

The Fear of the Lord

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[0:00] Thank you.

The view was terrible, but we were willing to suffer for Jesus for your sake. It's a joy to be here with you this morning. The truth is, as I've told you before, I'm the president of the Gym Masters Fan Club.

So I'm just in town for some more bumper stickers and buttons, and we'll head back to Prescott to continue to spread the word there. But no, I am really grateful for your pastor and for this church. You guys are always a blessing to us. It's so encouraging to be here with you this morning. So I should have started by saying, turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Proverbs, because then that gives me time to talk while you turn in your Bibles to Proverbs.

I've been doing an expository series through the book of Proverbs with our college students. One of the responsibilities I have at our church is college ministry, and so we meet on campus at Yavapai College on Friday nights, and been preaching through the book of Proverbs with our college students.

[1:10] I gave them the opportunity to choose what topics in the Proverbs they wanted to hear. Since Proverbs is so scattered, it's not really the kind of book you can just start in verse 1 and kind of work your way through the whole thing.

So what we did was I made a list of all the topics in Proverbs. I handed it out to our college students, and I told them, you circle your top five, and we'll gather them all up.

We'll add this up because I'm interested. I want to preach to you what you think you need to hear from the Proverbs. And I kind of told them, and I'm going to pick a few that you need to hear, whether you think you do or not.

And one of those was on the fear of the Lord, because while I was encouraged to see a lot of the topics that they chose, the simple reality is you read through the book of Proverbs, and starting in verse 1, 1 through 6 in Proverbs, Solomon is really just kind of introducing the book to you, and so you know, of course, that Proverbs is the only book in the Bible written to kids, to teenagers, perhaps.

Perhaps Solomon is writing to his sons and sharing his wisdom with them for life. And so that first six verses are really just saying that.

[2:22] And so technically then, the first thing that Solomon says in the book of Proverbs, the very first thing he wants to share with his sons is verse 7.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom instruction. So, in this book, it is meant to communicate wisdom.

That is the primary focus of the book of Proverbs, we would all agree, is to communicate wisdom. And Solomon begins, the first thing he says is, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

So I told the college students, you can pick all the topics you want, but the fear of the Lord, you're going to hear about that. Because we could cover all the other topics in Proverbs, and if we don't get the fear of the Lord, we're really just wasting our time.

So, obviously, we would agree, the fear of the Lord is a critical element here. And our elders have been studying this idea of the fear of the Lord as well, so that the timing was great with my series in Proverbs, and our elders also studying this concept in the scriptures of the fear of the Lord.

[3:34] And one of the books that we have been reading, our elders, is called Rejoice and Tremble. Rejoice and Tremble, it's just blank on the front. I don't know why I'm holding it up. Here. Rejoice and Tremble by Michael Reeves.

He's the author of Delighting in the Trinity. Probably a number of you have already read Delighting in the Trinity. This is his most recent book, Rejoice and Tremble, and it specifically covers the fear

of the Lord.

And so, I'll just tell you up front that I plan to blatantly steal many things from Michael Reeves on the fear of the Lord. Because sometimes someone else can say it better, right?

And because Charles Spurgeon said, all originality and no plagiarism makes for dull preaching. So what does it mean to fear the Lord? I think this is a question that we probably hear from time to time, and I think we all have somewhat of an idea.

But let me give you a hint as we're getting started. By the end of this sermon, I don't want you to fear the Lord. Instead, I want you to fear the Lord.

[4:37] This is very much how the Scripture appears to talk about this idea of the fear of the Lord. You know, my kids and I have a game that we play where we try to outdo one another in jumping out and scaring the other person.

Let's be honest. It's technically me against my kids. It's all of them against me. And usually, I am the most successful at this game. I like to attribute it to my vast amount of wisdom gained over the years with two other brothers, having learned successfully how to scare someone.

So there's, you know what I mean. You hide behind something. You wait for them to come around the corner. You jump out and yell, boo. Although, let me give you a tip. Boo is not the best choice of words because it's really hokey.

And so immediately, they're like, oh, you, no, not really. Because it just kind of, boo, it's just kind of lackluster. Instead, what you want to do is make some completely random noise if you're going to jump out and scare somebody.

Something like, who's going to scare me? Because for some reason, this just messes with somebody's brain. It just kind of creates this cognitive dissonance in which it just kind of one-ups the whole fear factor.

