will preserve men from offending him, into the heart, as an enlightened view of the cross of Christ..."
20. [3] Name—here I simply mean, we need to think deeply about God—God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...
21. My friends—I trust it goes without saying—to grow in fearing God, we must meditate on God—His essence and attributes...
22. This becomes evident if we remember what Gospel Fear is—The soul's comprehension of God and His divine perfections...
23. John Brown—"The foundation of this fear of God is in God himself. The only way in which we can apprehend what this fear is, and why we should cherish it, is by turning our minds to the contemplation of the venerable excellences of the divine character..."
24. Mal.3:16—"Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name..."
25. Now—in order to make this a bit more specific—let me suggest two attributes in particular that needs contemplation...
26. [a] God's goodness—by this is meant—the love, grace, and mercy of God, especially found in Jesus Christ our Lord...
27. Now—because I want to turn you to a text that teaches this, under the next heading, I'll simply leave it at this for now...
28. Ps.34:8-9—"Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him (Ps.130:3-4)..."
29. [b] God's holiness—by this is meant—His moral purity, but also His absolute transcendence above all creation...
30. Isa.8:13—"Sanctify the LORD of hosts Himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread"—set Him apart in our heart as Holy...

D. Associate closely with those who fear God

1. There is a true sense in which, most of us are highly influenced by those we associate with—"Iron sharpens iron..."
2. Thus—here I simply want to mention the need to become close friends with those who help you fear God more...
3. Ps.119:63—"I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep your precepts"—closely united...
4. Now—don't get me wrong—I am not suggesting that you refuse to associate with any member of the church...
5. Nor—am I suggesting that the weaker members get neglected—we don't believe in churches within churches...
6. But—I am saying—we need to associate with those who genuinely and sincerely—love and fear the LORD...
7. Prov.13:20—"He who walks with wise men WILL BE WISE, but the companion of fools will be destroyed..."

E. Mortify every other kind of Fear

1. By "mortify" I mean—we must put to death all sinful fear—that hinders and chokes out all Christian or Gospel Fear...
2. Now—I've mentioned many times throughout these weeks—Scripture speaks of two kinds of fear—one good one bad...
3. And—if we are to grow in the one we must mortify the other—for there's a sense in which they are in opposition...
4. Thus—I here want to divided this bad fear, that hinders Gospel Fear, into three kinds—the fear of man, torment, and the unknown...
5. [1] Fear of man—to fear man means you fear what he can do to you—either physically, materially, or socially...
6. To fear man means you're concerned too much with what man thinks—with his opinion and acceptance of you...
7. Perhaps I can put it like this—if fear God is walking beneath His eyes, the fear of man is walking beneath his...
8. And this can show itself in many ways—let me simply give you a couple brief examples of what this looks like...
9. Think of a preacher who's more concerned with what people think of him, than what God thinks—or think of the parent that's too concerned with what other's think of their children—or the child who's pressured to follow the crowd, even though they know the crowd is wrong—or the Christian who's afraid to tell their neighbor the truth, for fear of being rejected or consider strange—or the Christian who's afraid to take a stand on a moral issue at work, for fear of consequences...
10. Lk.12:4-5—"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after H has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him..."
11. [2] Fear of torment—by this I mean—an ever lingering fear that you're not forgiven and under God's displeasure...
12. Though I've made this a rather small point—I really believe it's very important—it is very difficult to rightly fear God if your not sure your His...
13. 1Jn.4:17-18—"Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 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..."
14. Now—there are several rather difficult and debatable phrases in these verses—let me just suggest a few things...
15. [a] Perfect love—the word "perfect" here means—"complete or full"—it refers to something brought to completion...

16. Now—it seems rather obvious—that the love referred to is—our knowledge of God's love to us in Jesus Christ...
17. The more we come to know God's love, be assured of His love, we can describe that love as—"perfect love..."
18. [b] Casts out fear—that is—the presence of God's love within the soul, removes the remains of carnal fear...
19. For example—take a glass and fill it full of dirt—and then place the cup beneath a faucet of running water...
20. The more water that's put in the cup, the more dirt there is that leaves—the presence of the water casts out the dirt...
21. Well—this is similar to God's love—the more His love is perfected in us, the more all slavish fear is cast out...
22. [3] Fear of unknown—that is fear of the future—don't fear the future, but fear God who controls the future...
23. Matt.6:34—"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble..."

II. Three Motives to Promote Gospel Fear

A. Gospel Fear beautifies the soul

1. Prov.31:30—"Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised..."
2. That is—physical charm and beauty are passing—but fearing God is what renders a lady truly and eternally beautiful...
3. Now—obviously foolish and unconverted man sees no beauty in this spiritual and moral grace—he looks mainly on the outside...
4. But—this is no longer true for Christians—though the outward is not unimportant, it's no longer of first importance...
5. For having our spiritual eyes opened—we now see what's of real importance—what constitutes true beauty..
6. A woman who comprehends the whole of God's divine perfections, as brought to bear upon her soul, as a fallen and redeemed creature...
7. Now—here's my point—what's true for women, is equally true of men—Gospel renders a soul truly beautiful...

B. Gospel Fear benefits the church

1. My friends, I think we at times fail to remember, that as a body of believers, we're dependant upon one another...
2. That is—if most of us gather on the Lord's day with our hearts cold and needy, it effects the rest of us negatively...
3. Remember—we are expressly exhorted—Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God—and how is He grieved but by sin...
4. Now—if failure to cultivate the fear of God within our hearts, grieves Him—then its presence, pleases Him...
5. Acts 9:31—"And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied (1Cor.14:25)..."

C. Gospel Fear glorifies the Savior

1. Rev.15:3-4—"They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: Great and marvelous *are* Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true *are* Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For *You* alone *are* holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested..."