

# The Fear of God - Part 4

by Jerry Bridges

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*The person who fears God lives in conscious awareness of God's presence and conscious dependence upon Him, which affects their behavior and helps them to make choices that please Him.*

**Duration:** 57:12

**Scripture:** Leviticus 19:14, Deuteronomy 8:17-18, Psalm 32:5, Psalm 139:7

**Topics:** "Fear Of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins with a far-fetched illustration of a Christian leader who contemplates going to a topless dancer performance to 'experience all of life.' However, he realizes that he cannot escape the presence of God and decides against it. The speaker then moves on to discuss the discerning and protective presence of God, emphasizing that God's hand will guide and hold us fast. The sermon concludes with a reminder that God is the creator of everything and does not need anything from us, but rather gives us life and breath. The speaker also mentions the importance of being aware of our thoughts and the need for repentance.

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## Transcript

Would you open your Bibles once again to Psalm 139? And I should tell you that I'm going to try to combine two messages into one this evening, because I feel that both of the subjects which we are going to look at this evening are very, very important. We are considering the characteristics, or I should say the fundamental characteristics, of a person who fears God. And as I said last night, these characteristics, if they are present in our lives, will form the foundation upon which other characteristics of the Christian life will be surely built.

And without these fundamental characteristics, the rest of the Christian life would be, as it were, built on sand. Last night we considered that the most fundamental characteristic, or at least the first probably in the order of priority, is that the person who fears God lives under the authority of God, which means that he or she lives under the authority of God's Word, and also lives under the authority of the authority institutions or structures which God has established for the good of society, and for the good of the family, and for the good of the Church. Tonight we want to consider two other of these fundamental characteristics, and they are as follows, and I will give them to you first, and then I will take them one at a time in the course of the message.

The first of these is that the person who fears God lives in the conscious awareness of God's presence. The person who fears God lives in the conscious awareness of God's presence. I want to emphasize conscious awareness, because the fact is that every individual lives in the presence of God, whether or not we are aware of it.

We will see that as we get into the message this evening. But the person who fears God has cultivated this realization, this awareness, that we are continually, without exception, without any microsecond omission if you please, we are continually in the presence of God. The second of these is that the person who fears God lives in conscious dependence upon God.

And once again I'm deliberately inserting that word dependence, because again the fact is that every creature, whether it's a human being or an animal, lives in dependence upon God, as we will see later on as we get into the message. But there is a particular sense in which the person who fears God needs to develop this conscious sense of continual dependence upon God. So with that introduction, let's look at our text here tonight.

And I want to actually begin not with verse 1, where David begins, but actually I'm going to begin at verse 7 and then we'll work back to verse 1. David says, Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

David says that we cannot climb to the heights, nor to the depths, nor are covered to the far side of the sea. In other words, as high as we can go, as deep as we can go, as far out as we can go, wherever we go, we are always in the presence of God. And as I say, this is true whether or not we are aware of it.

But the conscious awareness of the presence of God should affect and determine the way we live. Let me give you an illustration of this, and this is admittedly what I might call a far out illustration, and then I will work from the far out back to the more routine experiences that you and I might have. Some years ago, a Christian magazine in the States published an anonymous article by a man who they said was a Christian leader.

It did not say whether or not he was a pastor of a local church, or an executive in one of the so-called para-church organizations, or not. It just simply identified him as a Christian leader. He was on a trip away from home.

He found himself in a distant city by himself in a hotel room, and flipping through the guide to the events in this local city, he came upon an advertisement for a topless dancer at a local nightclub. He said to himself, you know in order to be an effective Christian leader, I need to experience all of life. And so he decided that he would call a taxi, and he would take the taxi to this nightclub and observe this performance.

