

Fear of the Lord

by Winkie Pratney

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and is related to God's immense greatness and our awe of Him.

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Scripture: Exodus 15:11, Deuteronomy 10:12, Psalm 86:11, Proverbs 1:7, Proverbs 28:14, Malachi 1:6, Mark 4:36-41, John 3:16, 2 Timothy 1:7, 1 John 4:18

Topics: "Reverence for God", "Fear Of The Lord"

Description

Winkie Pratney emphasizes that the fear of the Lord is the foremost requirement from God, as stated in Deuteronomy 10:12. He explains that while love, service, and obedience are important, they stem from a proper understanding of God's greatness and holiness. Pratney explores the dual nature of fear in the Bible, contrasting the fear of the Lord with the fear that God does not give us, and highlights that true reverence for God leads to wisdom and understanding. He encourages believers to seek a deeper revelation of God's beauty and majesty, which will transform their lives and lead to genuine worship and obedience.

Transcript

If I were to ask you what is the first thing that God requires of us, what would you say? To help you so you don't have to read the whole Bible, I'd like you to look at Deuteronomy chapter 10. How many of you would say that God wants us first of all to love Him? Put your hands up. That is utterly true.

How many would say God wants us to serve Him? Put your hands up. That is also true. How about to walk in all of God's ways? Those are all true.

God wants us, how many would say to keep all of His commandments, do what He says? Okay, that's good. All of those are true. But they are not the first thing that God asks us to do.

He said it quietly, but it was true. In Deuteronomy chapter 10 and verse 12, the very first thing that God lists before all these other true and significant and important things is the thing that is most missing from the western world, and that is the fear of the Lord. God says, first of all, before anything else, before you understand what it means to love Me, before you understand what it means to walk in My ways, before you understand what it means to keep My commandments and to serve Me, you have to understand what it means to fear Me.

And in the Scriptures many, many times we will see this praise, the fear of the Lord. Proverbs 28, 14 says, happy is the man that feareth always. In Proverbs 1, chapter 7, it says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

And there are many, many Scriptures like this. When we come across this phrase, to fear the Lord, very often new translations will translate it something like, to awesomely reverence God or to honor Him. But the word fear is a good word, and I want to explore it with you briefly tonight, because I believe that when the fear of the Lord comes on an individual person, or on a group, or on a nation, we're very close to having a visitation from the He who is the fear.

There is, first of all, though, a couple of strange verses that I'd like you also to look up, and perhaps somebody would like to read this out. In 1 John, chapter 4, and verse 18. Somebody want to look that one up? Have you got it? You're very fast.

Yes, you got it. Okay, read it out nice and loud for us, please. There is no fear in love.

Perfect love drives out all fear. So then. Okay, that's the main bit we want.

No fear in love. Perfect love drives out all fear. And then 2 Timothy 1.7. Somebody want to look that one up? 2 Timothy 1.7. Somebody might have memorized this.

What's that? Who's got it? Who got it? A girl? Guy? Another guy? Come on, girls. Come on, come on, come on, come on, come on, come on. Oh, what, what? There's thousands of them.

Oh, you are so fast, you see. Nice and loud, then. Come in, come in, come in, come in.

You can? All right, say it loud. I'll go out there, all right? Well, God did not give us a spirit of humility, but of power, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline. All right.

God did not give us a spirit of humility or fear. Now, here's a strange thing. God tells us, happy is the man who fears also, always.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We're constantly enjoying to fear the Lord, and then the scripture comes right back, and it says there's no fear in love. Perfect love casts out all fear, and God has not given us a spirit of fear.

What on the fat is going on here? Well, of course, when you see something like this, your first recourse is to look it up in the original, and that's what we usually do. We hope, then, that there'll be two different words for fear. There'll be the word for fear, which God doesn't give us, and the word for fear, which He enjoins on us.

Unfortunately, there is no difference. It is the same word. A bit embarrassing, is it not? A Hebrew word is the equivalent of the Greek word.

Now, what I want to do, then, is to say this to you. There are--whatever the fear of the Lord is, it feels like, in many, many ways, the fear you're not supposed to have. So let me give you very quickly, and if you'd like to write these down, what people are afraid of.

Now, you write these really quickly. First of all, people are legitimately afraid of something ugly or monstrous. You open the door, there's a being out there whose eyeballs are on stalks.

This would tend to make you afraid. All horror movies are based on this. You meet somebody whose face looks like an explosion in a hamburger, Halloween masks they have, and all this stuff, ugly and monstrous.

Secondly, you could be legitimately afraid of somebody who is a known evil character, somebody who is just--you're listening to the radio, and it says the Taranaki Strangler has escaped. He is out there somewhere in Auckland, and then his friend, the Papakura Chainsaw Murderer, is also out there roaming the streets. So lock your doors.

So you rush across, you lock your doors, and then you hear footsteps coming up your path, crunch, crunch, crunch, and then you hear, vroom, vroom. This would tend to make you afraid. Somebody or something that expresses a hostile attitude towards you.

