

Is the Fear of God in You?

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If you look at the history of religion in the United States—Canada follows suit also, kind of the same trends—in the mid-1950's, religion in the United States reached an all-time peak. Church attendance was at its maximum and during that time—that was a time when TV first started—there were a lot of religious programs on television on the weekends and even in prime time. It was a peak of religious activity in this country. Then came the decline of the 1960's and the 1970's and after that, starting after the 1970's, came what was called the great decline. Let me read from religionnews.com and they say this: *Religiosity in the United States is in the midst of what might be called the great decline. Previous declines in religion pale in comparison. Over the past fifteen years [and they are referring to 1998-2013] the drop in religiosity has been twice as great as the decline of the 1960's and the 1970's.*

I went online and looked up the Pew Research Center reports on religion and their latest survey, which I think is less than a year old, reports that only thirty-seven percent of all Americans attend church on a weekly basis. That is way down from what it used to be. They found that the wealthy attend the least. The most educated attend the least and it's not surprising that the older men and women attend the most. You're getting close to the end of your life and you want to hedge your bet so people go to church more often. Thirty-seven percent of Americans attend church on a weekly basis—it's only twenty percent of Canadians. Australians, only seventeen percent. The real surprise is in the United Kingdom—Great Britain—only eight percent attend church on a weekly basis. France is eleven percent; Germany is ten percent and Israel is thirty percent. You would think it would be more in Israel, but it's not. What is happening is, western society is rapidly becoming secular—becoming Godless. The number of people according to the Pew Research who say religion is not important to them has doubled from 2007 to 2014.

The fact is, that most of those who do attend church, which is a shrinking minority, are Christ-centered. Protestants, Evangelicals, Charismatics—they are all Christ-centered. God the Father being relocated to, in most cases, the cruel God of the Old Testament. In the case of the Mormons, the official name of which is The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, believe that Christ is the God of the Old Testament. Then we know that the Catholics and the Orthodox worship apostles, saints, Mary, icons—a lady here is nodding her head, as a former good Catholic—and the fact is, God the Father is lost somewhere in that mix. In these cases, people (although they don't realize it) is they are rapidly rejecting God the Father, when you think about it. Relegating God the Father is nothing new. Let's go to Luke 7:28, Christ is telling them a fact—those around Him—about what they were doing. I'll read this out of the New Living Translation.

Luke 7:28 [Christ is saying] *I tell you, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John. [John the Baptist] Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of God is greater than he is!*"

29) *When they heard this, all the people—even the tax collectors—agreed that God's way was right, for they had been baptized by John. (NLT)*

They accepted that and were baptized.

30) *But the Pharisees and experts in religious law rejected God's plan for them, for they had refused John's baptism. (NLT)*

Christ noted that and refusing to follow God's plan and refusing to acknowledge the One that God sent is not unusual—it has happened down through history. In all the cases today and then back in Christ's day there is one obvious fact, in rejecting God, people do not fear God, otherwise, they wouldn't reject him. The fact is, today people do not fear God. In our hometown newspaper, The Yakima Herald Republic, every Friday there is a religious section and back in 2017 on May 13 in this section, one of the authors said this: *Today when you say to someone, "the Bible says", they would probably say back to you, so what.* And that's true for the majority of the people in the country today and Canada too. We have to ask ourselves, what about in the greater church of God today? As we've noted before, it's easy to have an emphasis on an institution, it's easy to have an emphasis on some humanly devised corporation and it's easy to have an emphasis on a man, or to look to a man. Or where church tradition becomes very comfortable and that is adhered to regardless of what we might find in the Bible. The question is, in all of these cases, we have to ask, where is the fear of God in all of these actions? The decline in religion, in society in general, in maybe having a wrong focus that we can yield to within the greater church of God. Where is God in these actions? Where is the fear of God? We are commanded to fear God. Let's go to Ecclesiastes 12 and look at verse 13. Solomon is imparting wisdom and he comes to a conclusion that we would do well to heed. He's trying to summarize everything that he has written down both in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and he does just that.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: (KJV)*

Okay, that's important, what's the conclusion of the whole matter?

