

TO FEAR THE LORD

WHAT DOES IT MEAN... SERIES

READ OF THE WORD

PSALM 112:1, 6-9

Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!

For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord. His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.

Let's pray

Father, you have prepared our hearts through song and scripture. Now as we sit under the teaching of your word, mold how our hearts feel for you and think of you and see you. May we submit to your commands in gladness and delight in your ways over our own. In Jesus name, amen

Warming Up.

Good morning. For those who don't know me, my name is Eric Mattie and the elder council has asked me to step in this week as both our pastors were out this week. It is my privilege to bring the Word to you this morning.

Introduction:

This morning I want to talk about a biblical concept found in today's reading. If you've grown up in the church at all you've heard it time and time again. Yet it's a concept that for many of us is hard to nail down. When Scripture continues to bring it up over and over again, after a while you realize- "God's trying to say something and perhaps I need to consider what he's saying a little more intently."

Today I want to answer the question "What does it mean to fear the Lord"

Let me start with a large look at the overall Psalm first. In Psalm 112 we run into another one of those acrostic Psalms, where the first letter of the sentence is a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. If we did this in the American alphabet this first

verse may sound like what Dr. William Binne suggested back in the 1800's when wrote about this psalm. He wrote

"Hallelujah! {that stayed the same}

A- All blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.

B- Being filled with delight in His commandments

And so on... you get the picture.

But this Psalm extolls the benefits of those who fear the Lord and it's quite a list to go through. Some of the more comforting benefits includes in verse 6-8 (staying with Binne acrostic ... yet I encourage you to read it in your Bible...)

L -Lo, he shall not be moved forever:

M- Memorable shall be the righteous man forever.

N- No evil tidings shall he fear:

O-On the LORD depending, his heart is fixed.

P- Planted firmly is his heart, he shall not fear:

Q- Quake shall he not, until he see [his desire] on his foes.

With such a firm stability of faith and a heart that is firm and virtually free of anxieties- this concept of the fear of the Lord needs to find its footing here in us- the 21st century Christian-

If the Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom as God word says it is, than we want to be wiser than yesterday. We want to walk better and deeper in these concepts- not just by academically understanding the truth of them. But to allow them to take root in how we feel as Christian, how we think as lovers of God. And how we worship in spirit and in truth our holy heavenly Father Creator Redeemer and Judge

Whole Bible Concept

Many people feel when they read the Bible it shows a wrathful God in the Old Testament and a Loving God in the New Testament- as such we can mistakenly think the OT main command is to Fear God and the NT is to Love God. Nothing can be further from the truth.

First, look at one of the earlier mentions of the phrase “Fear the Lord” in the OT Deuteronomy 10:12-13

12 “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, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?

- Note fear, walk, love, serve- all of it is here and emphasized in the commands of relating to God not just fear.

Secondly, we see the continual command to Fear God in the NT.

- Colossians 3:22 – Bondservants are encouraged to work with sincerity of heart “fearing the Lord”
- 2 Corinthians 7:1- we are encouraged to cleanse ourselves from every defilement of the body and spirit bringing holiness to completion in the “fear of God”
- 1 Peter 2:17 Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king
- Acts 9:31 Luke accounts that after Saul conversion, the church was strengthened and grew in numbers “living in the fear of the Lord”
- Jesus was said to have a delight in the fear of the Lord- Isaiah 11:3

The Fear of the Lord is not just an Old Testament phrase of piety or devoutness. Scripture shows it is actually a blessing of the new covenant.

In Jeremiah 32:38–40 while talking about the new covenant God says:
38 And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 39 I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. 40 I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

- In summary, we carry in us by the Holy Spirit a planting of Fear of the Lord.
 - The BLESSING of being born again believers is not only a heart of stone turned to a heart of flesh, not only the spiritually dead coming to life, not only orphans that have been adopted, the lost, found, and sinners forgiven, but a fear will be put in our hearts that will not make us runaway afraid of God, but a fear will be put in our hearts that is actually to keep us from turning away him.
- The feels counterintuitive to how we view fear

In Jeremiah 33:8-9 the Lord continues:

8 I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. 9 And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. ***They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.***

- Let's pause here for a minute. Is fear the right word? I mean to define that there is a fear we experience when we see the goodness of God- is that even the right way to say it?
- All words have shortcomings and the word fear definitely has its baggage. Culturally, we know it as being afraid. But listen to what Matthew Henry says in his comments about Psalm 112 and the fear of the Lord. He sums up two different types of fear