Now, let me ask you this question, which is really a rhetorical question. That is, the question itself carries with it the obvious answer. If his wife had been with him on that trip, would he have gone to the nightclub? As I say, the question itself carries with it the answer, does it not? Suppose that one of his elders, assuming that he was a pastor of a local church, suppose that one of his elders had been with him, or perhaps one of the deacons had been with him on this trip, would they have gone to the nightclub? And again, the answer is certainly not.

But the fact is, God was with him. God was with him in the hotel room as he made that decision. God, as it were, rode with him, and I'm using that in an anthropomorphic way, but God was with him as he rode in that taxi.

God was with him there as he observed that lustful sexual act. As God says in Jeremiah 16, 17, My eyes are on all their ways, they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes. God sees every sin which we commit, whether it's some gross sin, such as this Christian leader committed, and by the way, the essence of the article was that it didn't stop just in this one visit to a nightclub, but he was hooked, if you please, on pornography as a result of that, and over the course of the next several years, fought a tremendous battle before God finally delivered him from pornography, and it was after this deliverance that he wrote the article.

You say, well, I'd never do anything like that, whether or not I'm conscious of God's presence. Well, don't be so sure. Have you ever driven down a highway like 401 out here, and I don't know how strict your provincial police are, but you see one of the cars with the lights on top and you instinctively hit your brakes? You were probably driving without the conscious awareness of God's presence, because you see, it's not the provincial policeman sitting there in his trooper's car, but it's God who ought to determine how fast we drive.

Now, I don't want to be legalistic about the speed limit and say, you know, you dare not go one kilometer over a hundred kilometers per hour or whatever the speed limit might be, but I'm just saying that however fast you determine in your own conscience that you should drive, it should be in the awareness that God, as it were, is sitting there in the seat beside you. I say, as it were. We know that, again, physically I'm using anthropomorphic expressions to help us grasp the closeness of God to us and the fact that he is always with us.

Now, let me use a couple of technical theological terms, and I do this not that I'm a theologian or a technician of the Bible or anything like that, but we do need sometimes some of these terms. The Bible teaches both the immensity of God and the omnipresence of God. Now, these are two related terms, but they are distinct.

The immensity of God would be defined as the entire, listen very carefully because this is a theological definition, the immensity of God is the entire indivisible essence of God at every moment of time present to every point of space. For example, I can put one hand on this side of the podium and one hand on this side of the podium, and so I'm over here and I'm over here by extension of my arms. Most of me happens to be standing in between these two sides of the podium.

Now, if we would, in our minds, enlarge this podium to the size of the universe, God does not, as it were, stand in the center of the universe with his one arm on one side of the universe and the other arm on the other side, but God's indivisible presence is every place present in the universe. It's just as if my whole body were over here and my whole body were over here and my whole body is here in the middle all at the same time. That's God's indivisible essence present at every moment of time in every point of space.

This, of course, flows from the fact that God is spirit. God is not limited to a physical body. Consequently, he is not limited to a specific location like we are.

And if the universe were twice or ten times as large as it is, God's essence would still be at every single point of space in the universe at every moment of time. On Sunday night, we considered the hundred

billion galaxies and God, in his indivisible essence, is fully present in every one of those hundred billion galaxies at this moment of time. That's his immensity.

His omnipresence, by contrast, obviously flows out of his immensity, but it describes the relation of God to his creatures, to you and me, as we each occupy our several positions in space. That is to say, God is here with us tonight. He is here with me in the pulpit.

He is there with you as you sit on your pew. He is with your relatives back home just as much as he's here with us tonight. He is with our Chinese Christian brothers and sisters halfway around the world tonight just as much as he is with us here.

We all know that sort of instinctively, but that's the meaning of omnipresence. Obviously, that flows out of his immensity. But it's the fact that God is omnipresent that, of course, the fact is what David is specifically talking about when he said, Where can I flee from your presence? Wherever I go, God, you are there.