13 continued) *... Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. (KJV)*

The King James inserts "duty of man" but duty is not in the Hebrew. This is the whole of man, to fear God and keep His commandments. As we come closer to the end of this age, one question looms large for all of us because God is asking all of us the question: Is the fear of Me in you? I'm addressing this to myself. Do I have the fear of God in me? Very important question as we get close to the end of the age.

The first point, let's examine:

1. What does it mean to fear God?

There's more to it than you might imagine on the surface. We just read Ecclesiastes 12:13. The Hebrew word for "fear" is Strong's #3372 and that is the verb—#3373 is an adjective, #3374 is a noun and all of them have a two-fold meaning. When you look at it carefully, they have a two-fold meaning. It's a combination, when the Bible says fear in Hebrew, of absolutely being afraid but it's also having a deep respect. A combination of fear, coupled with respect. Baker and Carpenter, in their book, The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament, say (about this word): *The word usually refers to the fear of God and is viewed in a positive sense.* Meaning it's a good thing to fear God and it's a good thing to respect God. Let's look in this first point, at these two components; being afraid and respecting or reverencing God.

We know we worship and look to God Almighty, the Most High God and the titles—these titles of Almighty and Most High—indicate supreme power and supreme authority. Part of fearing God is to be afraid of His power and wrath. When I first came in the church in the 1960's, God's wrath was a focal point. Booklets, magazines, preaching and all of that, because it was expected that the end time was coming very quick and God's wrath was going to be unloosed on the world and it was a focal point. We didn't have any problem, at least when I came into the church, of knowing and fearing the wrath of God. In reality, should we not be afraid to confront such power? Should we not be afraid of being at cross purposes of God and somehow opposing God—shouldn't we be afraid of that? Of course we should. Let's go to 2 Chronicles 19:1 and see that King Jehoshaphat of Judah was appointing people to be judges and Levites to serve functions as priests. Notice what his emphasis was.

2 Chronicles 19:1 *And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. (KJV)*

Verse 5.

5) *And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city,*

6) *And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment.*

7) *Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; (KJV)*

If you're going to make judgement, you better be afraid to go against God and God's wishes.

7 continued) *... take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.*

8) *Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the Lord, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem.*

9) *And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully, and with a perfect heart. (KJV)*

The implication is, God is not going to be happy if you pervert judgement. If you insert your will in front of God's will and thereby come in cross purposes with what God wants done. He said you better be afraid to do that.

Now let's go to a prophecy for a time yet future in Isaiah 2. This is something that is going to happen and to people and finally these people who deny God, who religion is not important, who think it's a big joke—they're going to be impressed to the point that they will fear and quake. Isaiah 2:10, a prophecy. Notice this and contrast this with what we find today and the people's lack of fear of God.

Isaiah 2:10 *Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty.*

11) *The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.*

12) *For the day of the Lord of hosts ... (KJV)*

We know that is Jehovah, you can go on our archives and see that. We have written material about who that is—God Almighty.

12 continued) *... shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: (KJV)*

Verse 19

19) *And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. (KJV)*

Can you imagine, the earth shaking, there is gloom and doom and all of a sudden, this immense power that is greater than anything any human being has ever experienced before and is so great they want to hide in the rocks. They want to find a cave and crawl into it.

20) *In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;*

21) *To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord [Jehovah] , and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. (KJV)*

We see that there is coming a time when people will be petrified over the power that God has, over His authority and over what is happening to them all around. Let's jump to the New Testament and look at Hebrews 10:31. This is a familiar scripture to all of us. This is us understanding the power and the might of God and not wanting to be fighting that. It's one of the aspects of the meaning of the word fear.

