

The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom

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- [0 : 00] All of these intimations, God willing. We're going to begin our service this evening singing to God's praise the first psalm. The first psalm, someone shall sing the whole psalm.
- That man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray, in counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinners' way, nor sitteth in the scornish chair, but placeth his delight upon God's law, and meditates on his law day and night.
- He shall be like a tree that grows near planted by a river, which in his season yields his fruit, and his leaf fadeth never. And all he doth shall prosper well.
- The wicked are not so, but like they are unto the chaff which wind drives to and fro. In judgment therefore shall not stand, such as ungodly are, nor in the assembly of the just shall wicked men appear.
- For why? The way of godly men unto the Lord is known, whereas the way of wicked men shall quite be overthrown. Psalm 1, the whole psalm to God's praise, that man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray.
- [1 : 24] That man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray, in counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinners' way, nor sitteth in the scorn and cheer, but praise and this delight, that on God's love has meditated, on his own day and night.
- He shall divide the three of the cross, near of the divine earth, which in his season yields his fruit, and his him, and his him, and his him, and his him.
- And all he does come, cross the well, the wicked are not so, that I may add unto the child, which when Christ do not flow.
- And judgment and mercy shall not stand, shall pass the body down, nor will the assembly of the just, shall wicked man appear.
- For by the will of God we may, and to the Lord is known, let us the way of wicked man shall quite be overdone.
- [4 : 21] Let us join together in prayer. Let us pray. For God in heaven, our heavenly Father, help us to have a vision of your glory.
- As we approach what is a throne of grace, may we have a vision of a throne of glory.
- May we have a sense of something of the awe that filled the heart and the mind and the soul of your servant, as he was filled full of the glory of God, as you came down into the temple precincts.
- The glory that is alone, the glory of God. And we are desensitized by sin, and by a world that lies in sin.
- And except it be for the occasional intrusion upon the darkness that envelopes this world in which we live, we will remain oblivious to that glory that is your glory alone.
- [5 : 58] We give thanks for the odd glimpse that you people receive of that glory, even as they are able to comprehend it in the face of Christ Jesus.

We bless you and thank you for the way in which the Gospel lifts them up before our eyes. We bless you and thank you and thank you for the way in which the Gospel is to be able to comprehend it.

We are able to contemplate something of that glory. And marvel at the way that he has revealed himself to us.

that we do not continue as sin continues with the veil covering our eyes, with the darkness of sin in its deep, impenetrable blackness, not allowing us to see what the eye of faith sees.

Grant to us a sense of need, if that is what is true of us, that we may cry out even as Bartimaeus of old cried out as Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

[7 : 31] We pray Lord that you would be mindful of the needs of your people here in this world. That you would be mindful of their needs even as they engage with life.

As those who are your people, as they have to live out their faith in a faithless generation. As they have to contend with issues, the issues of life, and have to endeavour to make sense of it.

Sometimes with the ends that are in their hands seemingly so tied and so knotted that they cannot begin to imagine the unraveling of these problems that are there.

But we give thanks that there is one who has seen fit to enter into the experience of mankind in order to bring life to the lifeless, in order to bring eternal realities to vision, that those who are his might comprehend not only that this world in which they live is a world that he gained mastery over, but that he also has the victory over the grave.

That he entered into the experience of death in order to triumph over it. And through him that those who are his would have the same expectation.

[9 : 31] that they too would rise triumphant from the dust. And that there would be a reuniting of body and soul into a glorious body that would be forever with the Lord.

We pray that you would encourage them to believe these truths in the face of the complexities of life in all their variant forms.

We bring before you this evening those who are in need, thankful that we can bear one another's burdens. And you counsel us to remember one another.

And we give thanks that we can plead the cause that you espouse and seek an outpouring of your spirit upon our congregations that are so in need of new life being breathed into them.

We pray that those who are still reluctant to put their trust in Christ, if indeed there are such, that that reluctance would be taken from them.