Scripture speaks about meeting a lion or bear that has been robbed of their cubs. That would tend to be a being that expresses a hostile attitude towards you. You ran into a bear, somebody stole her cubs, you better have your running shoes on, Jack.

And then number four, somebody who has declared their intent to harm you. Somebody who said, I am going to get you for that, you will pay for this. A contract killer, a little call, hello, is your name so-and-so? Sorry, hangs up.

Jezebel, who said to Elijah after the confrontation with the prophets, by tomorrow about this time, your life's going to be like one of my dead prophets. And poor Elijah headed out into the hills, he was afraid. And then, finally, something utterly alien.

You could do a series of movies and call them alien, and it would really be scary. Something utterly unlike us, something terrifyingly different. Now, these are what you could call legitimate fears.

They are things that ought to cause some kind of fear. But God is none of these things. God is the most beautiful being in the universe.

He is not ugly, he is not monstrous. God has perfect moral character. He is absolutely wonderful.

He has never expressed hostility towards man. As a matter of fact, the exact opposite. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Nobody was ever able to find fault with Jesus, not even his enemies, not even Pilate. When he examined him, he said, I find no fault in this man. And not only has God not declared intent to harm us, he has, in the contrary, declared his intent to help us.

In that beautiful scripture, God, soul of the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The only thing close to that which the Bible speaks about when it says the fear of the Lord is this thing alien. But actually, God is not alien.

He is not so other as to be unnatural. Because you see, God made us in his moral image. And we are related to God by his creator.

We are his creation, and he made us as persons. So though God is utterly greater than man, he doesn't say, my thoughts are alien to your thoughts. He says, my thoughts are higher than your thoughts, and my ways are higher than your ways.

Francis Schaeffer mentioned once a movie, it was one of those dumb Christian movies. I just pray we have a revival and we get some people like Spielberg saved in some serious movies. It's one of these dumb Christian movies, and it was even in another language.

And it was about a man and his son who accidentally stepped on an anthill. And they wanted to apologize to the ants, and so they meant no harm to the ants. And so the son, through some magical mystical means, became an ant and went to visit the ants.

And he was a different color ant from all the other ants, and they didn't like him, and they killed him. That was the movie. I think this was supposed to be a parable of the incarnation and the crucifixion.

Well, some poor atheist was dragged to see this would-be Christian movie, and he came out of it disgusted. And this is what he said to Dr. Schaeffer, what sense does it make for man to die for ants to win the ants? Francis Schaeffer said, no sense at all, because man is not related to the ant, but God is related to us, because he made us in his image. And he gave, his own son became man.

Understand, some people ask this question, will there be life on other planets? Well, there is other kinds of life in the universe. There's angels, and they don't look like little babies with nappies on that shoot you in St. Valentine's Day. They're heavy-duty beings.

There's seraphs, and there's all kinds of other beings out there. Well, tell this, if there is other life other than angels that was God created on some other worlds, remember this, God only had one son, and he became man. So man as he was designed to be, we'll put it like this, you as you were designed to be, are the utterly, the utter pinnacle of God's creation.

And C.S. Lewis said, if you met an ordinary, dull, boring Christian 2,000 years from now in the presence of God, you would be very strongly tempted to fall on your knees and worship him. When God restores what his original dream for man is, and that final accounting, when all the dead, small and great, stand before God, and God finally demonstrates the family that he's had in his heart to put together since before he made the universe, you will see that the greatest of all of God's creation was mankind. He only had one son.

At the right hand of the Father, there is a glorified, exalted, risen God-man, the man Christ Jesus. Remember that. These are not the reasons, then, why we are to fear the Lord.

Let me give you now some other reasons why people have the sense of fear or respect or awe, which is translated fear. And I'll give you four of these. First of all, fear is related to size.

I don't know if you've ever run into something utterly massive. I've been a few times to the U.S. and one time, and many times I've seen in movies, of course, the Grand Canyon. But the Grand Canyon is an awesome crack in the ground.

It's not just your basic small crack. You stand at the end of the Grand Canyon and your first and overwhelming impression is like this. Now this is true size.

It's true whether you're talking about height, whether you're talking about depth, or you're talking about width. Anything that is great in size creates the sense of awe, which is actually a form of fear. When you stand at the edge of the Grand Canyon, you look down, and it is that deep.

You don't go, oh yeah, Grand Canyon. You go, oh baby, Grand Canyon. A second thing that creates a sense of awe or fear, legitimate fear, is power.

Now if you take a little flashlight battery, the Energizer, one that keeps driving the bunny around. If you take one of those little batteries, you've got, say, 1.5 volts, and you could put that on your tongue and it wouldn't do very much. You'd feel a small tingle.

On the other hand, you could take a 9-volt battery and do the same, and you would probably feel a little bit more of a tingle. Then you could run a couple of wires from your car battery, try that on your tongue, and you'll have a smoky feeling and not be able to taste anything for a couple of days. And then you could conceivably plug a pair of scissors into a power socket, and you would have a 240, 250 volt tingle.