Now, Jeremiah 23 verses 23 and 24 present both of these, not in the sequence that I have given them, but God says, Am I a God nearby, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? Am I a God just at Maple Grove and not a God in China at the same time? Can anyone hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see? See, there's the application that we want to make of God's omnipresence. It's not just a theological theory, an abstract theological concept that we're dealing with here, but the application of God's presence is, No one can hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him, declares the Lord. And then he says, Do I not fill heaven and earth, declares the Lord.

There's his immensity. And so he combines both of these in this single passage of scripture, Jeremiah 23, 23 and 24. Again, one of the fundamental characteristics of a person who fears God is the continual awareness that wherever he or she is or goes, God is there with him.

J.I. Packer in one of his books says, Living becomes an awesome business when you realize that you spend every moment of your life in the sight and the company of an omniscient, omnipresent creator. Now, for the benefit of some of you who may not be familiar with the term omniscient, just as omnipresent means that God is everywhere present, so the word omniscient means that God knows everything. We're going to get into that as we move into the passage of scripture here.

But let me read that for you once again. He said, Living becomes an awesome business. Now, Sunday night we talked about the meaning of the word awesome and how it has, as a part of its definition, just the idea of a bit scary.

In fact, more than a bit scary sometimes. And he's saying that living becomes an awesome business. It's a sobering thing, you might say.

He says, Living becomes a sobering thing when you realize that you spend every moment of your life in the sight and the company of an omniscient God who knows everything and who is always present with you. And the person who is practicing the fear of God practices the awareness of that truth. Notice David's awareness here.

Now let's move back in the psalm to the first couple of verses, or actually verses 2 and 3. But he says, he begins, O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. Referring to his omniscience. You know when I sit and when I rise.

You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down. You're familiar with all my ways.

Now we learned on Sunday night that God has a hundred billion times a hundred billion stars that he's responsible for. And coming in the other direction, Jesus tells us that not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without God's will. So he's not only responsible for keeping a hundred billion times a hundred billion stars in their respective courses, but he's responsible for every single sparrow that is flying around.

Our son and daughter-in-law have a bird feeder there in Dearborn. And so far about all they've gotten are sparrows. But over the weekend as we were there with them, we were watching and these dozens of sparrows.

In fact, it was so much that our son said that Lisa fills the bird feeder in the morning and by evening it's empty. And these are just a few in one neighborhood in Dearborn, Michigan. And not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without God's will.

Even the very hairs of our heads are numbered. I don't know if you realize it, but there are about 140,000 hairs on the heads of most of you. A few of us don't have that many.

And they're all numbered. And the point I want to make is that God who keeps all of these stars in their courses, who governs the destiny of sparrows, who numbers the hairs on your head, takes note of every single action that you take. Every sideward glance of an eye to see something that you should not be looking at, God takes notice of that.

Every figure that you put on your income tax return that's not exactly accurate, God takes notice of that. God sees every action that we commit. But not only that, he hears everything that we say.

In fact, he knows our thoughts before we even say them. In verse 2 he says, you perceive my thoughts from afar. Our thoughts are an open book before God.

They are as visible to God just as much as our actions would be visible to other people. That's why Paul tells us in Colossians 3.22, the verse that we looked at last night regarding the employer-employee relationship, and where Paul says that you work heartily as to the Lord even when your employer, when your supervisor is not there to observe you. He says it doesn't matter whether your supervisor is there to observe you because God is there observing you.

There's a very interesting passage of scripture in Deuteronomy 19 verse 14, and you don't need to turn to this. But it's in the context of a series of specific instructions which God has given. I'm sorry, I said Deuteronomy and I meant Leviticus.

Leviticus 19, the heading here in the NIV is Various Laws. And in that context, Leviticus 19 verse 14, God says, Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God, I am the Lord. Now I have sort of scratched my head over this and thought what kind of thinking was existent in the Jewish culture at that time that would necessitate these warnings and these prohibitions.