Hebrews 10:31 *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (KJV)*

We know the Living God is Jehovah or YHVH, no question about that. The Greek word for "fearful thing" is just one word, it's Strong's #5398 and it's phoberos, where we get the word phobia. Phobia is a fear. It means frightful or terrible. It's interesting that the Greek word doesn't have the two components that the Hebrew word does. The Greek word only has the component of fear and fright, whereas the Hebrew has two components, being fearful and yet being reverent and respectful. The point I'm making here, in this first part of the definition of the word in Hebrew, is we should fear to face God's displeasure. We should fear to face His wrath or anger because of His power and His might and His authority. That is only natural. We have great respect for His power.

The second component of fear is having reverence for God. Reverence simply means deep respect. We reverence God because of His power and His might. Remember Christ said in John 10, My Father is greater than I. Christ acknowledged that and if the Father is greater than Christ, think of the power the Father must have and the authority He must have. Paul said in Ephesians 4, there is one God and Father of all who is above all. To have reverence and respect for God's power and His authority is only natural. It's something all of us should have and I'm sure do have.

Also, in addition to having reverence of His power and might, we should have reverence for the fact that God loves us. That He would call the likes of us, that He would honor us with the calling, a minuscule number of people in comparison to all of those that ever lived and He does so because He loves us. We know in 1 John 4, it's mentioned twice that God is love. To reverence the fact that He is love and reverence the fact of His many qualities. We know that those are revealed in the fruits of His spirit—love, joy, peace—God has all of those—gentleness, goodness—and thankfully God is that way when He deals with us. Kind, gentle, forbearing—He puts up with a lot from all of us. Of course the message for us, if He does that to us, maybe we should do that to each other and not be so quick to criticize, complain or get in somebody's face because God is very patient with us, very long suffering with us. Let's go to Isaiah 66:2, just closing out this second component of fear and that is having reverence for God. There's an additional part of that. God tells us something He really likes and we should obviously pay attention to that because we all want to please God.

Isaiah 66:2 *For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord [Jehovah]: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, [notice this] and trembleth at my word. (KJV)*

The Hebrew word for “trembles” is a totally different word, Strong’s #2730. It means fearful but it also means reverential. Trembling at God’s word—we are fearful to violate God’s word or to incur His wrath or displeasure, but also because we respect God’s word and God gives us laws that are good for us. If we obey them, we will be blessed. As we progress in this topic today, let’s keep in mind these two components of the fear of God. Fear—outright fear—but also reverence and respect. As we go through the rest of the time today, let’s keep these in mind because it’s not just one or the other but it’s a combination of both fear and reverence.

The second point we need to make in this subject is:

2. God wants His people to fear Him.

To be afraid yes, of His power and His authority and reverence and respect Him. Let’s look at ancient Israel, let’s go to Deuteronomy 4:7. We know Moses, in Deuteronomy, is recounting the history of Israel before Moses died. He is reminding them of their history, what has happened and is also giving them warnings about what lies ahead. We could say this about ourselves, being called right now. Moses was trying to impose upon the Israelites, how blessed they were to be the children of God.

Deuteronomy 4:7 *For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? (KJV)*

We’re so blessed, he said—we don’t deserve this.

8) *And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?*

9) *Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul [the King James says soul, it means life] diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen ... (KJV)*

Don’t forget the miracles, don’t forget how I brought you out of Egypt, don’t forget the crossing of the Red Sea, don’t forget all of the miracles that have occurred that got you to this point. He says, don’t forget those.

9 continued) *... and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons;*

10) *Specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children. (KJV)*

God wanted Israel to fear Him. Yes, to be afraid of His power but also to reverence Him for who and what He was. God knew when He made this statement that Israel didn’t have the heart, didn’t have the spirit. Look at the next chapter, Deuteronomy 5:29. They could not reverence Him because they did not have God’s Spirit in them.

Deuteronomy 5:29 *O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! (KJV)*

God wanted Israel and Judah to learn to fear Him but because of the absence of His Spirit, they lacked the heart and He knew that they would not. They just wouldn't because that is the nature of human beings.