“He that fears the Lord, as a Father, with the disposition of a child, not of a slave, delights greatly in his commandments,” Matthew Henry

- The word picture Henry puts before us is we are to have the disposition of a child’s fear of his Father. Not the disposition of a slave afraid of an angry master.
- A slave is afraid of his harsh and unyielding master. A lot of people feel that describes God. That his wrath is actually an evil driven motivation. And anxiety describes that kind of fear As believers, we can feel that way if we live our Christian life under a performance based obedience, that our good must outweigh our bad to be saved or even favored. Other wise suffer the consequences of the judgment of God- whose character we don’t trust and feel he is evil.
- Now the picture of son’s fear of his father, can carry its own burden of sinful baggage as a word picture. But simply stating A good son in a good relationship with his loving and kind father has a fear of offending or dishonoring the one he loves. Why? Because in the eyes of that child his Father is his world! A source of security and love

Like King David, we need to pray Psalm 86:11 “Give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name.”

- We need that singleness of heart when it comes to living our lives in the fear and love of the Lord.

Working Definition

So now that we understand that we are called to fear the Lord, as New Testament Believers let me give you a working definition of what the fear of the Lord is and from there I’ll break it down for our main points to ponder.

This definition come from Christian Teacher Paul David Tripp. He says

“Fear of the Lord means that I carry around with me such a deep awareness, awe, and reverence for the power, holiness, wisdom, and grace of God that I would not think of doing anything other than living for his glory.”

This is such a good working definition. Because it reminds us as mentioned in Jeremiah, the Lord gives us a fear of him, so that we actually don't turn away from him. Not in a sinful “afraid of His wrath” type of fear. But in delighting in living for Him, His glory and behaving in way that acknowledges him.

This definition not only identifies three elements of a godly fear we are to exercise, but also pinpoints attributes of God that we are to grow deep in.

So lets look into that.

To grow in the fear of the Lord we, are to exercise 3 things

Exercise...

1. A Deep Awareness of God's Power, Holiness, Wisdom and Grace.

To be aware of something, is the simplest start to any change in our lives.

For Example: when we are aware of our health conditions, we make changes so that we are healthier. When we are aware of communication problem, we make changes so we talk better with others

Spiritually speaking we see Paul do this:

Romans 12:1 (CSB)

“Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship”

- At this point in the Grand letter of Romans, God, through Paul, has laid out 11 chapters systematically, a full orbbed understanding of his mercies and good news that is found in the obedience of Christ going to Cross ,dying and raising again.

- God is making them fully aware that Salvation Follows God's mercy not human effort.
- Paul is saying "in view of God's mercy to grant forgiveness, in view of his grace to save by faith alone in Jesus alone. In view of his imparting his spirit of adoption to us who cry out daddy God.
- God now calls them to action- based on this newly expounded viewpoint of Mercy. In view of his empowering our spirits to come alive" to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God.
- We can't obey this command rightly without a deeper awareness of God's mercy. Otherwise it is works righteousness.

So with awareness of the fear of the Lord... Out of these attributes of Power and Holiness, Wisdom and Grace- Many of us carry the remembrance of God's grace

- And it make sense why, --its because it's the most accessible concept as we understand our own short coming and failures that need to be graciously forgiven. Plus we can carry the concept of God's unconditional love that he puts on display for us, because his grace goes hand in hand with love

But to dive a little deeper into an awareness of His power, holiness wisdom and grace- that truly causes us to intentionally live for the glory of God and have hearts that are undivided and delighting in his commands- that is to live in the fear of the Lord- it takes a little more than being aware and knowing facts about these attributes of his power holiness wisdom and grace of God.

We need to Honor God's All Knowing Presence

To honor someone means to act in humble ways that acknowledges someone else's strength character and influence in your life.

Let me give you some food for thoughts-

I can stand up here and give you my thoughts deep or shallow - but hopefully you don't settle for that. The prayer of the preacher is that you open your own Bible and compare what I say and think, and for you to grow deeper in your own thoughts on God's thoughts found in God's word.- That is how we grow deeper in

anything- by pondering the points of God's word for our selves, not just the preachers.

Hebrews 4:13

And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

1 Kings 8:27

But will God indeed dwell upon the earth? Even heaven, the highest heaven, cannot contain You, much less this temple I have built.