Now in the states today, and I can't speak for Canada, but in the states today, I can well imagine that some mischievous teenagers might want to curse a deaf person. And realizing that the person could not hear and could call this person all kinds of funny names and could just have a great old fun time and call this person all kinds of bad names knowing that the person could not hear. But the fact is, God hears.

Now why somebody would put a stumbling block in front of a blind person, I suppose again somebody with a malicious intent to take advantage of a disabled person and knowing that this person was blind would put some kind of an obstacle in his course so that he would stumble over it and he would never know who put the obstacle there. But God knows it. And so he says, Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God.

In other words, live in the conscious awareness of God's presence. Live in the awareness that God sees everything that you do, that he hears everything that you say. Then let's move back, or I'll move back to Psalm 139, hopefully you're still there.

But in the second part of verse 2 and verse 4 he says, You perceive my thoughts from afar, before a word is on my tongue, you know it completely, O Lord. God not only sees what we do, he not only hears what we say, but he is aware he knows what we think. We should learn to live in awareness that God knows our every thought just as completely as he sees our actions and hears our words.

All of us have thoughts that we would be ashamed for other people to know about. Thoughts of jealousy and envy, critical thoughts, resentful thoughts, and even lustful thoughts. We mentally argue with people.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I've found myself, you know, I say something and then I anticipate his saying something back, and then we go back and forth, and it's all in my mind, you know, he's not a participant. The way you laugh, I think that some of you can identify with me in that. In our minds we mentally tell off somebody, you know, in a way that we would not dare verbalize to that person.

As one of my friends used to say, he used this as an evangelistic tool in fraternities, in the universities in the United States to help these young men become aware of their sin. Today this would not work because they'd just laugh at it. But back 35, 40 years ago, when people still had a sense of at least outward morality about them, he used to say, if all of your thoughts for the past week could be projected on a screen here for the rest of us to see, and he would pause at that moment and kind of let that sink in, and then he would say, you'd have to leave town.

And this is true of all of us. We all have thoughts that we would be ashamed and embarrassed for other people to know, and yet, dear friends, we think these thoughts in the presence of God, and somehow we're not embarrassed or ashamed. And it's because we have not learned to live in the conscious awareness of God's presence.

God not only sees what we do, hears what we say, knows what we think, but he even understands our motives. Now, motives are the reasons that we do what we do. Sometimes we might do the proper thing for the wrong reason.

We will do the proper thing because we feel under pressure to be accepted by our peers, our friends, or something like that. We might do something that we would just assume not to do, but we think that, you know, we have a social obligation to do it. And so we do something for the wrong reason.

And God understands those motives. 1 Chronicles 28 verse 9 says, The Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. In other words, behind our thoughts, when we decide what we're going to do or say, we have a motive.

And God understands those motives that are behind our thoughts. You can understand why J.I. Packer would say that living becomes an awesome business when we realize that we live life, every moment of

our lives, in the presence of an omniscient, omnipotent God. But let me give you some good news.

Despite the fact that God knows everything about us, He still loves us. His love is not based upon our performance. It's based upon the fact that we are in union with Jesus Christ, and that is by His sovereign grace.

He knows all about our sinful ways, our unholy thoughts, our unkind words, our self-centered motives. And He chose us not because He foresaw that we would be good, but He chose us because of His own sovereign love. That's the good news.

The application of that is this, that you and I can be absolutely honest before God. We don't have to play games with God. We don't have to rationalize and excuse our behavior.

We don't have to play down the seriousness of our sin. I've often said that there are two courts that we have to deal with in a spiritual sense. One is God's court in heaven, and in that court we have been pronounced righteous.

There is no condemnation, therefore, to those who are in Christ Jesus, who shall bring any charge against God's elect. It is Christ that died that justifies. That's the court in heaven.

But we have another court that we have to deal with, and that is the court of our conscience. And the court of the conscience is the prosecuting attorney and the judge and the jury all wrapped into one. And the conscience brings a charge, an indictment against us and says, that was sin, and the judge and the jury says, yes, you are guilty.

