

The Fear of God

by Paris Reidhead

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and it leads to a deeper understanding of God's justice and holiness, and helps us to avoid sin and live a holy life.

Duration: 39:06

Scripture: Psalm 36:1, Acts 2:41-43, Acts 19:13-20, Romans 1:29-32

Topics: "Fear Of God", "Consequences Of Sin"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Romans 3:18, which describes the state of humanity without God. The speaker emphasizes that this description applies to all people, including himself and the audience. The main point is that the lack of fear of God is the root cause of all the negative behaviors and attitudes mentioned in Romans 1:29-31. The speaker also highlights the consequences of sin, including being exposed to the attacks of Satan. The sermon concludes with a prayer for multitudes to come to believe in Jesus and bring honor to His name.

Transcript

I had the joy and privilege of being pastor of the Gospel Tabernacle Church of New York City from 1956 to 1966. And during that time, I enjoyed one of the highest privileges of my entire life, and that was a very close association, fellowship, with Dr. A. W. Tozer. During that period, he was in the process of writing what I consider to be his greatest work, a contribution to Christian literature that every serious Christian home should have, his volume entitled, The Knowledge of the Holy.

I can recall on more than one occasion when he would come from Toronto to New York for a meeting of one sort or another, he would say, The Lord has assured me again that I am going to live until I have completed The Knowledge of the Holy. This is one contribution that I know he wants me to make to the body of Christ. The verse from which he got the name for the title for his book is here in this tenth verse of chapter nine of Proverbs.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. Now in understanding this, we understand why the subject of the morning, the fear of the Lord. Webster says, Fear is an unpleasant, often strong emotion caused by anticipation of, or awareness of, danger.

There are those who have been inclined to say that the fear of the Lord is reverential trust. I've heard that all my life, reverential trust. I recall down in North Carolina on one occasion, I was going to what was then

our home in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and I was driving a trifle faster than even North Carolina encouraged.

And I was anxious to get home, the car was running well, there wasn't much traffic, and I was just enjoying the drive. Until, until I heard that awesome sound of a siren. I looked around, I didn't see any towns where they'd have a fire siren or an air raid siren.

Then I saw a light, and it was directed at me, and they were indicating they wanted me to pull over to the side of the road. Now, my friend, when I pulled that car over, brought it to a stop, you may think that what I felt was reverential trust, but I'll tell you, I was scared. Oh, I trusted that state policeman from the sovereign state of North Carolina to do his duty.

He was paid to do it, and did I reverence him? Indeed I did. Reverence and trust, I respected him, his uniform, his car, his siren, his turret light, it was, oh, it just deepened my respect enormously. And if he'd accused me of stealing the crown jewels from the Tower of London, I would have admitted to it immediately without debate.

Because, you see, if you're guilty of one, you're potentially guilty of all. I didn't have a single excuse to offer except, Officer, I was enjoying the ride and wasn't paying attention. He said, I know, that's what they all say.

It didn't help at all. I followed him into town to the Justice of the Peace and paid hard cash, the \$60 plus that he asked for. You know how fast I was going now, don't you? Fear of the law, fear of the state police, the fear of the law.

Anything different about them? Not really. Now, the one thing that we noticed in the scripture that was read for us is verse 18. That's why I asked for it to be read.

I wanted you to get acquainted with the fact that there's a company of people, among which we were one day numbered. We were absolutely included in that group. For this is a full-length description of me and of you.

I'd like to beg off. I'd like to say cameras don't lie, scripture doesn't lie. This is what God saw when he saw us, you and me.

This is what we were. And it is therefore true that the summation of this full-length portrait that God has drawn of men and women in their impenitent, unforgiven state is that the crowning insult is there is no fear of God before their eyes. For had there been fear of God before their eyes, there would have been some changes made prior to this.

No fear of God is the reason, the explanation, the cause of all that you find here in the description of man. Now if you'll turn back just three chapters to the first chapter of Romans, you find something else that's very interesting. I begin reading with verse 29.