[10 : 49] And that they would surrender themselves to Christ in their entirety. We pray, Lord, that you would quicken the dead and pour out your spirit upon us in order that the blinded eyes would see and tongues that are tied and unwilling to praise and magnify God would be enloosed.

And that there would be a song of praise upon their lips, even the song of those that have been taken from the pit and from the mighty clay, and who are able to sing the song of the redeemed.

We pray that your blessing would be upon all other needs that are before you this evening. We are mindful of the grieving and the sorrowful amongst us.

Some present, some unable to be present, where death has intruded into life's experience. We pray for your grace to accompany that grief that so pierces and so wounds and so causes the sorrows and the tears that accompany it to flow.

We pray that you would heal their wounds. We pray that you would heal their hurt and bind their wounds. Remember all such, even those who do not think of their spiritual need as you speak to each of us when you take life away.

- [12 : 32] That you are speaking to us concerning everyone, their destiny. That you are reminding us that when death comes as it must, that if we are found in a state of readiness, even though death may come unexpectedly, sudden death is sudden glory.

But for those who are caught unaware, they are ushered into the darkness of an unending night. Lord, have mercy upon those who grieve their passing, that they may look for themselves to the God of glory, that they may do business with you on their own behalf.

Lord, have mercy upon those who are the Lord, that they may have remembered those amongst us who are experiencing the brokenness of body or mind. Those who through the ravages of time are confined to their homes, some in the care of others, some in hospitals and care homes.

We pray that you would remember all such and open the eyes of their understanding to look beyond the agencies that you have ordained to the great physician upon whom each must rely.

We commend the work that you would bless those engaged in it. Remembering nurses and doctors and carers of all descriptions.

- [14 : 09] Thinking again of the effects of Covid in our communities and beyond. Those who are careless and those who are selfishly engaged in the pursuit of their own aims.

To the detriment of what it may mean to others. Do not allow us to fall prey to such a mindless activity, but to think of others more than we think of ourselves.

We pray for resolution to this dark night of your making. That the day would be ushered in where you would speak to those who hitherto have been oblivious to your hand upon us as a nation or even as a generation.

We ask, Lord, that you would mercifully undertake for us. And that those who govern us thinking that they have the last word would be reminded that that word will leave them accountable.

To the one who really and truly has the last word with regard to each of us. For all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ there to give account for the things done in the body, whether good or evil.

- [15 : 41] Hear our petitions on behalf of the sins of the world in which we live. Be merciful to the nations of the earth that are suffering by reason of want.

Lord, when we see so much done that is so clearly an abuse of the privileges that you endow us with, we pray pardon, mercy and forgiveness.

Hear our petitions and continue to watch over us, forgiving every transgression in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to hear God's word as we have it in the Old Testament scriptures.

We're reading from the book of Proverbs. The book of Proverbs and chapter 9. Proverbs chapter 9.

Proverbs 9.

- [17 : 03] Proverbs 10.

Proverbs 9.

The days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself. But if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

A foolish woman is clamorous. She is simple and knoweth nothing. For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, to call passengers who go right on their ways.

Whoso is simple, let him turn him hither, and ask for him that wanteth understanding. She saith to him, stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.

[18 : 44] But he knoweth not that the dead are there, and that our guests are in the depths of hell. Amen. And may the Lord add his blessing to this reading of his word, and to this name be the praise.

I'm going to sing now from Psalm 145, the second version of the psalm. Psalm 145, Psalm 155, Psalm 155, Psalm 155, Psalm 155, Psalm 155, The eyes of all things, Lord, attend, and on thee wait, that here do live, and thou in season due dost send, sufficient food them to relieve.

Yea, thou thine hand dost open wide, and everything dost satisfy that lives, and doth on earth abide of thy great liberality. The Lord is just in his ways all, and holy in his works each one.

He's near to all that on him call, and call in truth on him alone. We're going to sing to the end of the psalm.

Psalm 145, the second version of the psalm from verse 15, The eyes of all things, Lord, attend. The eyes of all things, Lord, attend, and on thee wait, that here do live, and thou in season due dost send, sufficient food them to relieve.