Job 34:21

For His eyes are on the ways of a man, and He sees his every step.

- These verses confirm that “Yes” God is with us everywhere we are.
- And “Yes” God is watching us- but not from a distance. But very intimately paying attention as all of us are naked and exposed.
- And “No” he is not watching us to learn anything new about us, as if God is a detective trying to read us correctly. The Lord is all knowing of our thought motives and actions, private and public, words and deeds.
- And “yes” we must give an account of our lives.

Preach:

To honor his All knowing Presence- means to be deeply aware that his Power is made perfect in our weakness, therefore we can live in obedience.

To Honor His All knowing Presence means to be deeply aware that when we ask for wisdom, he will grant us it so we can walk upright and actually take the highroad, when circumstances get foolishly dramatic and sinful at work or home. He will give us the words to say in the moment when we are before the world's important people or when others need comfort or advice in a moments notice

To Honor His All knowing Presence means to be deeply aware of His Holiness in the place where we live, work, stand and sleep. Therefore, we control our bodies

in ways that are holy and honor. Not in the ways the pagans do, who do not know God. Our behavior is to acknowledge his pure unadulterated presence as being right here and now.

To Honor His all knowing Presence means to be deeply aware of his Grace that is sufficiently immediately, available. It will be a grace that is sanctifying, satisfying, safe keeping and securing what ever you are needing it to be in your time of need.

It is a humble truth that Martin Luther reminds us that we live our lives before the face of God. The Latin phrase he used was Coram Deo meaning in the presence of God.

So What does it mean to Fear God? It means: Exercise a deep awareness of God's power, holiness, wisdom and grace By honoring his all knowing presence in our lives.

We need to exercise:

2. A Deep Awe of God's Power, Holiness, Wisdom and Grace

Exodus 14:29-31

“But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

30 Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.”

When the people of Israel saw the mighty power that the Lord had unleashed against the Egyptians, they were filled with awe before him (NLT)

- This verse exemplifies that the people of God were not afraid of God. They were in awe of God. But the verse says the result of that awe wasthey

believed in him, that is that put their trust with him. They depended on Him.

The Israelites experienced the amazing delivering power of God at the Crossing of the Red Sea. It resulted in a reflex of their conscious to be in awe of the incredible majesty and rescuing power of God.

We have been created with a capacity to behold awesome things. The exercise of Awe is a lost practice in our society because we attribute things as awesome to stuff that are truly not. We have substituted awesome experiences, sights and sounds that are made to point us to God and misplaced it- satisfy our own selfish whims. The problem is misplaced awe will never satisfy.

To truly live in the fear of the Lord

We need to Trust God's Ever Powerful Providence

To Trust, means to have confidence in the character and word of another so as to depend on their strength, wisdom and ways.

To Trust God's Ever Powerful Providence means to be in deep awe of God Power to orchestrate and work in ways that are beyond our comprehension, yet still can trust He will work all things together for His glorious end and for our ultimate Good.

To Trust God's Ever Powerful Providence means to be in deep awe of God's holiness. The Lord is set apart from us and possesses what I can only describe as an otherness, compared to us. Psalm 145:3 proclaims both the greatness of God and then states that his greatness no one can fathom and his greatness is unsearchable. We are to rejoice that his thoughts are not our thoughts and that his ways are not our ways. For any of us that has said "Well if I was God..." We praise God that is not true. Because God does not counsel with us over his affairs of the universe or has us chime in on who should be saved and who should not. Praise God that he is not that like us and rather that He is holy

To Trust God's Ever Powerful Providence means to be in deep awe of God's wisdom. For all of us hindsight is always 20/20. To see clearly after the fact is the best way we see God's wisdom this side of eternity. Yet in his divine wisdom,

there are many things that God doesn't reveal his wisdom in and are considered the secret things that belong to the Lord. But we can trust in the Lord and lean not on our own understanding and in all our ways acknowledge him and be in awe that he will make our paths straight

To Trust God's Ever Powerful Providence means to be in deep awe of God's grace. We are to stir this awe when we participate in The Lord's table. Just as the Israelites saw the amazing power that God unleashed on the Egyptians, We remember the great power God used against sin and death. The exercise of God's awesome delivering power on our behalf compels us to trust Him. It is an awesome grace that we reflect on Christ's body being broken for us. It is an awesome grace that we reflect on Christ's blood being poured out for us. By Jesus' stripes we are healed by the blood of our deepest sins, are forgiven.