And we can play games with our conscience. We can respond to the condemning effect, and that, by the way, is the proper work of the conscience. And we can respond in one of two ways.

We can become then our own defense attorney, and we can begin to defend or rationalize or try to mitigate the seriousness of our sin. And say, well, it was just a little thing. You know, it was just a little fudging on my income tax return.

It was just a little lie. Or it was just a bit of gossip, yeah, but it really wasn't all that serious. And we can play defense attorney.

The other option that we have is just to flat out plead guilty. Say, yes, that was sin. It was serious sin.

We do not try to rationalize. We do not try to tone it down. But we say it's sin.

And then we take that to the blood of Jesus Christ, who cleanses us from all sin. And this is the way that we ought to do it. Because, dear friends, we might try to play games with our conscience and rationalize our consciences, but we cannot play games with God.

And since God knows all about us, and He loves us, because He has brought us into union with His Son, we can be absolutely honest with Him. And say, Lord, that was sin. It was terrible sin.

It was horrible sin. There's no excuse. I have no excuse for that.

I plead guilty. But I thank You for the cleansing blood of Your Son, who cleanses me from all sin. There's another part of good news here in verse 10.

David makes sort of a transition from verse 7 to verse 10. And I'm not sure exactly where he makes this, but it's very clear in verse 7 where he says, Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? That he's thinking of this as, you know, well, Lord, I'd kind of like to get away from You sometimes. I mean, I'd like to go on holiday sometime where You wouldn't be there.

You know, I'd just be myself, kind of a thing. He says, I can't do it. I never can get away from You.

But by the time he gets to verse 10, he's glad that he cannot get away from God. Because now he's talking about not the discerning presence of God, but the protective presence of God. Notice he says, even there Your hand will guide me.

Your right hand will hold me fast. Now, every one of you parents know the difference between a child holding your hand and you're holding that child's hand. If you're taking a three or four-year-old across a busy street, you are not going to depend upon that child to hold your hand.

You're going to hold very tightly to his hand or her hand. Because you're not sure that that child is going to always maintain his grip on you. You've got a lot more confidence in your grip on him than his grip on you.

When our daughter was about three years old, I guess, I took her with me to the supermarket to do some shopping for my wife. And I stuck my head down in the frozen food compartment to get something. And when I stood back up, my daughter was nowhere to be seen.

And what had happened was that a man had come along who sort of looked like me, poor guy. But she thought he was I, and so she followed him. And I lost her in the supermarket.

And believe you me, I learned the hard way what it means to hold on to the child's hand. And David says, your right hand will hold me fast. That's good news.

God is always present, and he's always holding your hand. Now, we want to sort of hold on to his hand in an attitude of dependence. And again, you parents know that the child, if he's the least bit fearful, he will grip as tightly as his little fist can grip.

And you appreciate that. But the fact is, you hold on to his hand. And with our little fist, so to speak, and our little bit of faith, we try to hold on to God's hand.

But the good news is, he's holding on to our hand. His protective presence. That's sermon number one.

Now, sermon number two. The God-fearing person also lives in conscious dependence upon God. And as I said at the outset, I again deliberately use that word conscious, because again, we are dependent upon God, whether we realize it or not.

Turn with me in your Bibles to Acts 17 and verse 25. Let me start with verse 24. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.

And he is not served by human hands as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. God gives us our very life and breath. God not only provides the air that we breathe, but God has built in, he has designed in creating the body, the autonomic nervous system that causes us to breathe without even being conscious of it, without even being aware of it.

And in that sense, he gives us life and breath. Our times are in his hands, as David said in one of the Psalms. He gives us life and breath and everything.

But we are absolutely dependent upon God for life itself. We are dependent upon God for every breath that we breathe. We are dependent upon God's providential sustenance or providential sustaining and care of his creation and specifically of ourselves.