But if you get hit by a bolt of lightning, you will get anything from 150,000 to a 500,000 volt tingle. And very few people go, oh, when somebody switches a flashlight on. But if lightning comes down very close to where you are, you go, whoa, like that.

And it is legitimate fear. Remember we said St. Augustine almost got hit by lightning and it drove him straight into a monastery. He said, if I survive this storm, Sir Dan, I'm going to become a monk.

And he did survive, and he did become a monk. The next, I went to, I actually visited Niagara Falls. We got some neat little streams here and some pretty good waterfalls.

But Niagara Falls is a serious waterfall. And you can actually sort of stand not really underneath it, but there's sort of an overhang place where you can watch it. You've got to put on these big heavy sort of raincoats and stand there and you watch this water.

It's just like, it's like half the ocean falling every quarter of a second. It's just like, wham, like that. And there's actually a little boat that goes near that.

Can you imagine being on that boat, going around with half the ocean falling, just a little watch? I don't care if you are Superman, if you fall over that, you're going to drown. And then something else creates a sense of awe or fear, and that is beauty. Now that sounds a strange one, but beauty can actually make people afraid.

Something utterly beautiful can utterly stop people's, literally stop people's breath. For instance, fireworks. Why do we turn out 5th of November every year and watch a bunch of stuff? You know, everybody's standing.

This is what it's like. Oh, must be having a stroke. I see flashes.

Maybe just one brief scene on a ballet or maybe a song or something, something so utterly beautiful that just for a second you just can't breathe. It utterly stops you. It is a fear, but it's a wonderful kind of fear.

Sometimes I stood at a sunset. We got some neat sunsets in New Zealand. Just stand there, just for, by God, every day he just paints all kinds of different stuff, never repeats himself twice.

Just awesome. And then there's another thing, I don't know what to call it, dignity perhaps. If I said majesty, you'd understand that's one of the songs or one of the words we use in some of the choruses.

We sing about the Lord, majesty, worship is, you know, that thing. Unfortunately, there is very few political figures that we can give this to. Now, the queen used to be an example of dignity, but poor Queenie, she needs, her whole family needs to get saved.

They're just in terrible shape, and they're showing up in all of the bad rags, and it's just awful. But perhaps the closest we have today are either a movie star or a rock star, you know. Maybe movies or some MTV blowout.

Some Nirvana looking dude, looking like he's stoned out of his gourd, and yet kids will meet him like, you know, that thing, see. Oh, movie stars. I've met a few movie stars.

Matter of fact, I accidentally got in a movie one time. It was really quite wild. I was coming back about, I don't know, one or two in the morning in San Francisco, carrying my little bag.

I got off the plane, one of these midnight special flights, and I walked along this long corridor, and there seemed to be a whole bunch of lights put up along the side, just like this big spot there. And then there were all these people walking out, one or two in the morning in San Francisco. You do not have sort of these people, you know.

There were sort of like couples walking, beautifully dressed, and talking black, and talking brown, and talking, you know, Asian. It was just, I kept looking at all these people, and I wondered, what is there? And then I walked right onto a movie set. I mean, I didn't stop.

I just kept walking, and then up came the star of the show. It happened to be a episode, and it was an ancient detective in the early days, and he walked right up. I didn't stop and go, oh, you're my cutters.

You know, I just went straight on past, and then about a year later, a guy said, you know, I saw somebody who looked just like you. And I said, yes, yes, I was on that set. I was.

That's about the closest we have to that sense of fear that comes from dignity, or glory, or something. But there is one other, and this one, too, is exceedingly rare in our culture, and that is purity. There's something utterly stunning, astonishing about purity.

Mother Teresa has it. You know, when you meet that woman, you just, you stagger. She makes real cynical people that are just sort of like, you know, ah, yeah, another religious figure.

She meets them, and her utter selfless, transparent love for God just shatters them. Matter of fact, they start tiptoeing around and whispering. St. Francis of Assisi had that kind of thing.

In Salvation Army, lassies in William Booth's day faced some very terrifying opposition. Matter of fact, Salvation Army, as they went into cities to try and recapture them for God, in one particular period of time, the opposition raised up what they call the Skeleton Army, over 5,000 real gang members there really were, specifically to stop the Salvation Army. And when the Zellies came in to this thing, marching, singing these songs, and confronting these towns, they would run around them with ropes and throw burning sulfur on them, and shoot ship's rockets at them, and carry dead animals, and throw them at them, and rotten eggs, and fruit, and stuff, and spit on them, and just this whole army was mobilized to stop them.

And William Booth sent out these, some of them, 16, 17, 18-year-old girls, right into the most vile, rotten, filthy dens of iniquity London ever had. One particular time, London had over 20,000 hookers in just a very

short space, just a couple of miles of London, just utterly filled. And William Booth sent out into the middle of this, these girls.

