

Teaching Sound Doctrine

Fear God Pt:1

One of the most impressive concepts in the Bible is that of walking in the fear of God. The more I study and see how that expression ("the fear of God") is used, the more determined I am to encourage others to walk in the fear of the Lord.

Fear has to be taught (Deut. 4:10; 14:23; Psa. 34:11). It is not casually absorbed. If one fears God, he has been taught to fear. Thus, if our children are going to walk in the fear of God, it will be because we have taught them.

I find myself using that expression more and more to describe those who are truly dedicated to God. I am very selective in my use of that expression. I do not use it to describe everyone who has been baptized or attends church all of the time. Not all of those who are members where we worship are walking in the fear of God. Sometimes when we are trying to figure out why someone doesn't live as they should and do better than they are doing, it would do us well to not make excuses and simply conclude that they don't fear God !

Our objective in this study is two-fold: (1) Help us to walk in the fear of God, (2) to challenge us to deeper study on the concept of fear.

Examples Of Those Who Feared God

Some in the Bible either described themselves or were described by God as standing in fear of God. When Abraham was about to slay his son as God had instructed, he was stopped by an angel saying, "now I know that you fear God" (Gen. 22:12). Joseph told his brothers, "Do this and live, for I fear God" (Gen. 42:18). Jonah told those aboard the ship he was on, "I fear the Lord" (Jonah 1:9). Nehemiah described the remnant that returned as "Your servants who desire to fear Your name" (Neh. 1:11). Later in the book he describes Hananiah the leader of the citadel as "a faithful man and feared God more than many" (Neh. 7:2).

This does not mean that only those whose names are associated with the term "fear" are those that feared God. The Bible is filled with examples of those who feared God, but other terms were used to describe their faithfulness.

Purpose And Summation Of Life

Solomon sought the answer to the question of the purpose of life. After finding

the emptiness of wealth, pleasure and wisdom, he concluded, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all" (Ecc. 12:13). The same writer said that we should be in the fear of God all day long (Prov. 23:17). God placed man on earth to fear him and keep his commandments. That means everything else is secondary to that. Our purpose and function in life is not to work and make a living. We work and make a living so we can live and serve God with fear.

Since the above is true, then if we fail to fear God we have failed in life. If fearing God is our purpose in life, then when we don't fear our life has no purpose. If we don't teach our children to fear God then we have failed miserably as parents.

Those Who Fear God – Please God

Peter said, "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:35). The familiar promise that the Lord's eyes are over the righteous and his ear are open to their prayers (1 Pet. 3:12) was quoted from Psa. 34:15 which is a description of the blessing that those who fear God (v. 9) receive.

What Fear Means

Some have a limited concept of the fear of God. Some may think that fear only involves being afraid of God. Others may think that sense of fear has no part in the service of God. However, the fear of God is like a coin: it has two sides. While those two sides are different, they also are inseparable. It involves:

1. Being afraid of displeasing God. When Saul and Samuel were gathering men to go to battle, they took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces and sent messengers out, each carrying a bloody piece of meat. Their message was, "Whoever does not go out with Saul and Samuel to battle, so it shall be done to his oxen." What reaction would you have had? I would have been afraid not to. The text says, "And the fear of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out with once consent" (1 Sam. 11:7). Thus, they feared God in the sense that they were afraid not to what they were told.

The Lord says that he will look on the one who "trembles at My word" (Isa. 66:2). David said, "My flesh trembles for fear of You, And I am afraid of Your judgments" (Psa. 119:120). We ought to tremble in our boots at the thought of doing the things that displease God.

Paul said that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb.

10:31). The reason is "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

One who can knowingly do wrong and not be bothered at all obviously doesn't fear God.

2. Respect and awe of God. When Jesus raised the son of the widow of Nain, fear came upon the people (Luke 7:16). There is no indication that they were afraid of anything. Rather, "They glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us", and "God has visited His people"" (v. 16). Their fear was that of awe, homage and respect.

When Jonah said he feared God explained saying, "I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and dry land" (Jonah 1:9). He stood in awe and wonder of God.

Moses instructed the people to "fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD..." (Deut. 28:58).

Let's consider now what that fear will cause us to do.

What Fear Causes Us To Do

1. Do what God says . While we do not live under the OT law (Gal. 3:24-25; 2 Cor. 3), books like Deuteronomy, which emphasize obedience to the law, serve to demonstrate the relationship of the fear of God to obedience. Notice that connection in the following passages:

"that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you..." (Deut. 6:2).

"Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him" (Deut. 8:6).

"You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and shall keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him" (Deut. 13:4).

"And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes..." (Deut. 17:19).

"If you fear the Lord and serve Him and obey His voice and do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord...." (1 Sam. 12:14).

The one who fears God, will obey to the utmost as Abraham did in his attempt to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:12). When God saw he was willing to go that far in obedience, he said, "Now I know that you fear God". This is obedience with no excuses, question or doubt.