[5:52] And you can really scare somebody by jumping out and just making some completely random noise. And so usually, I'm pretty good at this. The other night, though, my son won this game.

I'd like to say for all times, if there was a trophy, it would be in his bedroom right now. Now, my wife and I had tucked the kids into bed, and we are sitting on the couch talking.

And as we often do, because as you parents know, that's really the only time you can complete a sentence is after you get the kids in bed. And so we've gotten the kids in bed. My wife and I are sitting on the couch talking. And I'm looking over at my wife like this.

She's sitting next to me while simultaneously scratching the back of my head. And all of a sudden, she jumps. Something has startled her.

And it's my son who has come around the corner and is suddenly standing there in the darkness, staring at us. The problem was that because I was scratching my head and looking this way, I didn't see him coming.

[6:50] She was looking at me. All of a sudden, he scares her. I get startled. And so I turn to look, and my arm is in the way. And so I see nothing but my own arm like this.

And I move my arm down, and there's my son's face. I can pretty much guarantee you that nothing in my entire life has scared me as bad as that moment right there.

And so it's funny. We think about this, right? And we laugh about that. As kids, you know, I play this game because my kids love it. As kids, we love to scare people.

We jump out and laugh and yell boo. But we're also afraid of monsters and dark closets and that strange space under the bed, right?

As adults, though, we haven't really changed. We've just kind of shifted those focuses. Foci? Focuses. As adults, we watch scary movies.

[7:48] We ride roller coasters. And yet we're also genuinely afraid of someone breaking into our house. Or our kids being abducted. Or our loved ones killed in a car accident.

We love fear, and we hate it. So is fear good or bad? It's almost like there's two kinds of fear, aren't there? Same question when we come to the Bible.

It's almost like we hadn't gotten a lot of help yet. Is fear good or bad? The Bible says yes. Fear is good. Proverbs 1.7, we see the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Now, Proverbs 9.10 says the same thing. Solomon repeats it for his kids a number of times, as though kids are forgetful. Psalm 86.11, the psalmist prays that he would fear God.

Job 1.8 says Job feared the Lord, and it's meant to be a good thing that Job feared the Lord. There's plenty of other verses, too. Ecclesiastes 12.13, Luke 1.50, 2 Corinthians 7.1, Colossians 3.22, on and on.

[8:48] The verses go. We can see, okay, so the fear of the Lord is a good thing. But then there's other verses that seem to make it out that fear is a bad thing.

1 John 4.18, there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

And did you know the most frequent command, the most frequently repeated command in the Scriptures is, do not be afraid. So it's understandable why there's some confusion about this idea of the fear of the Lord.

Is it good? Is it bad? Are we supposed to fear? Are we not supposed to fear? Yes? No? Maybe? We know that the fear of the Lord is important, right? But we often put it on a shelf as some, like, dusty Old Testament concept, as though it's like the theological equivalent of eating your vegetables.

I know I'm supposed to fear the Lord. I know that's good for me, and I think I do. And I'd say the key, then, is to understand that fearing God and loving God are not opposite ends of the theological spectrum, but rather co-harmonious aspects of a right relationship with Him.

[10:08] We are both to love God and to fear Him. And the fear of the Lord is not the opposite of loving Him. It's at the very core of loving Him.

This seems baffling to us, right? If that's true, then what exactly is the fear of the Lord? We've all heard people say, well, the fear of the Lord is like awe, right? It's like reverence.

It's this reverential awe. Okay, that's helpful. I don't think that's complete when you study the Scriptures on this. I think it can be helpful. But you also just can't make things up like that because they sound good.

Like, that sounds good, right? But can you show me from the Bible where the fear of the Lord is awe, reverence? Or do we just say that because we've heard other people say that?

It sounds pretty good, and we don't want to say, I don't know. Even though, honestly, there's a lot of things we don't know. So we need to broaden our understanding, then, of this word fear because the Bible tells us not to fear God.

[11:11] And the Bible tells us to fear God. It sounds like there might be a wider range of meaning to this word fear, doesn't it? You know, words can have a range of meaning, right?

We call it the semantic range of a word for all you grammar nerds in the house. Let me adjust my pocket protector. Pulpit. It has a pretty narrow semantic range.

If I say pulpit, everybody knows exactly what I'm talking about. There's no confusion. There's really just kind of one very narrow definition of the word pulpit. But if I say stage, the word stage could be this physical thing I'm standing on.

