

Learning the fear of the Lord

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The fear belonging to Yahweh

- In his description of the throne of the Father, the apostle John wrote, 'Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the *seven Spirits of God*'. Rev 4:5. The prophet Isaiah described the seven aspects of Yahweh's one Spirit as: the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of might, the Spirit of knowledge and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. Isa 11:2. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit relate together in one Spirit. Each aspect of the Spirit of Yahweh defines the culture of how They relate together and offer Themselves to reveal one another.
- The fear of the Lord is one aspect of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh. It can only be understood through illumination, when the word of the Everlasting Covenant is preached to us. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit submit to one another according to the fear of the Lord. For example, by the capacity of Their one Spirit, Yahweh the Son laid down His life to become a slave of the Father. Php 2:7. As a slave of the Father, the Son delighted in the fear of the Lord. Isa 11:3. The fear of the Lord enabled Him to serve the Father. As a slave, the Son is able to judge the world because His judgements are not His own. He judges according to the will of the Father and has no prejudice or investment in the outcome. Joh 5:30.

The fear of death

- As an outcome of the fall of mankind, the 'other law' was established in the spirit of every person. Rom 7:21-23. In our democratic society, freedom is defined as being the right to exercise our other law in order to protect ourselves from one another. The suffering experienced by fallen man is a foretaste of eternal death and, therefore, the resultant mindset of mankind within the world is that 'suffering must be avoided at all costs'. Job 2:4. This innate motivation to protect ourselves demonstrates that man is bound by 'the fear of death'. The apostle Paul explained that Satan uses the fear of death as a weapon to control mankind, in order for them to do his will. Heb 2:14-15.
- The word of faith delivers us from our bondage to the fear of death, so that we can present ourselves for fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings. This was the gospel preached to Abram. The Lord met him in a vision, saying, '*Do not be afraid*, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1. Abram believed the word and entreated the Lord God regarding the means by which he would inherit his sonship. Gen 15:6-8. The Lord taught Abram to join the offering of Christ. Receiving and believing the word of faith that enables us to join the offering of Christ is the only answer to the fear of death. Jesus explained to the presbytery of Smyrna that a crown of life is given to each person who is delivered from the fear of death. Rev 2:10.
- There are only two fundamental fears - the fear of death and the fear of the Lord. We see these two fears most acutely demonstrated in the two thieves who were crucified either side of Jesus. One thief received illumination as the blood of Christ 'spoke' to him. Heb 12:24. As he received the testimony of Jesus, a spirit of grace and

supplication was poured out upon him. Zec 12:10. This enabled him to learn the fear that belongs to Yahweh. He ceased from his own judgements, and afterwards remonstrated with his companion, saying, '*Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.*' Luk 23:40-41.

- As we shall consider, the fear of the Lord is understood in relation to judgement, honour, submission and obedience. For example, it will be very hard to *submit* to someone if you have not received the fear of Yahweh. The action of subverting or suppressing 'my own will' in favour of the will of someone else can appear to be submission. However, this remains a life-preserving action. And we recall from the Scriptures that if we try to save our life, being motivated by the fear of death, we will lose it. Luk 17:33.

Taught to fear

- We receive and learn the fear of the Lord through the word of the cross which is preached to us. King David proclaimed, 'Come, you children, listen to me; I will *teach you* the fear of the Lord.' Psa 34:11. The fear of the Lord is not an innate quality within us; nor can it be generated from our own resources. We must *receive and learn* the fear of Yahweh. It was for this reason that King David testified, 'Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name.' Psa 86:11. David acknowledged the propensity for the heart of man to be misaligned by its various desires and pursuits. A *united heart* that fears the Lord is the fruit of the ministry of the New Covenant. Jer 32:39. Eze 11:19. The outcome of being taught the fear of the Lord is the blessing of steadfastness. Psa 112:7. Pro 14:26.
- In the last months of his life, Moses taught the children of Israel in relation to the fear of the Lord. The Lord had delivered the children of Israel from their captivity in order to bring them to Himself. The Lord desired to teach them to fear Him, through the words that He spoke to Moses and in their hearing. Deu 4:10. In turn, the Lord intended for them to likewise teach the fear of the Lord to their children and grandchildren. Deu 4:9. We know that the first generation were not willing to be taught by the Lord, and they perished in the wilderness because of their unbelief. For this reason, the apostle Paul wrote, 'See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven.' Heb 12:25.

Walking in the fear of the Lord

- *First*, the fear of the Lord is the sure knowledge that we will all be scrutinised before the judgement seat of Christ. The Scriptures explain that every person will appear before the judgement seat of Christ in order to give an account of himself to God. Rom 14:10. When judged by Christ, our true character will be revealed and we will reap the fruit of the deeds done in our body. Ecc 12:13-14. God is to be revered, 'for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap'. Gal 6:7. The certain knowledge of judgement is the first aspect of the fear of the Lord. It was for this reason that Jesus said, '*Fear Him* who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.' Mat 10:28.
- Jesus explained that it is more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgement than for those who refuse to heed His word, spoken through His messengers. Mar 6:11. Heb 12:25. This is a confronting realisation. The judgement is more severe upon those who are 'near' to the preaching of His word, but who eventually 'apostatise', or turn away from the truth, because they choose to walk according to the ways of their heart and in the sight of their eyes. Ecc 11:9. Just

being in 'proximity to the word' is no place of safety at all. Paul stated clearly, 'But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God.' Rom 2:5.

