

Growing in the Fear of the Lord

“He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure” (Isaiah 33:6)

ALL experiences of the fear of man share at least one common feature: people are big. People have grown to idolatrous proportions in our lives. They control us. Since there is no room in our hearts to worship both God and people, whenever people are big, God is not. Therefore, the first task in escaping the snare of the fear of man is to know that God is awesome and glorious, and other people are not.

I. The person who fears God loves God above all else.

The fear of the Lord could be like emotions on this spectrum, flowing with increased wisdom (L to R)
 Terror-Dread-Trembling-Astonishment-Awe-Reverence-Devotion-Trust-Love

On the far right (love) is the emotion of those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ. If you have terror in your heart, you hide from God. If you have love in your heart, you run to God. This latter emotion is the biblical “fear of the Lord” and it is what Solomon says is the beginning of real wisdom.

II. The person who fears God fears nothing else.

Knowing the difference between these two fears clarifies why Scripture can say “*There is no fear in love*” (1 John 4: 18) while simultaneously demanding the fear of the Lord. God is a cut above people.

To say God is “holy” means that he is different from us. All of His attributes are greater than man’s.

(A). “To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.” (Isa. 40: 25)

(B). “Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God?” (Ps. 77: 13)

(C). “For I am God, and not man — the Holy One among you.” (Hos. 11: 9)

III. Our need is to get to know God better than people.

Our God is the Immanent One who has revealed himself and become like us. He said, “*I will be your God and you will be my people*” (Lev. 26: 12). He is near us. He will never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13: 5). He is so close he calls us “friends” (John 15: 14). He is so close, the Scripture talks about in you (Col. 1: 27). Given his nature, this is virtually impossible for us to grasp. But, by God’s grace, we can grow in knowing his holiness and as we come to understand the nature of God, He becomes BIG!

IV. There are some things that naturally keep us from knowing God.

Last week, we saw the world’s influence on our concept of God. But the Scripture says that we have three enemies who seek to keep God small and man big – the world, the flesh and the devil. How so?

V. Growing in the fear of the Lord revolves around knowing His love and power.

“*Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing... Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*” (Ps. 34: 9, 11) Notice especially the mighty acts of God that show both his holy love and justice, kindness and sternness (Rom. 11: 22). The psalmist reminds us that those who fear the Lord say, “*His love endures forever*” (Ps. 118: 4), but they also say, “*Who can stand before you when you are angry?*” (Ps. 76: 7). Scripture speaks of unimaginable love alongside holy anger. God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love, but he does not leave the guilty unpunished; “he is angry with the wicked” (Psalm 7:11). Therefore, we cannot rightly say, “*My God is not a God of judgment and anger; my God is a God of love.*” Such thinking makes it almost impossible to grow in the fear of the Lord. Sin not only saddens God, it offends Him.