

THE FEAR OF THE LORD 2  
Deut. 6:1-9

INTRO: Our subject this morning, again, is the fear of God or the fear of the Lord. I trust that you do not find the subject of fearing God a negative subject. We will see later that it has many positive benefits. I have assembled many of the verses in Scripture that speak about the fear of the Lord or of God and arranged them in topical form. There are numerous verses that command us to fear the Lord. Then there are verses that give events that bring the fear of the Lord. Then there are verses that give further instructions to those who fear the Lord. Another category of verses list the benefits of fearing the Lord, and there are many benefits given. Then there are examples of those who feared the Lord. Then there are verses that give reasons why we should fear the Lord. One of the very instructive categories of verses are verses that teach us how to learn to fear the Lord. And then there is one last call to fear the Lord in Scripture. All of this involves 80 some verses and by no means exhausts the subject in Scripture. I trust you will not find it tedious, but I want to read a lot of those verses so that we will get an idea of how important this subject truly is.

Now let me just mention again briefly, that as I understand it, when the Bible speaks of the fear of the Lord, it speaks of actual fear. I have explained it in the sense of the law of the land. In our country right now it is goose hunting season. Let us say you have set up your blind and you are shooting geese but you do not have a license to hunt geese. Now your hunt is over and you come to your vehicle with a bunch of geese and there, parked by your vehicle is the game warden. The sight of that game warden causes fear and makes you want to run and hide. But, on the other hand, let us say you have purchased your license and you come to your vehicle and there is the game warden. Now you do not fear because he will find everything in order. So it is with God. If we live right we do not have to fear Him. So Scripture says that by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil. If we love God we will obey Him by keeping His commandments (John 14:21). And if we keep His commandments His love is perfected in us so that we may have boldness in the day of judgment (1 John 4:17). And this verse also says there is no fear in love because perfect love, or perfect obedience to God, casts out fear. Basically then, the fear of the Lord is fear to do wrong because God, the righteous and holy judge will judge us some day.

And so, in this message I want to briefly go over a number of verses which I have put into several categories. And we will begin with the commands found in Scripture to fear the Lord.

## I. COMMANDS TO FEAR THE LORD

Let us begin with Deuteronomy 6 and you may wish to turn to it (read 1-3), "1 Now this *is* the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe *them* in the land which you are crossing over to possess, 2 that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe *it*, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you—'a land flowing with milk and honey.'"

God gave Israel commandments, which, if they obeyed them it would cause them to fear the Lord and if they feared the Lord, it would go well with them and the Lord would bless them. The text goes on to say that they were to teach these commandments to their children. Now look at verse 13, "You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name." Then look at verse 24, "And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as *it is* this day." You see, God gave Israel commandments which, if they obeyed them, it would cause them to fear the Lord, and if they did this, it would be for their good. There is a direct link between God's commandments, obedience and the fear of the Lord. The fear of God and righteousness go hand in hand. Lack of fear of God and unrighteousness go hand in hand as well.

Another command to fear God is found in Deuteronomy 10:12-13 which says, "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"

Note again that the Lord's directives and the call to fear God is for man's good. Disobedience to God, destroys man's relationship with God and it destroys man.

Let me read a few more verses on commands to fear God. Psalm 34:9 says, "Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints! *There is no want to those who fear Him.*" Proverbs 3:7 says, "Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil." Another verse says that it is by the fear of the Lord that men depart from evil. It is then obvious that when we do not fear the Lord, evil takes over. Why is our nation going the way it is going? Why is the Church going the way it is going? We have lost our fear of God.

When Solomon was done searching out life and its purpose and he saw that all was vanity he concluded like this in Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is the whole duty of man.*"

A verse I mentioned in the previous message gives a command to fear God by Jesus Himself. He said in Matthew 10:28, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Luke puts that like this in 12:5, "But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!"

## II. EVENTS THAT BRING THE FEAR OF THE LORD

Well, those briefly are some commands in Scripture to fear God. But God allows certain events to happen from time to time, and these events cause the fear of God to come over people. It is interesting that when tragedies or horrific events happen that one of the first things many people say is, "O my God!" Think back to the event of 9/11 and the twin towers. How many times did people not say, "O my God." Great fear came on people. For a few weeks churches were filled, until that fear subsided and life returned to normal.