It describes what's in the human heart, human conduct, as we have expressed our choice in rebellion against God, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, argumentativeness, deceit, malignity, meanness, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God. Now that's a horrible sandwich, isn't it? I tell you, when you see the lower slice is murder and the upper slice is hater of God and that mixture in between, debate, deceit, malignity, whispering, and

backbiters, it's nothing to look forward to. Despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.

Now notice, who knowing the judgment of God, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them no fear of God before their eyes. Now, we are told again that in the next verse, Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest. For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest the same things.

And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them that do such things, and doest the same? Thou shalt escape the judgment of God. What's he saying? He's saying, as we're judged, so we'll be judged, and there's no escape. Now, one of the tragedies of 20th century Christianity is that there's been the loss of the fear of God.

The loss of the fear of God. It goes back, I guess, 150 years now, 130 years at least, when it was agreed that those that were born of God held certain fundamental truths. Back at that time in Germany, among the seminaries, you had the rising of something we call higher criticism, which attacked the inspiration of God and the authority of God's word, and produced and spawned what we now know as liberalism.

There were a company of people who truly loved the Lord, and who insisted that there were certain essential truths that everyone that was born of God would hold. These were called fundamental truths. And those truths, held by a company of people, delineated that company of people as having real salvation.

The next generation came along, were born of God, but they had taken that system of fundamental truth as being the creed, as it were, to which they subscribed. But there was generally real salvation. The next generation that came along tended to think that if they agreed with that system of truth, that they were Christians, then there came a system of teaching that said, if you just even mention that Jesus is Lord, that that was enough.

The repentance had no place today at all. Repentance was Jewish. The whole message was believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so the church was increasingly filled with people who had an intellectual assent to the plan of salvation, or to a system of doctrine, or a statement of truths. And we've called that through the years, but a great many have called it, easy believism. It's been viewed as being simply an adherence to a scheme, a plan, a scripture verse, a statement of truth.

Well, what's happened is then, with that has come an emphasis on the love of God, at the expense of his justice, at the expense of his holiness, at the expense of his righteous judgment on sin. And the Lord Jesus Christ has been presented as having loved us so much. I recall hearing one of my pastor colleagues, when I was a young student preacher, make this statement.

He said, if someone has mentioned or confessed the name of Jesus as Lord, and should he die in the arms of a harlot, he would go straight to heaven. Now, that was being consistent with, not the scripture. The scripture doesn't say that.

The preacher said it, because it was part of the philosophy that he had embraced, and with which, at the time, I agreed. But you see, he was presuming on the grace of God. It was what Paul called

antinomianism, anti, against, nomos, the law, that teaching that says, since God gets great glory when he forgives, the more sin we commit, the more he can forgive, and the more glory he gets.

It was condemned in the sixth chapter of Romans. It's been condemned ever since. But it's imperative for us to understand that it still exists today.

Now, what we need to realize is that however men have changed, for whatever reasons they may have changed, God hasn't changed. God hasn't changed. He remains ever as he has been.

And the word still prevails. The Lord knoweth them that are his, and let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. There is no assurance of salvation while a person is living in known sin.

I want to repeat it. I want to say it as many ways as is necessary. I want to get the thought across clearly.

As far as I can see the word of God, there is no grounds for assuming one to be born again as long as they are living in known sin. There's no assurance of salvation while living in known, unconfessed, unpardoned, unforgiven sin. The Lord knoweth them that are his, and let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Clear, unmistakable, absolutely the word of God. Now, what's happened in the 20th century? We've had a series of changes. This emphasis on God's love at the expense of his righteousness and his justice and his holiness.

This reducing of the standards away from an arbitrary separationism that I grew up with, which in many respects was salutary and beneficial. But it's changed. And now it seems as though God, who was once very acute and keen and sensitive to the attitudes and the actions and the plans and motives of man, has become more or less of a senile grandfather.