Jesus basically teaches us this in Matthew 6.11 when he teaches us to pray, Give us today our daily bread. Now for most of us, that's a little bit difficult for us to pray that from the depths of our hearts. Because I don't know how your little refrigerators and your campers and so forth are here right now.

They may be getting close to being depleted as you get near the end of the week. But you'll go home and on Saturday or Friday afternoon you'll go to the supermarket and you'll buy groceries for the next week. And so each day as you get up you can go to the refrigerator and there's food and you can open the pantry.

And there's the dry food, the stuff that doesn't perish. And it's a little bit difficult for us to realize that we are daily dependent upon God for our daily bread. But the fact is that is it.

In his providence today he may have chosen to allow us to store up a week at a time or something like that. He could reduce us to daily dependence and there may be some of you here in this room tonight and I personally have known people who have been reduced to the point of not knowing from day to day whether there would be food in their refrigerator. I'm talking about our contemporaries, people who live today.

But for one reason or another the breadwinner had been out of work for several months or something like that. And they're absolutely reduced to a day to day subsistence upon God. The nation of Israel of course is the classic example where they daily had to go out and gather the bread.

But I want to say to you today, whether your refrigerator back home is well stocked or will be well stocked as soon as you get home and have a chance to take care of that. Whether it's well stocked or not, you and I are absolutely dependent upon God for our daily food. Now it's true that again in God's providence he supplies through our work.

But it's because he has chosen to bless that work that we have our daily food. One of my best friends has rheumatoid arthritis disease and it is slowly crippling him. And as I had lunch with him last week he said, my fear is that I will eventually get to the place where I can no longer work, no longer support my family.

Now this man is excellent, he is outstanding in the work that he does. But the day may come when he will not be able to perform his work. And you see the fact that if you are working outside of the home or inside of the home, it doesn't matter.

The fact that you are working, particularly if you are out earning a livelihood or part of a livelihood of a family, is because God has not only given you the mental or the physical skills and dexterity to do that job, but he has also given you the health to enable you to go to work next Monday morning or Tuesday morning after Labor Day. We are absolutely dependent upon God. Deuteronomy chapter 8 verses 17 and 18, you don't have to turn with this, but listen carefully as I read it for you.

And I know it's preferable to have you turn in your Bibles and read along with me, but I sort of got this on fast forward almost tonight, and so that's why I'm reading these for you. But in Deuteronomy chapter 8, Moses starts out by reminding the people of God's care for them in the desert. And in verses 3 and 4, he says, He humbled you, causing you to hunger, and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord, to teach you that you are dependent upon God for your daily bread.

And then he says, as he progresses here in chapter 8, But when you come into the land, and you build fine houses, and you settle down, and your herds and your flocks grow large, and your silver and your gold increases, and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud, and you will forget the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt. And you may say to yourself, My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me. In other words, God gives you the benefit of a good education.

And let's assume that you have an education that is in a field today where there is quite a demand for skilled people, and consequently, because of that demand, the wages are going up. And you begin to have a very, very comfortable salary. And you begin to say, It's my skill, my education, my master's degree, or my PhD that have gotten this wealth for me.

Then he says, But remember, the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth. All of the mental skill and ability that you have, or if you're a tradesperson working with your hands, all of the physical dexterity and skill that you have is a gift from God. It is God who gives you the ability to produce wealth.

It is God who gives you the ability to earn a comfortable living. You and I are totally dependent upon God for our daily bread and everything else, our clothing, our house, and so forth. I'm sure that when Jesus said, Give us this day our daily bread, He was not limiting just to that.

He was using that to illustrate the broader principle. Lord, provide for our needs, all of our needs, because we're dependent upon you for all of our needs. Not only are we dependent upon God for life and breath and everything else, not only are we dependent upon Him to provide for us through our work or some other way, but we're dependent upon God for the successful execution and carrying out of our plans.