It could also mean to set something up, right? We're going to stage the birthday party. Here's a big one for you. Trunk. I don't know if you've ever considered the semantic range of the word trunk.

A trunk can be part of a tree. It can be part of an elephant. It can be part of a car. Or it can be a box. Trunk. Now, the thing that those things all have in common is they carry something.

[12:16] The trunk of a tree carries water up to the leaves, right? The trunk of a car carries things in the back. A trunk, you put stuff in it to carry. The trunk of an elephant carries water into the elephant's body.

But the word trunk, you realize, has this wide range of meaning. If I say trunk, you don't know what I'm talking about until you get some context. A really helpful word to think about is the word love. The word love has a wide range of meaning for us. I love coffee. Amen? Amen. Amen. Amen. I also love my wife. Now, let's hope that there is some qualitative difference to my love for coffee and my love for my wife, right?

I also say, I love the Lord. You would think there's also some qualitative difference between the way that I love my wife and the way that I love God. And so you see, even the word love, depending upon the object that is being loved, there's a different nuance to the meaning of the word.

Such it is with fear. Depending upon the object which is being feared, there is a different nuance to the word. And so as the Bible approaches this concept of the fear of the Lord, it really helps to kind of go from passage to passage and start to gather meaning.

[13:36] Because the word fear has this wide range of meaning like this. Turn to Isaiah 11 with me. Just kind of over a few books in the Bible there to Isaiah chapter 11.

Isaiah chapter 11, verses 1 through 3.

Listen to this. I'm sure I can find it. It's here in the New Testament somewhere. Okay, Isaiah 11.

Now, we know this to be a prophecy about Jesus, right?

Isaiah 11, listen. There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. 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 the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

[14:39] Isn't that fascinating to think about? If the fear of the Lord is Jesus' delight, then it can't be some gloomy, unhappy fear. And if it is his delight, then ought the fear of the Lord to be our delight.

And how is it, then, that we delight in fearing something, someone? Nehemiah understood this.

Turn over to Nehemiah chapter 1 with me.

While you turn there, Nehemiah 1 is always hard to find because his name sounds like he's going to be one of the prophetic books, which would make him to the right in your Bible.

But Nehemiah is actually a book of history, so that puts it before the Psalms and the Proverbs. So, Nehemiah chapter 1. Nehemiah 1, starting in verse 11.

Nehemiah understood this idea. He says, Oh, Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name. Delight to fear your name.

[15:46] So, this isn't just a Jesus thing either. Nehemiah says, Lord, we delight to fear your name. So, there is a kind of fear that is not repulsive. It doesn't drive us away.

It draws us in. We delight to fear the Lord. So, what exactly, then, is the fear of the Lord? Again, we're seeing that there's this wide range of meaning to it.

We see that the Bible uses this word fear in a variety of ways, telling us to fear in some verses, telling us not to fear in others. We've seen Isaiah 11, Nehemiah 1. There's this wider semantic range for the word fear.

And so, what we're going to do this morning, really, stemming from Proverbs 1.7, the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. We're going to ask the question, then, what does the Bible teach about the fear of the Lord?

And we're going to take our backpack, our little theological backpacks with us, and we're going to go from one verse to another, to another, to another. And we're going to gather all of the meaning that we can from the Bible to help us understand this wider range of meaning to the word fear, so that we can successfully answer the question, in what way am I called to fear the Lord?

[16:59] There are good fears, and there are bad fears. Sinful fears, and right fears.

And the Bible often uses the word fear in both ways, and sometimes even in the same passage.

Turn to Exodus chapter 20 with me. Exodus chapter 20. Starting in verse 18.

Exodus 20. Look at verse 18. Now, this is Mount Sinai, right? They've received the Ten Commandments. They're receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

Exodus 20, verse 18 says, Now, when all the people saw the thunder, and the flashes of lightning, and the sound of the trumpet, and the mountains smoking, the people were afraid, and trembled, and they stood far off.

And they said to Moses, You speak to us, and we'll listen, but do not let God speak to us, lest we die. So they're fearing God.

[18:06] And you would think, okay, well, that's probably good, isn't it, right? We're supposed to fear the Lord. But notice what Moses says in verse 20. Moses said to the people, Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.

Well, wait a second, Moses. You just told them, don't be afraid. God has come, so you'll be afraid. I don't know if that strikes you as really odd.