- *Second*, the fear of the Lord is the acknowledgement of His majesty and power. We worship Jesus Christ as the Lord who reigns over all. Rev 19:6. The Scriptures use the term 'only Potentate' to describe Christ as the *only* One who possesses true power and authority. Paul wrote, 'He who is the blessed and *only Potentate*, the King of kings and Lord of lords.' 1Ti 6:15. We respect and submit to His lordship over our lives. We note this aspect of the fear of the Lord in the disciples when Jesus calmed the wind and waves. In the Gospel of Mark, we read, 'And they *feared exceedingly*, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"' Mar 4:41.
- *Third*, the fear of the Lord is submission to, and obedience within, the relational order in which we have been placed by God the Father. We note the apostle Paul's words, 'Bondservants, *obey* in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, *fearing God*.' Col 3:22. Here, Paul was explaining our submission and obedience not only to employers and authorities, but also to those whom the Lord has placed as stewards over the house of God. Tit 3:1. Mat 24:45. These are overseers who watch over our souls. Hence, Paul wrote, '*Obey* those who rule over you, and be *submissive*, for they watch out for your souls'. Heb 13:17.
- Importantly, obedience to the Lord's command is not optional. A person cannot decide to obey only when they agree with what they hear and, likewise, choose not to obey when they don't agree. The very presumption to make this judgement is indicative of a lack of the fear of the Lord. Obedience is evidence that we fear the Lord. When Abraham was obedient in presenting Isaac as a burnt offering, the Lord testified, 'Now I know that you *fear God*, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.' Gen 22:12.
- *Fourth*, the fear of the Lord is the sure knowledge that the inheritance of our sonship is only found in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. This aspect of the fear of the Lord was demonstrated by Isaac when he willingly entrusted himself to be revealed by the offering of his father, Abraham. Isaac believed that exanastasis life would be his inheritance, as he was figuratively joined to the offering of Christ. Gen 22:8. This is why the Scriptures describe this expression of the fear of the Lord as, 'the fear of Isaac'. Gen 31:42.

Defining Christian community

- The fear of the Lord defines the culture of how sons of God relate with the Lord and with one another, in one Spirit. Isa 11:2. In order to understand how to live together as a community of Christian friends, we firstly need to appreciate, and to live according to, the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord defines the culture of our conduct and conversation. 1Pe 1:17. As we read in the book of Malachi, 'Then those who *feared the Lord spoke* to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who *fear the Lord* and who meditate on His name.' Mal 3:16.
- In contrast, Jude explained that within our participation in the *agape* meal there will always be those who demonstrate no fear of the Lord. They demonstrate no submission or obedience to those who oversee and shepherd the flock of God. Jude wrote, 'These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you *without fear*,

serving only themselves'. Jud 1:12. The apostle Paul described them as 'enemies of the cross of Christ'. Php 3:18-19. Instead of mourning for their sin, they glory in their shame. This is evidence of the fear of death. The Lord spoke through the prophet Jeremiah, 'Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush.' Jer 6:15.

- In order to relate together as a community that fears the Lord, we need to be progressively delivered from our fallen and unclean ways of relating to one another. This process of refinement, or purification, is through our daily fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings. Quoting the words of the prophet Isaiah, the apostle Paul wrote, 'Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. *Do not touch what is unclean*, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.' 2Co 6:17-18.
- The unclean ways of relating, from which we must be delivered, include peer pressure; factions; the 'pairing up' of young people; seeking excesses; functioning as a benefactor; immorality (going against moral standards); amorality (without any reference to moral standards); religious sophistication; offence on behalf of one another; and hidden, intimate relating, to name a few. Paul summarised such ways when he wrote, 'Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.' Eph 4:31. James explained that the source of our fighting and contentions with one another is from the desires and lusts of our heart. Jas 4:1-2.
- The apostle Paul defined the community of Christ as being those who have received the mind of Christ. Php 2:5. Rom 15:5-6. According to the mind of Christ, we are to regard the name of another and to converse in a way that is helpful for their sonship. As Paul wrote, 'Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for *necessary edification*, that it may impart grace to the hearers'. Eph 4:29. In this, we do not embrace one another's fallen relational modes in an endeavour to 'befriend' them into the kingdom. Rather, we exhort them to their own participation in the offering of Christ in which they can be delivered from their fallen relational modes. As Paul wrote, 'Now we exhort you, brethren, *warn* those who are unruly, *comfort* the fainthearted, *uphold* the weak, be *patient* with all'. 1Th 5:14.