James chapter 4, verses 13 to 15. James writes, Now listen, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money. Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow.

What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that. Now, all of us make plans.

I assume that the committee that's responsible for the Cary Conference has already made plans for next year's conference. And probably many of you have already made plans to attend next year's conference. The fact is that as we sit here tonight, none of us know whether or not there will be a Cary Conference next year.

And if there is, none of us can guarantee that we will be here or there, wherever it's located. What I'm saying is we are dependent upon God for the carrying out of our plans. Now, let me hasten to say that James here does not condemn planning.

In fact, James does not condemn a businessman's plans to make money. He couches it in the way that they did in those days. Today or tomorrow, we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.

Probably an itinerant tent maker or an itinerant this, that, or the other. But it would be analogous in today's context, today's society, of a businessman planning to open, say, a second store. Or introduce a new product into his product line.

James does not condemn planning. James does not even condemn the planning with the motive of making a profit. What James condemns is presumptuous planning.

That is planning that does not take into account the fact that we are absolutely dependent upon God for the carrying out of those plans. If you read some of the older writings that were written, say, around 1900 or the late 19th century, Christian writings, and invariably you notice that when these writers would express some intent, they would always end the sentence and say, you know, we're going to do this or that, they would always end the sentence with the initials DV. Now I took Spanish in high school and not Latin, and I didn't learn any Spanish, so don't try to converse with me.

But I didn't know what DV meant. Well, later on I found out that it stands for the Latin words Deo Valenti, or in English, God Willing. And so these people, as they would write a letter to a friend, you probably won't find this in a book of propositional truth, but maybe a biography in somebody's letter, and he would say, you know, Hudson Taylor might say, next year we're going to send so many missionaries to China, DV.

We're going to do thus and such, God Willing. And in their speech, they would often say, they would verbalize that. They say, we're going to do so and so, Lord Willing.

They were recognizing their absolute dependence upon God for the successful execution of their plans. Now I don't want to suggest to you that you need to become so hidebound in this, that you would say, we're going to have scrambled eggs for breakfast tomorrow morning, Lord Willing. But I would encourage you to resurrect that kind of thinking, and even that expression, and use it frequently enough that you realize that you are indeed going to have cereal or scrambled eggs for breakfast, only if God wills.

You might wake up in the morning and find that that dozen eggs in your box are all spoiled, or weevils are in your dry cereal. I'm just giving you a couple of kind of silly, absurd illustrations to illustrate the point. That just in the very mundane things of life, the things that you think you can count on, you really can't.

I don't know how it is in Canada, but often times in the States, when a public event is canceled, usually due to some kind of weather phenomenon, or something like that, and they will put out a notice that this event has been canceled due to circumstances beyond our control. Well the fact is, all circumstances are beyond our control. The person who fears God not only acknowledges this, but delights to acknowledge it.

Because you see, the person who fears God knows that God is sovereign over every circumstance of his life. The person who fears God knows that God is sovereign over what we would call the good things and the bad things. As the writer of Ecclesiastes says, When days are good, be happy, but when they are bad, consider.

God has made the one as well as the other. But God is sovereign, but God is also your Heavenly Father. I referred a few minutes ago to the fact that God keeps his eye on the sparrows, and Matthew 10, I think it's 29 there, says that not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without God's will.

That refers to God's sovereignty. In the parallel passage of this statement, in Luke chapter 12, Jesus says, God does not forget a single sparrow. There he is talking about God's care and God's love.

Then he says, how much more valuable are you than sparrows? And so the person who fears God knows that God is in sovereign control of every event in your life. But he or she also knows that this sovereign God is our Heavenly Father, who cares for us, who numbers the hair on our head. Now two applications from this.