And he's not nearly as concerned about the conduct of those who name the name of his dear son as he was a generation or two ago. Well, such is not the case. Such is not the case.

And during recent weeks and months, our media has been filled with examples of men and women that are caught up in their conduct. I think it's so important that we should have again an enunciation of the word of God that declares as it does in Hebrews. It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

It's a fearful thing to fall. If he didn't mean it, he shouldn't have said it. And he said it because he meant it.

He scourges every son, chastens every child. Now, he never lays a finger on the devil's family. I want to make that right clear now.

God never lays a finger on the devil's family. I've had people say to me when I've been speaking something like this or after I've been speaking something like this, they've said, well, look, I know a Christian and he's living in sin and been doing it for a long time and nothing's ever happened to him. Well, what does it mean? Let's study it.

What does it mean? It doesn't mean that he should be encouraged. In fact, he should be filled with terrible fear because, you see, it says he scourges every child and he chastens every son. But as I just mentioned, he never lays a finger on the devil's family.

Now, why? Because God knows that this is all the heaven the lost are going to have if they remain impenitent and unbelieving. And when they die, it will be hell forever. Now, with his own family, it's a different matter.

He knows that this is all the hell they're ever going to have. And when they die, it will be heaven forever. So he's willing to chasten his child, scourge his son, and not touch the ones who haven't been born into his family.

So if you find someone naming the name of Christ, do you think they're getting by with something? Oh, God is sick, and that's not one of mine. That's not one of mine. And if you've been getting by with something and God hasn't chastened you, I don't think it's a mere reason for you to be happy.

I think it's a reason for one to be terribly afraid, terribly afraid. Now, what happens when a child of God, when a child of God sins? What takes place in the life of a Christian, of a true believer, that's been born of God when he permits sin in his life? Well, there are five things. I quickly touched them so you can have them.

You've got a sheet for outlying. You can write them down if you want to. Five things that happens when a child of God sins.

Number one, fellowship. Conscious fellowship with God is interrupted. The scripture is clear.

It says, If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. But if we walk in darkness, we don't have fellowship with him. It breaks that sweet flow of communion.

It's otherwise been described as grieving the Holy Spirit. But if you've never had fellowship with God, a lot of people that name the name of Christ have a name to live in or dead. That's the kind that I have talked about in the past.

But they, you see, are, if you've never had fellowship with God, you're never going to know when it's interrupted, are you? The only ones that will know it's interrupted are the ones that have been having fellowship with God. A lot of people don't have fellowship with God. They're content just to have fellowship with other people about God.

And they're not going to know the difference anyway. But the ones that have fellowship with God and say, think, do something that grieves God are going to be aware of it. And it's going to be interrupted.

The second thing that happens when a child of God sins, and that is that prayer is unanswered. David was so explicit, he said, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. He didn't even need to get out into the life, just in the heart was enough to do that.

Interfere with prayers being answered. That's why we should keep a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men, in order that we don't have our prayers hindered. That's why husbands and wives should draw together in peace, that Peter said that their prayers be not hindered.

The third thing that happens when a child of God sins is that God doesn't use him. We may go on using God, but God doesn't use. God doesn't use, well, as F.B. Myers said about his little pen, the first fountain pen he ever had.

He bought it, but every time he wrote with it, he got his fingers all with ink, so he put it back. He'd reach in his drawer when he'd go on a trip and take out some pens to use while he was away. He'd feel that first pen, instead of taking it, he'd roll it back in the drawer.

He'd say, the pen said, wonder why it doesn't take me. Once I knew his thoughts before any other, but now I feel his touch now and then, but why doesn't he use me? Myers said, oh, little pen, little pen, I can't use you because when I use you, you get me dirty. The being clean that bear the vessels of the Lord, God won't use a dirty vessel.

We may use him, but he won't use us. The fourth thing that happens when a child of God sins, and that is he's exposed to the ravaging attacks of Satan. The scripture's explicit.