Their utter love for God and their purity stopped some of these lecherous dudes in their tracks. Matter of fact, Catherine Booth, mother of Salvation Army, was out one night, she was out witnessing, and there was a guy there, she was a fairly attractive girl, and a guy came up to her, and she didn't, I don't think she had a uniform on at that time, and he thought maybe she was out looking for a good time or something, you see. So he came up to her, and he said, he said, you want an appointment? And she just looked at him, and he took her silence as consent.

And he reached into his pocket, and he pulled out his little notebook, and he said, where? And she said, at the judgment seat of God, sir. Now I want to suggest to you that the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, before which none of obedience to these commandments or anything make much sense to you, is intimately related to these things we have on the board. First of all, God is immensely bigger than anything else or anybody you have ever heard of.

And I mean utterly. I flew through a thunderstorm once in Houston, and it was right in the middle of a lightning storm, and it was, it was terrifying. There was stuff just flashing all the way around, and then when you, when you came out of that, and you were utterly helpless, you just had to get out of it.

When you came down, underneath were the lights of Houston, and it was, Houston was all ablaze with lights, but it was a little tame, safe light. The light up there wasn't safe at all. That was just utterly scary light.

David said, when I consider the heavens the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have ordained, what is man that you are mindful of him? And I suggest to you that when the Lord comes near, he is the most awesomely great being. I mean, we, we, you look at out there, and that was done in a day, just by a word. Think about that.

Just decorations, matter of fact. Not even a big deal. Had to speak in an astronomy class once, a secular class.

Guy said, would you like to speak? So I said to the Lord, he asked me to speak in this astronomy class. I had a pair of binoculars once, do you want me to talk there? The Lord said, yes. So I took as my subject is there life on other planets, including this one.

Look at the possibility of man actually being here, within a chemical presuppositions. And then, but I looked, when I started off, I looked around, and all around, all these star charts that these poor fourth year astronomy students had to memorize, and I couldn't help it, I just burst out laughing. And, you know, the professor looked at me, I said, I'm sorry, but I said, how many of you have, have really spent a lot of time learning these charts? I said, the reason why it's so funny to me is, very soon, they're all going to be worthless.

Because God is going to recycle the whole universe, and if you're still around, you're going to have to learn it again. None of us have even an inkling of a clue what the word infinite means. Because everything we have has a beginning, and it's finite.

But when God comes, the one who made the worlds, I always think, I can't help thinking again of Moses, the man with the big mouth, you know, there in the crack in the rock, and saying, God, I want, I want, I

want to see your glory, okay, I want to see your glory. And I just, I know what God is thinking. You want to see my face? No man can look at my face and live.

I'll tell you what, I'll put you in a crack in a rock, and I'll cover you with my hand, and I'll pass by in front, and you won't see my face, you'll just see my afterglow, what I leave behind on the rocks when I'm gone. And as Moses stood there in the crack, and the glory that made the worlds went in front of that crack in the rock, I know he thought, I am an utter idiot. I have no idea why I asked this, and I'm probably going to die right now.

Number two, God is awesomely more powerful. We, we don't really understand or appreciate that because, see, God is also a very kind being. He is a disciplined being.

He's a regulated being. He's a being who is not lawless. And our, for us, power means usually vengeance type thing.

You know, somebody punched me, I punched him back, and I hit him really bad and knocked all his teeth out, man, it was great. But God is so, is so disciplined in his power. He doesn't just do stuff.

If he treated us the way we deserve to be treated, the way we treat other people, none of us would be here. University, sometimes kids would stand up and they'd go, God's so powerful, why don't you just stop the war? Why didn't you just stop the war right now? Why doesn't he do it? Yeah, they do stuff like that. Ingersoll used to stand up with a watch, you know, and he'd go, he'd blaspheme God for about five minutes, shake his fist into heaven, and then he'd go, if there is a God, why doesn't he just kill me right now? I'll give him three minutes, you know, and he'd just stand up there, okay, I'm timing it, I'm timing it, and nobody would go, and then he'd wait, one minute, two minutes, three minutes, nothing there, nothing, that's what he'd do.

Some old wise minister said, does the wheeladdy think he can exhaust the patience of God in three minutes? God has such a cool sense of humor. Voltaire, famous French rationalist and skeptic, who made a career out of attacking God and Christians, held up a Bible one day and he said, I'll have this book in the morgue in a hundred years. He did not drop dead of a heart attack, lightning did not turn him into a potato chip, but a hundred years went past, and guess who was in the morgue? What is infinitely funny is that Voltaire's house had become the headquarters of the Geneva Bible Society.

God has a subtle, not malicious, sense of humor. In Mark 4, and you might like to quickly glance at that, Mark 4, we have an account of this power. Verse 36, when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship, and there were also with him other little ships.

And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so it was now full. And he was in the hind part of the ship, asleep on a pillow. And they woke him and said to him, Master, do you not care that we perish? Jesus isn't worried at all, he's fast asleep.

And Jesus arose, and he rebuked the wind, and he said to the sea, peace be still. Now this, King James, in whatever version you have, really can't do justice to this thing. The phrase that is used there in these parallel passages is that Jesus stands up.

