

Growing in the Fear of the Lord (Part II)

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)

The fear of the Lord is learned by meditating on God's word and depending on Him to teach us this fear! "When he [the king] takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God" (Deuteronomy 17: 18-19; **see Deut. 31: 13**)

I. Learn to fear God's Character

Notice especially the mighty acts of God that show his holy love *and* justice, kindness and sternness (**see Romans 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?*" (Psalm 76: 7). Scripture speaks of unimaginable love alongside holy anger.

God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love, but he also does not leave the guilty unpunished; "he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation" (Ex. 34: 6, 7). 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. It suggests that sin only saddens God rather than offends him. Both justice and love are expressions of his holiness, and we must know both to learn the fear of the Lord. If we look only at God's love, we will not need him, and there will be no urgency in the message of the cross. If we focus narrowly on God's justice, we will avoid Him, live in terror, feeling guilty and waiting for punishment.

II. Learn to fear God as Creator

Creation is God's servant. He spoke just one word and it existed to do his will. What we see around us is God's handiwork that even he said was good. If God said it was good, it must be quite a work of art, even in its presently marred form (**see Psalm 33:8-9**). The blue of the sky reflects his royal garment. The clouds are reminders of his presence (Ex. 19: 9), they are his chariot as he oversees his creation (Ps. 104: 3). The winds are his messengers (Ps. 104: 4). They come from the storehouses of God (Ps. 135: 7). The sun comes forth like a bridegroom, reminding me that Jesus is returning for his church (Ps. 19: 5). The heavens truly praise his wonders (Ps. 89: 5), they declare his glory (Ps. 19: 1). (**See Psalm 8:3-4**).

III. Learn to fear God as Covenant Keeper

The first time Jacob met God, or the Fear of Isaac, as he called him, he was on the run from his brother Esau. Having just cheated him out of the birthright, Jacob had reason to fear the man. Esau was bigger, stronger, and perhaps more volatile. Undoubtedly, at this time in Jacob's life, man was big and God was small. Jacob's dream (see Gen. 28: 10-22) changed all that. The word "holy" is used throughout the Bible, but it is most often used as a description of the dwelling place of God. This is where Jacob found himself. In a dream, the curtain of heaven parted and the Lord spoke. The words, indeed, were tender and comforting, but they were still holy. Therefore, Jacob was afraid; he was glad to awake alive. He exclaimed, "How awesome is this place," and he vowed that "*the LORD will be my God*" (Gen. 28: 21).

What is the sign of the Covenant? (Old Covenant see Gen. 17; New Covenant see Jer. 31:31; Rom. 2:28).