Is Moses just confused? Now, I know you're good Bereans, so you're already thinking, I know what's going on here. There's two different words for fear in the Hebrew, aren't there? Yeah, no. It's the same word. The same word repeated both times. Moses says, Do not fear. God has come so that you may fear him. Fear, fear, same word, both times. The people are afraid, though, notice, of God's judgment.

But Moses understands their fear is the wrong kind of fear. It is an incomplete fear. So he says, Don't fear, but fear the Lord so that you won't sin.

[19:16] The people are simply afraid of God because of his greatness, his power, his wrath against sin, but they're only seeing half of who God is. They're afraid because they have an incomplete picture of God.

Look at verse 19. You can tell because they say, Do not let God speak to us, lest we die. So they want to be away from the Lord.

That's a clue that this is the wrong kind of fear. And they say, Lest we die. And you can see they're afraid of judgment. They just want Moses. Like, Moses, you just tell us what to do.

They don't want to hear from God because they're afraid of dying. And the lesson here on Mount Sinai is something that the New Testament revisits in 2 Corinthians 3.

And you can just jot that down. We don't have time to cover it this morning. But 2 Corinthians 3 talks about the idea of what happens here on Mount Sinai and this wrong fear that the people have.

[20:15] This is a wrong fear because it's an incomplete fear that only sees half of who God is. It only sees his judgment against our sin. This kind of fear of God can't lead to a proper life before him because it's incomplete.

Trying to live a life of obedience to God simply out of fear of punishment doesn't work. That kind of fear is a terrible motivator.

It always short circuits itself. It does not lead to holy living. Turn to 1 Samuel chapter 12. 1 Samuel chapter 12.

In 1 Samuel 12, we're going to look at verses 17 through 25 and just walk through a very similar experience in the life of the Israelites. Now Samuel is the man leading them here.

And verse 17, he says, Is it not wheat harvest today? This is 1 Samuel 12, 17. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call upon the Lord that he may send thunder and rain.

[21:22] And you shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord in asking for yourselves a king. So, you know the context here, right?

They asked for a king. We don't want God to be our king. We want a man as a king. And that was a sin. And so we know the context there. And he says, You shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord in asking for yourselves a king.

Verse 18. So Samuel called upon the Lord and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day. And all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel.

So again, they have a fear of God. So now we've got a little bit of experience in this. We're not just going to assume this is a good fear. We're going to ask. Okay. So they're afraid. Is that good or bad fear?

Well, let's read on to find out. Look at verse 19. And all the people said to Samuel, Pray for your servants to the Lord your God that we may not die.

[22:22] So there's some pretty big hints there, right? This is the wrong kind of fear. He says, they say, For we have added to all our sins this evil to ask for ourselves a king. So they want Samuel to pray for them.

And it's a fear of punishment and death. They don't want to talk to God. They want Samuel to do it for them. You talk to God. You just tell us what to do. We're scared to die. So this is a wrong fear of God because they're, it's like they're stepping away from God as they're talking.

This is a clue to us that this is the wrong kind of fear. And so Samuel says in verse 20, Samuel said to the people, Do not be afraid. You have done all this evil.

It's interesting. Samuel says, do not be afraid because this is the wrong kind of fear. He also does not say, Don't be afraid. You didn't really sin. Right? You would think he'd say, Hey, don't be afraid.

It's not that big a deal. Right? I know you chose the king thing, but it's really not that big of a deal. But that's not what he's saying. He says, do not be afraid. You have done all this evil.

[23:28] You have to wonder if they kind of stood there and gave him like the tilted head dog look. Huh? Like, don't be afraid. We did sin. Notice what, look at verse 20.

Yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart, and do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty. Now, Samuel wants them to see that they have a sinful fear, which still needs to be developed into a healthy fear.

So, he begins to tell them about God's kindness. Verse 22. Here's why they should not be afraid.

For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great namesake, because it is pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself. 23. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way.

Only fear the Lord. Wait. You just told us not to fear the Lord, and now you're telling us to fear the Lord. Exactly. He says, Fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart.

[24 : 37] Why should they fear him? For consider what great things he has done for you. They're already afraid of God's judgment, and he says, Don't be afraid, but fear the Lord.

Why? Because their fear is incomplete. It is only a fear of judgment. Fear of God is, if it's limited to his power to judge, needs to be completed by doing what Samuel says here, considering what great things he has done for you.