That the 2nd point:

We are to exercise a deep awe of God's power, holiness, wisdom and grace, by trusting in His Ever Powerful Providence.

Lastly,

The fear of the Lord is to exercise

3. A Deep Reverence of God's Power, Holiness, Wisdom and Grace

Hebrews 12:28, 29

"Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire."

Revering God means to hold him in the deepest respects. Time and time again, in the Scripture, we see that when God's people don't revere him by doing their own thing, there are consequences.

- Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. They were kicked out of the Garden of Eden.

- Moses in anger hit the rock instead of speaking to it as God commanded. He wasn't allowed into the promise land.
- The Israelites failed to continue to fear him, there for disobeying his commands and doing what was right in there own eyes. They were attacked by their enemies and dispersed as a country.
- Earlier in Hebrews God says that he disciplines the ones he loves. It is a corrective discipline. Unpleasant for sure, but loving and training us to learn to rever his word.

To dive a little deeper into revering God

We need to Admire his Most Holy Personhood

Exodus 15:11

“Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? God is unlike us in his personhood.”

- For he has perfections that are free from flaws and limitation

To Admire God's most holy personhood means to hold deep reverence and respect for his power. We are to rever him as powerful creator, but he is not that alone. He is also most powerful redeemer and most powerful judge. When we consider his redeeming power and his judging power, we are to stand amazed and humbled that they are characterized by loving motives and a motive of true justice.

To Admire God's most Holy Personhood means to hold deep reverence and respect for his Holiness. He is beyond compare and beyond measure for us to ever figure out. Yet he bends low to our stature reaches out in our language, walked this earth as one of us, all so that we would know him and to make him known.

To Admire God's Most Holy Personhood means to hold a deep reverence for his wisdom. Another whole sermon can be written, about how and why the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom and knowledge. We can yet settle, that

his wisdom, though may look foolish to a watching sinful world, is to humble the mighty and proud. It is to provide and protect for us his children.

To Admire God's Most Holy Personhood means to hold deep reverence for his grace. Familiarity with grace will breed contempt and produce a rebellious disposition in our heart to God's commands. Presumption of grace can also breed false security for the truly unsaved. We are never to take for granted God's grace flippantly and run into disobedience. We are to admire his grace and to hold deep reverence for it so that our hearts will worship with great delight that he has saved us.

That's the 3rd point:

To Exercise a deep Reverence of God's power, holiness, wisdom and grace, by admiring his Most Holy Personhood

In summary

So What does it mean to Fear God?

It means:

To Exercise a deep awareness of God's power, holiness, wisdom and grace By honoring his All Knowing Presence in our lives.

To exercise a deep awe of God's power holiness, wisdom and grace, by trusting God's Ever Powerful Providence

To Exercise a deep Reverence of God's power, holiness, wisdom and grace, by admiring his Most Holy Personhood

This topic can be overwhelming. So here are some keys to applying this:

- Take these notes and place them in your bible and read them weekly.
- Slow down your life to grow deeper in this.,
- Psalm 86:11 "Give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name."
- Read the Old Testament with a new perspective. It is in these accounts we see awestruck displays of God's majesty, splendor, holiness and love that should stir our godly fear in our own lives today.

- Begin to ask God to increase your awareness, awe and reverence of him to the point that you love him, live wiser than yesterday and walk upright in his commands in the joy of the Lord.

Let's pray:

Father, thank you for implanting a fear of the Lord into our souls. Forgive us for not cultivating it as we should. Slow us down let we may grow deep. Restore our sense of awe with you. Let us hold deeply an awareness and reverence for who you are. May we delight in your commands as we walk in them and may our lives reflect your otherness to the unsaved, that we may give you credit and the glory in Jesus name. Amen.

TO FEAR THE LORD

PSALM 112:1, 6-9

Jeremiah 32:38-40 Jeremiah 33:8-9 Deuteronomy 10:12-13
Colossians 3:22 2 Corinthians 7:1 1 Peter 2:1 Acts 9:31

3 THINGS WE NEED TO EXERCISE

1. A Deep _____ of God's Power, Holiness, Wisdom and Grace...

...By _____ his All Knowing Presence in our lives.

2. A Deep _____ of God's Power, Holiness, Wisdom and Grace...

...By _____ God's Ever Powerful Providence

3. A Deep _____ of God's Power, Holiness, Wisdom and Grace.

...by admiring his Most Holy Personhood