[20 : 45] And shower strength and other CHRISTOPON happy. Hear thou, thine hand dost open wide, and everything dost see that life is that life is that life is that life is that wonderful.

Amen. Before we talkuba pieces, Lord, attend, and if you hang out on her side two platforms, All time is with the quality.

The Lord is just in His resolve. And holy is His perfect love.

He's near to God that God will come. He'll call Him to the Lamb alone.

God will the just desire for you. O such a spirit near the Lamb.

[22 : 15] That driving car from here He will answer that in the time of day.

Thou Lord pre-sails on more than rest. Thou did to Him a loving heart.

But why birds of wickedness destroy will He?

And He is a bird. Therefore, by love and death, I pray to speak the gracious of the Lord.

To magnify His holy name forever.

[23 : 38] Thou did to Him a loving heart. Thou did to Him a loving heart. Thou did to Him a loving heart. Thou did to Him a loving heart.

I would like us to turn with you for a short while to the chapter that we read. The book of Proverbs in chapter 9. And we can read again verse 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Someone has called the book of Proverbs the book of divine common sense.

And in it we find many wise and sage statements. Which are designed to inform, to instruct, and to direct each one in the path of everlasting life.

[24 : 55] Two of the commentaries that I have in the study are both entitled in a similar vein. One of them has the subtitle Heavenly Wisdom.

And the other one Wisdom from Above. So clearly they recognize that wisdom is a dominant theme of the book.

And the source of that wisdom is recognized to be from God above. Now our text suggests that true wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord.

And such a statement merits further consideration. Just by asking a few simple questions.

What do we think is meant by the fear of the Lord? Secondly, in what way?

[26 : 04] Why is this wisdom? And thirdly, why does the writer of this book of divine wisdom call it the beginning of wisdom?

The beginning of wisdom. So three simple questions that we can ask in the hope of expanding our thoughts on the basis of what the word is saying to us.

As you will appreciate, many that live with us in modern society regard the fear of God as being something that those who acknowledge it to be not very bright.

Just to put it mildly. Just to put it mildly. They don't think that they're very intelligent if they acknowledge that they are living in fear of God.

Because they themselves would in most cases consider themselves to be liberated from such inane fear.

[27 : 24] But that is a contradiction of what the Bible teaches us. And there are many passages that we can go to that remind us of the foolishness that the person is guilty of who disregards or denies the validity of living in the fear of God.

One of the psalms we were singing in the morning was Psalm 36. And the psalmist begins that psalm with the following words.

He says, And denial of the denial of the denial of the wisdom that applies to the person or that the person who lives in the fear of God should be contented with.

Should be aware of us being something that is praiseworthy rather than condemnatory. Bishop Horne in his commentary on the psalms writes the following.

He who lost the fear of God is first led into sin and then detained in that sin.

[29 : 14] Because having forgotten the great witness and judge of his actions. He vainly thinks his crimes may be concealed or disguised.

Till a discovery breaks the charm and disperses the delusion. And the last day will show strange instances of this holy.

The Bible is full of examples of men and women who live their life to the exclusion of God.

Certainly to the exclusion of any sense of the living in the fear of God. Now we see that the believer, the unbeliever, is someone who has no fear of God.

But we should also see that the believer is someone who has the fear of God. And it is quite wrong to believe that once a person comes to faith that the fear of God is something that is salient to them.

[30 : 25] Something that is no longer in their experience. To many such a thing appears as if it is a negative experience to say that you live in the fear of God.

And in reality, if we read the scripture, it tells us that what it does is it greatly enhances our relationship with God if we live in his fear.

And I suppose that needs to be explained because in our mind, on the truer way of thinking, to live in the fear of God is to live as if we are afraid of God.

And that thought is entirely negative. That person who lives in the fear of God lives as if God was his enemy.

And that God was his... Somebody who was completely opposed to him.

[31 : 31] That's not the sense that we should have of the believer living in the fear of God. One of the commentators that I have in the studies, a theologian, and his name may be known to some of you, an American theologian by the name of W.G.T. Shedd.