Now remember, the disciples are terrified. They are really afraid because they see the power of the storm. They know we could all die here.

The ship is filling up with water, and there's Jesus, he's fast asleep. They can imagine, all drowning and standing before God, and God saying, what did you do with my son? He drowned. He just shouldn't have taken him out.

Don't you care that we're dying? And Jesus just gets up, and he goes over to the side of the ship. And this is what he actually says. He says a single phrase.

It is a very strange phrase, but loosely translated, it is the same thing he used. I don't know if you've ever seen those dogs on Magnum P.I., the ones that chase Magnum, all of those big Doberman pincers, like this, you know, those kind of dogs? They're always yapping and chasing him around. You imagine one of those dogs, like this, and you get, it looks like an ice cream cone, made out of wire, just like a mesh ice cream cone.

And it's called a muzzle. And the dog, and you go, and you stick this right over his mouth. That is the phrase that Jesus uses the storm.

The muzzle, it's like, everybody really gets, he goes, he doesn't go, peace, be still. Don't do that. He goes, quiet.

And the storm goes, oh, sorry, we didn't know you were in the boat. And just, it just cools right out. Now, what I want you to see is this.

The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. It just stopped like that. Now, check this.

And they feared exceedingly. Now, they were afraid before, but when Jesus said what he said, and the storm did what it did, they were utterly afraid. That's the fear of the Lord.

They were impressed with the violence and the power of the storm. But with a single word, Jesus cooled it just like that. And they thought, what, what kind of man is this? And that already hung around them.

Yeah, he's son of God. Yeah, sure, son of God. We know son of God.

But this is son of God. You know what I mean? You understand how you can, you can, yeah, I love God. Yeah, I love God.

And I knew his, I knew his word, and I serve him. But you've never seen him talk to a storm yet. And when you think that he loves you, you think it's because, yeah, I'm pretty cool.

I mean, he was lucky to get me. That fear of the Lord is a scary, scary thing. Matter of fact, I know this guy in the U.S. He's still alive.

He's almost blind. He's a memorized, huge, just about the whole Bible. I think he's memorized.

He, there may be one or two names and numbers that he's forgotten, but this guy knows the whole Bible. He's a, they call, used to call him the walking Bible as just a young man. He memorized the Bible.

He's a street preacher. His name is Holy Hubert. He's had most of his teeth knocked out by radicals.

He's massive red hair. He's quite old now. He's getting into his seventies and he freckles, but he was just a radical, radical street preacher.

And I don't know how many times he's had his teeth knocked out by various people for preaching in Berkeley, California, and medical places. One time Holy Hubert was in a church and he was preaching a very, very serious message. And a man stood up in the back and pulled out a knife and said, Hubert, I'm going to kill you.

And Hubert said, you stop right where you are. And he said, no, I'm going to kill you. And he walked straight down the thing with this knife out and, and Hubert said, you stop right where you are.

And the guy said, no, I'm going to kill you. And Hubert said, no, God's going to kill you. And the good guy took one more step and he dropped dead.

And they went, all the church went like this. And then somebody said, call an ambulance. And Hubert said, no, call an undertaker.

And he went on with his message. I remember hearing Murray Thompson long, long ago. Murray had been in a revival and it sort of spoiled him for the rest of his life.

He never could be satisfied with anything else. Revivals can really shake you up. You know, you tasted that and you're not content with anything else.

Great meetings, tremendous souls, nothing. He saw it, spoiled him for the rest of his life. And I remember Murray coming back from that awakening.

He was just filled with fire. He wanted to see all of New Zealand burn from one end to the other. And he stood up and he said, this is an Easter sermon.

He said, you know, he said, we need revival. And there was some lady sitting in the front, one of those ladies with a bun and hairy legs and tennis shoes and a Bible as large as a piano. And Murray said, we need to see revival in New Zealand.

She said, man, you know. And then he said, and when revival comes, the book of Acts will live again. Oh, man, brother, you're getting louder and louder and louder.

And then Murray said, you know what happened in the book of Acts? She's all ready for the biggest amen of all. And then he said, people died in church. Silence there from front row.

When we speak about beauty, there is something utterly lovely in your life that you prize above everything else. You know, we look for beauty in different things. Some people find it in works of art.

And Lewis talked about in the book, *The Weight of Glory*, he spoke about this thing, glory. And he said, when we see something utterly lovely, it might be a person. You know, you might think there's one person above every other person you've ever met who is the epitome of someone utterly lovely and beautiful to you.

And for some people, it's just like a painting. Maybe it's a song. There is a Bruce Springsteen video, *Dancing in the Dark*, where one girl gets the ultimate dream come true.

It's a black and white video. Springsteen is doing his thing. He's quite good looking in this video.

He hasn't left his wife. He is dancing in this thing. And there's a girl sitting right in the front row.

She's right there with everybody else. Right near the end of the video, the unbelievable happens. Springsteen, this great superstar, reaches into the audience and pulls her out from the crowd to finish off the song and the dance with him.