Let's look now at Israel's lack of fear of Jehovah. We're staying in Deuteronomy, let's go close to the end of the book, Deuteronomy 31 and we'll begin the story in verse 16. It was time for Moses to die and it was time for Joshua to take his place and for them to go into the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 31:16 *And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them.*

17) Then my anger [Jehovah's anger] shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them ... (KJV)

The Hebrew means to leave them. Ezekiel 10 prophecies when that day would occur.

17 continued) ... and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? (KJV)

They're blaming it on God. Why was God not among them? Because they didn't fear Him, they didn't want to obey Him.

18) And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods. (KJV)

Idolatry was Israel's constant problem. They would worship anybody, any being, anything but God. They would fall down before things made of sticks and wood and stone and metals—anything but worshipping the true God. Let's see the end result of Israel and Judah because of their refusal to fear God. Let's go to 2 Chronicles 36:11—ancient Israel had already been taken captive many years before and now it is Judah's turn.

2 Chronicles 36:11 *Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.*

12) And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord. [The very mouth of Jehovah.]

13) *And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel. (KJV)*

He just wouldn't do it, he didn't fear God.

14) *Moreover all the chief of the priests [even the priests did this], and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord [even polluted God's house] which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. (KJV)*

Ezekiel prophesied of that coming. We have sermons in the past by several ministers talking about that fact. They had no fear of God. Therefore they willingly, knowingly rejected God.

15) *And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers [meaning the prophets], rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: (KJV)*

God's presence was in the Holy of Holies until He departed.

16) *But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words [no fear, no trembling before the word of God], and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. (KJV)*

God was forbearing, He was kind and gentle, until it became apparent that there was just no remedy—they would not turn, they would not turn back to Him. God finally got to the point and said, enough is enough. I've warned you, I've talked to you, I've sent my prophets, you just refuse to obey so enough is enough.

17) *Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he [Jehovah] gave them all into his hand. (KJV)*

Sad, sad thing.

18) *And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon.*

19) *And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. (KJV)*

That occurred in 585 B.C. When you think about it, look at what their lack of fear of God resulted in and caused. It's such an unnecessary tragedy because they just would not

fear God. If they had only feared God, none of this would have happened but Israel, Judah just didn't have the heart, they wouldn't put God first and they wouldn't fear Him in their minds.

What about the greater church of God today? Let's jump to the present time. I've always been taught, in years past, that the verse we're going to read in just a second—you can begin to turn to 2 Timothy 3—I was always taught and felt that this applies to the world we live in, but on closer inspection these series of verses also apply to the church of God—they have to. Very familiar scripture and when I read this I would always think of the world. Let's see if it doesn't also apply to all of us in God's church.

2 Timothy 3:1 *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*
(KJV)

What are the defining characteristics of these very dangerous times?

2) *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud ...*
(KJV)

It's sad to say but our president is the poster child for this. It's sad, but it's true.

2 continued) ... *blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
3) *Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent [that means without self-control], fierce, despisers of those that are good ...* (KJV)

No good deed goes unpunished in Satan's world.

4) *Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;*
(KJV)

This is referring to people that maybe claim to love God but in reality, they love pleasures more than God.

5) *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.* (KJV)

Terms like lovers of God, having a form of Godliness, denying the power thereof, seems to me to apply to God's people—those He's called or those who are in God's church. They claim to be part of the body of Christ, so this is a warning for all of us that the world is this way but we can't let the world creep into the church. We can't let the world creep into our lives individually. We see that in the last days in the world and more importantly in God's church, will be those who do not fear God because they love themselves more than they love God. That is something that all of us would do well to take heed to and pay attention to. Part of fearing God is the fear of and the reverence for His power and His authority. The point is, closing out this second point, if we have no fear of God we'll be just like Israel and will reject Him just like Israel did and then

when we reject God, we move away from God and God will not be near us. When we call out, just as with ancient Israel, there is a point that He will not hear—He just will not listen because enough is enough. That's something that all of us have to look into ourselves and ask ourselves, is the fear of God in me?