Again, it says, give no place to the devil. Why? Because if you give it, he's going to take it. When we permit, confess unforgiven sin in our life, we've opened the gate.

Let the devil's dogs in to tear up everything precious to us. And the fifth thing that happens when a child of God sins, we fall into the chastening hands of God. Now, if any of you think that's nice, come around afterwards.

I've got some scars to show you that it's not a very pleasant thing. Because whom he loves, he scourges, and every child feels that hand on them when they need it. These are the five things.

Now, what does a child of God do that fears God? What does a child of God who fears God, and if he's born of God, he fears God. Reverential trust, indeed. He's my father.

He loves me. But I know he loves me too much to let me get by with anything. That's how much he loves me.

And therefore, when I permit in my life that which grieves God, what is going to happen? What must I, I've told you what will happen if I don't deal with it. How do I deal with it? How do I deal with it? It's explicit and clear and simple. Number one, I judge it.

And the word says, judge yourself that you be not judged. For he that is judged is chastened of the Lord, that he should not be condemned with the world. Judge yourself.

If you fear God, you will. You bring yourself up in front of the law where the judge sits. You're the judge.

You're the one that's brought before the judge. And the law book is the word of God. And the judge is you, judging you by the word of God.

Judge yourself. You draw the picture. You judge yourself.

The next thing the scripture says, let the wicked forsake his way. The unrighteous man is thought. And let him return unto the Lord who will have mercy.

O pardon. You judge yourself. This is what God's word says about you, you say to you.

And this is what you've done. Now you're going to forsake it. And you reply to the judge, yes, I'm going to forsake it.

And then the third thing you do is to confess it. If it's in between you and God, you confess it to the Lord. If it's a sin against the body, you confess it to the body.

If it's a sin against a person, you're told in the word to ask the person to pardon you, forgive you. Confess your sin. Why? And it means to say with God what God says or, in other words, to call it by its biblical name.

Now if you fear God, if you fear God, that's what's going to happen. Now you can always tell when revival comes. You know that? Here's a simple way to tell.

When people begin to feel the same way about the little sins that they felt all along about the big ones. Remember when I read from Romans 1? Weren't you a little bit shocked to hear him say, Envy and deceit and whispering and backbiting sandwiched in between murderers and haters of God. Hey, if one of the elders comes into this church drunk, I know you're not going to tolerate it.

He's going to be churched. He's going to be dealt with because we won't permit it. And there are every good reason not to.

Scripture is clear. But what about it? The word of God, James said, the wisdom that descends from above is not. What is the wisdom of this world? He said, strife and bitterness in the heart is earthly, sensual, and devilish.

Where did God use stronger words about man's attitudes or conduct than that? But have you ever heard of anybody being churched, brought before the church for discipline, because they had strife in their hearts or bitterness in their hearts or because they whispered or because they were tail bearers or because there was envy? Have you ever heard of it? I never have. But I'll tell you something. For when revival comes, people feel the same way about the things that only God cares about as they felt about the things the community cares about all the time.

And when the fear of God is in our minds and in our hearts, we're going to be as severe with ourselves as God's word is with us. Now, what are the blessings of fear? I want you to note these scriptures because they're so important. And I want you to turn to them.

We're not going to spend a lot of time on them, but you've got to see them because I believe this is the message of God to your heart today from Acts. I want you to go to Acts chapter 2, verses 41 to 43. Please write it down.

I want you to see it. Acts 2, 41 to 43. The blessings of the fear of God.

I'm reading about that early church and its first love. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers.

And fear came upon every soul. Did you hear it? Now, what happened? And many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. When? When fear came upon every soul.

When the veneration for God and the respect for God and the holiness of God and the justice of God and the righteousness of God and the glory of God and His holiness and righteousness filled the hearts of the people, fear came upon them, and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. There's a

relationship there. Now, I want you to turn to Acts chapter 5. Verse 5 and then verses 11 to 16.

Acts 5 and verse 5. And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and gave up the ghost. And great fear came on all them that heard these things. And verse 11.