That's the ultimate. It's like Bruce Springsteen, that thing. But Lewis talks about how when we see something lovely, we don't just want to look at it.

We want something we can hardly even put into words. We want to be in it. We want to be part of it.

We want to have our lives merge with that thing. You see this sunset and it's so utterly lovely, you wish you could just sort of be that sunset. But the sad thing is that when you get close to the really lovely things, you're never really there.

You get there and you still haven't got it. You've got the painting and you can light it, but you still don't own it. There's something deeper than that.

He said, beauty smiles, but not to welcome us. Face was turned in our direction, but she didn't see us. We haven't been welcomed into the dance.

We're not part of the song. And the sun goes down and we stand there cold and alone. We're all left out.

But he said, those midges are not the beauty. They're just a small little fragment of another beauty. They are just the temporary little messages that bring down something on which all beauty is based.

And he said, if we cannot handle the dregs at the bottom of the stream, they are too much for us. What is it like at the fountainhead where that beauty comes from? I want to read you something that took place just before Azusa. Azusa, you will remember, some of you, was that tremendous outpouring that took place in 1906 as a consequence of the visitation of God in Azusa.

A great chunk of world missions is presently driven. In other words, because of what God did in that little delivery stable there in Los Angeles in 1906, with a black one-eyed preacher called Willie Seymour, millions and millions of people, that's really his name. I can't help it.

That's really his name. That was his name, I know. It's, you can call him by his official name if you wish, William T. Seymour, but that's his name, Willie Seymour.

And he did. Before Azusa broke out, one man of God, and this came, a number of different people had been impressed to pray around that time. This is the man's record.

One evening, July the 3rd, I felt strongly impressed to go to the little Peniel Hall in Pasadena to pray. There I found Brother Boettner ahead of me. He had been led of God to the hall.

We prayed for a spirit of revival for Pasadena, which is in where Azusa is, until the burden became well nigh unbearable. I cried out like a woman in birth pains. The spirit was interceding through us.

Finally the burden left us. After a little time of quiet waiting, a great calm settled down on us. I want you to remember this phrase, a great calm settled down on us.

Then suddenly, without premonition, the Lord Jesus himself revealed himself to us. He seemed to stand directly between us, so close we could have reached out our hand and touched him. But we did not dare

to move.

I could not even look. In fact, I seemed all spirit. His presence seemed more real, if possible, than if I could have seen and touched him naturally.

I forgot I had eyes or ears. My spirit recognized him. A heaven of divine love filled and thrilled my soul.

Burning fire went through me. In fact, my whole being seemed to flow down before him like wax before fire. I lost all consciousness of time and space, being conscious only of his wonderful presence.

I worshiped at his feet. It seemed a veritable mountain of transfiguration. I was lost in pure spirit.

For some time he remained with us, and slowly he withdrew his presence. We would have been there yet had he not withdrawn. I could not doubt his reality after that experience.

Brother Boettner experienced largely the same thing. We had lost all consciousness of each other's presence while he remained with us. The sun was up next morning before we left the hall, but the night had seemed but half an hour.

The presence of God eliminates all sense of time. With him all is eternity. It is eternal life.

This is the secret of time appearing to pass so swiftly in nights of real prayer. Time is superseded. The element of eternity is there.

For days that marvelous presence seemed to walk by my side. The Lord Jesus was so real. I could scarcely take up human conversation again.

It seemed so crude and empty. Human spirit seemed so harsh. Earthly fellowship but torment.

How far naturally are we from the gentle spirit of Christ. The beauty of that radiant beauty of Jesus is something, remember, that the shepherds saw up on the hill. Remember when they're waiting? The old Christmas carol about them washing their socks by night, if you remember that thing.

And then suddenly scripture speaks about how the angel of the Lord came down and the glory of the Lord shone all about them. And do you remember what it says their reaction was? They were sore afraid. The phrase appears again.

In 2 Chronicles 20 and verses 3 and 20, you see this phrase. We will praise the beauty of holiness and then the Lord sent ambushments against the enemy. In Exodus 15 11, God speaks about being fearful in praises.

That's a link there with the beauty of God. And Psalm 5 7 says, in thy fear will I worship. That beauty of God.

By the way, it's very important, and I don't know if we really have time to do this. Can't do it tonight, certainly. Because I believe God's going to deal with some of us tonight, give us a chance to get some.

The law, everything God does, all of God's law is based on his value. It is a revelation of the value of Jesus that gives you courage to do what he says. Therefore, until you get a revelation of God's love for you, you will never have power over sin.

And this is a very important principle. Some of you struggle with sin, you battle with it, and you wrestle with it. And the trouble with sin is that it's selfishness.

And the more you concentrate on it, focus on it, the bigger it gets. So the wrestling and struggling with sin is really not the best way to deal with it. It will only get bigger.

The greatest way to deal with temptation and sin is to get a revelation of the loveliness of God. And in the revelation of that loveliness, all the junk falls away. Zhang Yiqiu talked once about a lady in his church whose daughter used to go to church.