John Bunyan says, It's the devil's work to promote a fear of God, which makes people afraid of God, such that they want to flee from him. But the Spirit's work is exactly the opposite, to produce in us a wonderful fear that wins us and draws us to God.

So there's a wrong, sinful fear that drives us away from God, even if we're seeking to obey his law. You can be trying to obey the Bible out of fear of the Lord, and if it's the wrong kind of fear, the whole process short circuits.

Wrong fear drives us to live externally obedient, while still on the inside, not drawing near to the Lord. Wrong fear of God simply drives us to legalism, because it doesn't drive us to God.

[25 : 58] It drives us away from him, even as we're trying to obey him. Fear of the Lord, simply because he's a righteous judge, is actually a sinful fear. It drives you away from God, even as you seek to obey him.

This was the fear of the Pharisees, right? We have obeyed. I've kept all of these things from my youth. We could look over and over again. The Pharisees were obeying the word of God. They were obeying the Bible.

But Jesus said, these people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. So we need to have a right fear of God. What does that look like? Well, I have a confession to make.

We moved to Arizona in September, almost six years ago, and we still have not been to the Grand Canyon. I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive me for that.

I have been to the Grand Canyon. Ironically, though, I drove there from Texas when we lived in Texas. Since we've been here, we've not been to the Grand Canyon.

[27 : 02] Now, the Grand Canyon is absolutely gorgeous, right? It's also absolutely dangerous, isn't it? You stand near to the Grand Canyon, and you are in grave danger, aren't you?

That's part of what makes it so amazing, isn't it? The fear of the Grand Canyon, the fear that you have, though, doesn't make you want to get back in the car and drive away.

It makes you say, I could stay here forever. I just want to pull up a chair, sit right here with my coffee every morning from now on.

The fear is magnificent, and it makes you want to get closer. In the same way, God is absolutely dangerous and beautiful.

You stand near to Him, you are in grave danger, but the fear that we have of the Lord doesn't drive us away from Him. Our fear of the Lord ought to make us want to be closer to Him, to say, I never want to leave.

[28 : 16] I want to be right here with you, Lord. Sinful fear drives you away from God. Right fear drives you towards Him. So what is that right fear then?

Let's look at some passages that show us what that looks like. How does the Bible talk about it?

Turn with me to Jeremiah chapter 32. Jeremiah 32. You all have digital Bibles, don't you?

I hear no pages turning. Jeremiah chapter 32, starting in verse 38. Look at verse 38 to 40.

God says, And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear me forever for their own good and the good of their children after them.

I will make with them an everlasting covenant, and I will not turn away from doing good to them.

And I will put the fear of me in their hearts that they may not turn from me.

[29 : 23] Isn't that interesting the way, even though the Lord says, the new covenant will be such that God will put His fear in our hearts, and it won't make us turn away from Him, but it'll make us turn towards Him because of His goodness to us, because of His promises to us.

This is a fear that makes us turn towards good because it's a fear that's based on all of the good that God has done for us. Look over a page at Jeremiah 33, verse 9.

He says, And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise, and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them, and they shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity that I provide.

They're going to fear and tremble because of all of the good that God does. This fear because of good, not a fear of punishment, a fear because of good, a fear that blows us away in light of what I know is true about my sinful brokenness.

I know a thousand times I've turned my back on God, a thousand times I've ignored Him, a thousand times He told me the right way to do something, and I thought I knew better. A thousand times over this week.

[30 : 43] And yet, though I so desperately deserve His wrath, He promises good to me because of the gospel. That is a good that blows me away.

It leaves me fearfully overwhelmed by God's goodness to me. Listen to Hosea 3, 5. God says, afterward, the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to His goodness in the latter days.

They will come in fear to His goodness. There it is again. Spurgeon says, this is a fear that leans towards the Lord. People felt this way in the presence of God throughout the Bible, right?

You see Isaiah, woe is me for I'm a man of unclean lips. And in the same chapter, here am I, send me. When I think about my sin and His power as the creator, as the judge, and then I realize His promises of goodness to me, I am fearfully in awe.

I'm overwhelmed. This happy sense of delightful fear. I'm flabbergasted. You can see how words just fail us to try to unpack as the more we look at these verses, we're piling meaning into the word fear.

