

What Is The Fear of God

Text: Psalm 2:11; 33:8; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Acts 10:35

Theme: The heart that fears the Lord is free to truly worship Him

Introduction — What is the fear of God?

- to what shall we liken it?
- many of us have been there:
- hiking, walking, visiting a tourist site
- come across a spectacular scene
- waterfall, canyon, massive forest of trees, filled with awe

1983, visited Niagara Falls

- breath-taking scene
- massive amounts of water racing over the cliffs
- thunderous roar of cascade
- feel the rocks underfoot vibrate
- deadly if you were to jump in
- but causes you to tremble almost at sight

This is something like fearing God

- Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Psalm 2:11
- you hear it there, don't you?
- rejoice with trembling
- helps us understand what it means to serve the Lord with fear
- **Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!**
Psalm 33:8
- standing in awe of God is fearing the Lord

This is what it means to fear the Lord

- it is joyful trembling before Him
- it is to be awestruck, speechless in His presence
- it can be like taking your breath away

How does God want you to view Him, think of Him?

- how do you think about God?
- do you find yourself answering: not nearly as much as I'd like to or know I should?

Over the course of next few Sundays, wish to explore this

- won't be able to say everything in Scripture about fear of the Lord
- but hope to say some things & trust God to use them for our benefit
- I hope that by looking to God's Word, we can see more of what this means
- may the Lord grant that we can grow deeper in our fear of Him
- may Holy Spirit guide us so it will be a God-honoring fear of Him
- I pray we might learn to rejoice and tremble before our great and awesome God

With that in mind, let's pray

Let's begin by asking the most essential question...

I. WHAT IS THE FEAR OF THE LORD?

- **Psalm 2:11 — Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.**
- psalmist puts fear and rejoicing in same breath
- Psalm 33:8 helps a bit more by saying that this fear is like awe, standing in awe of God!
- **Psalm 33:8 — Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!**
- **Jeremiah 32:38-40 — And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 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. 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.**
- thru prophet, Lord says put this fear in hearts of His people in new covenant
- yet, what does all this mean?

1. Bible has a lot to say about fear

- one of most common phrases throughout is “Do not be afraid”
- yet told to fear the Lord
- Apostle John says that perfect love drives out fear
- yet all inhabitants of world are to stand in this fear of the Lord
- Zechariah, John's father, prophesied of Jesus' salvation
- **Luke 1:74-75 — that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.**
- and yet God says He'll put this fear of Him in our hearts thru Jesus Christ
- so what are we to make of all this?

2. The wrong kind of fear

- we live in culture of fear, filled with anxieties and worries, some of worst sort
- we all know fear, kind that shoots adrenaline thru body
- heart races, breathing accelerates, muscles tense, brain goes into hyperdrive
- we fear what we cannot control
- we fear losing what we hold most dear
- we fear bad things happening to us, family, friends, even others

1) be not afraid and fear God

- look at this more next Sunday
- but Moses, in Exodus 20 tells people to not to fear God
- instead, God has come to test His people so they would fear Him
- there is an element of natural fear here
- the people at the base of Mt Sinai were fearful of flashes of lightning & thunder
- never saw or heard like this
- sounds of trumpets and mountain smoking
- so, naturally, they were afraid

2) sinful fear

- **James 2:19 — You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!**
- unbelievers should be afraid and fear the Lord: they are under judgment
- but this fear flows from sin, not from a righteous heart

- this does not flow from a heart of love for God
- rather, you might be afraid that you'll be found out
- or taken out of this life before you're ready
- even late Christopher Hitchens, a well-known atheist, had this fear
- when asked about the possibility of God existing, he said
- **"I think it would be rather awful if it was true. ...you'd never have a waking or sleeping moment when you weren't [afraid]."**
- because most unbelievers have exchanged truth for a lie about God, they live in fear
- no love for God, no love for His laws which point you to Christ: just fear
- so, turn to self or other means of salvation rather than to God thru Jesus Christ

3. The right kind of fear

- yes, we live in a sorrowful culture of fear
- yet fear of God is just the prescription we need to overcome this
- John Newton once knew the wrong kind, but God was gracious to him
- *'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved*
- again Jeremiah records God's words regarding this new covenant & new fear
- **Jeremiah 33:8-9 — 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. And this...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.**
- no more fear of punishment, but one of delight, awe, reverence and worship
- and this is the right kind of fear: "an inward awe and reverence"
- this is certainly part of the fear of the Lord
- yet there is much more intensity of joy and full happiness in this fear of God
- God is all glorious, gracious and full of lovingkindness, so we fear Him
- when we experience and come to understand the love of God's grace for us, we fear Him
- there is much more that we could say on this, but let's move on for now

Let's consider this second question...

II. WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

- I'm sure it comes as a surprise to you:
- most of people you meet each day are not thinking about God
- they may have never even considered what it might mean to fear Him
- it simply is not an important idea to most today
- but the question you and I must ask is this:
- is it important to God?