She dropped away from church first, then away from God, and finally wound up on the street selling her body. She's a very pretty girl. She became a prostitute.

And her mother, of course, was heartbroken. She constantly brought her daughter up in the ladies' prayer meetings. She prayed for a night and day.

You know, Zhang Yiqiu's church is a praying church. They've got thousands of people praying all the time, 10,000 every, you know, at any one time, there's 10,000 people praying in their church. It's just awesome stuff.

And she came to Zhang Yiqiu at the end of a great chunk of prayer. And she said, Brother Zhang, I don't know what to do. My daughter is terrible.

She's making us ashamed and embarrassed. In Korea, a very place high priority on not being ashamed and not being embarrassed. And she said, I just, I prayed for a night and day with tears and nothing has happened at all.

She is so hard. And Zhang said this, how are you praying for your daughter? She said, well, I constantly remind the Lord. She is a prostitute, Lord.

She's dishonoring our family and she's dishonoring the church. People know she comes from a church background. It's just a total dishonoring.

And Zhang said to her, you're praying the wrong way. Which really shocked her. He said, this is how I want you to pray for your daughter.

I want you to hold up before the Lord a vision of your daughter redeemed, turned back to God, clean again. And hold up before the Lord this vision. Whenever you go to pray for your daughter, pray for her.

Ask God to give you a vision of what she looks like saved, restored, right with God. Some of you young men in here, you've had very difficult battles with sin. And you just wondered whether you could ever make it through.

I want you to ask God to give you a revelation of Jesus and his vision for you. Let God tonight show you, this son is what I want you to be like. And you'll be able to walk away from that thing that you've never been able to deal with before.

The beauty of Jesus. This is what God says, I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me. And it is the goodness of God that leads people to repentance.

Do you understand? Not a million years in hell will ever make a person repent. It is the revelation of the beauty of Jesus that gives you courage to walk away from a selfish life and to trust him. And God's going to give some of you that tonight.

I just got two other cookies and then we've got to quit here. This thing about the unknownness of God, he is, he is just, so we don't even know what this word means. You understand? We don't know what that word means.

We know that God is uncreated, but we have no idea what that means. We have nothing in all of the universe that is like it. It's just an unknown.

In Matthew 14 verse 26, have a quick look at that. Jesus is up praying on the mountain. The disciples are on a ship and the evening was come.

This is verse 23. He's up there in the mountain on his own praying. And then another one of these dumb storms that doesn't know anything at all about what Jesus is, catches up to the ship.

Ship is now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves. The wind was contrary. The fourth watch of the night, Jesus went to them walking on the sea.

It's bad enough to get in a storm without Jesus there. And you look out into the darkness and there's this being walking across the waves right towards the ship dressed in white. Now what would you think if you're on the ship? I know what every single, there it says, verse 26, they were troubled.

That has to be one of the great understatements in the New Testament. I said, it is a ghost. And they cried out for fear.

And straightway Jesus spoke to them and said, be of good cheer. It's I, don't be afraid. He said, don't worry, be happy.

See again this fear. What kind of person is it that walks on the water? Now Peter, good old Peter, foot, shape, mouth Peter, he goes, that's really you. You let me come to you the way you're walking to me.

And then he hears something terrifying. Come. See, you know, we think that the reason why Jesus could walk over the water is because he's, you know, he's kind of, the disciples thought he's like a ghost.

Not really sort of there. He's less there in the way. Remember when disciples were all in the upper room and they're afraid of the Romans and Jesus being crucified and they got the doors locked and then suddenly Jesus comes and the door doesn't open and he doesn't blow the door down and he doesn't say, behold, I beat you a door down and freak your head out and he doesn't blow a Jesus shaped hole in the door.

He just comes. I mean, he just comes. The wall is solid.

The door is solid and he just comes and they all look up and they have exactly the same reaction as this thing. They're utterly terrified. It's a go.

It's a ghost. I saw him die. He's dead.

And here's a ghost. The ghost has come back. They are utterly terrified.

Their thought is this. The reason why Jesus can walk through this door is because he's not really solid. But that isn't the reason why Jesus could walk through the door.

Again, C.S. Lewis, one of his characteristic pieces of insight said the reason why Jesus could walk through the wall was not because he was less solid than the door, but the door was less solid than he was. And he walked through matter and energy like he walked through mist in the morning because he's the uncreated God, the one who spoke all of that into existence by the word of his command. And I know this, that the one who speaks is more solid than the word spoken.

Jesus walked through the wall like mist in the morning. After all, he is called the rock, not the gas. We could talk about the power of God.

He is utterly powerful. He is wonderfully majestic. Scripture calls him king of kings and lord of lords.

Mark 9, 6. Remember with the visit, Moses and Elijah and Jesus on the mountain, again the disciples, it said they were sore afraid. Malachi 1, 6. God says, if I really am your master, where is my fear? If I am the majesty, the ruling, no, just ordinary buddy God stuff. And the final thing I want to leave with you tonight before God starts to do something with us is this.