First of all, as I indicated, we need to practice this conscious dependence. Just as we need to practice a conscious awareness of God's presence in our lives, every moment, wherever we are, every thought we think, the motives that we have, so we need to practice a conscious dependence upon God. Now by practice, I'm implying that you start out like a child who starts out learning to play the piano, and starts out with very simple drills, and eventually comes to the place where the person is a competent pianist.

But that person only arrives at that through constant practice. And when I say we need to practice the conscious presence of God, and we need to practice conscious dependence upon God, I'm suggesting to us that some of us may be starting out as total novices tonight, like the little six-year-old starting out on the piano. Some of you may be at, you know, grade six or seven on the piano, but you want to progress wherever you are.

In these two practices, we need to practice and practice and practice more. Just by way of a practical suggestion, one of the ways that we can do this is to memorize some of the passages of scripture that we have looked at tonight, that teach us on these two subjects, and then to go over those in our minds, and to meditate on them, and to think about them, and to pray over them, and ask God to increase our awareness level. The second application that I want to make specifically for this second sermon, shall we say, our awareness of our dependence upon God is this.

This truth, that we are totally dependent upon God, does not nullify our responsibility to act prudently and discreetly in all of our actions. We should always act as prudently as we can, realizing that ultimately God is the one who prospers or does not prosper our efforts. We are always responsible, and we are always dependent.

In our morning session this morning on materialism, the question was brought up, should we buy insurance? I appreciated the way our brother handled that, and I don't want to make a pronouncement on that tonight, but I will give you my personal testimony on that. There was a time, early in our marriage, when I had no life insurance, and we were renting at the time, we didn't own a home, we were renting an apartment, and I had no renter's insurance, I did have insurance on our car, because you are required to have that in the state of Colorado. And one day I realized that I was acting presumptuously, that God in his providence has so ordained the institution of insurance, and that the whole purpose of insurance is to protect us in the event of these unexpected calamities, the house burning down and all of our furniture and clothing going up with it, the major illness or the death of myself, leaving my wife with a little one.

And I felt before God, I had, I shouldn't say I felt, I use the word feel sometimes when I really mean think. I concluded in my mind as I thought through on this, that I needed to go out and buy insurance, and that was the way I was to be responsible toward my family. Now that's my personal conviction.

If you disagree with me on that, that's fine. All I'm doing tonight is trying to use my personal experience to illustrate the principle that I'm making, that the truth of our dependence does not nullify our responsibility.

The fact that I went out and bought insurance did not make me any less dependent upon God for our shelter and our clothing.

The fact that I went out and bought some life insurance did not make my wife any less dependent upon God for her welfare in the event of my premature death. But just as God has ordained to provide our daily bread for the most part through our work, there are always some exceptions to this, but the general rule is that God has ordained in his providence to provide our daily bread through our work. I felt that God had ordained to provide protection in these areas through the insurance principle which he has allowed to become established in our economy.

Now again, I'm not trying to say go out and buy insurance. I'm just simply illustrating from my own life, my own experience, how this principle applies. You've all probably heard the joke of the... I could say Reformed Baptists, but it's always a joke that's told on the Presbyterians because for some reason we Presbyterians get stuck with the negative implications of predestination and you Reformed Baptists get away free on that.

But you've heard the joke about the Presbyterian guy, you know, who fell down the flight of stairs and he was all bruised and skinned and so forth and he picked himself up and he said, boy, I'm sure glad that's over with. And my response is, you should have read the sign, please use the handrail. Now he might have fallen even using the handrail, but it would be absolutely presumptuous and ridiculous to say, well, I'm either going to fall or I'm not going to fall, so it doesn't matter if I use the handrail.

Now that's a very obvious, absurd illustration. But we can play these same kinds of games more subtly in other areas of our life. So we are responsible, but we are dependent.

May God help us to learn to live in the conscious awareness of his presence and be sobered by that, but at the same time rejoice in it and to live in the conscious awareness of our dependence upon him and be humbled by that awareness, but at the same time rejoice in that. Let us pray.

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