He lived many years ago, and he was a systematic theologian. And he's written many excellent books on theology. But there's two collections of sermons that he preached.

And one of them is called Sermons to the Spiritual Man. And the other book is called Sermons to the Natural Man. Now, interestingly, in his book, which is entitled Sermons to the Natural Man, there is a sermon which is based upon the text before us here, along with another text.

But his reason for preaching this sermon, and all the sermons that are in that book, is to speak to the unconverted, and to convince them of their need to come to God, and to believe in God, and to embrace salvation as it is in Jesus Christ.

But the thing that made me refer to him was this, that Shedd saw these two parties in the world.

[33 : 10] There were those who preached so that they made the hearer of their sermons live in terror of God.

They preached so that the word of God made people afraid, and in their fear they were to turn to God.

And the other extreme was those who were encouraged to come to God as someone who was benign, and someone who was appeasing, and someone who was ready to bestow grace on anyone who came.

Now Shedd maintained that both extremes were extremes, and that one should speak on the basis of the word of God to men in a sensible way, where you spoke to their conscience, and spoke to their conscience in a way that they came to such a thing as fear of God, in a way that the scripture requires us to live in the fear of God.

Now, we need to remember that when we read such a passage as this, we may think and we may emphasize this passage so that it is a passage that is applied to the unconverted, to get the unconverted to think about the danger of living their life in the world without fearing God.

[35 : 10] And there is no question, but there is wisdom and merit in reminding men and women of every generation that they must fear God, because God is the one to whom they are answered in the ultimate.

And we remember when Christ preached, and when he spoke to those in the world when he was there, he said, for example, in Luke 12, Now, Christ is clearly there identifying the necessity for a person to have a knowledge of God that would inculcate such fear of him, and to initiate within their lives action that would be in accordance with a recognition that God is a God who is to be feared.

Now, while that must be true, and while that must be recognized, it is not the sole province of the scripture to direct the unregenerate to passages that remind them of the God of heaven to be the one that they must answer to, but also to remind the child of God that they too must live in the fear of God, although not in the same sense that the unregenerate do.

Because if you remind yourself of this, and it is something that many of the writers highlight, and it's important for us to highlight it as well, that without question, the unbeliever must be reminded of the need to fear God, that there is also a side to it where the believer would profit from being in a relationship with God that is one where they fear him.

The divine child's preacher writes the following, that it is that affectionate reverence by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his father's love.

[38 : 05] Now, that's just one aspect of it, that the child of God, the believer, is someone who has a relationship with God, which is a filial relationship with God, where his relationship is such that he does not want to offend God.

Now, where bridges comes from and where many of the divines comes from is probably best found in the description that the Bible gives us of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you remember, when the prophet Isaiah anticipated the coming Messiah, he gave us a description and many descriptions of what the Messiah, what Jesus was going to be like when he came into the world.

And he says about Jesus something that perhaps surprises some people because it tells us of the kind of life that he was going to live.

in chapter 11 it speaks of Christ in this way and it isn't speaking about anyone but Christ in this instance.

[39 : 21] There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse and a branch shall grow out of his roots and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

I'm sure you're ticking the boxes as you go through that list and you're saying oh yes that's Christ for you there. The spirit of the Lord resting upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and you stop there.

But it doesn't stop there. He speaks about Christ with the fear of the Lord. Lord. Now why would Christ be numbered amongst those who lived in fear of the Lord or with the fear of the Lord in their heart?

What can it possibly mean? And what is the significance of it for ourselves if we are believers and if we're wrestling with this idea of thinking that our salvation and our redemption and our peace with God is assured, how it can possibly be true of us that we also live in fear of the Lord?

If the fear of the Lord has been removed in the sense that we are no longer looking upon him as someone who is going to meet with us as the lawgiver and deal with us as lawbreakers because that is what lies at the heart of what should be in the fear of a person who is waiting to meet God.

[41 : 12] But the words here that speak of the spiritual endowments of Christ, wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and fear of the Lord, describe to us not a slavish fear, not a fear that arises out of a dread or being afraid of God, but rather out of the nature of the relationship that exists between God the Son and his Heavenly Father.