[32 : 14] It's kind of like top fuel. You know, top fuel races are when they, it's another one of humanity's genius inventions where we take a car and then we strap an airplane engine on it, right?

or something along those lines. And these cars, when they fire these things up, they actually take rocket fuel and they drive at speeds that are illegal on the road.

They're not street legal cars. But they race these top fuel cars and if you, if you stand near to this car when they fire up the engine, it is fearful.

It shakes you. You feel the sound of the engine rumbling. You feel it in your chest and yet, it's not the kind of fear that makes you want to turn and run the other direction.

You stand there stunned, in awe. You fearfully want to get closer. People responded to Jesus this way all the time, didn't they, right?

[33 : 20] You can jot down Luke chapter 7 verses 14 to 16 and maybe even look that up during the time of reflection at the end of the message. Luke 7, 14 to 16 is a great passage where we see this very thing.

People in stunned, fearful awe of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh. It is an awe, a profound bewilderment and wonder, a remarkable, blown away admiration, an astonished reverence.

And it's common for Christians to try to fumble around with all of these words, trying to come up with awe and respect and reverence as synonyms for the fear of the Lord and that's not wrong. We should try to grapple with this but what we really have to do is what we're doing this morning, going from passage to passage and just deepening our understanding of how the Bible uses the word fear and understanding from the context of all of these passages what the fear of the Lord really is so that when we talk about it, while we may struggle to find the words, we've seen in Scripture what the fear of the Lord actually is.

Michael Reeves says in his book Rejoice and Tremble that those words, awe, reverence, respect, those words actually fall quite short of capturing the intense and happy fullness of what Scripture means when it speaks of the fear of the Lord.

So we're just carrying our backpacks this morning from verse to verse to verse trying to fill our backpacks up with what it means to fear the Lord. So bring your backpacks with me over to Psalm 31.

[34 : 57] Psalm 31 verse 19 the psalmist understood this he says oh how abundant is your goodness which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you in the sight of the children of mankind.

How abundant is your goodness in our sight. You've stored up goodness for those of us who fear you. So two things to note here right. First fearing God rightly means receiving his goodness.

God has goodness stored up for those who fear him. Second to fear the Lord is synonymous with taking refuge in him.

Right? Think about that for a second. To fear the Lord is synonymous with taking refuge in him. It is a lot like you know if you've ever taken your young kids to someone's house and they have a huge friendly dog and your child stands there about eye to eye with this big huge dog.

Right? They're about the same height and you know one of the kids says something like I forgot my snack in the car. I'm going to run out and get it and as the kid bounces away down the sidewalk the dog gets excited and so with this low growl starts to kind of gallop after the kid which of course terrifies the child who then runs faster which then incites the dog to more excitement who runs faster after the child and of course you remind your kids then whoa don't run don't run from a dog instead because dogs don't like it when you run away from them just stay close to the dog walk alongside him out to the gate with your hand on his back there and isn't that a great picture?

[36:59] Right? Our fear of God is a fear in such that you don't run away from him those who run from God are chased by God but those of us who will instead put our hand on him want to be close to him there is a power and protection there Reeves says this really well paints this picture he says true fear of God is the right response to God's full orb'd revelation of himself in all his grace and glory this fear is the opposite of being afraid of God godly fear casts out being afraid overwhelmed by his goodness and majesty and holiness and grace and righteousness overwhelmed by all that God is the faithful tremble and the biblical theme of the fear of God helps us to see the sort of love that is a sort of love towards God that is fitting it is a fearful love because seen clearly the dazzling beauty and splendor of God must cause our hearts to quake

Spurgeon says it this way believers worship and adore the living God with a joyful tender fear which both lays us low and lifts us very high for never do we seem to be nearer to heaven's golden throne than when our spirit gives itself up to worship him who it does not see but in whose realized presence it trembles with sacred delight this is where we begin to see that having the right kind of fear of the Lord is not a Old Testament dusty concept but it is at the very core of what it means to live the Christian life this is what it means to see ourselves rightly before God and to see him rightly to stand in wonder and amazement at his majestic beauty his incredible power his inexplicable grace and mercy towards me it is a right fear that makes the difference between hypocritical performance of just doing all the stuff that the Bible says and truly genuinely walking with God C.S. Lewis captures this picture really well and the fear of the Lord in the Chronicles of Narnia I'm sure most of you have read that which Lewis says he wrote an article you could google this sometime C.S. Lewis wrote an article that's called sometimes fairy stories say best what's to be said and I think that's true sometimes we need a real big picture painted for us to see it for us to grasp it to get our arms around it and he has this idea of when the children are first in Beaver's little home and Beaver mentions the name of Aslan and it's the first time in the book the name of Aslan is mentioned and it says all of a sudden a curious excitement came over all the children they didn't know who Aslan is any more than you the reader does but only C.S. Lewis can get away with actually referring to you in the book right like breaking the fourth dimension there like nobody does that