1. In Ecclesiastes 12.13, we get a partial answer

- **The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. Ecclesiastes 12:13**
- the end of the matter
- Solomon has been contemplating life
- does it have meaning?
- is there some grand purpose in it?
- or is it all meaningless, just vanity?
- here, in v. 13, he concludes his findings

- the end of the matter = after all has been said
- this is what it is all about: he's about to tell us
- "Fear God" he says
- yes, there are many things that can be meaningless in life
- pursuing gain and wealth simply for sake of having more
- giving vent to your pleasures and cravings, your desires and imaginings
- working with no goal in sight
- just about anything you do in life
- if you only do it to be doing it, well...
- meaningless, meaningless, life is meaningless

2. But if you learn the fear of the Lord

- as Solomon will tell us in his book of Proverbs
- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge... Proverbs 1:7
- here, in Ecclesiastes, it is the sum purpose of life
- you want to have purpose?
- you want to know meaning?
- you want something to live for?
- fear the Lord and keep His commandments
- it is the most important thing anyone of us can do

3. Solomon's structure of wording makes it clear

- fearing God...and
- keeping His commands...are
- man's all
- this is what God expects of mankind

4. Peter preaches the same thing in Acts 10

- **but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.**
Acts 10:35

- again, note the structure:
- fearing God...and
- working righteousness (which is biblical terminology for obeying)...are
- all it takes to be acceptable to God
- Peter knew Solomon's words because he knew his Old Testament
- so, he echoes them here in Acts 10

5. Message is same in OT and NT

- all God requires of us is that we fear & obey Him
- this is what is most important to God
- it is what He made us to do
- what does it mean to be human?
- to fear God & keep His commandments
- this means if your heart trembles at the thought of God & His greatness...
- and if you are living under His commands
- you are living human life to the fullest

6. Sadly, so many, even called Christians, miss this

- they want excitement...nothing wrong with that

- they need an adrenaline rush
- or they need success, recognition, notoriety
- or perhaps dozens of other things
- and they have become convinced this is what life is all about
- they listen to the world, the media, other people
- go for the gusto
- grab what you can now
- you only go around once
- you deserve this
- and then, they're surprised when they feel empty
- shocked to find it does not satisfy
- and only too late, do many realize they've missed it

7. Deep in hearts, we've always known this

- God made His creation stunning
- think about His creation for a moment
- first there was nothing, then there was something
- oh, the poor, poor evolutionists, even the so-called theistic evolutionists
- they claim there was something, this great super-compressed piece of matter, a singularity
- then it simply exploded, for no known reason
- and from that explosion of hyper-compressed stuff came...well, everything that is today
- no wonder there is no fear of God in their hearts
- no wonder there is so little joy because if that is how it came about
- if that is what life is, then Solomon was right:
- meaningless, meaningless

1) But God simply took nothing and made something

- He spoke and it was
- **'Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you. Jeremiah 32:17**

2) Day One: God created heavens & earth

- spherical ball formless and void
- covered in darkness
- Spirit of God hovering, waiting
- then God created Light, not the sun, mind you
- before sun, moon, stars, God simply made Light
- some say this is why Scripture gets it wrong
- think only in terms of this world, not God
- can't have light without sun
- can't have green vegetation without sun
- but, oh, God can do this

3) Amazing symmetry and pattern to Scripture

- in beginning, God creates Light
- no sun, not needed yet
- then in Rev 22:5 we read this
- **And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. Revelation 22:5**

- did you hear that: no sun needed for God will be our light
- pure radiance of His glory is light eternal
- all light, even before sun and after sun, is a gift from God
- light emanates from God
- and so fear the Lord who said, “Let there be light” and from nothing & darkness, there was light

8. This is why God is worthy of worship

- **For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. Romans 1:20**
- and once He made man, He wrote His law upon our hearts
- he has put within us a strong understanding...
- a powerful recognition of things that are right and things that are wrong
- They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them Romans 2:15
- we may not always have words for it
- but all of us deeply know that God is worthy
- He who made and sustains all things is worthy of our trembling before Him
- His commands are what we must keep
- this is why it is so important to fear the Lord
- it is life and everything for us

Conclusion – Now, let me bring this home to roost

- if we feared God & kept His commands as we ought, we’d be fine
- we would be acceptable to God
- we would, indeed, be righteous
- ah, but alas, we’re not, are we?
- we do not fear God as we ought
- we do not obey His laws and statutes as we should: perfectly all the time
- this is why we need Jesus to save us
- this is why it was necessary for His blood to be shed on our behalf
- this is why last weekend was such a powerful one in our eyes
- oh, if we could only worship God wholeheartedly this would be enough
- but so many things distract us
- we treasure so many other things than God alone

So, we find ourselves in great need

- we need the blood of Christ
- we need the perfect obedience of Jesus
- we have all sinned and need to be forgiven
- when you saw that gorgeous sunrise the other day and neglected to worship God...well, there it is
- when that eagle soared down out of the sky, scooped up that rodent in his talons and you refused to give God thanks...there it is again
- your inability to fear God & keep His laws
- yes, indeed we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God
- and this is what Jesus has died to pay for

But what we have heard in these verses today is this:

- a life of worshiping God & walking in His ways is what we are made for
- this is why living and walking in Jesus makes us feel truly human
- our purpose is restored
- as a Christian, you have one chief and primary task
- tremble in worship before God and walk in His ways

This is why I believe it is good to spend a few Sundays learning how to fear the Lord

- this is why, Lord willing, we'll do so over the next four weeks
- and make it your pray, along with mine for you:
- Lord, help us to fear You
- helps us to obey You
- and do all this through the powerful name of Jesus Christ.