And what we spoke of in the morning as he came into the world, he came for his own, he came for the sheep, he came to do business on their behalf, to bring salvation to them.

And that was the business that was entrusted to him by his Heavenly Father, and nothing but nothing was allowed to distract him from that. And as he lived in the world, he lived with this thought pervading his every action to do your will I take delight.

That's why I'm here. to do the bidding of my God, my Father, to do everything and anything that is entrusted to me in order that I be a Saviour and a Redeemer to the lost.

So in that sense his will, his delight was to do God's will, his will was to do what delighted God as well.

[42 : 55] God spoke to Israel of Lord, you remember. He marked them out as own people. He called them his chosen, he called them his elect, but he told them that they were not just to enjoy salvation by his hand, but in the first instance they were to live their lives in the fear of the Lord, to reverence him, to respect him, to walk before him in obedience to his revealed will.

In the book of Job, the man of God there on several occasions speaks about his own relationship to God, he speaks about the kind of life that he lives where he delights in doing what God has entrusted to him.

In chapter 28 and verse 28 we read of Job there, unto man he said, behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, to depart from evil is understanding.

And he was conscious of the truth, again and again he returns to it. Touching the almighty we cannot find a mouth, he is excellent in power and in judgment, in plenty of justice he will not afflict, men do therefore fear him, for he respecteth not any that are wise in heart.

Job knows that his relationship with God, a righteous man, a holy man, a man who could not be pointed to as being a lawbreaker in any meaningful way.

[44 : 51] And yet he lived in fear of the Lord. And that's what the wise man wants the believer to be, someone who lives their life here in the world in fear of God.

Because that is the wise thing. That's the wise thing he says. Give instruction to a wise man and he will be yet wiser.

Teach a just man, he will increase in learning. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. In what way is it wisdom to live with the fear of the Lord governing your life?

Derek Kidner in one of his comments on the book of Proverbs is a very helpful commentary, very brief commentary, but he highlights the main parts of it.

And he gives a helpful description of the way wisdom is portrayed in the book of Proverbs. And there are several words that you come across which belong to this group, which you would call the words that are wisdom words.

[46 : 13] by themselves as individual words, they don't speak to your wisdom, but they are part of what wisdom is.

There's instruction, there's understanding, there's wise dealings, there's the word knowledge, the word being clever or shrewd.

And all of these words, you say, what Kidner says about these words is, if you think of light, when you see light as light, it's white, but when it's broken up into its constituent parts, it becomes a rainbow of different colors.

And that's the way the wisdom of which this passage and this book speaks is, it's like that, it speaks of elements or constituent parts to this wisdom that is commended.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, all part of the whole, but not the whole. To know God is what is, what it means, to be wise, to know God is what it means to possess knowledge, because without the insights that God gives to us, without the information that we receive at God's hands, then wisdom is not really something that we can claim to possess.

[47 : 59] To know God is to have the knowledge that God means us to have. To be without it is to be unwise.

The preacher Tim Keller states the following, the deep consolation of God's grace heals the heart of its arrogance, hurt feelings, jealousy, self-pity, anxieties, and fear of the future.

All forms of self-absorption at the root of bad decisions and character. lack of wisdom, in other words.

All of these things affect us from time to time, perhaps more so at other times than at other times.

The use of the words beginning that we have here suggests to us that we are on a launch path to something greater or better.

[49 : 13] He says this is the beginning of wisdom. But that is not the meaning as far as we understand the meaning of this passage.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom in the sense that this is where it all begins. It's not, this is what is foundational to everything else.

This is what is necessary to a life of grace. I'm not sure which one of the preachers of old, I think it was Calvin who said that.

He was talking about justification righteousness and righteousness in the experience of the believer if it is not preceded by the fear of the Lord.

It is meaningless, it is without value, it is something that comes before everything else and everything else proceeds from it.

[50 : 28] Saving grace cannot exist if it is not rooted in the righteousness or rooted in what God has revealed of himself that would create in us this filial fear, this desire to honor and obey him.