C.S. Lewis gets away with it because the children didn't know who Aslan was any more than you do and yet at the name of Aslan spoken a great excitement overwhelmed them Lucy felt as though it was the last day of school before summer would begin and it kind of goes through what each of the kids were feeling this overwhelmed sense of awe and stunned silence as they just looked at each other they couldn't even explain what they were feeling fear the Lord fear that pleases God is not a groveling shrinking fear because God isn't a tyrant it's a love and joy that senses how overwhelmingly kind and magnificent good and true God is and that therefore leans on him in staggered praise and faith as we think about that all of this appears to be this lofty theological concept and yet the reality is this is very practical for your life and mine this afternoon this week this month because today we live in a culture of fear fear is a powerful motivator right politicians know this politicians are trying to get you to vote for them by telling you all of the things you should be afraid of if their opponent gets elected it sounds funny but they actually do this because they know you will be motivated by fear we talk about FOMO the fear of missing out and as much as we joke about it it really is a thing the fear of missing out is a dominant controlling influence in people's lives recently

I got this text don't be the last person without an air fryer the Kasori XL is 35% off on Amazon get here and get cooking and I thought oh no am I really going to be the last person without an air fryer on earth as silly as that is they know that people are motivated by fear we are regularly motivated

by fear we are genuinely afraid of things we are afraid of kidnappers and burglars and sexual abuse and emotional manipulation and germs and we are afraid of failing and we are afraid of having the wrong diet so we have created speed limits and special locks and apps and airbags and antibiotics and we have removed pesticides from our foods and lead paint from our walls and our homes and we buy bigger guns and crash test rated cars we can monitor our homes with security cameras and pinpoint our kids location with app location sharing we do all of this in some ways because of fear it's interesting although we're the safest generation in the history of mankind we are more fearful and panicky probably than any generation in the history of mankind we have helicopter parents who can't let their kids grow up and young people who can't cope with someone having a different viewpoint than them so we call it hate speech we're afraid of a lot there are things that you are afraid of there are things that I'm afraid of you ever wonder how to have a really deep conversation with someone get them alone and just ask them like hey what are you afraid of and after they give you their like pat answer because they don't want to tell you the truth ask them again no no really like I want to pray for you what scares you in life what are you really afraid of because we're also deeply anxious people you know the difference between fear and anxiety fear has a direct object there's a thing that you're afraid of anxiety is more nebulous it just kind of it's like this dangling fear that just latches on to everything that comes along why are we so fearful and anxious and troubled what is it that will guard us from all of these overwhelming fears in life fear we're afraid of everything because we've lost our fear of God the fear of the Lord is a balancing force that tames our other fears it puts our entire lives our soul in perspective

[44 : 59] Jesus taught this he said do not fear those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul rather fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell so what did Jesus say is the solution to fear of people trying to kill you and I would say if people were afraid of people trying to kill them probably all of our fears are lesser fears than that Jesus said the solution to fear of people trying to kill you is fearing God this is why our fears so often come true fear fear is often a self-fulfilling prophecy our lives see our lives work best when we live them in accord with how God has revealed himself and life to work when we follow him life goes well for us our fears are directly connected to an area of our lives in which we're not trusting God we are afraid because we're not trusting him we're afraid precisely because we're not seeing God as he relates to that area of our lives and so we try to take control of that area of life in fear we try to wrestle control away from the

Lord no no no I'm gonna do it my way God and because we're trying to control that area of our lives rather than entrusting it to God it's that very area of our lives that's affected by poor decision making unbelief and disobedience and when we apply unbelief and bad decisions to any area of our lives it ruins that very area of our lives and so fear often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy in this way this is true in every single area of our lives where we allow fear to take control that very thing that we fear ensnares us and the solution is to have a right view of God to genuinely fear him to see him for who he is and to allow the fear of the Lord to balance and control all of our other fears to check them and put them in their place so how then in closing do we grow in this fear how do we grow in the fear of the