The third point I'd like to make:

3. Look at the blessings that are promised from fearing Almighty God and the Most High God.

There are incredible blessings if we will just do that. If you would like to outline, point A under this third point.

A. The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge and understanding and wisdom.

Knowledge, understanding and wisdom, so let's define our terms. What do we mean by knowledge, understanding and wisdom? Knowledge is the acquisition of information and throughout all of our life, we acquire knowledge. We go to school and acquire knowledge, we're on a job and acquire knowledge. Knowledge is the acquisition of information. The problem is, that information could be true or that information could be false. If we're honest with ourselves, between our two ears, we have true knowledge in our head and we also have some false knowledge in our head. When we were called, look at all the false knowledge we had to get rid of and we had to change. The reality is, inside us is a combination of both—truth and falsehood. We don't want falsehood but the reality is, we are human and we do have falsehoods between these two ears of ours. So knowledge, let's remember it's the acquisition of information and it can be true and it can be false.

Understanding is knowing the truth from falsehood. When we understand on a Godly level then we can separate the truth—what is true—from what is false. Let's go to Proverbs 1:7, we'll cover some scriptures here in Proverbs that deal with this subject. This could be a whole sermon in itself obviously but we're just going to hit the highlights. Understanding is separating true knowledge, true information, from false knowledge and false information. Notice the tie-in with fearing God.

Proverbs 1:7 *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: [I might add, true knowledge, not false knowledge obviously] but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (KJV)*

Let's go to the next chapter, Proverbs 2:1

Proverbs 2:1 [Solomon says] *My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; [Make it part of your life]
2) So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; (KJV)*

Meaning separating truth from falsehood.

3) *Yea, if thou criest after [discernment] knowledge ... (KJV)*

Discernment is knowing what is true and what is not true, what is false and what is not false. In other words, to know right from wrong. If you cry out for discernment—to know right from wrong, good from bad—going on:

3 continued) ... *and liftest up thy voice for understanding;*

4) *If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;*

5) *Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. (KJV)*

True knowledge of God. Underlying all of that is the fear of God. If we have the fear of God, both being frightened but also reverential and respectful of God, then He will help us discern truth from falsehood—that is understanding—knowing what is wrong versus what is wrong. Understanding is knowing truth from falsehood.

That leads us now to wisdom. We covered knowledge—facts, true or false—understanding—separating the truth from falsehood. Wisdom is the application of understanding. Wisdom is the application of what is true, of true knowledge. It is the application of the truth. Let's go to Proverbs 9:10. We're talking about wisdom now—the application of what we have gleaned by our understanding, knowing what is true and what is not true.

Proverbs 9:10 *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. (KJV)*

We see, the later part of this verse, the knowledge of the holy—what is from God—is understanding. We discern and differentiate truth from falsehood and the fear of the LORD is the very beginning of wisdom; that is the foundation of wisdom, when we fear God. Let's jump to Isaiah 33:5, just closing out this point A about the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge and understanding and wisdom.

Isaiah 33:5 *The Lord is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: (KJV)*

We obviously should reverence God and exalt God because He does dwell on high and He is exalted.

5 continued) ... *he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.*

6) *And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is his treasure. (KJV)*

What is the treasure? Salvation, wisdom and knowledge. The key to that, for us having eternal life and for this physical life, having true knowledge and wisdom is the fear of

God. We see that the fear of God leads us to understanding—knowing right from wrong. The fear of God leads us to wisdom—the application of Godly principles. The fear of God is the key to true knowledge, to understanding and to wisdom and then ultimately as we read, salvation.

Let's go to point B now.

B. The fear of the LORD keeps us from sinning.

This being afraid, and yet at the same time being respectful and reverential to God. Let's go to Proverbs 8:13, I'll read this out of the New King James. When we have the proper fear of God, we will not want to get near sin. We just don't want to do that.