When King Asa warred with the Ethiopians it says in 2 Chronicles 14:14, "Then they defeated all the cities around Gerar, for the fear of the LORD came upon them; and they plundered all the cities, for there was exceedingly much spoil in them." When God's people live right the fear of God comes upon the enemies of God. We sometimes try to

win the world by offering the same things they do. Take for example rock music. But when we do that, the unbeliever loses all fear of God and all respect for God's people. In times of revival, when God's people repent and begin to live right, the world begins to fear God. So, 2 Chronicles 17:10 says of the days of Jehoshaphat, a godly king: "And the fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat."

But man can become so hardened that not even catastrophic events cause men to fear God. After the seventh catastrophic plague in Egypt Moses said to Pharaoh in Exodus 9:30, "But as for you and your servants, I know that you will not yet fear the LORD God." The harder we become, the less we fear God. The softer we become, the more we fear God.

But from time to time God allows events into our lives and sometimes into the lives of certain localities or nations that cause us to recognize there is a God to whom we must some day give account.

### III. FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS TO THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD

Another category of verses I found regarding fearing God gives instructions to those who fear the Lord. These verses are written to those who already fear God but it instructs them further. Listen to Psalm 115:11, "You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield." So, those who fear the Lord are also to trust in Him.

Psalm 22:23 says to the believer, "You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, and fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!" Those who fear the Lord are further exhorted to praise Him and glorify Him.

Psalm 118:4 says, "Let those who fear the LORD now say, 'His mercy endures forever.'" When we fear the Lord we learn of His tender mercies. What a huge thing it is for God to bring those who fear Him to where they truly come to the place where they say, "His mercy endures forever."

Psalm 135:20 instructs the believer like this, "Bless the LORD, O house of Levi! You who fear the LORD, bless the LORD!" Those who fear the Lord are here instructed to bless Him also. Now I define blessing God as saying good things about Him to others. Here is instruction for us as

believers. We are to speak good things about God to others. Do we testify of His goodness to others? That is what blessing Him means.

#### IV. BENEFITS OF THE FEAR OF THE LORD

##### a. Positively

Another category of verses is verses that give the benefits of fearing the Lord. We saw earlier in Deuteronomy 6:24 that to fear of the Lord is for our own good! The scriptures give positive benefits for those who truly fear God. Job 28:28 says that to fear the Lord is wisdom. Wisdom is a tremendous benefit to anyone. But from that we also gather that not fearing the Lord is foolishness. Oh how we need wisdom in life. Parents, how much do we not stand in need of wisdom?

Then listen to this benefit from fearing the Lord. Psalm 19:9 says the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever! It is clean! Oh, young people, that you could but learn how precious such truths are before you defile yourselves with sin! It is clean and it endures forever!

Psalm 25:14 lists a further benefit of fearing the Lord. It says that the secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him. Oh how incredible it is when God lets you in on a secret. What a difference that can make in life. And then it says He will show them His covenant. Psalm 33:18 says, "Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy."

Oh, how much time we could spend on some of these benefits! Psalm 34:7 says the angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear the Lord and he delivers them! Do you know what that means? Have you experienced that? In how many circumstances of life do we not need deliverance. Then Psalm 34:9 says there is no want to those who fear God! Oh, how many are in desperate want and they don't even know it! There are people who have a lot of money and they are in want. Psalm 85:9 says, "Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, that glory may dwell in our land." Psalm 103:13 says, "As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him." Isn't that an

incredible picture? When man falls into deep needs, God takes pity on those who fear Him. Psalm 103:17 promises, "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him..." Psalm 111:5 says, "He has given food to those who fear Him; He will ever be mindful of His covenant." Oh the benefits of fearing God! Do you see how great this matter of fearing God is?

In Psalm 145:19 the writer says of the Lord, "He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them." Do you know how satisfying fulfillment is? Whether we realize it or not, every last one of us is seeking fulfillment. We live on a street where young men show off their powerful pickups or cars. These young men find fulfillment in squealing the tires of their cars. When you get older you begin to see just how vain and proud such things are. But true fulfillment comes when our desires are godly, not selfish. And God will fulfill the desires of those who fear Him, and those who truly fear Him will have their desires changed to a desire to live right. And for these, God will listen to their prayers and save them when they are in trouble. Psalm 147:11 gives this amazing statement, "The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy." When God sees those who fear Him, He is pleased with them; and no doubt, their lives are fulfilled by that as well.