Lord understand that the danger of shifting to how to language is a very real danger right it's really easy for me now I'm going to give you five practical tips on how to fear the Lord the problem is we shift towards ourselves and what we do we look at our performance and we stop looking at him we can look at our external performance and think that our outward actions equal the fear of God when in fact we can easily just be faking it and missing the point altogether to grow in our fear of the Lord we have to behold him when we rightly understand fearing the Lord we realize it's not something you do it's something that as we see him for who he is it does something to us it causes us then to do things the fear of God is not something that can be acquired through behavior modification or better habits however godly habits like bible study being at church and hearing sermons fellowshiping with other believers spending time in prayer these very things put us in the path of grace to receive the inflow of the gospel to seek

God rightly for who he is and that's the very thing that causes us then to grow in the fear of the Lord see in the gospel at the cross we see both the massively pure holiness of God and the unflinching justice of God against sin we see how terrible our sin really is and how powerful God as a just creator is and we also see how marvelously gracious and forgiving he is what great good he has done for us so we can come in fear to his goodness the way he's poured out love and mercy and forgiveness and welcomed us as his own so having turned from our sin believed the gospel of

Jesus Christ we now stand in awe of him we stand amazed at his danger and at our safety as we draw near to him this is why Solomon begins Proverbs with the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom if you don't reverently adore him if you don't fear the Lord you can't even begin to apply all that the Proverbs has to offer this is the indicatives before the imperatives even in Proverbs in the Old Testament right you'd better rightly see God and what he's done for you before you get busy trying to do things for him that's why the first thing Solomon says to his kids is the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom picture yourself climbing the mountains as you're climbing on these massive rock faces high above you see a storm coming and it's clearly a massive dangerous storm and you realize you are unbelievably vulnerable on the side of this mountain the massive mountain is a great danger to you the rain and the wind is a grave danger to you the lightning and the thunder are terrifying as you scramble for your life on the side of this mountain you are afraid in such a way that you wish you were down off the mountain that you had never come up here and that you were as far away from all of this as possible suddenly as you pull yourself up over the next rock there's a tiny little cave there just right there a little hollow in the side of the mountain just big enough for you to get in and hide from the storm and it's just small enough that really the only way to stay in there is to turn around and put your back against the mountain and as you spin quickly to get into it facing out to the storm you realize all of a sudden you are finally and completely safe from this storm and you breathe a sigh of relief now as this whirlwind of terror slams into the mountain the overwhelming fear you had is altered changed switched into a sense of wonder at the power of it all the thunder the lightning the wind and now there's nowhere you would rather be than right here at the center of all of this power on display in the same way when the holiness and justice and power and wrath and judgment of God breaks over the mountain of your life like a whirlwind of terror because you're totally safe all of the horrible danger is transposed into a music of majesty and you fear it in a bewildering sense of wonder that you could be so safe in the midst of this and that little hollow where you're kept safe in the side of the mountain that's the gospel

[52:43] Jesus died on the cross to provide that place for you to be kept safe from the power and the wrath of God while simultaneously being as close as you could possibly be to it all Jesus died for us to provide a place where we can enjoy the majesty of God and a kind of fear and trembling that's not a cowering fear that makes us want to get away from him but a humble devoted fear a fear that makes us stand in awe of the fact that we could be so close there's nowhere we'd rather be than as near to the center of God's majesty and power as possible and Lord as we think about that that's exactly what we have because of what you did on the cross and so we want to close by saying thank you we have walked through so many passages in your word to see how you've explained the fear of the Lord to us and God we want to fear you rightly help us not to be people who only fear your judgment and obey out of a sense of guilt or fear of punishment instead Lord knowing that we are completely safe that because of Jesus Christ and his death in our place on the cross there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus we are in

Christ as those who've turned from our sin put our faith in him and so we are at the center of your power and majesty and yet completely safe and we thank you for that God pray that as we continue to come back to your word day by day week by week that you would reveal yourself to us show us your glory cause us to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ in the pages of scripture so that we would fear you rightly and draw near to you and it's in Jesus name we pray amen well friends as you know have a time of reflection after the message each Sunday so we'll take a minute now just to sit quiet in your seats and talk to the Lord about what we've seen in his word this morning you