Proverbs 8:13 *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate. [God says] (KJV)*

God hates pride, He hates arrogance, He hates evil of all kinds. Through the fear of Jehovah, we overcome, begin to hate evil as much as God does. We know—God looking down on Israel—how much God hated to see their idolatry, their breaking of His commandments, their putting other pieces of wood and metal in front of Him—He hated that. Through the fear of God and obviously with God's Holy Spirit, we come to the understanding and the realization that we begin to hate sin as much as God hates sin. We have to get to that point. Let's go to chapter 16:6. We've seen here the fear of the LORD is to hate evil and in Proverbs 16:6, we read:

Proverbs 16:6 *By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil. (KJV)*

We do so because we have a healthy fear of disobeying God. We don't want to fall under God's condemnation. At the end of the day we don't want to stand before God and have to justify sin. I think all of us have a healthy fear of standing before God and trying to explain our evil doings and our evil thoughts and our evil deeds. What we want to do is have God pleased with us—pleased with our behavior, pleased with our language, pleased with our thoughts. The fear of God keeps us from sinning.

The third, point C:

C. The fear of God leads us to a blessed life physically and to salvation eternally and spiritually.

Let's go to Proverbs 10:27 now. Solomon is giving us some principles here that will save us a lot of problems, a lot of trouble, in this physical life.

Proverbs 10:27 *The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened. (KJV)*

Because God has set natural laws in place, that if we are in harmony with Him we're going to be blessed but if we go against God, there's going to be problems and there will be a price to pay. Look at chapter 14:26.

Proverbs 14:26 *In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: (KJV)*

Once we have reverence, respect and honor for God, and we have that fear—we don't want to disobey God and fall under is condemnation—that's a strong confidence. We know we are on the right path.

26 continued) ... *and his children shall have a place of refuge.*

27) *The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death. (KJV)*

This obviously refers to spiritual death as well as physical death. God's way—the fear of God—is a fountain of life. Let's go to chapter 19:23.

Proverbs 19:23 *The fear of the Lord tendeth to life [the King James says]: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; (KJV)*

If we have the proper fear of God, we will be satisfied. We will be comfortable so to speak—not talking about possessions but we will be at peace.

23 continued) ... *he shall not be visited with evil. (KJV)*

Look at the evil that God allowed to come upon ancient Israel when God finally had enough. They were visited with evil because they refused to fear Him, refused to reverence Him, to honor Him and they just weren't afraid of God. They were putting other things in front of God Almighty. For us, the fear of God leads not to just a blessed life in this life—none of us are rich, none of us have jet airplanes or yachts or anything like that, I'm not talking about that—we are blessed in the sense that we know God, we come in harmony with God's way and we internally can be at peace. We can internally not have turmoil and upset because we are following God's way because we fear God. It also leads not to just peace in this physical life but it leads to eternal life in God's Kingdom.

The fourth point we want to talk about before we end the sermon—this is the last point.

4. How can we avoid making the same error as Israel and Judah in our life?

How can we avoid that? They did not fear God. They saw the miracles, they came through the Red Sea, they saw the quaking of the mountain and they heard God's voice and yet they didn't fear God—sad, sad situation. How can we avoid that? It's very simple obviously and you already know the answer.

A. You have to put God first.

Every facet of our life, we have to put God first—that's the first commandment. Exodus 20:3, eight simple words.

Exodus 20:3 *Thou shalt have no other gods before me. (KJV)*

Very simple. The New Living Translation says do not worship any other gods besides Me—don't do that. Yet, it is so easy to break as a human being because we oftentimes put our desires above God's law or God's desires. We can somehow twist things so that we put ourselves first and God second or we put what we want instead of what God wants—it's so easy to do. The fact is, anything or any being we put before God, violates the first commandment—just a fact. It is so easy to break; it is so easy to dismiss. Oh, I meant this or I did that or here's what I was thinking or whatever and yet look at where it got Israel and where it got Judah. We have to put God first—just something we need to keep in mind. I have to ask myself several times a day, is this what God wants? Am I putting God first? Or am I putting myself first? Is this what God wants or what I want? We try to push away what we want and get out of God's way and let God do what God wants us to do.