And great fear came upon all the church and upon as many as heard these things. And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people. And verse 14.

And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes, both of men and of women. When fear came upon the people, signs and wonders and multitudes added to the number of believers. When a church has lost its fear of God, its awe, its reverence, its respect for God, then God is kind.

He could do there no mighty works, we are told, in that city that He loved, Nazareth, because of their unbelief. Absence of fear of God is a form of unbelief. Will you turn to Acts chapter 9, verses 26 to 31? Especially verse 31.

And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples. But they were all afraid of him. But Barnabas took him and brought him unto the apostles.

And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus. In verse 31. Then had the churches arrest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Do you see the relationship? Well, once more. This will be four times in the book of Acts. Acts 19, verses 13 to plenty with special emphasis on verse 17.

Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus saying, We adjoin you by Jesus whom Paul preached. And there were seven sons of one Siba, a Jew, and chief of the priests which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus. And fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came and confessed and showed their deeds, so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

What is it? It's when the church has come back again to discover that God is exactly who he says he is. A righteous, holy God. In your hand you hold a book that says Holy Bible.

It tells us about a holy father, and a holy son, and a holy spirit. But the church of Jesus Christ seems to have more fear of holiness than it does of sin. Oh, how important it is for those of us that dare to believe the whole gospel, the whole word, for the whole man, to understand that there is a right and proper place for the fear of the Lord.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the understanding, the knowledge of the holy of understanding. Let us bow in prayer. Let us take just a moment to look into our own hearts today, this Mother's Day.

Many of us learned the fear of the Lord at our mother's knee. We learned our parents meant what they said. And because our parents demanded and received respect and obedience, they taught our parents,

our mothers, our fathers, taught us the fear of the Lord.

Oh, those of us that can look back to a godly mother and realize that in her heart was this desire when she demanded that we respect her and respect our fathers. And demanded that we respect God and fear God. She wasn't trying to fill us with forbidding thoughts that would mar our adulthood.

But she was trying to inculcate in us that which was the beginning of wisdom. To fear God. To know that God keeps his word.

That every sin shall come into judgment. But we can't get by with anything. To fear the law.

To fear those laws that men pass. Lord, we see so many today whose lives are being shattered and broken because they've run afoul of the laws of man. We see men who've had great careers and the respect of a nation who cringe in fear and flee when no one pursues because they've come afoul of the laws of men and thy laws.

Somehow, Father, with what's happening in politics today and what's happening in evangelism today, television evangelism, some of the things that are taking place, Oh, God, stir our hearts. To search our hearts before thee. To examine ourselves in the light of thy word, illumined by thy spirit.

Oh, that it might be that this people this day see the wisdom not of waiting until everybody does what they ought to do. Father, thou wilt not penalize one of thy children if they're but willing to meet thee. They can have revival this morning.

They don't need to wait for anybody else. The folly of waiting until everybody does at one time what we know we ought to do now and thus penalize ourselves and rob us of thy blessing. Show us, Father, the ignorance and the capriciousness, the folly of bearing in our hearts a moment longer than now anything that we ought to confess and forsake and have covered with the blood.

Grant to us as a people this day, Father, out of veneration and respect for the mothers you've given us that we'll remember what we learned if we were fortunate enough to have mothers who so taught us. That we're going to judge ourselves and forsake anything that you show us that we must judge and confess and know the cleansing of the precious blood and the restoration to blessing and usefulness and fellowship and answered prayer. Breathe upon us breath of God and grant that in our hearts today will be kindled a new love and a new respect, a new veneration, a new honoring of thee and of thy law and, O God of all grace, that as thy people bend before thee, lost in wonder, love, and awe, might signs and wonders be seen again and multitudes brought to adhere to and believe in the name of Jesus.

That's the end for which I cry. That's the purpose for our meeting. Bring honor and glory to the name of Jesus Christ.

We ask in his name and for his sake. Amen.

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