That purity that was in the faces of the Salis, they didn't get it just by being good kids. He got it by hanging around him who was the utter essence of what it means to be holy. God is good and our lives have been evil.

God is light and we live in darkness. God is truthful and most of our life has been unreality and falsehood. God is just and we have not been fair.

God is righteous and we have been wrong. And the scripture speaks about perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. Psalm 86, 11 says, unite my heart to fear thy name.

Evan Roberts, this young evangelist that I mentioned, a young revivalist who was sort of pulled suddenly into this incredible maelstrom of the Holy Spirit, a storm of fire in the Spirit that went through Wales. There is an account here that I got from one of the books written about that time by a man who heard Roberts preach and I want to read this to you. He was in the church when Roberts was preaching and he was sitting quite near the front.

There came a sudden calm. Hearing a movement behind me in the pulpit, I looked up. Evan Roberts was on his feet.

Our eyes met for a few seconds. I solemnly avow that those eyes searched through and through. They burned like coals of fire.

In a split second my innermost soul seemed to be laid bare. I feared and I shook. Had there been a cover nearby, I must have surely would have sought it.

Now, God asks us to fear Him. And behind that, if we put all of this stuff together, these lovely things we've looked at tonight, these scary, totally awesome is hardly the word, the infiniteness of God, His beauty, His light, His majesty, this supernaturalness of Him, His purity, His greatness. If we put all of those things together, we get a just a tiny inkling of what He means by His fear.

What I want you to do tonight is to take now the next 60 seconds and to pray a very scary prayer. I want you to ask God to reveal to you what has stood in the way of you knowing the fear of the Lord. You're going to represent the Lord Jesus this next year, at the end of the year.

You'll be going out speaking to others about Him. And you will be going out not only to evangelize, but with the hunger in your heart to see perhaps a real awakening come to the nation. An American reporter had a few minutes with Evan Roberts, and he said, I'm going back to America.

He said, have you got a message you can send with me to take back to my nation? And this is what Evan Roberts told him. The prophecy of Joel is being fulfilled. There the Lord says, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.

If that is so, all flesh must be prepared to receive. You want an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in your city? You do well. But remember, four conditions must be observed.

They are essential. I'll give you these four before you pray. First, the past must be clear.

The past must be clear. Every sin confessed before God, any wrong to man must be put right. Have you forgiven everybody? Everybody.

If not, don't expect forgiveness for your sin. Better to offend 10,000 friends than grieve the Spirit of God or quench Him. Number one, the past must be made clear.

Every sin confessed to God, any wrong to man must be put right. Have you really forgiven everybody? Number two, everything doubtful must be removed once and for all out of your lives. Is there anything in your life you cannot decide whether it is good or evil? Away with it.

There must not be a trace of a cloud between you and God. Three, obedience. Prompt implicit unquestioning to the Spirit of God.

At whatever cost, do what the Holy Spirit prompts without hesitation or fear. And four, public confession of Christ. Multitudes are guilty, he said, of long and loud profession.

Confession of Christ as Lord is of recent date. Hear the word of the Lord, quench not the Spirit. That is the way to revival.

When fire burns, it purifies. And when purified, you're fit to be used in the work of God. Christ said, I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to me.

A friend of mine who works in schools, in high schools in the US, sometimes has to deal with up to a hundred thousand high schoolers a week in his ministry in public high schools. And very recently he's asked some of the kids, these are unsaved kids, to do something with him. He's talked about nightmares, and that's the exact opposite of this fear of the Lord we've spoken about here.

The thing that has most made them afraid, and he said this, I want you now to think of your utter worst nightmare, the worst thing that ever happened to you in your life. And then he said, now I want you to ask Jesus to come right where that nightmare is and tell me what you see him do. And that's been some of the most astonishing things.

These kids just take this silence, and some of them start shaking. They see the thing that happened to them that they fear more than anything else in the world. And then God comes.

And he told me of one little boy. This kid for a long, long time, he just shook. He's a very shy little boy, and he finally stood up and he said, my dad, he drinks all the time.

When he comes home, he sometimes gets out a baseball bat and he beats my mother, and he looks for us kids to beat. And one day he's going to kill us. And he said the last time he came, you could hear him hitting mother and hitting mother.

My little brother and I hid in the cupboard, and we heard his footsteps coming, and we were crying. We're trying not to make any noise so he wouldn't find us. And he said, and I closed my eyes and I saw the cupboard and my little brother was there.

I heard my dad outside. And he said, and suddenly Jesus was there. And he was in the closet with us.

And he put his arms around us. And he was crying too. I want you to ask Jesus to reveal to you what you need to be ministered to right now.

You've got just 60 seconds. There are men in this place, and you need a profound healing. You need God to give you real victory over your life.

The scripture says, such as I have, give I unto you, before we sing any songs, we play any music, before we do anything, I want you in the silence of this moment to ask the Holy Spirit to show you your heart, your life. And then I want you to ask the Lord to give you a vision of what your life is supposed to be like.

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