So the second point B, how we can avoid making these errors, of Israel and Judah, it's very simple.

B. We have to exercise God's spirit in us.

Israel didn't have God's spirit, Judah didn't have God's spirit, but we do, therefore we have no excuse. God has blessed us. When hands were laid on us at baptism, Christ said we're going to come and dwell with you—My Father and I will come and dwell inside you. That's what happened with us so we have no excuse. We can't say we don't have the heart—we have God's Holy Spirit in us, we have access to that heart, therefore we better exercise that heart. That means we have to study and pray and fast and especially control our minds and our mouths through God's spirit. Why—because we love God, because we want to, not because we have to and because we fear Him. We don't want God's wrath to come upon us at the end of the day. Also because we so highly respect Him and we so highly honor Him, we would do nothing else. We wouldn't do anything else. We wouldn't do anything to displease God or to bring disrepute on the church or on us as God's people. We just wouldn't want to do that because we have the proper fear of God. Let's go to 2 Timothy 1:6. Paul is giving advice to this young minister. We don't know the background on this, we don't know the back story on this, but Paul felt it necessary to remind Timothy of one thing.

2 Timothy 1:6 *Wherefore [Timothy, because of all this that I've said to this point] I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. (KJV)*

Paul baptized him, he laid hands upon him and he said, Timothy (we don't know why he's saying this) you need to stir up this gift of the Holy Spirit. The word stir up in the

Greek, it's one Greek word and it means to rekindle—like start the fire up. It might be an ember down here; he says I want you to rekindle it; I want to see a fire. I want to see this thing blazing—not just a little ember. Stir up the gift. Around a campfire, we've all stirred up the campfire and all the coals down below will come up and then you can have a larger fire and that's the implication there—rekindle God's spirit in you, Paul is telling Timothy. Sometimes we can get down or get depressed and get in a tail spin so to speak—circling the drain so today—and it's hard to do that but Philippians 2:13 tells us how it can be done. Paul tells us a fact that all of us—I'm speaking to myself—we need to remember on a daily basis.

Philippians 2:13 *For it is God which worketh in you [through His Spirit] both to will [meaning to have the desire] and to do of his good pleasure. (KJV)*

God is telling us that He will give you the desire to do it and then the power to do it, if you will exercise His Spirit in you. We have to exercise it—we have to use it. Exercising it means when you don't want to study, you make yourself study. When you don't want to say something kind and you want to say something nasty, you say no to the nastiness and yes to the kindness because it takes effort. It's stirring up God's Spirit. Every minute of every day we have a choice. Literally every minute of every day, we have a choice. Do we exercise God's Spirit in us or do we yield to our human nature? It's a choice, every day. If I exercise God's Spirit in me, I will bring forth the fruits of His Spirit. If I yield to human nature, then I expose myself to the provocations of Satan and all that that implies. So we have to yield to God and exercise God's Holy Spirit. We fear and reverence God when we exercise His Spirit. When God looks down on us and we're exercising His Spirit rather than exercising our human nature, we're saying to God that I want to be like you and Your Son. I want to follow You and be like You. When we say no to our human nature and yes to God's Spirit, yes to His word, we're saying I want to be like You. We prove that every day of our life. At the end of the day, we look back on the day and ask ourselves, how have I done today? Have I shown God that I want to be like Him and shown Jesus Christ that I want to follow in His footsteps, that we have a record of in scripture? Do I want to do that? Or do I just want to do my own thing and open myself up to Satan and all that implies? We demonstrate that every day.