Then here is a statement that has greatly challenged me in Psalm 111:10, "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*." Then 112:1-3 says, "Praise the LORD! Blessed *is* the man *who* fears the LORD, *Who* delights greatly in His commandments. His descendants will be mighty on earth; The generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches *will be* in his house, And his righteousness endures forever." As I mentioned in the last message, it is not love that is the beginning of wisdom. It is not mercy, it is not joy. It is the fear of God that is the beginning of wisdom.

Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." The fear of the Lord is not only the

beginning of wisdom, it is also the beginning of true knowledge. Until you learn to fear God, you have not even truly learned to know. You can check that out with men who don't fear him, like Richard Dawkins. When we are too stiff necked, sometimes God has to allow us to see some tragedy before we begin to heed instruction. Let me say to everyone of us here. It does not matter who we are; if God allowed some things to happen to us we would be lowered to the dust of the ground from any height of pride we might find ourselves in.

Then listen to Proverbs 8:13 "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate." Do you want to know how much you fear God? Well, let me ask you, how much do you hate evil? Also, check to see what comes out of your mouth. That is where you will find out how much you fear God. Pride, arrogance, and the evil way; if I enjoy these, I am far from fearing God. When I learn to fear God I begin to hate evil. I will learn to hate pride and arrogance and the evil way and the mouthy mouth if I but learn to fear God. And if I do not hate these things, by that I know that I do not really fear God yet.

Proverbs 10:27 again makes a promise. It says, "The fear of the LORD prolongs days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." Proverbs are general rules. It does not always happen like this, but these are the general rules. When a person fears God, it tends to lengthen his life. That is true of all obedience to God as well. Obedience, righteousness and the fear of the Lord go together.

Proverbs 14:26 says, "In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge." There is strong confidence in a very proud man too, but one tragedy, and all that confidence blows away. But not so with those who fear God. When one fears God, it wants to give confidence in life, and so often we need that. And the children who grow up in such a home, they have a place of refuge when life gets tough for them.

In 14:27 it says, "The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." It is a

fountain of life. Real life. Not temporary frivolous life. Oh, it is wonderful to have a fountain of life. You can drink again, and again. And not only is it a fountain of life. It delivers from the snares of death.

Proverbs 15:33 says, "The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honor is humility." To fear the Lord is like having a teacher who constantly teaches one wisdom. And to fear the Lord also deals with pride in one's life. Oh, what a horrible thing pride is. What a folly. It is oh so foolish. Yet it lies there deeply entrenched in every natural and fleshly man.

Then Proverbs 16:6 says, "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil." Wow, what verses! Mercy and truth purges sin! What benefits! And by the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil! Dave Hunt speaks in his last message of Christopher Hitchens. He was a very brilliant, Jewish man, raised as a Christian; a man who really spoke in fond terms of his Sunday School teacher of years gone by. But he hated the Lord. And this is one of the things he would say: Calling God 'that heavenly dictator up there.' He would say, 'We've got to love him, but at the same time, we're supposed to fear him. Now, how are you going to work that out?'" And I say, "See what a fool unbelief makes of an otherwise brilliant man!"

Then Proverbs 19:23 says, "The fear of the LORD tends to life: and he that has it shall be satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil." Are these not incredible benefits? Oh, what would almost everyone give to be satisfied? But here we learn where we are to find it.

Proverbs 15:16 says, "Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it." To have the fear of God when one is financially poor, is to be truly rich.

To shorten our time on these incredible benefits of fearing God let me just read the remaining verses.



Proverbs 22:4 *By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life.*

Isaiah 33:6 *And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure.*

1Samuel 12:14 *If you fear the LORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the LORD your God. A land that fears the Lord will be blessed.*

1 Samuel 12:24 *"...fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you."*

Psalms 15:1-4 *"LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?*

*2 He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; 3 He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; 4 In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the LORD; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change..."*

Psalms 115:13 *He will bless those who fear the LORD, Both small and great. God blesses those who fear Him.*

Jeremiah 26:19 *Regarding a certain prophet it says, "Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah ever put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and seek the LORD'S favor? And the LORD relented concerning the doom which He had pronounced against them. But we are doing great evil against ourselves. The Lord may change his mind about allowing difficult things into our lives if we learn to fear Him."*

Luke 1:50 *"And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation."*

Acts 9:31 *"Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."*

Well, with regard to the list of benefits of fearing the Lord, the list is long.

b. Negatively

Well, there are a lot of benefits listed for those who fear God. Turn to Proverbs 1:23-31. This passage gives a negative consequence to not fearing the Lord. In this passage it is wisdom that is speaking and it says, "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."

V. EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO FEARED THE LORD

The Scriptures give some examples of those who feared God. I won't spend much time here. There was Obadiah, 1 Kings 18:12; Hezekiah, Jeremiah 26:19; The children of Israel, Hosea 3:5; and Jonah, in Jonah 1:9.

VI. REASONS TO FEAR THE LORD

The Scriptures also set out reasons why God is to be feared. Jeremiah 5:24 says, "They do not say in their heart, 'Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest.'" Why should we fear Him? We are dependent on Him for everything! If He should but be unfaithful for a very short time we would all die. We cannot even breathe without Him, even though most don't even know that. Psalm 67:7 says, "God shall bless us, And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." When God blesses the believer, the unbeliever takes note. But God blesses such as fear Him. When men fear the Lord it has positive benefits for that person, and for the people who live around such a person. There is a reason to fear God.

Matthew 10:28 gives us one of the great reasons to fear God. Jesus Himself said, "And do not fear those who kill

the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Why should we fear God? Because He, and He alone is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. We might fear those who persecute us, but they can only harm the body. Not so with God. So Luke 12:5 says, "But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!

## VII. HOW TO LEARN TO FEAR THE LORD

Now one of the very important and key categories of verses on fearing God is verses that teach us how to fear God. So, let me now pose this question: how can I learn to fear the Lord? Is there something I can do to learn to fear God or to increase my fear of God? Well, we can't just say, "I am going to fear God", and there it is, done. And I found verses that instruct us on how to learn to fear God, and it has to be learned. Well, we begin with Deuteronomy 17:19 which says regarding the Word of God, "And it (the Word of God) 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." How can I learn to fear God? By reading the Word of God! I believe there is one major reason why many do not fear God very much. It is this: They do not know Him very well! Before I fear God I must get to know Him. I must learn of His holiness, His sinlessness and abhorrence of sin. I must learn of His justice. Every sin must be dealt with righteously etc...

Deuteronomy 6:1-2 adds to that, "Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged." First we must know the Word of God and what God wants of us and then we must obey Him. And when we do that, we will learn to fear Him. To this Deuteronomy 8:6 says, "Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him."

In Deuteronomy 31:11-13 it says, "When all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in

their hearing. Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who *is* within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and *that* their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess." I think that we might take from this that when we go to the house of the Lord and learn the things of God, there we learn to fear God.

Joshua 4:21-24 says, "Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land'; for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it *is* mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever." It is when we read of the mighty acts of God in the Word of God that a fear of God begins to grow within us.

Another instructive verse is found in 2 Kings 17:28. It says, "Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD." First, according to this, one can be taught how to fear the Lord. And second, it is one of the pastor's tasks to teach people how to fear the Lord. It is interesting that the fear of God can both be taught and learned.

#### VIII. THE LAST CALL TO FEAR THE LORD

Well, in Revelation 14:6-7 we have the last call in the Bible to fear God. It says, "And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having the everlasting glad tidings to announce to those settled on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

As there is a last call in the Bible to fear God, so for those who have heard the truth there comes a last call to fear God as well. And then comes death or the Lord returns

and the consequences of a life lived in turning away from the fear of God catches up with us.

CONCL: So, let us conclude this subject for now. And let me say in conclusion, that I greatly wrestled in preparing this message. But I have concluded that in the Church we have lost the fear of God. We have seen God as a God who loves unconditionally to such an extent that we have lost sight that He is also a holy, just and righteous judge, and that some day we must all give account to Him.

I cannot think of anything greater to achieve in this life than to be able to have boldness in the day of judgment. The only way we will be able to stand boldly in the day of judgment is if we have dealt with our sins and have lived righteously before Him. The only reason I see that we have to fear God is sin, and sin always lies at the door. It is amazing the boldness and strength and courage righteous living brings to those who live in it. It is righteousness that will give us boldness in the day of judgment. And if we truly fear God, we will live right. May the Lord encourage us to righteous living through a reminder from Scripture to fear the Lord.