If you remember this morning we spoke of the humanity of Christ, the essential necessary experience that was his, he became man in order that he would become the redeemer of God's people.

And without question that is something that we believe and we accept. but in the words of Sinclair Ferguson he says in the humanity of Christ we see this, the grace that was part of his perfect humanity.

You know, if the words of the prophet Isaiah mean anything that describes to us something that was true of this Christ because it was a picture given to us of what he was going to be like, what the Messiah was going to be like.

And all these other things that we mentioned that marked him out, they had to be true. you. And just as surely this was a lovely grace, as Sinclair Ferguson put it, that marked him out in his humanity.

[52 : 21] A lovely grace in that he feared the Lord, in that he lived his life to the glory of God, he lived his life. And the point that Ferguson was making was this, that this is something that we as Christian believers, if that's what we are, we should aspire to be conformed to in this world.

To live in the fear of God as Christ lived in the fear of God. And if his fear of God is shown in his obedience to his revealed will, his delighting doing what God had given to him, presented to him to do well, surely it behoves us to demonstrate that we do understand something of who God is and what we are as his people.

Now do you see the difference between the person who lives in this world, who lives without the fear of God, and yet because they are without the fear of God, they have every reason to fear him, because he will deal with them as those who do not honour him or obey him or serve him or the like.

Whereas those who are believers who live in the fear of God do so because their Christ-likeness requires them to do that.

They live with the selfish desire, if you can call it that, to do all to his glory, knowing that this is what gives him the most pleasure in his people, to see them live their lives as it should be lived.

[54 : 28] Can you see the difference? Can you see yourself there? Can you recognise the difference between what you were and what you are? if you can speak of yourself in the past tense as someone who, like the psalmist described, was wicked and who didn't live with the fear of God.

May God help us to understand that his word encourages us to live in his fear, not as those who are slavishly concerned that he will be our judge to condemn us, but as of God that he will want from us the best that we can be, the best that we can bring by way of our free will offerings to him.

The apostle Paul speaks of the life of the believer as a life that is lived in this way, that they give themselves as an offering to God, give themselves as pure and as holy and as righteous as they can possibly be with God's help.

And that's what we would seek from instruction given to us such as what we have here. Give instruction to a wise man and he will be yet wiser.

That's what the wise man says. Teach a just man and he will increase in learning. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the holiest understanding.

[56 : 26] God bless truth, these three thoughts and discipline. God help us to know that there is a life led by your people where they honour and respect and obey you as God in heaven and as their heavenly father.

And nothing but nothing would be of greater benefit to them than to know that you delight in watching their walk in this world as those who love you and who want to honour you through their doings.

Grant to us an understanding of what your word sets before us. Remember all that we address to your care and keeping. Pour out your spirit upon us.

In the Lord Jesus Christ's name. Amen. Our closing psalm, a psalm that speaks to us of something of what we've been speaking of, Psalm 112.

The beginning of the psalm. Praise you the Lord, the man is blessed that fears the Lord aright. he who in his commandments doth greatly take delight.

[57 : 58] His seed and offspring powerful shall be the earth upon of upright men, blessed shall be the generation. Riches and wealth shall ever be within his house and store, and his unspotted righteousness endures forever there.

unto the upright light doth rise, though he in darkness be compassionate and merciful and righteous is he. A good man doth his favour show, and doth to others lend, he with discretion his affairs will guide into the end.

We're going to sing verses 1 to 4. Praise you the Lord. Praise and sayingu May the Lord come on his rest, and we hear the Lord arise.

He heard his grace, no matter his grace, but clearly take delight.

This is the most powerful shall be the earth of all.

[59 : 28] All the light and blessed shall be the generation.

Rich as the world shall ever be, with the mist of the storm, and his sons of righteousness endures forevermore.

But to the upright light and bright, though he in darkness be, compassion and mercy, and mercy, and mercy, and peace, and Christ in Jesus' name.

May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit rest and abide with you all never and always. Amen. Amen.