We want to show God that we reject ancient Israel's lack of fear of Him—we reject that and we want to have a healthy fear of God and a healthy reverence and respect for Him. In closing out this third point let's notice how we have to work out our own salvation—the famous scripture, work out your own salvation. Let's read it and notice the end of is, Philippians 2:12. How do we work out our own salvation? We're told very plainly. Paul is saying to the church in Philippi and to us today by extension, down through all of these centuries:

Philippians 2:12 *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation.,, (KJV)*

Nobody else is going to do it for us, we can't ride anybody's coattails into the Kingdom of God. Nobody is going to work out our salvation for us, we have to do it ourselves. But we are told how.

12 continued) ... *with fear and trembling.*

The Greek word for fear is phobos, we've covered that before. That means fear—absolute fright. Trembling is the Greek word tromos which means quaking with fear—that is a stronger word than phobos. Tromos means you are shaking; you are so afraid. What Paul is telling us, is that when we work out our own salvation, we better not only be afraid but we better be quaking with fear because we do not want to go against God who has all power and all might and He is a loving and a kind God. Yes, He is patient and kind with us, but at some point there is no remedy, there is an end of it. We always think, what's the end? It's when we go to the place of safety or when Christ returns—no the end could be tomorrow when we get in a car wreck, the end could be next week when we get sick or something. We're being told we need to have fear and quaking before God and His word because we respect His power, might, and love and at the end of the day we have to stand before God. My guess is we're going to be naked. I don't think we're going to wear clothes, standing before God. I just don't think we are—we're going to stand before God the way we came out of the womb. Nothing to hide behind. We must stand before God alone and answer this ultimate question; God will say, is the fear of Me in you? Rick, is the fear of Me in you? We all have to answer that question every day of our lives.

Let's conclude now. As we said in the introduction, most of mankind, the vast majority of mankind does not fear God—just doesn't—God's not a factor. Centuries ago, there was a time when it was a factor. In the 1950's after World War II, God was more of a factor than He is today. Sadly, probably within the church of God, the fear of God is not first and foremost among our minds in the church of God. It should be but we live in this scrambled messed up, satanic, Satan inspired world, it has an effect on us and sometimes we can put things before God. We can take time away from God, away from study and prayer and meditating about God. We can do all of that, which basically says, God I'm not putting you first and I don't fear you enough, otherwise I would put your first. There is coming a day when God will bring circumstances to pass that men are going to fear Him. Women are going to fear Him. They are going to quake. There is coming that time. What we want to do is have the fear of God before that time. We want to have it every day. Let's go to Revelation 14:6. This is going to happen. Is it going to happen in our lifetime—we don't know, but it's going to happen.

Revelation 14:6 *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, (KJV)*

This angel is going to do that miraculously.

7) Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (KJV)

After this then the wrath of God comes on the earth and what a horrible time that is. There will be people that just dismiss God and view anybody that has a religious bent as somebody that is half nuts and believes in fables. There is going to come a day when all of that is going to be stripped away and they will see and experience firsthand, the power of Almighty God.

Let's conclude by looking forward to a future time that we will soon be celebrating at the Feast of Tabernacles. Let's go to Jeremiah 32, final scripture and begin in verse 37. Jehovah speaks of that future time.

Jeremiah 32:37 *Behold, I will gather them [and the context is Israel and Judah] out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, [because they would not fear Him] and in my fury, and in great wrath; [why—because they refused to fear God Almighty] and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: [at last]*

38) And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:

39) [Notice this] And I will give them one heart, and one way, [why?] that they may fear me for ever, [Why does He do that? It says] for the good of them, and of their children after them: (KJV)

God says that it is a good thing to fear Him. It is a good thing to be afraid of His power and from coming at cross purposes against Him and it's a good thing to reverence Him for who and what He is and worship and respect Him for who and what He is. The key is for us today, before what we read in Revelation 14 comes, before God's power is demonstrated to the world, we have God's Holy Spirit and that connection with God should prompt us to fear Him always. So let's all strive to put the fear of God first and foremost in our minds.