

What Does the Lord Ask of You?

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

September 27, 2020

Each of us is the protagonist, the main character, of our own life. We feel we are the most important beings in the world. For example, if we are cold, hot, hungry or thirsty, we try to meet our needs as soon as we can and as much as we can. It is natural. It is a survival instinct. But every now and then, when we face something awesome, something magnificent, we realize how insignificant we are in relation to the whole universe.

If you ever stand at the rim of the Grand Canyon, or stand at the Pulpit Point of the Black Canyon of Gunnison National Park, you'll really feel a sense of awe. Whether it is a panoramic view from Angel's Landing of Zion Canyon or the view from the Amphitheater of Bryce Canyon, the splendid and marvelous view always generates a sense of admiration and reverence.

Each time I see these stunning views, I am always overwhelmed. I pause in reverence for the awesome God who created all these wonders. And my heart is filled with fear and gratitude. Fear, because such an awesome and mighty creator is not to be trifled with. He ought to be honored and glorified. And gratitude, because such an awesome God reached down to lead and guide us, and to save us from our sins.

We are living in an age where people have lost the most important sense – the sense of fear, the fear of God. I am convinced that the greatest problem we face in the United States today is the loss of this fear. The fear of God is what holds a society together. It is what keeps our nation from falling apart, falling into chaos, anarchy, and moral destruction. Look at our society today, all the destruction and chaos. Don't you think this is a sign of the loss of fear of God? It seems like many people have lost much of this fear and some lost it completely.

After spending forty years in the wilderness, the Israelites were at the verge of the Promised Land. They were about to enter it. Just before they were moving in, Moses gave them the final instructions. That is what the Book of Deuteronomy is about. It is his final sermon. And his message is very appropriate even for today's Americans.

He says, "Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in his ways and to love him, to serve him with all your

heart and with all your soul, and to observe his commandments and decrees?”¹ He was reminding the Israelites not to forget the Lord and not to lose the sense of the fear of the Lord.

Why is this important? Why is it important to have the sense of the fear of God? Because fearing God has benefits. The Bible says, “Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”² “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death.”³ “O fear the Lord, for those who fear him there is no want.”⁴ By fearing the Lord, we find life, wisdom and salvation. The Psalmist says, “Surely God’s salvation is near to those who fear Him.”⁵

Fearing God is to have a deep reverence for God. It is to acknowledge his holiness and power. It is to recognize his trustworthiness and steadfast love. It is to accept his mercy and grace. It is to revere and to adore him.

A Persian poet from medieval time, Saadi of Shiraz (1210-1292), once said, “I fear God, and next to God, I mostly fear the one who does not fear God.”⁶ Those who fear the Lord, would lament the fact that we are losing our most important sense – the reverence, the presence, and the fear of the Lord. That is what we need to regain in our society, from politicians to preachers, from justices to journalists, from commissioners to commoners.

The fear of God is something we learn and choose. Proverbs 1:29 says that many people “hate knowledge and choose not to fear the Lord.” This was true in the ancient days, and it is today. They may prosper for a little while, but their end will be filled with despair, desolation and destitution. So, how do we learn to fear the Lord?

Proverbs 2:1 and 5 say this: “My child, listen to me and treasure my instructions, then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord and you will gain knowledge of God.” Listening to the Lord and fearing him go together. When you listen to the Lord, when you pay attention to his instruction, you learn to fear him. And when you fear him, you will also learn to pay closer attention to him and listen to him more attentively.

¹ Deuteronomy 10:12-13.

² Proverbs 1:7.

³ Proverbs 14:27.

⁴ Psalm 34:9.

⁵ Psalm 85:9.

⁶ <https://www.brainyquote.com/topics/fear-god-quotes>.

That is how the relationship with God is built. When I hear God - I fear God. Then when I fear God, I hear God. The fear of God brings God's friendship.

It may surprise you, but the fear of God and the love of God are inseparable. As we build the relationship with God, our reverential love for the Lord grows and our trust in him deepens.

So, how can we increase this kind of fear in our own hearts and lives? How can we fear God more, so that we may love him more?"

There is a man in the book of Acts named Cornelius, who was a Roman soldier. He and his family were devout and God-fearing. He was kind and generous. He was such a righteous man that even though he was a Roman soldier, an enemy of the Jews, he was respected by all the Jewish people.⁷ They recognized him as a God-fearing person.

Would people call you a "God fearing person?" Evidently, in the way Cornelius lived, people could see the fear of God in his life. There is a difference between people who fear God and people who don't.

When you fear the Lord, you will know it in your own life. You will see that you fear the Lord in your own life. Proverbs 3:7 says, "Don't be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil." Don't rationalize your behaviors and actions. Examine your life and turn away from your sins.

The fear of God leads to a life of holiness. Because when you fear God, you fear dishonoring and displeasing him. You want to turn away from evil. You will despise your sins, and you will hate your wrong doings.

In 2 Corinthians 5:11, Paul says, "What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience." When we fear the Lord, we learn to examine ourselves constantly. We examine our behaviors, words, thoughts and gestures. We become keenly aware of what we are, and what condition we are in spiritually, morally and ethically.

So, let me ask you. If you really lived your life with proper fear of God:

What of your thoughts would change?

What of your words would not be spoken?

⁷ Acts 10:1-23a.

What of your actions would cease?
What of your attitudes would be corrected?
What of your motives would be purified?

One of the wisest men who ever lived, if not the wisest man, was a man named Solomon. He summed up the purpose of life this way. “Here is the conclusion:” he said, “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”⁸

Franklin Roosevelt once said, “The only thing we need to fear is fear itself.” It is a beautiful statement, and it may be an appropriate saying in some situations. But there is something else we need to fear. We need to fear God. We need to learn to revere him. Actually, when we fear God, we have nothing else to fear, not even fear itself.

⁸ Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.